

JANE ADDAMS

THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH
AND THE CITY STREETS

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FOREWORD

Much of the material in the following pages has appeared in current publications. It is here presented in book form in the hope that it may prove of value to those groups of people who in many cities are making a gallant effort to minimize the dangers which surround young people and to provide them with opportunities for recreation.

CHAPTER I

YOUTH IN THE CITY

Nothing is more certain than that each generation longs for a reassurance as to the value and charm of life, and is secretly afraid lest it lose its sense of the youth of the earth. This is doubtless one reason why it so passionately cherishes its poets and artists who have been able to explore for themselves and to reveal to others the perpetual springs of life's self-renewal.

And yet the average man cannot obtain this desired reassurance through literature, nor yet through glimpses of earth and sky. It can come to him only through the chance embodiment of joy and youth which life itself may throw in his way. It is doubtless true that for the mass of men the message is never so unchallenged and so invincible as when embodied in youth itself. One generation after another has depended upon its young to equip it with gaiety and enthusiasm, to persuade it that living is a pleasure, until men everywhere have anxiously provided channels through which this wine of life might flow, and be preserved for their delight. The classical city promoted play with careful solicitude, building the theater and stadium as it built the market place and the temple. The Greeks held their games so integral a part of religion and patriotism that they came to expect from their poets the highest utterances at the very moments when the sense

of pleasure released the national life. In the medieval city the knights held their tourneys, the guilds their pageants, the people their dances, and the church made festival for its most cherished saints with gay street processions, and presented a drama in which no less a theme than the history of creation became a matter of thrilling interest. Only in the modern city have men concluded that it is no longer necessary for the municipality to provide for the insatiable desire for play. In so far as they have acted upon this conclusion, they have entered upon a most difficult and dangerous experiment; and this at the very moment when the city has become distinctly industrial, and daily labor is continually more monotonous and subdivided. We forget how new the modern city is, and how short the span of time in which we have assumed that we can eliminate public provision for recreation.

A further difficulty lies in the fact that this industrialism has gathered together multitudes of eager young creatures from all quarters of the earth as a labor supply for the countless factories and workshops, upon which the present industrial city is based. Never before in civilization have such numbers of young girls been suddenly released from the protection of the home and permitted to walk unattended upon city streets and to work under alien roofs; for the first time they are being prized more for their labor power than for their innocence, their tender beauty, their ephemeral gaiety. Society cares more for the products they manufacture than for their immemorial ability to reaffirm the

charm of existence. Never before have such numbers of young boys earned money independently of the family life, and felt themselves free to spend it as they choose in the midst of vice deliberately disguised as pleasure.

This stupid experiment of organizing work and failing to organize play has, of course, brought about a fine revenge. The love of pleasure will not be denied, and when it has turned into all sorts of malignant and vicious appetites, then we, the middle aged, grow quite distracted and resort to all sorts of restrictive measures. We even try to dam up the sweet fountain itself because we are affrighted by these neglected streams; but almost worse than the restrictive measures is our apparent belief that the city itself has no obligation in the matter, an assumption upon which the modern city turns over to commercialism practically all the provisions for public recreation.

Quite as one set of men has organized the young people into industrial enterprises in order to profit from their toil, so another set of men and also of women, I am sorry to say, have entered the neglected field of recreation and have organized enterprises which make profit out of this invincible love of pleasure.

In every city arise so-called "places"—"gin-palaces," they are called in fiction; in Chicago we euphemistically say merely "places,"—in which alcohol is dispensed, not to allay thirst, but, ostensibly to stimulate gaiety, it is sold really in order to empty pockets. Huge dance halls are opened to which hundreds of young people are attracted, many of whom stand

wistfully outside a roped circle, for it requires five cents to procure within it for five minutes the sense of allurements and intoxication which is sold in lieu of innocent pleasure. These coarse and illicit merrymakings remind one of the unrestrained jollities of Restoration London, and they are indeed their direct descendants, properly commercialized, still confusing joy with lust, and gaiety with debauchery. Since the soldiers of Cromwell shut up the people's playhouses and destroyed their pleasure fields, the Anglo-Saxon city has turned over the provision for public recreation to the most evil-minded and the most unscrupulous members of the community. We see thousands of girls walking up and down the streets on a pleasant evening with no chance to catch a sight of pleasure even through a lighted window, save as these lurid places provide it. Apparently the modern city sees in these girls only two possibilities, both of them commercial: first, a chance to utilize by day their new and tender labor power in its factories and shops, and then another chance in the evening to extract from them their petty wages by pandering to their love of pleasure.

