THE AMERICAN GIRL AND HER COMMUNITY

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By MARGARET SLATTERY

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"The Girl and Her Religion,"
"Just Over the Hill," etc.

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The American Girl

CONTENTS

I

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I. THE AMERICAN GIRL

THE American Girl? She is discussed so often in the current literature of both her own and other lands that one finds it easy to persuade himself that she is a distinct and definite type which may be easily photographed, painted, catalogued and filed away for reference. The challenge which she offers to the thinking people of her day lies, however, in the fact that she is not a distinct type. It is true that the American girl may have certain special characteristics that very definitely set her apart from the girl of Germany, England, France, Italy, China or Japan. It is true that one may say with assurance, even after very brief observation, "made in America." But a mistake has been made by those who have tabulated the special specimen of girlhood under their personal observation as *the* American Girl. They have planned her education and training, and marked

out the place she is to occupy when she finds her niche in the everyday life of the world, as if, having met her special needs and solved her problems, they have done their full duty by all girlhood that chances to find itself a part of American life. The fact is that *the American Girl is a composite of all the daughters of all the people.* To face it frankly is to make one's soul tingle at the enormity of the demand made upon any nation confronted with such a girl problem—for at the root of all problems lies clear and distinct the girl problem. She is potential womanhood. She makes the present and determines the future. As she lives, plays, works, dreams, thinks and acts, so does the race. Man cannot rise above her standards nor go far beyond her ethics, nor can he ever fully escape from the religion she teaches. When she awakens, nations stir in their sleep and ask in troubled tones, "What is the matter?" When she is quiet and fully content, they sleep on. The American girl present and future is the American problem, and it is the part of wisdom for all who bear the welfare of the nation on their hearts to add their efforts to those who are giving time and thought to her. With profit to ourselves, and, if we are wise, with greater profit to her, we may with

sympathy, longing and eagerness ask her if she will let us *know* her; not *study* her as if she were a problem and a specimen, but get acquainted with her, that we may see what she has to give and what we must give in return.

On that blustering March night, the east wind blowing in over Boston Harbor made the North Pole seem just around the corner, and I was astonished by the number of girls from sixteen to twenty-five who had braved it to come out to their club for a lecture. I had been told that they were a club of "typical American working girls in the trades not requiring skilled labor." During the music and afterward at the "reception" I could observe them at close range. Typical American girls! The one who introduced me was bright, interesting, very good to look at. She was born in Scotland, and still bore definite marks of the homeland in her fascinating accent. Her father had recently become a naturalized citizen; three of the family of five children were born in America. One of the girls who played was a Russian Hebrew. Her technique was poor, her temperament and appreciation were wonderful, and her ambition to secure an education and "a chance to do something in music" was pathetic. Among the other girls of the club was

a Bohemian who spoke two languages besides her native tongue and her acquired English. She was an evident favorite and, the girls said, "kept things lively." During the evening she said, "If only I could have stayed in school! I wanted so much to be a teacher." A quiet, well-poised Armenian girl of eighteen attracted my attention. Her two younger brothers were at work and during the year past her parents have permitted her to keep her wages. With the help of what she has saved she can work her way through a mission training school. She will take courses in nursing and hygiene, and hopes through the church to be of real service to her own and other peoples in crowded city districts. In the club were two colored girls, both workers in the factory. They sang a duet and did it very well. They were hoping that some "better job would turn up."

The next day I spent a delightful twilight hour with a girl of about twenty who had been described to me as "ideal," and her enthusiastic admirer had added, "She comes from a wonderful old New England family with a splendid history. I like to think of her as the typical *American* girl."

She was beautiful with the beauty that it takes

generations to give. Beneath the fine restraint I could detect the modern passion to be of real service in a real world. As we stood in the darkness looking out at the river, its banks dotted with innumerable lights, and I watched, fascinated, a searchlight bring out into bold relief against the sky the dome of the State House, I heard that quiet voice, tense with emotion, saying, "I think I am willing to give *all* I have to the girls of this city, if only some one can show me how to do it. I want it to be a real service. I want it to help make right the things that are fundamentally wrong."

She sent me to the station in her car. It was nearly six o'clock and very cold. A stream of people, young and old, rushed through the waiting-room. As I entered the concourse I saw a group of girls returning to the suburbs from work. Two of them wore very short skirts, high laced shoes that once were white, coats of fashionable cut but thin and of poor material; they all wore earrings, and hair and hats were "the proper thing." "Gosh!" said a strident voice, "why don't the train back in? I'm froze. I'm saving my lunch money and I'm starved." "Sure, I'm goin' tonight if I ever get home," she added in answer to a friend's query. The phrase "typi-

cal American girl" flashed into my mind, and the contrasts made me smile in spite of the deep significance of all I had seen and heard that day.

The last of the week found me a guest of a Business Women's Club, and I have never spent a more interesting evening. These girls, young, intelligent, well-dressed, efficient, successful and womanly, seemed almost the fulfilment of one's desires, and I felt a sense of satisfaction when another guest called them representative American girls.

During the following month or more I spent an hour with a girl not yet twenty whose father is not living and whose ambitious mother has marked out a climbing pathway for her daughter. The mother was shocked, disturbed and puzzled by the discovery of some of her daughter's views. She is herself a church woman of the formal sort, never for a moment remiss in any of her duties. "I cannot understand my daughter," she said in a pained voice. "I have sent her to the best schools, she has been carefully trained, yet," in a tone of utter contempt, "she uses cigarettes, she dismisses her chaperon, she insists upon going to all sorts of queer places, and yesterday," she struggled for control of her voice, "she told me the most astounding things which she actually

believes! She says she believes in trial marriages, thinks in most cases divorce is a perfectly natural and very proper thing, that all women should *work*, even if they marry; think of it! She says that all the girls except the 'saints' and the 'frumps' think these terrible things. What will become of our girls if they do? Where did she get such ideas?"

In talking with the girl I found that her ideas were even more advanced than her mother knew. "Poor mother," she said, "I do shock her so. She simply cannot understand the American girl of the present."

The American girl—it hurled itself again into my consciousness. Is she this also?

The varied groups pass before me, now twenty or more girls gathered in a little country church away up in the hills for a girls' conference, strong, serious, many of them crude, all of them earnest and interested—one could not fail to be impressed by their reliability, their great possibilities and worth, with the promise of hope for the future wrapped up in them. Equally interesting, dependable and self-reliant was the group in the beautiful college town: girls for the most part with high ideals and great dreams that kept action sane and normal. I was told

as I left for the station that I had been talking with a group of typical American girls. The memory of their fresh young faces, their keen, alert minds, made the future look bright. A little more than twenty-four hours and I was with the girls in a prosperous suburban town. They were between eighteen and twenty-two, and from homes where all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life were theirs for the asking. Three in the group were soon to be married, and the rest had their castles-in-the-air. It was a wholesome, jolly group, interested in its own pleasures but responsive to the need of other girls less fortunate. My hostess said it did her heart good to watch them. "The American girl does not know how fortunate she is, does she?" she said.

Then it was Sunday morning. As I was walking to the station, Elizabeth passed me, giving a smiling greeting through the window of her car. Every Sunday morning finds her up early and on her way to a nine-thirty Sunday-school class of Italian girls. Elizabeth speaks easily in Italian, to the delight of the fathers and mothers who help keep regular the attendance of these girls. While I was waiting for my train, a girl of seventeen or eighteen stopped to buy the Sunday news-

paper. She tucked two huge editions under her arm. In one hand she had a paper bag and a small box, having stopped at the delicatessen. It was easy to see how she would spend the day in the gray, unattractive boarding-house the other side of the tracks. In town I found fascinating groups of girls on their way to Sunday schools and to churches, and at the transfer station a gay group with their skates over their shoulders or their skating shoes wrapped in green and brown covers. The afternoon found me on the way to the hospital, and with me a teacher of a class of girls of sixteen who were going out to sing and give flowers to the convalescents.

Through the parks and along the drive, scores of automobiles, from which young faces beamed, rushed past; at five o'clock the fashionable vesper service had its share. In the early evening I sat in the restaurant. Several young men and women were at the various tables, but I was attracted by a girl who sat alone. Her face was sad and she sighed repeatedly while waiting for her order. When it came, she ate as if it were a duty that she must perform, and finally canceled what she had ordered for dessert, sat with her hand over her eyes for awhile, then, passing out, reached the door as I did. She was neatly

dressed and attractive. I smiled at her, but she paid no attention. Passing into the street, I walked slowly along behind her. She stopped a moment before a motion picture house, examined the boards, walked almost past, then, suddenly turning, purchased a ticket and went in. Down the street a lighted cross on a church stood out against the black sky; over the door the word "Welcome" blazed out. The chimes at the cathedral were playing "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Two young girls who could not have been more than sixteen stepped up to two young men who were standing on the edge of the sidewalk, hands in their pockets. "Go on, take us in, it's a good show," I heard. One remonstrated, the other said, "Oh, come on, let's give the kids a good time." When I turned to look back, they were walking down the street together.

