CHAPTER VII

SOME EARLY UNDERTAKINGS AT HULL-HOUSE

IF THE EARLY American Settlements stood for a more exigent standard in philanthropic activities, insisting that each new undertaking should be preceded by carefully ascertained facts, then certainly Hull-House held to this standard in the opening of our new coffee-house first started as a public kitchen. An investigation of the sweatshops had disclosed the fact, that sewing women during the busy season paid little attention to the feeding of their families, for it was only by working steadily through the long day that the scanty pay of five, seven, or nine cents for finishing a dozen pairs of trousers could be made into a day's wage; and they bought from the nearest grocery the canned goods that could be most quickly heated, or gave a few pennies to the children with which they might secure a lunch from a neighboring candy shop.

One of the residents made an investigation, at the instance of the United States Department of Agriculture, into the food values of the dietaries of the various immigrants, and this was followed by an investigation made by another resident, for the United States Department of Labor, into the foods of the Italian colony, on the supposition that the constant use of imported products bore a distinct relation to the cost of living. I recall an Italian who, coming into Hull-House one day as we were sitting at the dinner table, expressed great surprise that Americans ate a variety of food, because he believed that they partook only of potatoes and beer. A little inquiry showed that this conclusion was drawn from the fact that he lived next to an Irish saloon and had never seen anything but potatoes going in and beer coming out.

At that time the New England kitchen was comparatively new in Boston, and Mrs. Richards, who was largely responsible for its foundation, hoped that cheaper cuts of meat and simpler vegetables, if they were subjected to slow and thorough processes of cooking, might be made attractive and their nutritive value secured for the people who so sadly needed more nutritious food. It was felt that this could be best accomplished in public kitchens, where the advantage of scientific training and careful supervision could be secured. One of the residents went to Boston for a training under Mrs. Richards, and when the Hull-House kitchen was fitted under her guidance and direction, our hopes ran high for some modification of the food of the neighborhood. We did not reckon, however, with the wide diversity in nationality and inherited tastes, and while we sold a certain amount of the carefully prepared soups and stews in the neighboring factories—a sale which has steadily increased throughout the years—and were also patronized by a few households, perhaps the neighborhood estimate was best summed up by the woman who frankly confessed, that the food was certainly nutritious, but that she didn't like to eat what was nutritious, that she liked to eat "what she'd ruther."

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

If the dietetics were appreciated but slowly, the social value of the coffee-house and the gymnasium, which were in the same building, were quickly demonstrated. At that time the saloon halls were the only places in the neighborhood where the immigrant could hold his social gatherings, and where he could celebrate such innocent and legitimate occasions as weddings and christenings.

These halls were rented very cheaply with the understanding that various sums of money should be "passed across the bar," and it was considered a mean host or guest who failed to live up to this implied bargain. The consequence was that many a reputable party ended with a certain amount of disorder, due solely to the fact that the social instinct was traded upon and used as a basis for money making by an adroit host. From the beginning the young people's clubs had asked for dancing, and nothing was more popular than the increased space for parties offered by the gymnasium, with the chance to serve refreshments in the room below. We tried experiments with every known "soft drink," from those extracted from an expensive soda water fountain to slender glasses of grape juice, but so far as drinks were concerned we never became a rival to the saloon, nor indeed did anyone imagine that we were trying to do so. I remember one man who looked about the cozy little room and said, "This would be a nice place to sit in all day if one could only have beer." But the coffee-house gradually performed a mission of its own and became something of a social center to the neighborhood as well as a real convenience. Business men from the adjacent factories and school teachers from the nearest public schools, used it increasingly. The Hull-House students and club members supped together in little groups or held their reunions and social banquets, as, to a certain extent, did organizations from all parts of the town. The experience of the coffee-house taught us not to hold to preconceived ideas of what the neighborhood ought to have, but to keep ourselves in readiness to modify and adapt our undertakings as we discovered those things which the neighborhood was ready to accept.

Better food was doubtless needed, but more attractive and safer places for social gatherings were also needed, and the neighborhood was ready for one and not for the other. We had no hint then in Chicago of the small parks which were to be established fifteen years later, containing the halls for dancing and their own restaurants in buildings where the natural desire of the young for gayety and social organization, could be safely indulged. Yet even in that early day a member of the Hull-House Men's Club who had been appointed superintendent of Douglas Park had secured there the first public swimming pool, and his fellow club members were proud of the achievement.