As these overworked girls stream along the street, the rest of us see only the self-conscious walk, the giggling speech, the preposterous clothing. And yet through the huge hat, with its wilderness of bedraggled feathers, the girl announces to the world that she is here. She demands attention to the fact of her existence, she states that she is ready to live, to take her place in the world. The most precious moment in human development is

the young creature's assertion that he is unlike any other human being, and has an individual contribution to make to the world. The variation from the established type is at the root of all change, the only possible basis for progress, all that keeps life from growing unprofitably stale and repetitious.

Is it only the artists who really see these young creatures as they are—the artists who are themselves endowed with immortal youth? Is it our disregard of the artist's message which makes us so blind and so stupid, or are we so under the influence of our *Zeitgeist* that we can detect only commercial values in the young as well as in the old? It is as if our eyes were holden to the mystic beauty, the redemptive joy, the civic pride which these multitudes of young people might supply to our dingy towns.

The young creatures themselves piteously look all about them in order to find an adequate means of expression for their most precious message: One day a serious young man came to Hull-House with his pretty young sister who, he explained, wanted to go somewhere every single evening, "although she could only give the flimsy excuse that the flat was too little and too stuffy to stay in." In the difficult rôle of elder brother, he had done his best, stating that he had taken her "to all the missions in the neighborhood, that she had had a chance to listen to some awful good sermons and to some elegant hymns, but that some way she did not seem to care for the society of the best Christian people." The little sister reddened painfully under this cruel indictment and could offer no word of excuse, but a curious thing happened

to me. Perhaps it was the phrase "the best Christian people," perhaps it was the delicate color of her flushing cheeks and her swimming eyes, but certain it is, that instantly and vividly there appeared to my mind the delicately tinted piece of wall in a Roman catacomb where the early Christians, through a dozen devices of spring flowers, skipping lambs and a shepherd tenderly guiding the young, had indelibly written down that the Christian message is one of inexpressible joy. Who is responsible for forgetting this message delivered by the "best Christian people" two thousand years ago? Who is to blame that the lambs, the little ewe lambs, have been so caught upon the brambles?

But quite as the modern city wastes this most valuable moment in the life of the girl, and drives into all sorts of absurd and obscure expressions her love and yearning towards the world in which she forecasts her destiny, so it often drives the boy into gambling and drinking in order to find his adventure.

Of Lincoln's enlistment of two and a half million soldiers, a very large number were under twenty-one, some of them under eighteen, and still others were mere children under fifteen. Even in those stirring times when patriotism and high resolve were at the flood, no one responded as did "the boys," and the great soul who yearned over them, who refused to shoot the sentinels who slept the sleep of childhood, knew, as no one else knew, the precious glowing stuff of which his army was made. But what of the millions of boys who are now searching for adventurous action, longing to fulfil the same high purpose?

One of the most pathetic sights in the public dance halls of Chicago is the number of young men, obviously honest young fellows from the country, who stand about vainly hoping to make the acquaintance of some "nice girl." They look eagerly up and down the rows of girls, many of whom are drawn to the hall by the same keen desire for pleasure and social intercourse which the lonely young men themselves feel.

One Sunday night at twelve o'clock I had occasion to go into a large public dance hall. As I was standing by the rail looking for the girl I had come to find, a young man approached me and quite simply asked me to introduce him to some "nice girl," saying that he did not know any one there. On my replying that a public dance hall was not the best place in which to look for a nice girl, he said: "But I don't know any other place where there is a chance to meet any kind of a girl. I'm awfully lonesome since I came to Chicago." And then he added rather defiantly: "Some nice girls do come here! It's one of the best halls in town." He was voicing the "bitter loneliness" that many city men remember to have experienced during the first years after they had "come up to town." Occasionally the right sort of man and girl meet each other in these dance halls and the romance with such a tawdry beginning ends happily and respectably. But, unfortunately, mingled with the respectable young men seeking to form the acquaintance of young women through the only channel which is available to them, are many young fellows of evil purpose, and among the girls who have left their lonely

boarding houses or rigid homes for a "little fling" are likewise women who openly desire to make money from the young men whom they meet, and back of it all is the desire to profit by the sale of intoxicating and "doctored" drinks.