The American Girl—what shall we do *with* her, what can we do *for* her? How shall we cultivate and develop all the great good in her? How shall we starve the undesirable things with which her times, her environment, her inheritance have stamped her?

The task is so great, the need so varied, that as individuals we can do little, as separate organizations not much more; neither home, school

nor church can do it alone. If we are to serve her effectively we must do it *together*. The responsibility for her future depends not upon *one* but upon *all*. In the awakened, challenged, impassioned *community*, willing to learn the facts and face them, eager to modify and change them, lies the hope for the preservation and conservation of what is best in all the daughters of all the people.

II

HER COMMUNITY

HER COMMUNITY

CONTINUALLY before us as we study her community, we must keep the definition of the American girl which, in the previous chapter, we concluded was, in view of the facts, the only one adequate. The American girl, we decided, is a composite of *all the daughters of all the people.* Therefore every type of community which the past has produced and the civilization of the present has accepted, is doing its share in making the American girl, desirable and undesirable, what she is. The casual student of sociology and economics who views life and assembles facts from the standpoint of the pessimist believes that the American community will never be able to find its soul. He believes that it will continue to be dominated by the few who will prosper and feed upon the many, that forms of graft will change but that graft must always be—that all forms of sin which bring reward in gold will be tolerated and encouraged, that government of the people, by the people, for the welfare of all the people is a dream. The casual student, by nature and temperament an optimist, tells us that the American

community is on the up grade and that in time all the regrettable things in the life of today will take care of themselves. He leaves them to do so, making no perceptible effort to hasten the time.

Neither the pessimist nor the temperamental optimist has much to contribute to the solution of the problem. Only the student who, looking frankly into the past and viewing the facts of the present from a standpoint as far as possible unbiased, is willing to attempt solutions, and eager to test constructive plans, is of real value to the American girl. To this class belong the men and women interested in commission government, in a city manager, in referendum and recall, in the community survey, in citizens' public welfare leagues, in the playground, the recreational centers, the public baths, the town improvement societies, the policewomen, the scores of constructive agencies asking to be tested. To increase the number of men and women in the rural, urban and suburban communities who are willing to take advance steps, to test plans, honestly to *attempt* to solve the problems, every effort of those to whom the present and future of the American girl is a vital concern should be directed.

Although varying in detail, the problem of the country and the city is at heart the same: "How can all the people of the community be made to realize that they have, as individuals and as groups, a definite duty to all the daughters of all the people?" This duty centers in the home—in all the homes—those that have daughters, those that have sons, those that are childless, those that have an abundance and those that know the pain of poverty. All the daughters of all the people find it exceedingly hard ever to escape from the stamp of the home. If the home could rid itself of its glaring weaknesses, the community would soon become a good place in which to live. The American home of today seems to find itself utterly unable to establish a right scale of values. In action, if not in word, it teaches its daughters a smug selfishness, trains them to pay other people to amuse them rather than to find ways of amusing themselves, leads them to estimate the things of life in terms of money, teaches them by example to recognize and demand class distinctions, leads them to devote the larger proportion of time to the things least real and lasting—and all these things it does in semi-conscious or unconscious fashion. The American home has not waked up to the changed order of our day, and

so wastes time in lamenting the facts instead of courageously attempting to change them.

The country girl toiling for a pittance in the city's great industrial machine breaks one's heart —but the stream of country pilgrims does not diminish; the suburban girl spending all her physical energy in commuting morning and night and giving the hours meant for the rest of body and mind to the pleasures which the day cannot provide, calls aloud for the sympathy of those who think—still, the numbers increase with every year; the subterfuges, the sacrifices of girlhood engaged in the climb for society leadership move one to profoundest pity—yet countless girls weave their day-dreams and build their air-castles on the hope of meeting success in this sort of adventure. The solution of all these difficulties lies in the awakened *homes* of every community, and the challenging task is the re-education of mothers—*all* the mothers of the community. It must be performed by the enlightened few joined together in devoted and unselfish service for the sake of the many. The little group of those who see must call to its aid the private and public schools, the preachers of every name, the newspapers of every persuasion, and ultimately the producers of all the literature

upon which the American girl feeds her mind and builds her ideals.

The church also must be awakened to the fact that the problem cannot be solved without it. It owes a duty to *all the daughters of all the people*, and it must act in its individual and united power before even the beginning of the solution can be made. There are some things that the individual country church can do for its girls—they are few. There are many things that the churches of a rural community united in purpose and plan can do. There are many things that an individual city church can do for its girls, there are a great many more that the city churches of every name *united* upon a definite plan of helpfulness, protection and inspiration can do. But the church, like the home, must be reeducated. At present it provides a program more or less iron-clad. It says, "When the chimes ring out, or the bells peal forth in the clear air on a Sunday morning, come to us, take part in the order of service we have planned for you, listen to the music others sing to you, attend the Sunday school and study the lessons we have selected for you, give your money to the causes we have chosen for you; if you do not like what we have prepared, we are *truly* sorry, but we have done

the best we could." The church must be re-educated so that it can ask *all the daughters of all the people* what they like in a church service, what sort of help they long for, what they enjoy singing, what subjects and courses they would be interested to study, what they need most, at what hours they can best come to worship God. That is, the church must be retrained so that it can recognize the fact that its chief task is to follow its Master. He met *needs;* sometimes it was physical—the pain of the body; often it was mental,—the struggle of the mind; most of the time it was spiritual,—the hunger of the soul; whatever it was, he answered *it.*

The town and city officials alike must be made to realize that the problem cannot be met without *them*—that as individuals and as a governing body they are responsible for the place in which *all the daughters of all the people* must *live.* Perhaps this is the hardest task of all, for officials are *busy,* so busy they have not time to think of the characters being formed in those who are to make or unmake the America they have sworn to serve. If challenged they are prone to point to home, church and school, forgetting that numberless homes have no control over *conditions* which they, as officials, permit, sanc-

tion, encourage; that hundreds of churches are waging an heroic battle against frightful odds which they, as officials, have created; that schools are led over a beaten track or forced along a narrow way which they, as officials, have marked out. The official needs reeducation, that he may have a new concept of his importance, the importance of one upon whom rests personal responsibility for public welfare rather than opportunity for special privilege. The officials need to realize that when the youth of a community start out to "see life," *they* are the ones who determine what that "life" shall be, and they are responsible for its results upon the character of the individual and the race.

One must face, then, squarely and with courage the fact that the task of those interested in the welfare of the American girl is no less than that of the reeducation of the community, so that it will assume the burden of living each for all and all for each. The burden is old, countless ages old; it has existed since God asked a developing soul, "Where is thy brother?" and it answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It was constantly reemphasized in the challenging words of Christ concerning neighbors and brothers. Of late the burden has pressed more heavily, it has

assumed larger proportions in the sight of all men and women, and so we may hope that the day of new birth for the Community Spirit draws near—there is a star in the sky, and wise men seek it. For the sake of *all the daughters of all the people* let us pray with deeper consecration and passion that they find it.

III

THE RURAL GIRL

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IT will be hard for any one who saw their faces ever to forget the two girls who, as they alighted from a train at the North Station in Boston one October night, were met by the police and hurried away through a rapidly gathering crowd. One was seventeen, the other fifteen. They were runaways, but through friends the distraught parents were able to trace them and their adventure quickly ended.

A woman who had interested herself in the girls asked me if I would have a talk with them before their journey back to the little town away up in the forsaken hill country. In that hour's talk I discovered so much of longing, day-dreaming, romancing and misconception that the girl of the lonely rural community seemed for the moment the most appealing of all girl problems. *Starved* was the word I found myself saying over and over.

Both girls were attractive with the fresh, unspoiled prettiness of the teen years. Their dress showed attempts to copy newspaper interpretations of the fall styles, their eyes were bright with excitement. When the train carried them

out of the crowded station back toward the little dead town, it seemed no less a tragedy than their coming. But I could console myself by the fact that a little of the glamour of the city had gone. A generous-hearted woman had taken them through the Fenway, had shown them a little of the Library and the Public Gardens, and then driven them through the narrow streets and dirty crowded tenements of a section of the city which had never entered their dreams. It was a morning when the east wind and the mist did not add to the picture. Once or twice the machine stopped where unskilled, poor and untrained girls had to toil. They saw where girls like themselves, with less than ten dollars between them, might have to live while seeking work. They saw the dirty children and hopeless-looking mothers, and as one of them wrote afterward, "It made the woods, red and yellow, and the river and all, look pretty good to us."

But though they had seen the facts of the city and something of the glory had gone, yet the facts of their country home with its old people content, its middle-aged restless but unresisting, its dearth of life and pleasure, the inborn right of youth, remained.