There was in the earliest undertakings at Hull-House a touch of the artist's enthusiasm when he translates his inner vision through his chosen material into outward form. Keenly conscious of the social confusion all about us and the hard economic struggle, we at times believed that the very struggle itself might become a source of strength. The devotion of the mothers to their children, the dread of the men lest they fail to provide for the family dependent upon their daily exertions, at moments seemed to us the secret stores of strength from which society is fed, the invisible array of passion and feeling which are the surest protectors of the world. We fatuously hoped that we might pluck from the human tragedy

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

itself a consciousness of a common destiny which should bring its own healing, that we might extract from life's very misfortunes a power of cooperation which should be effective against them.

Of course there was always present the harrowing consciousness of the difference in economic condition between ourselves and our neighbors. Even if we had gone to live in the most wretched tenement, there would have always been an essential difference between them and ourselves, for we should have had a sense of security in regard to illness and old age and the lack of these two securities are the specters which most persistently haunt the poor. Could we, in spite of this, make their individual efforts more effective through organization and possibly complement them by small efforts of our own?

Some such vague hope was in our minds when we started the Hull-House Cooperative Coal Association, which led a vigorous life for three years, and developed a large membership under the skillful advice of its one paid officer, an English workingman who had had experience in cooperative societies at "'ome." Some of the meetings of the association, in which people met to consider together their basic dependence upon fire and warmth, had a curious challenge of life about them. Because the cooperators knew what it meant to bring forth children in the midst of privation and to see the tiny creatures struggle for life, their recitals cut a cross section, as it were, in that world-old effort—the "dying to live" which so inevitably triumphs over poverty and suffering. And yet their very familiarity with hardship may have been responsible for that sentiment which traditionally ruins business, for a vote of the cooperators that the basket buyers be given one basket free out of every six, that the presentation of five purchase tickets should entitle the holders to a profit in coal instead of stock "because it would be a shame to keep them waiting for the dividend," was always pointed to by the conservative quarter-of-a-ton buyers as the beginning of the end. At any rate, at the close of the third winter, although the Association occupied an imposing coal yard on the southeast corner of the Hull-House block and its gross receipts were between three and four hundred dollars a day, it became evident that the concern could not remain solvent if it continued its philanthropic policy, and the experiment was terminated by the cooperators taking up their stock in the remaining coal.

Our next cooperative experiment was much more successful, perhaps because it was much more spontaneous.

At a meeting of working girls held at Hull-House during a strike in a large shoe factory, the discussions made it clear that the strikers who had been most easily frightened, and therefore first to capitulate, were naturally those girls who were paying board and were afraid of being put out if they fell too far behind. After a recital of a case of peculiar hardship one of them exclaimed: "Wouldn't it be fine if we had a boarding club of our own, and then we could stand by each other in a time like this?" After that events moved quickly. We read aloud together Beatrice Potter's little book on "Cooperation," and discussed all the difficulties and fascinations of such an undertaking, and on the first of May, 1891, two comfortable apartments near Hull-House were rented and furnished. The Settlement was responsible for the furniture and paid the first month's rent, but beyond that the members

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

managed the club themselves. The undertaking “marched,” as the French say, from the very first, and always on its own feet. Although there were difficulties, none of them proved insurmountable, which was a matter for great satisfaction in the face of a statement made by the head of the United States Department of Labor, who, on a visit to the club when it was but two years old, said that his department had investigated many cooperative undertakings, and that none founded and managed by women had ever succeeded. At the end of the third year the club occupied all of the six apartments which the original building contained, and numbered fifty members.

It was in connection with our efforts to secure a building for the Jane Club, that we first found ourselves in the dilemma between the needs of our neighbors and the kind-hearted response upon which we had already come to rely for their relief. The adapted apartments in which the Jane Club was housed were inevitably more or less uncomfortable, and we felt that the success of the club justified the erection of a building for its sole use.

Up to that time, our history had been as the minor peace of the early Church. We had had the most generous interpretation of our efforts. Of course, many people were indifferent to the idea of the Settlement; others looked on with tolerant and sometimes cynical amusement which we would often encounter in a good story related at our expense; but all this was remote and unreal to us, and we were sure that if the critics could but touch “the life of the people,” they would understand.