Perhaps never before have the pleasures of the young and mature become so definitely separated as in the modern city. The public dance halls filled with frivolous and irresponsible young people in a feverish search for pleasure, are but a sorry substitute for the old dances on the village green in which all of the older people of the village participated. Chaperonage was not then a social duty but natural and inevitable, and the whole courtship period was guarded by the conventions and restraint which were taken as a matter of course and had developed through years of publicity and simple propriety.

The only marvel is that the stupid attempt to put the fine old wine of traditional country life into the new bottles of the modern town does not lead to disaster oftener than it does, and that the wine so long remains pure and sparkling.

We cannot afford to be ungenerous to the city in which we live without suffering the penalty which lack of fair interpretation always entails. Let us know the modern city in its weakness and wickedness, and then seek to rectify and purify it until it shall be free at least from the grosser temptations which now beset the young people who are living in its tenement houses and working in its factories. The mass of these young people are possessed of good intentions and they are equipped with a certain

understanding of city life. This itself could be made a most valuable social instrument toward securing innocent recreation and better social organization. They are already serving the city in so far as it is honeycombed with mutual benefit societies, with "pleasure clubs," with organizations connected with churches and factories which are filling a genuine social need. And yet the whole apparatus for supplying pleasure is wretchedly inadequate and full of danger to whomsoever may approach it. Who is responsible for its inadequacy and dangers? We certainly cannot expect the fathers and mothers who have come to the city from farms or who have emigrated from other lands to appreciate or rectify these dangers. We cannot expect the young people themselves to cling to conventions which are totally unsuited to modern city conditions, nor yet to be equal to the task of forming new conventions through which this more agglomerate social life may express itself. Above all we cannot hope that they will understand the emotional force which seizes them and which, when it does not find the traditional line of domesticity, serves as a cancer in the very tissues of society and as a disrupter of the securest social bonds. No attempt is made to treat the manifestations of this fundamental instinct with dignity or to give it possible social utility. The spontaneous joy, the clamor for pleasure, the desire of the young people to appear finer and better and altogether more lovely than they really are, the idealization not only of each other but of the whole earth which they regard but as a theater for their noble exploits, the unworldly

ambitions, the romantic hopes, the make-believe world in which they live, if properly utilized, what might they not do to make our sordid cities more beautiful, more companionable? And yet at the present moment every city is full of young people who are utterly bewildered and uninstructed in regard to the basic experience which must inevitably come to them, and which has varied, remote, and indirect expressions.

Even those who may not agree with the authorities who claim that it is this fundamental sex susceptibility which suffuses the world with its deepest meaning and beauty, and furnishes the momentum towards all art, will perhaps permit me to quote the classical expression of this view as set forth in that ancient and wonderful conversation between Socrates and the wise woman Diotima. Socrates asks: "What are they doing who show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? And what is the object they have in view? Answer me." Diotima replies: "I will teach you. The object which they have in view is birth in beauty, whether of body or soul.... For love, Socrates, is not as you imagine the love of the beautiful only ... but the love of birth in beauty, because to the mortal creature generation is a sort of eternity and immortality."