As in imagination I followed them on their

journey from town to town, farther and farther from the joys of companionship, the food for dreams, the pleasures to be anticipated while one toils, I felt a sinking of heart at the moment when the train was due at the little station four miles from the straggling street with its dilapidated, pastorless church, its corner store, its weather-beaten two-room town school. I found myself following one of them two miles farther up into the hills to a lonely farm run on the plan of twenty years and more ago. I sat down for a few moments with the other at a kitchen table which bore the marks of poverty, with a man who ate rapidly and in silence, a nervous woman with one arm helpless from rheumatism, an older sister about twenty on whom fell a large share of the housework and the care of the three younger children. I confess the returning prodigals seemed to me more sinned against than sinning.

How to help wisely the rural communities, sometimes desperately poor, sometimes with means enough but with no sense of their responsibility to the nation for the youth in their midst, often with vision but no leadership, sometimes suffering with inertia from which they cannot rise, and again making great strides into

the light but needing guidance, is a problem that *ought* to challenge the American woman of today as she thinks of her share in the making of the American woman of tomorrow.

In the light of humanity's heartrending cry for food to which the American women of the present day have listened, there is no need even for comment upon the value of the rural contribution to the very life of the world. But those who think are forced to see the need of stressing every effort for making the life of the rural town and community interesting, stimulating, enjoyable, that the working power of the human element may be one hundred per cent efficient. The last ten years have witnessed a new centering of interest in the country and the farm, and organizations rich in executive ability and far-sightedness are attempting to meet the various problems. The revival of the Chautauqua movement has made a large contribution to the broadening of horizons; the magazines and journals have offered every assistance to the reading rural population; the government at Washington has awakened to the nation's need of its agricultural population and seeks to make close connection with it; the great part that the school must play in the development of the future rural citizenship is forcing

leading educational agencies to devote to the problem of ways and means its serious attention; the deplorable condition of church life, once the source of strength and inspiration to the farming people, has finally brought to the various denominations such a challenge that they are calling men from among their best and strongest leaders to give themselves to a determined effort to solve the problem, and the Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., with their usual practical answer to evident needs, are using the power and adaptability of their organizations to demonstrate what can be done to relieve the deadly monotony.

Here and there one finds, in studying the situation as it directly affects the American *girl*, outstanding examples of what may be done. Sometimes the agency which has accomplished the transformation is the Extension Department of a State University. I had the opportunity of meeting a group of girls whose entire lives had been changed through the work of a university extension department which had opened the door into a narrow, dull country community through the Canning Clubs. While they were canning, these girls heard such fascinating reports of university life that two younger girls who had "finished school" went back into the little one-

room schoolhouse to fit themselves for entrance the next fall into a high school twenty miles distant. They were successful and are on their way to the university. One of them has visited it and her enthusiasm is unbounded. Two older girls of the group have become readers of good literature, well informed on current topics. They have started a reading circle that has very real social value. Under the influence of the girls' interest and enthusiasm, the university was able to start a mothers' club, and once a month lecturers are sent out to talk on live subjects of interest to mothers. Such practical things as "How a Country Woman Should Dress Her Children," "Twelve Good Meals," etc., have served to make desirable changes in many homes. The canning, millinery and home-dressmaking exhibits given by the girls brought the whole countryside together, and the girl who won the prize for bread-making was a heroine. In three short years the girls and women of this community have been given something to think about, to talk about, and on which to get together. New ambitions in raising flowers, improving the grounds about the house, making the interior of the home more comfortable and habitable have been born. One of the lecturers of the university,

responsible for much of the regeneration of this community, said with a beaming face, "Two porches and one real, modern, up-to-date verandah have been built during the year. The owners have proudly *sat upon them*, and under our encouragement a sixteen-year-old had a 'perfectly wonderful porch party' last summer."

Next year will witness the organization of a town chorus and a Girls' Social Club, both modeled after successful organizations in the southern part of the county whose fame has reached this small village, so rapidly waking up.

Another interesting group of girls thrilled me one day by their recitation of "A Country Girl's Creed." The last two paragraphs of the creed, given with the special earnestness and conviction of fresh young voices, could not fail to impress any listener.

"I believe there is much I can do in my country home. Through studying the best way to do my every-day work I can find joy in common tasks well done. Through loving comradeship I can help bring into my home the happiness and peace that are always so near in God's out-of-door world. Through such a home I can help make real to all who pass that way their brightest ideal of country life.

"I believe my love and loyalty for my country home should reach out in service to that larger home that we call our neighborhood. I would join with the people who live there in true friendliness. I would whole-heartedly give my best to further all that is being done for a better community. I would have all that I think and say and do help to unite country people near and far in that great kingdom of love for neighbors which the Master came to establish—the Master who knew and cared for country ways and country folks."

After the recitation of the creed I heard, amid much giggling and with the self-consciousness these girls had not yet overcome, the reading of paragraphs they had written on "The Way I Used to Wash the Dishes." The contrast between these ways that "used to be" and their present scientific dish-washing was a revelation. The same was true of bed-making and the repairing of their personal wardrobes. I found myself suddenly conscious of the fact that I was witnessing the "dignifying of labor," that these girls who had "hated housework" and performed their tasks in a careless and unwilling fashion had suddenly been made to feel the *charm* of *efficiency* and made to experience the satisfaction that

comes in the doing well of a worth-while task. They were no longer "slaves of the kitchen." Something of the fascination of the visions of working in a city "store" or factory had passed. The next course was to be "Home Nursing," and I confess that I wanted to remain and see them attack it. This work was all under the direction of a wide-awake, lovable, capable young woman, a true girl herself in spirit and sympathy, known as the Y. W. C. A. County Secretary. If her number could be multiplied over all the rural sections of our country, the loneliness and dull grind, the drab existence and strain of the teens would soon pass.

In another country community which had a manufacturing establishment employing foreign girls and women whose lives had been practically without recreation or uplift of any sort, I found a group of four country girls, two of whom had "been away to school" and all of whom had some leisure, meeting with another girl just graduated from college to take the course in leadership for "Eight-Week Clubs for Immigrant Girls" founded by the Y. W. C. A. The club, known as "The International Friendship Club," has as its motto "Each Day, My Best," its watchword "Others," and its purpose (1) To unite young

women of America and of foreign countries in America in an understanding friendship. (2) To learn to use the language of America. (3) To learn some of the things which make a more useful, happy and abundant life. (4) To learn about the goodness in things . . . all that we mean by that word "service." Later I found that the two clubs formed were a very great success; that while furnishing "good times" they had been able to teach these girls much of the meaning of American customs, which had a decided influence upon their homes, and that the girls' gain in ability to express themselves in English was amazing. The benefits of this club were not confined to the foreign girls, for the leaders and their friends were able to witness at first-hand something of the self-denial and heroism of these sisters of toil. In one department of the factory improvements were brought about through the interest of the manager's young daughter, who had never before given a thought to the girls under her father's care.

After seeing the results of their work I am convinced that all women everywhere who are eager to have a part in the enrichment and development of rural girlhood can render no more efficient service than in helping to place the

Young Women's Christian Association County Secretaries in the field.

The number of public schools ministering intelligently to the life of the country girl is increasing. The teacher in the average country school finds herself greatly handicapped even if she be a young woman of vision with definite desires to contribute to the welfare of the community. The country school is looked upon as the beginning, it is a stepping-stone. The average country community is unwilling or unable to pay for the very best teachers, living conditions are exceedingly hard, congenial companionship often not easy to find. In the opinion of many, the state owes to the youth of poor, small and scattered rural communities the very best guidance and leadership possible, and should find a way to provide for these future citizens teachers well equipped in purpose and rich in preparation for the high task of molding a generation. When public sentiment demands a thing, it will come, and if those interested in the welfare of the country girl can educate public sentiment up to the point where it will be willing to consolidate schools, build suitable school houses, provide possible quarters for the teachers' home, or automobile or other transportation to such quarters,

the problem will be well on the way to solution. In many of our western and some of our southern states such public sentiment has been created. It is with joy and hope that one witnesses what has been done in such communities. The artistic and suitable buildings, with safe and wholesome sanitary conditions and facilities for lunch, the beautified school grounds with model school gardens, the well equipped playground which the community shares, the teachers' home to which the teachers of the various districts return, and in which they can live a normal home life which is both example and incentive to the community, have already demonstrated that, the *people* informed and willing, the *dream* may become a *fact*. When one contrasts such a rural school with the old, dirty, unsanitary and unwholesome one-room building, set in a bleak, unattractive "yard," furnished with old desks, impossible blackboards, and windows through which little light comes, presided over by a poorly equipped teacher who through loneliness, unsuitable "boarding-place" and insufficient salary has lost both enthusiasm and ambition, it seems decidedly unfair that America should give to one group of its future mothers, home-

makers and citizens so much, and to others so little.