The situation changed markedly after the Pullman strike, and our efforts to secure factory legislation later brought upon us a certain amount of distrust and suspicion; until then we had been considered merely a kindly philanthropic undertaking whose new form gave us a certain idealistic glamour. But sterner tests were coming, and one of the first was in connection with the new building for the Jane Club. A trustee of Hull-House came to see us one day with the good news that a friend of his was ready to give twenty thousand dollars with which to build the desired new clubhouse. When, however, he divulged the name of his generous friend, it proved to be that of a man who was notorious for underpaying the girls in his establishment and concerning whom there were even darker stories. It seemed clearly impossible to erect a clubhouse for working girls with such money and we at once said that we must decline the offer. The trustee of Hull-House was put in the most embarrassing situation; he had, of course, induced the man to give the money and had had no thought but that it would be eagerly received; he would now be obliged to return with the astonishing, not to say insulting, news that the money was considered unfit.

In the long discussion which followed, it gradually became clear to all of us that such a refusal could be valuable only as it might reveal to the man himself and to others, public opinion in regard to certain methods of money-making, but that from the very nature of the case our refusal of this money could not be made public because a representative of Hull-House had asked for it. However, the basic fact remained that we could not accept the money, and of this the trustee himself was fully convinced. This incident occurred during a period of much discussion concerning “tainted money” and is perhaps typical of the difficulty of dealing with it. It is impossible to know how far we may blame the individual for doing that

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

which all of his competitors and his associates consider legitimate; at the same time, social changes can only be inaugurated by those who feel the unrighteousness of contemporary conditions, and the expression of their scruples may be the one opportunity for pushing forward moral tests into that dubious area wherein wealth is accumulated.

In the course of time a new clubhouse was built by an old friend of Hull-House much interested in working girls, and this has been occupied for twelve years by the very successful cooperating Jane Club. The incident of the early refusal is associated in my mind with a long talk upon the subject of questionable money I held with the warden of Toynbee Hall, whom I visited at Bristol where he was then canon in the Cathedral. By way of illustration he showed me a beautiful little church which had been built by the last slave-trading merchant in Bristol, who had been much disapproved of by his fellow townsmen and had hoped by this transmutation of ill-gotten money into exquisite Gothic architecture to reconcile himself both to God and man. His impulse to build may have been born from his own scruples or from the quickened consciences of his neighbors who saw that the world-old iniquity of enslaving men must at length come to an end. The Abolitionists may have regarded this beautiful building as the fruit of a contrite heart, or they may have scorned it as an attempt to magnify the goodness of a slave trader and thus perplex the doubting citizens of Bristol in regard to the entire moral issue.

Canon Barnett did not pronounce judgment on the Bristol merchant. He was, however, quite clear upon the point that a higher moral standard for industrial life must be embodied in legislation as rapidly as possible, that it may bear equally upon all, and that an individual endeavoring to secure this legislation must forbear harsh judgment. This was doubtless a sound position, but during all the period of hot discussion concerning tainted money I never felt clear enough on the general principle involved, to accept the many invitations to write and speak upon the subject, although I received much instruction in the many letters of disapproval sent to me by radicals of various schools because I was a member of the university extension staff of the then new University of Chicago, the righteousness of whose foundation they challenged.

A little incident of this time illustrated to me the confusion in the minds of at least many older men between religious teaching and advancing morality. One morning I received a letter from the head of a Settlement in New York expressing his perplexity over the fact that his board of trustees had asked money from a man notorious for his unscrupulous business methods. My correspondent had placed his resignation in the hands of his board, that they might accept it at any time when they felt his utterances on the subject of tainted money were offensive, for he wished to be free to openly discuss a subject of such grave moral import. The very morning when my mind was full of the questions raised by this letter, I received a call from the daughter of the same business man whom my friend considered so unscrupulous. She was passing through Chicago and came to ask me to give her some arguments which she might later use with her father to confute the charge that Settlements were irreligious. She said, “You see, he has been asked to give money to our Settlement and would like to do it, if his conscience was only clear; he disapproves of Settlements because

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

they give no religious instruction; he has always been a very devout man."

I remember later discussing the incident with Washington Gladden who was able to parallel it from his own experience. Now that this discussion upon tainted money has subsided, it is easy to view it with a certain detachment impossible at the moment, and it is even difficult to understand why the feeling should have been so intense, although it doubtless registered genuine moral concern.