To emphasize the eternal aspects of love is not of course an easy undertaking, even if we follow the clue afforded by the heart of every generous lover. His experience at least in certain moments tends to pull him on and out from the passion for one to an enthusiasm for that highest beauty and excellence of

which the most perfect form is but an inadequate expression. Even the most loutish tenement-house youth vaguely feels this, and at least at rare intervals reveals it in his talk to his "girl." His memory unexpectedly brings hidden treasures to the surface of consciousness and he recalls the more delicate and tender experiences of his childhood and earlier youth. "I remember the time when my little sister died, that I rode out to the cemetery feeling that everybody in Chicago had moved away from the town to make room for that kid's funeral, everything was so darned lonesome and yet it was kind of peaceful too." Or, "I never had a chance to go into the country when I was a kid, but I remember one day when I had to deliver a package way out on the West Side, that I saw a flock of sheep in Douglas Park. I had never thought that a sheep could be anywhere but in a picture, and when I saw those big white spots on the green grass beginning to move and to turn into sheep, I felt exactly as if Saint Cecilia had come out of her frame over the organ and was walking in the park." Such moments come into the life of the most prosaic youth living in the most crowded quarters of the cities. What do we do to encourage and to solidify those moments, to make them come true in our dingy towns, to give them expression in forms of art?

We not only fail in this undertaking but even debase existing forms of art. We are informed by high authority that there is nothing in the environment to which youth so keenly responds as to music, and yet the streets, the vaudeville shows, the five-cent theaters are full of the most blatant and vulgar songs. The trivial

and obscene words, the meaningless and flippant airs run through the heads of hundreds of young people for hours at a time while they are engaged in monotonous factory work. We totally ignore that ancient connection between music and morals which was so long insisted upon by philosophers as well as poets. The street music has quite broken away from all control, both of the educator and the patriot, and we have grown singularly careless in regard to its influence upon young people. Although we legislate against it in saloons because of its dangerous influence there, we constantly permit music on the street to incite that which should be controlled, to degrade that which should be exalted, to make sensuous that which might be lifted into the realm of the higher imagination.

Our attitude towards music is typical of our carelessness towards all those things which make for common joy and for the restraints of higher civilization on the streets. It is as if our cities had not yet developed a sense of responsibility in regard to the life of the streets, and continually forget that recreation is stronger than vice, and that recreation alone can stifle the lust for vice.

Perhaps we need to take a page from the philosophy of the Greeks to whom the world of fact was also the world of the ideal, and to whom the realization of what ought to be, involved not the destruction of what was, but merely its perfecting upon its own lines. To the Greeks virtue was not a hard conformity to a law felt as alien to the natural character, but a free expression of the inner life. To treat thus the fundamental susceptibility of sex

which now so bewilders the street life and drives young people themselves into all sorts of difficulties, would mean to loosen it from the things of sense and to link it to the affairs of the imagination. It would mean to fit to this gross and heavy stuff the wings of the mind, to scatter from it "the clinging mud of banality and vulgarity," and to speed it on through our city streets amid spontaneous laughter, snatches of lyric song, the recovered forms of old dances, and the traditional rondels of merry games. It would thus bring charm and beauty to the prosaic city and connect it subtly with the arts of the past as well as with the vigor and renewed life of the future.

CHAPTER II

THE WRECKED FOUNDATIONS OF DOMESTICITY

"Sense with keenest edge unused
Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire:
Lovely feet as yet unbruised
On the ways of dark desire!"

These words written by a poet to his young son express the longing which has at times seized all of us, to guard youth from the mass of difficulties which may be traced to the obscure manifestation of that fundamental susceptibility of which we are all slow to speak and concerning which we evade public responsibility, although it brings its scores of victims into the police courts every morning.

At the very outset we must bear in mind that the senses of youth are singularly acute, and ready to respond to every vivid appeal. We know that nature herself has sharpened the senses for her own purposes, and is deliberately establishing a connection between them and the newly awakened susceptibility of sex; for it is only through the outward senses that the selection of an individual mate is made and the instinct utilized for nature's

purposes. It would seem, however, that nature was determined that the force and constancy of the instinct must make up for its lack of precision, and that she was totally unconcerned that this instinct ruthlessly seized the youth at the moment when he was least prepared to cope with it; not only because his powers of self-control and discrimination are unequal to the task, but because his senses are helplessly wide open to the world. These early manifestations of the sex susceptibility are for the most part vague and formless, and are absolutely without definition to the youth himself. Sometimes months and years elapse before the individual mate is selected and determined upon, and during the time when the differentiation is not complete—and it often is not—there is of necessity a great deal of groping and waste.