What has been said of the school in the rural community is largely true of the church—the great need is an enlightened and educated public sentiment that will encourage and finally demand those things which shall give every possible advantage to its girls. Often this education must come from the outside. Today there is great need that church bodies realize the condition of the country church and that they adopt a definite policy against over-churching, against all jealousy, denominational selfishness and aggressive propaganda by extension boards. If this could be accomplished, then *by conference and agreement a community church could serve a community.*

I am thinking of such a church, standing now in a community where for years the only preaching was for a few weeks in summer, and the only touch of any minister upon the community life came through a wedding or a funeral service. Three evangelical denominations owned unused churches in that community. Youth left the town at the first possible moment, and to the girls who were too young or who found it impossible to leave, life was a dreary thing.

When a young preacher was finally sent to one of the churches with his meager salary paid by a home missionary society, he faced a problem as great as one might find on a foreign field. Indifference, inertia, prejudice and suspicion are hard to overcome. The long road to victory cannot be given in detail, but the entering wedge was made by the minister's wife, a young, energetic, practical idealist who won the girls of the community. The cooperation of a school teacher, the organization of a community chorus, a practical lecture course with demonstrations for the farmers, a Community House built by actual labor contributed by practically every able-bodied person in the community, and finally a new Union Church and a cooperative motion picture house, have brought the town from death to life.

The faces of the girls one meets in the present girls' club and the Sunday school in that town are a wonderful testimony to the power of environment. These girls are not longing for excitement, they are not blasé, they are not dull, nor phlegmatic, they are normal, busy and happy. They enjoy to the full the simple, natural pleasures of an awakened community into which we earnestly pray may never enter superfi-

ciality or "society" copied from cities, to act as a death blow to their hard-won community-democracy.

In studying the transformation of this rural village through the church, one finds certain significant things. The pastor was a *big* man. His own horizons were far-stretching. He came to the community with one purpose—*to minister*. He was not dependent wholly upon the salary given by the Home Missionary Society, or that paid later by the small group in the community able to pay it. He was aided by two men in a rich city church who believed that the best thing they could give to this rural community in which they had become interested was *leadership*. Their contributions furnished the young pastor with books and magazines, they brought him to the city to hear great men, they gave him a mid-winter vacation with lectures at the university and opportunity to hear great preachers, they made the parsonage habitable and *they considered this not a gift but an investment* on which their return has been greater than they dreamed.

How long it will be before churches large in numbers and rich in money will see their duty to the struggling country church, and for the sake of

future Americans formulate definite plans for *co-operation*, one dare not say, but until some such policy is reached and set at work we cannot hope for widespread leadership on the part of the country church in the task of making rural girlhood strong, happy, efficient and good. The man who can successfully cope with the problems of the rural church must have and be all that the city preacher has and is—plus. And he must be able to remain long enough to leave his impress.

It may seem at first as if a plea that public school, university, church welfare organizations, editors of magazines and writers of books, individuals everywhere unite in serving the girl of the rural community, magnifies her importance, but it does not. The substantial American home is the foundation of all our nation's hope for the new democracy. The home of high standards and ideals set in the midst of an intelligent and prosperous rural community is her greatest asset. The rural girl is the maker of that home. No investment which can contribute to her physical, mental and social welfare, which can save her from the dwarfing of spirit that loneliness, drudgery, and little opportunity for pleasure and recreation always mean, can be too

costly. The next generation will need, more than any other for centuries has needed, strong, earnest, Christian womanhood. On a thousand hills, hidden in countless valleys, on the edges of great forests, and on wide prairies, that womanhood is now being marred or made—it is for the thinking American man and woman of today to decide which.

IV

THE SUBURBAN GIRL

THE SUBURBAN GIRL

IF one were to make an exhaustive study of the suburban girl and her needs, he would be compelled to preface this chapter with one upon "Suburbs," so greatly do they vary in type. Certain characteristics, however, are common to them all. Like the spokes of a great wheel they stretch out from five to twenty-five miles about the city. The little station of wood, brick or stone, with or without grassplots and flowers according to its age, the type of its citizens or the dividends of the railroad, the small stores, shops and offices that serve that part of the community which does not make its purchases and transact its business "in town," are so familiar as to need no word of comment. Were one to spend a day at any of these stations he would witness practically the same procession of human beings, rushing to or hurrying from the city. In the early hours of the morning, there pours by train, boat or trolley from the suburbs nearest the city a stream of men—and newspapers. It is usually seven o'clock before any considerable number of girls are seen hurrying to

the station or rushing aboard trolley or boat. From that time until nine o'clock the stream is constant. After that the rush from the nearer suburbs within the five or ten-cent zone is over.

The later the hour, the more prosperous, in the main, is the appearance of the girls. The majority now are well groomed. In half an hour or more they will be shopping. From eleven to twelve comes still another type, mostly in groups. They mean lunch, then the matinée or opera. From a number of suburbs, motors speed rapidly along toward town, bearing the girls who practically never board a trolley and whom the suburban trains seldom serve. From two o'clock until five the station is almost deserted and no one need stand on trolley or train. Then comes the hurrying crowd again, rushing aboard, dropping wearily into seats, standing hanging to straps, or leaning against the door across which are printed the words "Do not lean against this door." The girls who went into town on the early trains come out on the late ones—it hardly seems fair. How often I have wished, as I have hurried along with these girls who have for a day been swallowed up in the roar of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles or Boston, that I might in a series of rapidly moving pic-

tures follow them through its eight or more hours and then into the night. What a strange life it is for a girl—*young*—full of dreams and eagerness, hope and courage, as yet unharmed by experience. Some of those who go in early and return late show the mark of the years. They are twenty-five—thirty-five. Will the sixteen-year-old at thirty-five still be commuting on the 7.20 and the 5.18? She does not think so; she intends sometime to go in at ten or eleven —or going by motor is not impossible in her dreams; that is nature's law of compensation in operation.

As I have come to know these girls of the suburbs, the moving-picture scenes of their lives have gradually taken color and form. I know that the girls who motor in have beautiful homes, many of them places of true culture and refinement, that they enjoy every pleasure the city offers during the winter season and then go to the country, the mountains, the shore or the fashionable camp, or spend the days in travel or at house parties. I know that they are sheltered and protected—but they are not all happy. The majority of them will marry and make more homes, many of them even more luxurious, builded in more fashionable suburbs than those of their

fathers, but they will not all be happy, for *things* do not make happiness. I know that these girls have needs, deep spiritual needs, hunger of soul, and that sometime, sooner or later, because they live in the day of the birth pangs of true democracy, they will want to get into life at its heart and *do something.*

I know that the girl who eats a hurried breakfast in the dark on a winter morning and runs to the train, who works all day beside a machine or behind a counter, with only the meager lunch her purse can afford, who often helps with the dishes and launders her shirtwaist or collar after her return at night, needs the strength of a giant to stand the strain, and she hasn't it. She cannot have sufficient sleep and pleasure, and now while she is young she chooses the pleasure. From a group of ten girls of the early morning commuters, I learned one night in the moonlight, at a conference where we were confessing our sins of physical carelessness, one to another, that three girls who were chums stayed in town, one night a week, going without dinner to go to a "show." "There is never anything going on in our poor little town," one said. "At least nothing for us girls." Another belonged to a group that went to each other's homes one night a week.

"I can't eat and get my dress changed and get there before eight to save my life, and then we get to talking and I stay later than I mean to," said one of them. "Many a time I have run all the way home from Dot's, scared to death—it's a lonely way. I'm almost dead the next day. But what can you do, you can't stay in the house all the time!" And from another I learned, "Gee, I know I commit plenty of physical sins; I suppose I'll pay for them. Not keeping my windows open, for instance! I just can't do it. I nearly die as it is, dressing in the morning. Dad can't get up at midnight to have the house warm in the mornings. Besides, we can't pay for the coal. I help all I can, but everything is so high. I kept them open up to Thanksgiving last year, and then, believe me, I shut all but one and that about an inch open. Tuberculosis hasn't got me yet," she added with a laugh, "but I do have awful colds." A third girl confessed that she did "worse than that last winter. I have a ten-minute walk to the station and fifteen more in town. I work in the basement of ———. Well, if you'll believe it, I wore out two pairs of rubbers before the winter was half over. I didn't buy any more. Didn't have the sixty-nine cents. If somebody would tell me how to stretch out my money after

I pay mother my board and get my ticket and my lunches and clothes enough so they won't discharge me, I won't commit any more 'physical sins.'"

Under the circumstances I knew no recipe for "stretching money," but I longed for one. The girls in this group were intelligent, with respectable, hard-working parents. They had been obliged to leave school early to help eke out the family income. Some day they will marry, and the "physical sins" will demand recompense in sons and daughters physically unfit.

I know that the girls who live at home in suburban communities and work in business houses where they are expected to be at their desks at nine o'clock and to leave them at five, impress one on the whole most favorably. They have had some degree at least of preparation for their work. They have not entered upon a blind-alley occupation. The possibility of promotion, and increasing reward for faithful and efficient service, tends to foster in them the desire to excel. In meeting large groups of girls in the various sections of our country, those at work in the offices of reputable business houses and living under wholesome conditions in the suburbs, have seemed to me the sanest, keenest, most ambitious

and most promising of all the girls outside of the professions, who enter the working world to earn a livelihood. Except when, through weakness of character or laxity in home training, they succumb to the peculiar temptations of their positions, the picture that they present is most encouraging.