There was room for discouragement in the many unsuccessful experiments in cooperation which were carried on in Chicago during the early nineties; a carpenter shop on Van Buren Street near Halsted, a labor exchange started by the unemployed, not so paradoxical an arrangement as it seems, and a very ambitious plan for a country colony which was finally carried out at Ruskin, Tennessee. In spite of failures, cooperative schemes went on, some of the same men appearing in one after another with irrepressible optimism. I remember during a cooperative congress, which met at Hull-House in the World's Fair summer that Mr. Henry D. Lloyd, who collected records of cooperative experiments with the enthusiasm with which other men collect coins or pictures, put before the congress some of the remarkable successes in Ireland and North England, which he later embodied in his book on "Copartnership." One of the old-time cooperators denounced the modern method as "too much like cut-throat business" and declared himself in favor of "principles which may have failed over and over again, but are nevertheless as sound as the law of gravitation." Mr. Lloyd and I agreed that the fiery old man presented as fine a spectacle of devotion to a lost cause as either of us had ever seen, although we both possessed memories well stored with such romantic attachments.

And yet this dream that men shall cease to waste strength in competition and shall come to pool their powers of production is coming to pass all over the face of the earth. Five years later in the same Hull-House hall in which the cooperative congress was held, an Italian senator told a large audience of his fellow countrymen of the successful system of cooperative banks in north Italy and of their cooperative methods of selling produce to the value of millions of francs annually; still later Sir Horace Plunkett related the remarkable successes in cooperation in Ireland.

I have seldom been more infected by enthusiasm than I once was in Dulwich at a meeting of English cooperators where I was fairly overwhelmed by the fervor underlying the businesslike proceedings of the congress, and certainly when I served as a juror in the Paris Exposition of 1900, nothing in the entire display in the department of Social Economy was so imposing as the building housing the exhibit, which had been erected by cooperative trades-unions without the assistance of a single contractor.

And so one's faith is kept alive as one occasionally meets a realized ideal of better human relations. At least traces of successful cooperation are found even in individualistic America. I recall my enthusiasm on the day when I set forth to lecture at New Harmony, Indiana, for I had early been thrilled by the tale of Robert Owen, as every young person must be who is interested in social reform; I was delighted to find so much of his spirit still clinging to the little town which had long ago held one of his ardent experiments, although the poor old cooperators, who for many years claimed friendship at Hull-House because they heard that

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

we “had once tried a cooperative coal association,” might well have convinced me of the persistency of the cooperative ideal.

Many experiences in those early years, although vivid, seemed to contain no illumination; nevertheless they doubtless permanently affected our judgments concerning what is called crime and vice. I recall a series of striking episodes on the day when I took the wife and child, as well as the old godfather, of an Italian convict to visit him in the State Penitentiary. When we approached the prison, the sight of its heavy stone walls and armed sentries threw the godfather into a paroxysm of rage; he cast his hat upon the ground and stamped upon it, tore his hair, and loudly fulminated in weird Italian oaths, until one of the guards, seeing his strange actions, came to inquire if “the gentleman was having a fit.” When we finally saw the convict, his wife, to my extreme distress, talked of nothing but his striped clothing, until the poor man wept with chagrin. Upon our return journey to Chicago, the little son aged eight presented me with two oranges, so affectionately and gayly that I was filled with reflections upon the advantage of each generation making a fresh start, when the train boy, finding the stolen fruit in my lap, violently threatened to arrest the child. But stranger than any episode was the fact itself that neither the convict, his wife, nor his godfather for a moment considered him a criminal. He had merely gotten excited over cards and had stabbed his adversary with a knife. “Why should a man who took his luck badly be kept forever from the sun?” was their reiterated inquiry.