This period of groping is complicated by the fact that the youth's power for appreciating is far ahead of his ability for expression. "The inner traffic fairly obstructs the outer current," and it is nothing short of cruelty to over-stimulate his senses as does the modern city. This period is difficult everywhere, but it seems at times as if a great city almost deliberately increased its perils. The newly awakened senses are appealed to by all that is gaudy and sensual, by the flippant street music, the highly colored theater posters, the trashy love stories, the feathered hats, the cheap heroics of the revolvers displayed in the pawn-shop windows. This fundamental susceptibility is thus evoked without a corresponding stir of the higher imagination, and the result is as dangerous as possible. We are told upon good authority that

"If the imagination is retarded, while the senses remain awake, we have a state of esthetic insensibility,"—in other words, the senses become sodden and cannot be lifted from the ground. It is this state of "esthetic insensibility" into which we allow the youth to fall which is so distressing and so unjustifiable. Sex impulse then becomes merely a dumb and powerful instinct without in the least awakening the imagination or the heart, nor does it overflow into neighboring fields of consciousness. Every city contains hundreds of degenerates who have been over-mastered and borne down by it; they fill the casual lodging houses and the infirmaries. In many instances it has pushed men of ability and promise to the bottom of the social scale. Warner, in his *American Charities*, designates it as one of the steady forces making for failure and poverty, and contends that "the inherent uncleanness of their minds prevents many men from rising above the rank of day laborers and finally incapacitates them even for that position." He also suggests that the modern man has a stronger imagination than the man of a few hundred years ago and that sensuality destroys him the more rapidly.

It is difficult to state how much evil and distress might be averted if the imagination were utilized in its higher capacities through the historic paths. An English moralist has lately asserted that "much of the evil of the time may be traced to outraged imagination. It is the strongest quality of the brain and it is starved. Children, from their earliest years, are hedged in with facts; they are not trained to use their minds on the unseen."

In failing to diffuse and utilize this fundamental instinct of sex through the imagination, we not only inadvertently foster vice and enervation, but we throw away one of the most precious implements for ministering to life's highest needs. There is no doubt that this ill adjusted function consumes quite unnecessarily vast stores of vital energy, even when we contemplate it in its immature manifestations which are infinitely more wholesome than the dumb swamping process. Every high school boy and girl knows the difference between the concentration and the diffusion of this impulse, although they would be hopelessly bewildered by the use of the terms. They will declare one of their companions to be "in love" if his fancy is occupied by the image of a single person about whom all the newly found values gather, and without whom his solitude is an eternal melancholy. But if the stimulus does not appear as a definite image, and the values evoked are dispensed over the world, the young person suddenly seems to have discovered a beauty and significance in many things—he responds to poetry, he becomes a lover of nature, he is filled with religious devotion or with philanthropic zeal. Experience, with young people, easily illustrates the possibility and value of diffusion.

It is neither a short nor an easy undertaking to substitute the love of beauty for mere desire, to place the mind above the senses; but is not this the sum of the immemorial obligation which rests upon the adults of each generation if they would nurture and restrain the youth, and has not the whole history

of civilization been but one long effort to substitute psychic impulsion for the driving force of blind appetite?

Society has recognized the "imitative play" impulse of children and provides them with tiny bricks with which to "build a house," and dolls upon which they may lavish their tenderness. We exalt the love of the mother and the stability of the home, but in regard to those difficult years between childhood and maturity we beg the question and unless we repress, we do nothing. We are so timid and inconsistent that although we declare the home to be the foundation of society, we do nothing to direct the force upon which the continuity of the home depends. And yet to one who has lived for years in a crowded quarter where men, women and children constantly jostle each other and press upon every inch of space in shop, tenement and street, nothing is more impressive than the strength, the continuity, the varied and powerful manifestations, of family affection. It goes without saying that every tenement house contains women who for years spend their hurried days in preparing food and clothing and pass their sleepless nights in tending and nursing their exigent children, with never one thought for their own comfort or pleasure or development save as these may be connected with the future of their families. We all know as a matter of course that every shop is crowded with workingmen who year after year spend all of their wages upon the nurture and education of their children, reserving for themselves but the shabbiest clothing and a crowded place at the family table.