But the suburban girl, while escaping many of the evils of city life, does not as yet enjoy her inalienable right to the *pursuit of happiness*. There are suburban communities without a vestige of community consciousness, where public spirit is unknown and each group lives complacently "unto itself." One such community, awakened recently from its lethargy by cold, hard and shocking facts regarding the physical and moral health of the girls that made up its quota of the great commercial and industrial army, confessed that it knew practically nothing of its schools, the places of amusement frequented by its children or the attempts of its small number of church people in active service to stem the subtle tide of evil which was undermining the character of girlhood before it had time to form. When this community knew the facts, it acted, but it is practically helpless so far as the immediate generation of girls in their

teens is concerned. It opened its eyes too late. I am quite convinced that numberless suburban communities know nothing of themselves. The thoughtful, intelligent people are *too busy*, the women of social ambitions and dreams too self-centered and blind, the mothers of the girls who suffer too ignorant, or too burdened by the task of making existence possible for their families, to study situations and trace results back to their first cause. If America is to solve the problem of making a strong womanhood, capable of giving to state and nation worthy sons and daughters, it must cultivate, foster, train and put to the test its boasted spirit of an equal opportunity for all men. It cannot act with intelligence until it is informed, and one undeniable duty in this present hour of crisis is that of knowing the conditions under which the childhood of a given community enters upon life, the possibilities for its nourishment, the sort of training given it in the elementary, high and evening schools, the pictures exhibited in motion-picture houses and the associations that, centering in them, play so large a part in the making of character. Fact is a powerful thing. Not merely fact that "everybody knows" but fact that can be proven and demonstrated—fact that dares to

face Gold and say to it, "You are weighed in the balance and found wanting—this community cannot afford to acquire you at such a price."

In a day when *conservation* and *efficiency* are words that fall easily from every lip, it seems strange to find so much waste of the human element. In a suburban community in which I have become interested, which is the type of many another, I find several challenging anomalies. I find an expensive, well-equipped grammar school whose teaching force is paid so little that only those women and men who reach their maximum development early can afford to stay. Not in one instance is the salary adequate to support any live, energetic, ambitious, forward-looking man or woman. Consequently each September brings a large percentage of new teachers willing to come to get experience. If they are promising or equal to their tasks, the next autumn will find their places empty, only those remaining who can do "nothing better" or whose family ties compel them to sacrifice the future to the present. Such a condition is disastrous to the child. The superintendent realizes it, but he is helpless. Sometimes in desperation he demands that his teachers sign a contract in April before new positions offer, that they may be held for the follow-

ing year, but this by its effect upon the teaching force practically defeats his purpose. In this type of community the children who leave school as soon as the law permits go blindly out into the world of work to waste days, years and often life in the effort to find suitable and congenial toil—to join the pitiful and lamentable number of misfits. Neither they nor their parents know what occupations are open to girls with limited education, what opportunities for progress or promotion exist, what moral or physical dangers there are or what the special desires and characteristics of the child may enable her best to do. After the girl "goes to work," no intelligent eye follows, no informed, sympathetic heart directs. *She has gone to work.* That is the end.

The community does not see its folly, its inefficiency, its lack of true patriotism. But we see now and then the contrasting picture of schools with a teaching force at its best and constantly improving upon its best, with a well-informed, trained group of teachers of civics, interpreters of vocations, with a guide who not only opens the way into congenial employment but follows with stimulus and encouragement until the danger of square peg and round hole is past. Although still in the experimental stage,

the accomplishment of the vocational guide in placing girlhood, in firing ambition, in raising the ideals of the young workers, has more than justified any expenditure. The suburban community, feeding the machinery of the city, is unworthy of America, is wasteful and inefficient, if it hurls its young girlhood, unprepared and unprotected, into the jaws of the competitive industrial and commercial mill.

Sometimes when one studies the work of the church in suburban communities of certain types it seems almost as though he were witnessing a determined effort on the part of one group to put out a fire which is being constantly fed inflammable material by another. The Sunday schools are struggling to establish high ideals of the relation of God and man, and man and his fellow man. Meanwhile the life of the poor and the display of the rich are giving constant demonstration of the fact that in the community life, God is hidden in the maze, and justice is but a statue in stone. The girls' clubs of various names, the Camp Fire, the Girl Scouts, at work in the development of character and the habit of devotion to high ideals of recreation and sport, are met by the unwholesome dance and the cards that have no rightful

place in the life of a girl of sixteen. At every point is *waste,* moral, mental and physical waste, because a community small enough and in the main intelligent enough does not give itself to the task of forming a plan and a program which its citizens, for the sake of present and future America, shall work out together.

I recently spent some time in a community boasting a Recreation Center. It proved to be all that its name implied, and more. It was a *center* of wholesome community life. On Tuesday morning I found a group of women hard at work on Red Cross duties; in the late afternoon, high-school girls who had gladly given two hours; in the evening, the shop and store girls. Women of leisure, in the main, women of the church, were present to guide, direct and form friendships. I witnessed a wonderfully satisfactory pageant in which all the community took part. I saw the Saturday night dance, which the older young people and in many cases their parents enjoyed to the full. I learned very soon the connection between the Center and the movies, and that they were working together. Women with training and power of leadership were at work in its girls' classes and clubs, and they began with girls of ten and twelve. The spirit of "all together for

the good of each" was evident. The faces of the young people showed the effect of wholesome living; they looked forward with hope to the future and greatly enjoyed the present. No iron hand of evil, of nauseous temptation and vice sapped life at its roots—*there were no saloons.*

All that I saw in this community, and the special lines of civic service and betterment I have witnessed in other and widely scattered suburban towns, make me confident that the dawn of the day of a suburban life, wholesome and more worthy the idealism of the greatest Democracy, is near—that the importance of the task of conserving American womanhood at the start is awakening those that sleep. The difficulties are challenging, not insurmountable; indeed, from the vocabulary of womanhood rich in Christian idealism, faith and will, *insurmountable* and its synonyms disappear, and it becomes a matter of test and experiment with methods that promise success.

V

THE CITY GIRL

THE CITY GIRL

IF, because of the great variety in type, one finds the analysis of the life of the suburban girl difficult, how much more complicated does he find that of the city girl! Yet out of the mad whirl and seeming chaos of city life, four definite groups of girls emerge as one studies it—the industrial girl, the business girl, the schoolgirl, the girl at home. Whether it be a great metropolis or a smaller manufacturing or trade center, the four groups are there, varied in size but having great outstanding characteristics. The industrial girl in the main leaves school early, during the sixth to eighth grade, according to her age. Often because of limited mental ability she has reached only the fourth grade when her age entitles her to an employment card. Not many girls in industrial life, unless they are in highly specialized industries, have had even one year of high-school training. Their work is arduous, exhausting, or characterized by a deadly monotony; their surroundings unsanitary, in many cases to an unbelievable degree; the machinery dangerous, the

opportunities for promotion few. *They find in their work little to interest, inspire or enjoy,* and therefore look for these things entirely *outside* their work, finding them, if at all, in the night-life of the cities. The problem facing those who would formulate fundamental and far-reaching plans for development and character-building in these girls is twofold: conditions under which they work and live must be made physically and morally safe; there must be some incentive for progress, and there must be provision for recreational life, with the ultimate wiping out of agencies that, for private gain, prey upon the weaknesses of girlhood, in the name of amusement and pleasure.

In these directions the progress already made encourages one to believe that when sufficient interest can be awakened, and proper investigation reveals cold, hard facts, the American public will act. The duty of unceasing effort to educate that public is clear. Two industrial plants which I visited within the year stand out vividly as exponents of what ought and what ought not to be.

