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# The College Settlement

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THE COLLEGE SETTLEMENT.

ANNA B. SHERMAN.

CLASS OF 1901.

## THE COLLEGE SETTLEMENT.

Formerly it was said that "one-half of the world does not know how the other half lives," a statement which was then true. The rich did not trouble themselves about the poor if only they themselves were comfortable; while the poor struggled as best they could, until their condition became unbearable. The upper classes soon knew that something was the matter, and began inquiring what the strikes and other social disturbances meant, and what should be done about them. Since then information on the subject has been rapidly accumulating, but the problem does not seem to be wholly solved yet. It is what the College Settlement is trying to accomplish: striving, by cooperation with other institutions, and also by its own unaided efforts, to help the poor to help themselves in every way possible, for it early learned the lesson that the self-respecting poor will not be patronized.

The Settlement movement took formal rise in England, and the altruistic spirit to which it was due was aroused in large measure by the inspiring teaching of John Ruskin, who stirred every department of social activity with his message.

In 1867, Edward Denison, an Oxford student of wealth and position, confided to the Vicar of St. Philip's in Stepney, London,

his desire to live and work in that parish. He made his home among the people, and earnestly tried to understand and assist them. He died in two years, but during that time prepared the way for the College Settlement. In 1875, Arnold Toynbee, an Oxford tutor, went to reside in Whitechapel, and work under the Vicar of St. Jude's. His life was also brief; but while he lived, he was a brilliant leader of thought among the workingmen. He died in 1883; an important date since from his ashes the Settlement movement sprang into life. His friends, wishing to erect a suitable memorial to him, thought of endowing a lectureship for Extension teaching, when several events turned their thoughts in a different direction. One was the publication at this time of "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London," a revelation of misery which stirred all England. Another event was the visit of Rev. S. A. Barnett, a clergyman resident in Whitechapel, who had worked with Toynbee and who knew his dreams and hopes. Barnett told them how useless it would be to secure a room in East London where University Extension lectures might be given, as they were thinking of doing; and said that "every message to the poor would be vain, if it did not come expressed in the life of brother man." So the University Settlement Association was formed to provide necessary funds for the work, and to increase interest in other ways. The first home of the movement was Toynbee Hall, opened in 1885,



followed by Oxford House.

Once started, the movement spread rapidly; and in three years the College Settlement in New York, the Rivington Street House, and Hull House in Chicago were opened in the same month. The new method was everywhere recognized as promising much for the future. There are now some fifty Settlements in Great Britain, and over eighty in the United States. Of these eighty, many which claim the name are only missions.

The College Settlement Association started among the students of Smith College in 1887. It aims to found and maintain Settlements, and to control their general policy. In reality its membership consists of all persons subscribing five dollars annually to it. Colleges, or a large body of non-collegiate members, who contribute not less than one hundred dollars may form a chapter of the Association, and have two representatives on the Electoral Board; which meets semi-annually to control the general business of the corporation. Each Settlement is more immediately controlled by a local committee, appointed with the approval of the Electoral Board. The Association has chapters at almost all the principal women's colleges. When the members leave their Alma Mater they naturally scatter all over the country, a fact which adds greater strength and soundness to the work, than if each separate branch organization had only the support of its immediate vicinity.

The question is often raised, whether the Settlement is designed to meet the situation in some or all grades of working class life. It may include all grades, but usually limits itself to special ones. Its greatest opportunity lies in the extension of educational facilities. Instruction is made as pleasant as possible. Many Settlements have means for teaching boys some trade: such as printing, carpentering, cabinet-making etc. The girls also may learn the millinery business, dress-making or cooking: while history, English, arithmetic, writing are taught in most of the Settlements, and sometimes even elocution, German, singing, stenography and typewriting, music, drawing, and physical culture. In addition to this direct teaching, many of the Settlements have a library and reading-rooms, which are open to all. Frequently bright and instructive lectures are given on some subject attractive to the people whom the workers are trying to reach.

Some have clubs, both of boys and of girls, connected with them, the members of which meet at appointed times for work, study or recreation. It is often said that the Settlements uphold the saloons. This is not true, and there is no reason why they should be so unjustly accused. The Settlement workers, being on the spot and knowing the wishes and needs of the people, realize that the only way to eliminate the saloon is to find a satisfactory substitute. In England this substitute is the coffee-house; in



America, it is the club. Night is the worst time for the boy, when he is out of school or has finished his work; then the saloon makes its money, and if anything will save him from it, the club will.

The Settlement tries in every way to better the social condition of the people. It is the connecting link between the two classes, the rich and poor; it believes that they are reciprocally dependent. The children are educated in our cities because education is considered a national necessity, but no attempt is made to unite them afterward. It is said that "Americans are kept from that full sympathy with the poor, not only by the barrier of different social position, but by the more impassable barrier of alien race," which we must admit is true, for only a very small percentage of our poor are native. The Trade Unions are of estimable economic value, in that they insist upon fair treatment for the wage earner. The Settlement seeks to foster every kind of organization among workmen that will strengthen their economic position; and attempts to broaden the home and neighborhood life by interesting it in the wider life of such organizations.