"Bad weather for you to be out in," you remark on a February evening, as you meet rheumatic Mr. S. hobbling home through the freezing sleet without an overcoat. "Yes, it is bad," he assents: "but I've walked to work all this last year. We've sent the oldest boy back to high school, you know," and he moves on with no thought that he is doing other than fulfilling the ordinary lot of the ordinary man.

These are the familiar and the constant manifestations of family affection which are so intimate a part of life that we scarcely observe them.

In addition to these we find peculiar manifestations of family devotion exemplifying that touching affection which rises to unusual sacrifice because it is close to pity and feebleness. "My cousin and his family had to go back to Italy. He got to Ellis Island with his wife and five children, but they wouldn't let in the feeble-minded boy, so of course they all went back with him. My cousin was fearful disappointed."

Or, "These are the five children of my brother. He and his wife, my father and mother, were all done for in the bad time at Kishinef. It's up to me all right to take care of the kids, and I'd no more go back on them than I would on my own." Or, again: "Yes, I have seven children of my own. My husband died when Tim was born. The other three children belong to my sister, who died the year after my husband. I get on pretty well. I scrub in a factory every night from six to twelve, and I go out washing four days a week. So far the children have all gone through the

eighth grade before they quit school," she concludes, beaming with pride and joy.

That wonderful devotion to the child seems at times, in the midst of our stupid social and industrial arrangements, all that keeps society human, the touch of nature which unites it, as it was that same devotion which first lifted it out of the swamp of bestiality. The devotion to the child is "the inevitable conclusion of the two premises of the practical syllogism, the devotion of man to woman." It is, of course, this tremendous force which makes possible the family, that bond which holds society together and blends the experience of generations into a continuous story. The family has been called "the fountain of morality," "the source of law," "the necessary prelude to the state" itself; but while it is continuous historically, this dual bond must be made anew a myriad times in each generation, and the forces upon which its formation depend must be powerful and unerring. It would be too great a risk to leave it to a force whose manifestations are intermittent and uncertain. The desired result is too grave and fundamental.

One Sunday evening an excited young man came to see me, saying that he must have advice; some one must tell him at once what to do, as his wife was in the state's prison serving a sentence for a crime which he himself had committed. He had seen her the day before, and though she had been there only a month he was convinced that she was developing consumption. She was "only seventeen, and couldn't stand the hard work and the 'low

down' women" whom she had for companions. My remark that a girl of seventeen was too young to be in the state penitentiary brought out the whole wretched story.

He had been unsteady for many years and the despair of his thoroughly respectable family who had sent him West the year before. In Arkansas he had fallen in love with a girl of sixteen and married her. His mother was far from pleased, but had finally sent him money to bring his bride to Chicago, in the hope that he might settle there. *En route* they stopped at a small town for the naïve reason that he wanted to have an aching tooth pulled. But the tooth gave him an excellent opportunity to have a drink, and before he reached the office of the country practitioner he was intoxicated. As they passed through the vestibule he stole an overcoat hanging there, although the little wife piteously begged him to let it alone. Out of sheer bravado he carried it across his arm as they walked down the street, and was, of course, immediately arrested "with the goods upon him." In sheer terror of being separated from her husband, the wife insisted that she had been an accomplice, and together they were put into the county jail awaiting the action of the Grand Jury. At the end of the sixth week, on one of the rare occasions when they were permitted to talk to each other through the grating which separated the men's visiting quarters from the women's, the young wife told her husband that she made up her mind to swear that she had stolen the overcoat. What could she do if he were sent to prison and she were left free? She was afraid to go

to his people and could not possibly go back to hers. In spite of his protest, that very night she sent for the state's attorney and made a full confession, giving her age as eighteen in the hope of making her testimony more valuable. From that time on they stuck to the lie through the indictment, the trial and her conviction. Apparently it had seemed to him only a well-arranged plot until he had visited the penitentiary the day before, and had really seen her piteous plight. Remorse had seized him at last, and he was ready to make every restitution. She, however, had no notion of giving up—on the contrary, as she realized more clearly what prison life meant, she was daily more determined to spare him the experience. Her letters, written in the unformed hand of a child—for her husband had himself taught her to read and write—were filled with a riot of self-abnegation, the martyr's joy as he feels the iron enter the flesh. Thus had an illiterate, neglected girl through sheer devotion to a worthless sort of young fellow inclined to drink, entered into that noble company of martyrs.