In the first establishment there were light and air, two absolute necessities, not only for the present life of the girl but for the future life of

America. Modern ingenuity has made light possible even in the crowded districts, and modern inventions have made germ-laden, death-dealing dust unnecessary. The manager of this establishment had seen to it that the dangerous machinery was protected, the girls safeguarded and the nervous tension that goes with constant effort to avoid getting hands or hair caught was absent. Wherever possible, provision was made for the girls to be seated. The sanitary arrangements were perfect; the rules of the company made it necessary for girls to be neat and clean. Arrangements for a wholesome lunch to be served at a possible price and for girls to eat luncheon provided by themselves, were adequate and satisfactory. Through the welfare system the girls became *individuals*, the work was noted, added wages or a higher position was the reward of faithfulness and skill; opportunity for study if one wished to fit herself for the highest departments was offered. Insurance and profit-sharing gave the added sense of self-respect without which there can be no real progress. I found the social life of the plant on a most efficient basis, so that a girl, if she chose, could find pleasure and amusement without danger. I shall never forget, as I was about to leave, stepping into a

room where a very sweet and courteous girl was at work coloring lantern slides used in connection with the work of the company. She smiled when I spoke, but did not answer, and I found she was totally deaf, having been made so by a serious illness. When she came back she could not do her old work at a high-power machine, and instead of discharging her the company tried her out in other departments and found that her delicate touch and color-sense made her invaluable. Her happy face, her ability to support her mother and herself in comfort, the exceptionally fine work she was doing, were a wonderful testimony to their system of human economy. The history of other individuals saved from inefficiency or the scrap-heap was quite as interesting. That company was making more money than it had ever dreamed it could in the days when it just *ran a factory.*

When I left this place, which I would like, if only I could, to think of as a typical American industrial plant, and, after a short journey, walked along the dark, narrow hall of entrance to another factory, it seemed to me that I had been dropped back scores of years, into the ways of yesterdays that should have been forgotten. The laws of this second state were very poor

and their enforcement lax. Girls undoubtedly under age were at work. Dust was everywhere and the poor light was a constant strain on eyes and nerves. There was no opportunity for girls to be seated, only two devices for protection from dangerous machinery were in use, the air was deadly and I could not describe on this page the condition of the toilets, with walls disfigured by words and drawings that made one shudder as she thought of the blunted moral sense of those who put them there and the effect upon the young girl just entering the industrial world from the schoolroom. While I was present a girl was discharged by an angry "boss." In spite of my being within hearing he dismissed her with oaths and she answered him with more. But she cried outside in the hall and said, "Oh, my Lord, what will I do now, how will I face my mother?" Her clothing was soiled and her whole appearance ill-kempt. She was a specimen of girlhood as far removed from those I had left in the first industrial plant as you can well imagine. When the "boss" left the room, some of the girls began to sing, others talked of the discharged girl, one near the aisle where I was swore at her loom in words that I have seldom heard men use. That night we saw where these

girls lived, the only places provided which they could afford, and rent there was very high. We saw the cheap, garish vaudeville houses, the saloons with "family entrances," the cheap "movies" and, although it was cold, the constant procession of very young boys and girls walking up and down the streets. There was a Y. W. C. A. in the city, but it had no industrial secretary. So far as I could find out, with the exception of two downtown churches which ministered through clubs to the girls they had managed to keep in their Sunday schools, there were absolutely no direct uplifting influences in the lives of those girls. Yet they are a part of American life, they marry, they make homes unworthy the word, they contribute children,—the future Americans. It is not fair that in one spot of the nation a wise, intelligent company of men should produce conditions such as I found in the first industrial plant, and blind and ignorant men a single night's journey away should tolerate and preserve conditions such as I saw in the second factory. It is not only unchristian, it is un-American. *Law* should *compel* men to do what *low ideals* will never *impel* them to do. The chief owner of the second factory is an absentee. She has never seen it, she knows

nothing of its methods. I believe she would be heart-sick over the conditions if she lived a week in the midst of them. But her lack of knowledge cannot repair the damage done to the bodies and souls of that city's girls.

I believe the great agency for reform to be public sentiment, and public sentiment is created through education. *Fact* has a tremendous power in American life when it is presented clearly to all the people. The printed page, the public school, the home and the church are the great educating forces of the community. For the last ten years the printed page has faithfully set forth facts regarding the dangers, physical and moral, to the girl workers of America. It has written up, in long illustrated articles, stories of the success of men who have used humanitarian principles in business. It has greatly helped to awaken people who have been indifferent to the vast power of the human element. The religious press has also opened its columns to appeals for the need of raising the standards of industrial girl-life. Here and there private schools have been true to their great opportunity and studies in civics have opened a door to the truths that every privileged girl who is a sharer in the profits of industrial life has a

right to know. Many high schools, through vocational studies and community civics, have opened the eyes of their pupils and laid the foundations for a new and powerful public sentiment in the next generation.

The homes of intelligence, where leaders in thought and action should be trained and nourished, it seems to me have been remiss. The discussions around the table in the presence of the older children, the few words of comment by father or mother on the industrial conditions of the day, the recognition of the value and need of humanitarian instead of commercialized government, the review of popular lectures, new books, etc., make a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of American youth. So often this tremendous force in the making of *leaders* is utterly neglected by the homes of refinement, culture and intelligence where leaders should be made. Our sheltered girls, the recipients of the results of the toil of their sisters, are too often left uninformed and unawakened, where wise parents might guide them into sane knowledge. In the homes of "the good old American stock" the questions of the day are left too often untouched, while the petty things of family life or experience are discussed without benefit to any

one. The home conversation is a vital force in the making of public sentiment, and homes must be entreated to begin to talk once more as they did in Lincoln's log cabin, around Whittier's fireplace, under the trees in Louisa M. Alcott's orchard, leaning on the pasture bars on Daniel Webster's farm, of the great issues in which, before they are aware, their sons and daughters will play a mighty part.

The church also makes public sentiment. In every community it has within the hearing of its voice the leaders of that community and their sons and daughters. It has its school in which it teaches religion which, *if it is of the right sort, has a mighty part to play in molding sentiment.* Many of the teachers of its older boys and girls, as well as those of the early teen years, have forgotten to vitalize the truths of the Book that has come down to us from *other* days with the facts of *our* day and the answer of the principles of Jesus Christ to those facts. Many have made the mistake of giving to these older boys and girls a religion of childhood that shuns questions, shakes its head over problems, demands little of deep sacrifice in the face of need, is satisfied with a God that stays far away in the heavens until man sends up a great cry to him

to help in an hour of need. *But those who are near to the teaching work of the church can see the great new light that is permeating its work, both impressing the truth and providing for the expression of it, and the next ten years will see great strides made by the teaching church in making the God that it represents so real that he will be the great force in the building up of a sane, strong, unselfish public sentiment.*

The solution of the problem of the industrial girl seems to me to lie in an educated, humanized, intelligent public sentiment. To create it takes time and patience, but when it comes it is irresistible. American men and women *are* seeking the truth, daring to look at fact, and we may hope that the dawn of the day of justice and consideration for toiling girlhood is not far distant.

VI

THE BUSINESS GIRL

THE BUSINESS GIRL

NO one can stand at the five o'clock hour near the elevators of any great metropolitan office building and not be stirred by the deep appeal of girlhood and young womanhood as it pours out from its work over typewriter, multigraph, filing-case, ledger and desk. Much of it is so young, so poorly paid for these days of the ever-increasing cost of living, that the strain of making ends meet shows in face, voice and conversation. The majority of these girls have had high-school or special business-school training. Only the few who have the more responsible positions have had greater advantages, but experience has taught them much. They are in the main keen, alert, efficient, able to think and act quickly. One who is continually meeting groups of girls learns very soon that the business girl can be both her keenest critic and her most devoted friend. The business girl deals with facts, often cold, hard and unpleasant, and she asks of those who want to show her friendship that they also deal with facts. She has emotions, but she is accustomed

to keep them under the management of her will, and if a strong appeal is to be made to her, it must, while beginning with the emotions, be submitted to reason and will. A well-meaning friend who thinks she knows girls was inviting a girl of twenty-two to attend a Bible class the other day. The girl has a good salary and an important position. When the woman had left her after a half promise that she would come, the girl turned to me and said, "Her method of *winning* me was very interesting, wasn't it? It was good business psychology—except that she didn't size *me* up right. If I join the Bible class it will not be for any of the reasons that she gave. It will be because I'm not as good as I ought to be and I know it and, to be perfectly frank, I need help. I wish she had been *honest* and said that the class was to help us *live* better instead of to furnish 'pleasant associations and companionship.' Why do they hand it to us girls sugar-coated?"

It *is* a great mistake. The business girl is not accustomed to things sugar-coated. She deals largely with men and often with men to whom she is only a good machine. If by word, look or appeal of any sort she reminds them that she is a *girl*, her usefulness ceases and complications

of all sorts arise. She is accustomed to orders without explanations; she sees, under the stress of business competition, *character revealed.* She knows the weaknesses, foibles and sins of mankind and she wants help, if at all, from those who, although they also understand and appreciate, yet in the face of facts *challenge* her to rise to her best.

I asked a group of business girls recently to write out for me a list of what they considered the weaknesses and the virtues of business girls. In those lists I found a remarkable agreement. Among the virtues most often listed were: honesty, sincerity (defined often as hatred of hypocrisy), faithfulness, promptness, accuracy. Other girls said, "the business girl can be counted on," "she makes a good friend," "she is self-reliant and reliable," etc. Her weaknesses as listed by herself were most interesting—I copy from some of the papers: "the everlasting vanity bag," "the longing for clothes," "the temptation to have a good time," "no real interest in the work," "carelessness," "shirking," "complaining of work," "a craze for amusements," "lying about the things she does weekends," "flirting," "spending all she earns," etc.

It seemed to me as I read and reread the lists

that no one could, even by long study, observation and association, analyze the business girl more clearly than she had analyzed herself.