The ideal for which the Settlement stands is that it may be a social clearing-house, where all may meet as brothers and equals. In short it endeavors to establish a home among other homes; and tries, through various forms of entertainment, to bring the people

of the different classes together in social intercourse. We find the workmen organized into armies of producers, but they are not organized socially. The Settlement thinks that social inequalities can be greatly lessened, but believes that we must first remember that all which is noble in life is common to men as men, and that differences in position of the people brought together must be ignored before any marked success is attained.

One line of work in which the College Settlement takes an important part, is tenement-house reform. The condition of such houses it is hard for us to realize, who live in the country and have plenty of light and air. Here, where all are neighbors and are acquainted with one another one seldom finds a poor family or person who is not cared for. But in the city, where there are hundreds of families huddled together in tenements, a whole family often living in a single room, earning just barely enough to live upon, and working from early in the morning until late at night to do it, these people do not have time to neighbor, they must look after themselves. Their environment is very bad, not affording them sufficient light or air, and this induces a lower condition of body and mind. Many times over half of the rooms in the tenement are totally dark, or only receive light from an adjoining room, and the hallways are dark and ill cared for;



while from the windows there is no grass or pleasing scene for the tired eye to rest upon, but always high walls, dirt, and the hurrying people in the street. Is it any wonder that the children die? Is it strange that many of the men are confirmed drunkards? It is said that man is by nature social, and naturally he goes where he can be diverted- to the saloon. This presents a striking contrast to his home. Here it is clean, light, and attractive as possible: with plenty of talk and amusement. Who can blame him? Who would not be justified in doing the same thing himself, if his home were small, dark, filthy, and always crowded, as these rooms mostly are? Thus we have a circle, the home sends the man to drink, and the drink takes his money so that he can have no better home. Then, too, his rent is often all, and sometimes more than he can possibly pay. If a man receives two dollars a day, which here we deem high wages, he usually takes out three-fourths of his income for rent and supplies, thus leaving only one-fourth to clothe his family, and furnish his home. It must be remembered, too, that he is not always sure of work, so, even though the mother becomes a wage earner, which it is impossible for her to do and properly care for her home and family, it is very hard to get along, and the children are early pressed into service. Yet the fact that they are put to work so young is not of itself so deplorable as

is the nature of the work which they often have to do. If it were only something which increased their stock of knowledge, it would be worth while; but when, according to Mr. Riis, they paste labels upon whiskey bottles, it begins to look as if the necessity of reform was urgent.

This is part of the work which the Settlement has taken upon itself: co-operating with the law in sending the children to school: condemning old houses unfit for use, helping to build good ones which shall have plenty of light and air, a little grass and a few flowers about them, and so making the home more attractive: and lowering the rents, thus giving the tenants a chance to rise in the world.

The Settlement aids also in obtaining play-grounds for the children, often on the site of some condemned tenement-house; and public parks, which are much needed, though more numerous than formerly. Then, also, in the case of school buildings, of which the supply is not equal to the demand, the Settlements have often given valuable advice and substantial aid: improving them both in their conveniences and appearance, for these children as well as others, love pretty things and perhaps prize them more, because they do not have so many of them.

One treat which the children who have it thoroughly enjoy,



is their two-weeks visit to the country, which the Settlements are enabled, by their charity fund, to give many. The little people delight in these outings and remember them long after, and even their excursions of a day into the country are red-letter events.

Though our attention is drawn by what the Settlement has done and is doing, it is the future which is really of most interest to us. What can we expect from the forces set free by this movement? May we not reasonably hope to see the end of the "slums"?

The Settlements have shown that social co-operation can modify both human disposition and outward environment; and when once started have grown rapidly, as have many important material agencies during the last half of the past century. Of these may be noted: the abnormal increase of commerce; the marvelous development of practical science, with the revolution in industry which it has effected; the application of steam and electricity on an immense scale to machinery; the enormous extension of railways, telegraphs, and other means of rapid communication; yet they are only a promise of the gifts of the near future.

The great army of industrial workers is almost entirely the



growth of the past hundred years. Yet we are told that the immense progress of the century, has brought no corresponding gain to the masses: that to the wage-earning class the century has been, in many respects, a period of progressive degeneration; that the laborer has ceased to be a man as nature made him, and is merely a part of a great machine; that even the skilled laborer holds desperately to his small niche. "What does it avail if the waste places of the earth have been turned into highways of commerce, if the many still work and want, and only the few have leisure to grow rich?" What does it profit the worker that knowledge grows, if all the appliances of science are not to lighten his labor? Science may be content to sit still and wait for something to put an end to the prevailing misery; but it is not to be expected that those who have to suffer, with the power they at present possess, will be content to be equally patient, should they discover themselves to be equally hopeless. The worker begins to see that what he has lost as an individual he has gained as a member of a class, and that organization is power, as he can meet his master on more equal terms.

Perfecting means of communication, consolidation of society, influence of the press, and public opinion, are all factors and forces as much on one side as on the other, and we are beginning

to see the result. Men are coming to recognize the needs and power of the industrial classes, and to feel the necessity of satisfying the one and applying well the other. With this feeling the Settlements are growing, and the Settlement workers and supporters hope that some time in the near future, these institutions will become so frequent as to cease to be Settlements in any novel sense. When this happens, it is felt that the rich and poor will so know each other that the government will be qualified to do the greatest good in the best way, and people of different pursuits and with different incomes may, through like manners and tastes, form the friendships which will hold them together in good times as well as bad.