When girls "go wrong" what happens? How has this tremendous force, valuable and necessary for the foundation of the family, become misdirected? When its manifestations follow the legitimate channels of wedded life we call them praiseworthy; but there are other manifestations quite outside the legal and moral channels which yet compel our admiration.

A young woman of my acquaintance was married to a professional criminal named Joe. Three months after the wedding he was arrested and "sent up" for two years. Molly

had always been accustomed to many lovers, but she remained faithful to her absent husband for a year. At the end of that time she obtained a divorce which the state law makes easy for the wife of a convict, and married a man who was "rich and respectable"—in fact, he owned the small manufacturing establishment in which her mother did the scrubbing. He moved his bride to another part of town six miles away, provided her with a "steam-heated flat," furniture upholstered in "cut velvet," and many other luxuries of which Molly heretofore had only dreamed. One day as she was wheeling a handsome baby carriage up and down the prosperous street, her brother, who was "Joe's pal," came to tell her that Joe was "out," had come to the old tenement and was "mighty sore" because "she had gone back on him." Without a moment's hesitation Molly turned the baby carriage in the direction of her old home and never stopped wheeling it until she had compassed the entire six miles. She and Joe rented the old room and went to housekeeping. The rich and respectable husband made every effort to persuade her to come back, and then another series of efforts to recover his child, before he set her free through a court proceeding. Joe, however, steadfastly refused to marry her, still "sore" because she had not "stood by." As he worked only intermittently, and was too closely supervised by the police to do much at his old occupation, Molly was obliged to support the humble ménage by scrubbing in a neighboring lodging house and by washing "the odd shirts" of the lodgers. For five years, during which time two children

were born, when she was constantly subjected to the taunts of her neighbors, and when all the charitable agencies refused to give help to such an irregular household, Molly happily went on her course with no shade of regret or sorrow. "I'm all right as long as Joe keeps out of the jug," was her slogan of happiness, low in tone, perhaps, but genuine and "game." Her surroundings were as sordid as possible, consisting of a constantly changing series of cheap "furnished rooms" in which the battered baby carriage was the sole witness of better days. But Molly's heart was full of courage and happiness, and she was never desolate until her criminal lover was "sent up" again, this time on a really serious charge.

These irregular manifestations form a link between that world in which each one struggles to "live respectable," and that nether world in which are also found cases of devotion and of enduring affection arising out of the midst of the folly and the shame. The girl there who through all tribulation supports her recreant "lover," or the girl who overcomes, her drink and opium habits, who renounces luxuries and goes back to uninteresting daily toil for the sake of the good opinion of a man who wishes her to "appear decent," although he never means to marry her, these are also impressive.

One of our earliest experiences at Hull-House had to do with a lover of this type and the charming young girl who had become fatally attached to him. I can see her now running for protection up the broad steps of the columned piazza then surrounding

Hull-House. Her slender figure was trembling with fright, her tear-covered face swollen and bloodstained from the blows he had dealt her. "He is apt to abuse me when he is drunk," was the only explanation, and that given by way of apology, which could be extracted from her. When we discovered that there had been no marriage ceremony, that there were no living children, that she had twice narrowly escaped losing her life, it seemed a simple matter to insist that the relation should be broken off. She apathetically remained at Hull-House for a few weeks, but when her strength had somewhat returned, when her lover began to recover from his prolonged debauch of whiskey and opium, she insisted upon going home every day to prepare his meals and to see that the little tenement was clean and comfortable because "Pierre is always so sick and weak after one of those long ones." This of course meant that she was drifting back to him, and when she was at last restrained by that moral compulsion, by that overwhelming of another's will which is always so ruthlessly exerted by those who are conscious that virtue is struggling with vice, her mind gave way and she became utterly distraught.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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