Her employer says that she *is* careless, that he has to waste his valuable time repeating directions and orders, that her English and her spelling are a great annoyance to him, that she will not take responsibility, that she is not worth more than nine or ten dollars, that he would gladly pay more for *satisfactory* help, that the business girl who receives the lowest salary receives it because she is worth no more, and that she is poorly prepared for her work. I believe that his criticism and her acknowledgment are not without foundation, and the fault lies with home and school. No community has a right to send its girls into any form of self-support *unfitted.* The home must be taught and inspired to place responsibility upon the child and to train her in habits of careful work. It does not so train her today, for it lacks vision. The school must be given a *chance* to train her in accuracy of expression, in the common branches of every-day English and spelling. It cannot so train her today because of the multitude of subjects it attempts to teach and the impossible number of pupils that one teacher is required to

handle. I stood in a classroom the other day where there were sixty pupils taking a lesson in shorthand. The lesson period was one half-hour. There was absolutely no opportunity for individual work, the room was dimly lighted and one could see at a glance how poorly prepared for office work such pupils would be, despite the good and conscientious work of the teacher. The business man, annoyed and handicapped by poor help, must not content himself with criticizing the schools but must give himself to the task of demanding better conditions for the preparation of workers. The parent must not content himself with a tirade against the employer of Edith or Louise but must resolve so to train her that she will have abilities which seldom fail to earn promotion. To fit the young worker for her work is a *community* task, it belongs to *home* and *city*.

It is true that the "vanity bag" is a great means of wasting time. Countless business girls have never been told that one should dress in the morning for her day's work so that hair will not have to be arranged between letters. Adults take for granted that she *knows* that once she sits at her desk or enters her office, her mind should be upon her work, but adults them-

selves *know* much which they do not translate into action, and it is only by being constantly reminded and inspired that one forms the desirable habit of strict attention to the work in hand. Business girls need such inspiration, they need to be shown that concentration is the key to the mastery of every subject or task—the open sesame to success. While we laugh about advice given to youth it is nevertheless true that youth thinks more deeply than we give it credit for, and the young business girl who writes me: "*Mr. —— says that a miracle has happened to me during the past month, and he has made my salary fourteen dollars a week! All this because of the inspiration for faithful service I received at the Conference*" is typical of what might happen to many a young girl challenged to measure up to her best. It is easy to drift, and all girlhood needs the *call*. A real interest in her work and the kindling of the ambition to excel in it is the best competitor for the vanity bag. "The days are gone now before I know it," said a formerly careless, indifferent girl who had seen a vision. It is the privilege of the community to furnish inspiration to its young girl workers through continuation courses,

through lectures and through wide-awake, well-chosen books upon the library shelves especially set apart for business women and girls. What the employer finds in his business magazines, Rotary Club or special conventions, his employed office staff *should* find *somewhere.*

The girl who lives for evenings and week-ends, to whom work is an awful necessity to be endured because there is no escape, can be found in every office building. She will change positions often but none of them will be right. Her salary will always be small, her employer inconsiderate, those who work with her disagreeable. She is the type of girl who through dinner, theater, the dance, falls easily into grave temptations that so often prove her undoing. To help her is a difficult matter. The late hours mean poor health and consequent lack of the vitality which quickens interest. The association with different men who offer her the opportunity to gratify her desire for excitement and a good time leaves her unsatisfied and restless. She needs wholesome *group* good times of a simple nature with opportunity to express herself. I have witnessed during the past year or more the complete transformation of a girl who when I first knew her would go to almost any length to secure an

invitation from men friends and acquaintances for theater, dance, "movies" or, in the summer, a trip to shore or park. She was persuaded to join a club of girls numbering about a hundred. She went for ten days to their summer camp and the experience there gave her new visions, the old method of "managing" to have a good time grew distasteful and she gave herself more and more to the activities of the club, and was elected to office. The men she met at the occasional special evenings and entertainments were of a higher order than she had known. Her dress reflected the change in herself; she wore no more last year's "best clothes" and "best shoes" to the office but dressed in good *business girl* taste. Her new interest in life shows in her work, and in every way her improvement is most marked. What she had needed she found—friends a little older and of higher type than she, but alive, full of fun, ambition and hope. These girls knew how to enjoy evenings and Saturdays and come back to work "fit." I know of no case that demonstrates more fully the power of leadership that lies in the hands of the older business girl. She may make what she will of her younger sister. Before the problems of business-girl life are solved the older girl must be awakened to her

duty and privilege toward the younger girl. She has the first-hand contact.

The business girl as a rule has better food, a better place in which to live and better preparation for life than her industrial sister. She has more of resource and initiative. She needs leadership rather than guidance and specific direction. Right here so many of the agencies that want to help her, fail. They try to do things *for* her rather than *with* her. The Y. W. C. A., when it has recognized these facts, has been of inestimable value to her. If it has organized a business women's branch, with a special secretary and an executive committee chosen from the business women themselves, it will succeed. Business girls are accustomed to business methods and are able to conduct their own business affairs with dignity and skill. They are eager to finance their own work as far as they are able and are willing to deny themselves in order to do it. The gymnasium and the swimming-pool make a particular appeal to the business girl, and every city, either through its municipal buildings or through its Christian Association, should offer her both. It will be an investment paying large dividends in the health and efficiency of the girls.

The business girl responds not only to the

right sort of recreation, but also to the call to self-improvement through evening classes. I met, a while ago, a group of metropolitan business girls in a current-events class that was a liberal education. I have met them in numberless Bible classes where they are doing intelligent and definite work. I have found them in first aid classes, in Spanish classes, in reading clubs.

The business girl is self-sacrificing and heroic in spirit as is her industrial sister. Within the week it has been my privilege to work in close touch with a Business Girls' Council, numbering in all about three thousand young women and girls, upon the task of raising five thousand dollars for war work. The executive committee of the Council had a banquet at which the appeal was heard and the plans made. The *personnel* of this committee was most interesting. They were girls who hold positions of responsibility in the leading business firms of a great city. A woman of leisure who attended the banquet said, with deep earnestness, "I feel so inadequate and inefficient in their presence. They are such fine specimens of young womanhood, so far-sighted and clear-minded." And it was true. Every one of them had earned her position and the increase in salary that went with it. As the

campaign progressed, we were able to see the "stuff" of which the business girl is made. She has raised that five thousand dollars by sacrifice, and even the youngest recruit in the business ranks has contributed. Girls have walked to business, have economized on lunch, given up Christmas gifts, put aside the hope for winter coats and furs, worked evenings, in fact reached out in every direction as well as deep down into their own pockets to meet the need. More than half the business girls in this Council have dependents—mothers, invalid sisters, brothers, fathers. Very few are wholly without financial burdens. Many have neither time nor strength to vary the routine of their days by real pleasure which would be refreshing and upbuilding, but they accept in a wonderfully philosophical spirit the duties and the burdens. They are a glorious company, and were they suddenly to drop out of their offices tomorrow morning their city would be in a chaotic state indeed.

Business girls have many needs. They need better preparation, and better pay. The salaries they receive are altogether inadequate to the standard of living they ought to be able to maintain. The salary should insure a decent and comfortable place in which to live, enough

nourishing food and suitable clothing. It should be enough to encourage thrift and make unnecessary the woefully pathetic economies of the young business girl—especially the thousands of girls living away from home.

The business girl needs clean amusement and recreation for the reasonable sum that she can pay. The community should give it to her. She needs the protection of good laws relating to the moral condition of places where she may be permitted to work, the hours overtime, the sanitary condition of offices. She needs health insurance and thrift organizations. She needs the protection of a welfare worker in every large office building, who can be friend and adviser and can set and maintain standards. She needs the church, a living, vitalized church, interested in her, acknowledging the debt of society to her, eager to *give her what she wants*, to make a place where she can effectually serve—for the business girl is solidly against *take* with no demand to *give*. She needs the incentives, ideals and challenges which the church ought to be able to give.

The business girl marries, and only a very small proportion of girls trained in business prove inefficient home-makers. They are not, as

a rule, afraid of hardship, they willingly accept motherhood. Many of the happiest homes I have known have been the homes of trained business girls.

The life of the business girl is a strain, it is keyed high, it has many powerful and subtle temptations, but there is today no more self-reliant, dependable, efficient group of women in America than the business girls who have made good. If the community will seek to be worthy of them, to give them opportunity for a just return for their labors, they will march steadily on to even more valuable service in the new democracy of which we dream.