I recall our perplexity over the first girls who had “gone astray”—the poor, little, forlorn objects, fifteen and sixteen years old, with their moral natures apparently untouched and unawakened; one of them whom the police had found in a professional house and asked us to shelter for a few days until she could be used as a witness, was clutching a battered doll which she had kept with her during her six months of an “evil life.” Two of these prematurely aged children came to us one day directly from the maternity ward of the Cook County hospital, each with a baby in her arms, asking for protection, because they did not want to go home for fear of “being licked.” For them were no jewels nor idle living such as the storybooks portrayed. The first of the older women whom I knew came to Hull-House to ask that her young sister, who was about to arrive from Germany, might live near us; she wished to find her respectable work and wanted her to have the “decent pleasures” that Hull-House afforded. After the arrangement had been completed and I had in a measure recovered from my astonishment at the businesslike way in which she spoke of her own life, I ventured to ask her history. In a very few words she told me that she had come from Germany as a music teacher to an American family. At the end of two years, in order to avoid a scandal involving the head of the house, she had come to Chicago where her child was born, but when the remittances ceased after its death, finding herself without home and resources, she had gradually become involved in her present mode of life. By dint of utilizing her family solicitude, we finally induced her to move into decent lodgings before her sister arrived, and for a difficult year she supported herself by her exquisite embroidery. At the end of that time, she gave up the struggle, the more easily as her young sister, well established in the dressmaking department of a large shop, had begun to suspect her past life.

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

But discouraging as these and other similar efforts often were, nevertheless the difficulties were infinitely less in those days when we dealt with “fallen girls” than in the years following when the “white slave traffic” became gradually established and when agonized parents, as well as the victims themselves, were totally unable to account for the situation. In the light of recent disclosures, it seems as if we were unaccountably dull not to have seen what was happening, especially to the Jewish girls among whom “the home trade of the white slave traffic” was first carried on and who were thus made to break through countless generations of chastity. We early encountered the difficulties of that old problem of restoring the woman, or even the child, into the society she has once outraged. I well remember our perplexity when we attempted to help two girls straight from a Virginia tobacco factory, who had been decoyed into a disreputable house when innocently seeking a lodging on the late evening of their arrival. Although they had been rescued promptly, the stigma remained, and we found it impossible to permit them to join any of the social clubs connected with Hull-House, not so much because there was danger of contamination, as because the parents of the club members would have resented their presence most hotly. One of our trustees succeeded in persuading a repentant girl, fourteen years old, whom we tried to give a fresh start in another part of the city, to attend a Sunday School class of a large Chicago church. The trustee hoped that the contact with nice girls, as well as the moral training, would help the poor child on her hard road. But unfortunately tales of her shortcomings reached the superintendent who felt obliged, in order to protect the other girls, to forbid her the school. She came back to tell us about it, defiant as well as discouraged, and had it not been for the experience with our own clubs, we could easily have joined her indignation over a church which “acted as if its Sunday School was a show window for candy kids.”

In spite of poignant experiences or, perhaps, because of them, the memory of the first years at Hull-House is more or less blurred with fatigue, for we could of course become accustomed only gradually to the unending activity and to the confusion of a house constantly filling and refilling with groups of people. The little children who came to the kindergarten in the morning were followed by the afternoon clubs of older children, and those in turn made way for the educational and social organizations of adults, occupying every room in the house every evening. All one’s habits of living had to be readjusted, and any student’s tendency to sit with a book by the fire was of necessity definitely abandoned.

To thus renounce “the luxury of personal preference” was, however, a mere trifle compared to our perplexity over the problems of an industrial neighborhood situated in an unorganized city. Life pressed hard in many directions and yet it has always seemed to me rather interesting that when we were so distressed over its stern aspects and so impressed with the lack of municipal regulations, the first building erected for Hull-House should have been designed for an art gallery, for although it contained a reading-room on the first floor and a studio above, the largest space on the second floor was carefully designed and lighted for art exhibits, which had to do only with the cultivation of that which appealed to the powers of enjoyment as over against a wage-earning capacity. It was also significant that a Chicago business man, fond of pictures himself, responded to this first appeal of the new and

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

certainly puzzling undertaking called a Settlement.

The situation was somewhat complicated by the fact that at the time the building was erected in 1891, our free lease of the land upon which Hull-House stood expired in 1895. The donor of the building, however, overcame the difficulty by simply calling his gift a donation of a thousand dollars a year. This restriction of course necessitated the simplest sort of a structure, although I remember on the exciting day when the new building was promised to us, that I looked up my European notebook which contained the record of my experience in Ulm, hoping that I might find a description of what I then thought "a Cathedral of Humanity" ought to be. The description was "low and widespreading as to include all men in fellowship and mutual responsibility even as the older pinnacles and spires indicated communion with God." The description did not prove of value as an architectural motive I am afraid, although the architects, who have remained our friends through all the years, performed marvels with a combination of complicated demands and little money. At the moment when I read this girlish outbreak it gave me much comfort, for in those days in addition to our other perplexities Hull-House was often called irreligious.

These first buildings were very precious to us and it afforded us the greatest pride and pleasure as one building after another was added to the Hull-House group. They clothed in brick and mortar and made visible to the world that which we were trying to do; they stated to Chicago that education and recreation ought to be extended to the immigrants. The boys came in great numbers to our provisional gymnasium fitted up in a former saloon, and it seemed to us quite as natural that a Chicago man, fond of athletics, should erect a building for them, as that the boys should clamor for more room.

I do not wish to give a false impression, for we were often bitterly pressed for money and worried by the prospect of unpaid bills, and we gave up one golden scheme after another because we could not afford it; we cooked the meals and kept the books and washed the windows without a thought of hardship if we thereby saved money for the consummation of some ardently desired undertaking.

But in spite of our financial stringency, I always believed that money would be given when we had once clearly reduced the Settlement idea to the actual deed. This chapter, therefore, would be incomplete if it did not record a certain theory of nonresistance or rather universal good will which I had worked out in connection with the Settlement idea and which was later so often and so rudely disturbed. At that time I had come to believe that if the activities of Hull-House were ever misunderstood, it would be either because there was not time to fully explain or because our motives had become mixed, for I was convinced that disinterested action was like truth or beauty in its lucidity and power of appeal.

But more gratifying than any understanding or response from without could possibly be, was the consciousness that a growing group of residents was gathering at Hull-House, held together in that soundest of all social bonds, the companionship of mutual interests. These residents came primarily because they were genuinely interested in the social situation and believed that the Settlement was valuable as a method of approach to it. A house in which the men residents lived was opened across the street, and at the end of the first five years the

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.

Hull-House residential force numbered fifteen, a majority of whom still remain identified with the Settlement.

Even in those early years we caught glimpses of the fact that certain social sentiments, which are “the difficult and cumulating product of human growth” and which like all higher aims live only by communion and fellowship, are cultivated most easily in the fostering soil of a community life.

Occasionally I obscurely felt as if a demand were being made upon us for a ritual which should express and carry forward the hope of the social movement. I was constantly bewildered by the number of requests I received to officiate at funeral services and by the curious confessions made to me by total strangers. For a time I accepted the former and on one awful occasion furnished “the poetic part” of a wedding ceremony really performed by a justice of the peace, but I soon learned to steadfastly refuse such offices, although I saw that for many people without church affiliations the vague humanitarianism the Settlement represented was the nearest approach they could find to an expression of their religious sentiments.

These hints of what the Settlement might mean to at least a few spirits among its contemporaries became clear to me for the first time one summer’s day in rural England, when I discussed with John Trevor his attempts to found a labor church and his desire to turn the toil and danger attached to the life of the workingman into the means of a universal fellowship. That very year a papyrus leaf brought to the British Museum from Egypt, containing among other sayings of Jesus, “Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood and I am there,” was a powerful reminder to all England of the basic relations between daily labor and Christian teaching.

In those early years at Hull-House we were, however, in no danger of losing ourselves in mazes of speculation or mysticism, and there was shrewd penetration in a compliment I received from one of our Scotch neighbors. He came down Polk Street as I was standing near the foundations of our new gymnasium, and in response to his friendly remark that “Hull-House was spreading out,” I replied that “Perhaps we were spreading out too fast.” “Oh, no,” he rejoined, “you can afford to spread out wide, you are so well planted in the mud,” giving the compliment, however, a practical turn, as he glanced at the deep mire on the then unpaved street. It was this same condition of Polk Street which had caused the crown prince of Belgium when he was brought upon a visit to Hull-House to shake his head and meditatively remark, “There is not such a street—no, not one—in all the territory of Belgium.”

At the end of five years the residents of Hull-House published some first found facts and our reflections thereon in a book called “Hull-House Maps and Papers.” The maps were taken from information collected by one of the residents for the United States Bureau of Labor in the investigation into “the slums of great cities” and the papers treated of various neighborhood matters with candor and genuine concern if not with skill. The first edition became exhausted in two years, and apparently the Boston publisher did not consider the book worthy of a second.

Copyright © 2016. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc.. All rights reserved.

Addams, Jane. Twenty Years at Hull House, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uniroma3-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4747084.
Created from uniroma3-ebooks on 2021-06-07 20:02:37.