VII

THE SCHOOLGIRL

THE SCHOOLGIRL

SHE is as varied in type as her industrial or business sister. As with them, certain definite characteristics distinguish her. To me her great outstanding characteristic is her spontaneity, her vivacity, in short, her *youth*. The schoolgirl of eighteen, and the industrial and the business girl of the same age present contrasts that compel one to think. As a rule the industrial girl bears on her face the marks of care. She has been two, even four years doing her part in the whirl of industry, and a certain weariness records itself in her eyes. The business girl has already acquired the keen look that "sizes up" people and things, and the pressure of the business day added to the evening hours when she seeks recreation means that she has early lost the carefree expression one finds upon the face of the schoolgirl. Her eyes have often lost their sparkle and there is a noticeable lack of resilience. The average high-school girl, a senior at eighteen, or the college freshman of the same age, appears to be, in the majority of cases, just what she is called—a girl. Womanhood and

its cares come late to her. At sixteen and at twenty-two the same comparisons are true. The schoolgirl keeps a freshness, an interest and enthusiasm that one covets for all girls.

As a rule the girl who remains in school after her sixteenth year comes from a home where *enough, plenty* or *abundance* sums up conditions. Occasionally over-abundance must be added. She belongs to the more fortunate daughters of men. She represents varied spheres of life, but she has a chance to reach a more or less full development before the pressure of responsibilities and burdens falls heavily upon her. If every American girl could be given the advantages of school until twenty-one and then enter upon the duties of home-making, business or industry, trained and fitted to meet them, America would soon be a paradise. The trained mind has resources, the developed body has reserves which give a spiritual poise and balance that mean power.

Only a very small percentage of American girlhood continues school beyond the grades, a still smaller proportion beyond the high school. As long as this statement remains a fact, there will be dangerous and regrettable cleavages in society. How the school years of every Amer-

ican girl may be prolonged is a question worthy the study of the keenest and most far-seeing minds, as well as the most patriotic.

When we study the girl at close range during her high-school years we can see clearly the dangers that menace her highest development. She often enters the high school with a wrong scale of values for which she is not personally responsible.

In the ordinary grammar school she has been associated with all the pupils of the grade. She has looked upon her "class" or "room" as a unit. There has been little departmental work and practically no division into groups. She has prepared most of her lessons in school, studying under the eye of the teacher. These conditions she leaves behind in June, and in September is plunged into a system and set of circumstances wholly new. The high school is conducted upon an absolutely different plan. She is about fourteen years of age, which means that she is in the midst of a series of rapidly changing physical and mental conditions. She finds many of the faces familiar to her in the grade school missing —the girls have gone to work. She is aware sub-consciously if not consciously of a difference:

she is to go on in school, they must earn their living.

No one who has taught girls of this period in the public or the Sunday school or in clubs and organizations of various sorts fails to be very conscious of the barrier which rises at this time between the girls of the high school and the girls of the shop and factory. In places where the junior high school with vocational guidance has been successfully established, this break comes much more naturally and gradually and under conditions far less marked. Lacking this preparation, the fourteen-year-old girl finds herself in a comparatively small division or group organized upon her future hopes as a basis. That is, if she hopes to enter business life she finds herself in the commercial division, class, or, if the city is large, the Commercial or English High School. Other girls with whom she played freely and associated happily in the lower grades she finds in the Classical High School or, in the smaller towns, in the college preparatory or classical division. Unaccustomed to departmental work, she places an importance upon these divisions which is unfair to herself and her friends. She reveals very soon, not the appreciation of the value of college training, but the

recognition of the fact that here is a girl who can go to college, here is one who will enter the normal school and another who will enter business life. In her thought she establishes a social gradation. Within a week I have heard the following very suggestive comment: "Did you say Alice was in the college division? I had no idea she had money enough to go to college!" An eighteen-year-old girl said it, and at first thought it seems a harmless remark, but it places a definite money value upon college. It draws a line of cleavage with a gold pencil. A little later at a church social for high-school girls, I heard: "Barbara D—? No, she isn't here. She goes over to the Classical. She goes around with the swells. She's going to college." It was said by a girl in the commercial department of the "English High." It revealed much that ought not to exist in a democracy. In places where the junior high school has been effective, the groupings which we must have if our girls are to be especially prepared for their coming tasks have been brought about naturally and the younger girl thinks little of it. More than that, the study of the various vocations by all the girls has made them appreciate the value of *all* vocations, their interrelation and interdependence, and

wise studies in civics have given to them new concepts of the meaning of *community* and *cooperation* which are denied girls who plunge into high-school work directly from the ordinary class work of the grades. What has been accomplished in the difficult task of democratizing girlhood makes us hopeful for the future and eager that all girls should have the training which shall establish a right scale of values. What one *is*, not what one *has*, must be the future measuring-rod of women. Those women are being made now.

When mothers grow wise enough to dress their schoolgirl daughters becomingly but with true simplicity, we shall take a long step forward. The present gain in this line promises much. It may be that school faculties need also a deeper realization of true values, for at times one detects a hint of the feeling that the teachers in certain departments of the high school, certain buildings or grades of the grammar school are higher up in the social scale or of greater value to the community. Any such lurking feeling is bound to bear fruit unworthy of a noble profession. Not what *subject* one teaches to a girl, not the *place* where one teaches, but *what* one teaches is the standard of measurement.

All men and women interested in the welfare of girlhood must see to it that the education of today fits it for that world democracy of tomorrow for which millions now suffer and die. America needs to humanize all her educational work, but most of all that of her colleges.

A new spirit has been gradually entering college walls in recent years and can be powerfully felt today. The college girl in the main has grown democratic in spirit, in act as well as in word, as is evidenced by no one thing more than by the lessening hold and in many cases the disappearance of the sorority—a thing which has no right to exist in the educational institutions of a democracy. The majority of college girls today accept their privilege as a responsibility. The increasing number preparing to enter the professions whose object and passion is human welfare, the list of colleges at present represented in welfare undertakings, in preventive and reconstruction work which demands great sacrifice, long hours and little money return, is one of the most encouraging things that has come about in the world of women in a generation. The college door must however be opened far wider than at present, that the largest number possible may be

given the advantages which higher education brings.

Although more protected and living a more natural and normal life than most of her sisters, the schoolgirl is not without temptations. In common with all girlhood, she shares the temptation to procrastinate and to trust the last moment's "cram" to do for her what faithful daily work could more easily do; she finds it easy to yield to the temptation to "get by" or to sacrifice honesty on the altar of a passing mark. She finds it hard to resist the temptation to have a "good time" even at the cost of great sacrifice on the part of parents or neglect of studies and home duties. *She finds it difficult to keep her standards of purity always high, and when unwise school boards and parents permit abuse of the school dance, class party, and countless other forms of expression of social impulses desirable in themselves, she may be in very real danger.* A wholesome out-of-door life, food, sleep, exercise and good companions make for her safety, but they often seem so commonplace that she passes them by.

The greatest needs in the life of the school and college girl from thirteen to twenty-two are inspiration, leadership and direction. Given

normal conditions of home life or well-disciplined dormitory life, the schoolgirls of America are safe if in their classrooms they can come daily in contact with men and women greater than the text-books from which they teach and the courses of study they follow; great enough to sympathize with and understand the dreams and hopes of youth, and to direct them into right channels of expression; great enough to be able to lead their girls out into a real world where men and women struggle to find the way to happiness for their children; great enough to inspire them with a passion to contribute their full share to the solution of life's problems, to cooperate with any who toil unselfishly for the good of all, and share the burden that all girlhood must bear today if it is not to be left to rest even more heavily upon the shoulders of the girls of tomorrow.

VIII

THE GIRL AT HOME

THE GIRL AT HOME

WHEN one speaks the word "home" in these days, so many pictures of the places which people call by that sacred name flash upon his mental screen that he is at once confused. The other night one of the girls whom I greatly admire bade me good-bye saying, "Well, I must hurry home." I caught my breath at the word. There were cold, poverty, illness and misery in that home. She could hardly bear up under the awful burden. It was in a neighborhood wearing the marks of rapid degeneration, and "home" was three small rooms at the end of a hopelessly dark hall, sadly in need of repairs. Two or three days before, after talking with hundreds of women and girls, I had entered a luxurious machine and heard a girl of Florence's age say one word to the chauffeur, "Home." The memory of the glory of the sunset, the white stretches of the park, the artistic, well-built house, the pictures, the fireplaces, the air of warmth and comfort, protection and refinement, the dainty room, perfect in its appointments, all this was *home* to her, and all the way between,

in the long line stretching from poverty to luxury, I could see the homes of the American girl.

But I am not to attempt in this study to follow the girl into the varied types of homes in the mountains and on the prairies, in the country and the city, but rather to emphasize a few things that knowledge of and friendship with girls have made stand out so definitely that one cannot miss their significance.

Except in cases where serious illness or the mother's death have made it absolutely necessary, there are no girls from sixteen to twenty-five in poverty-stricken homes. Where there is poverty, the daughter of the house goes early to work. The girls at home in America today are in homes of comfort or luxury, or they are in isolated places where, having early exhausted the school privileges, they are sharers in the domestic duties of simple homes where food and comfortable clothing are supplied.

The one great outstanding characteristic of the girl at home in America, as I have known her, seems to be her discontent. If she becomes a part of the social machine immediately after finishing-school or boarding-school or, in the past, continental training, she usually lives a

very busy, hurried, exciting and interesting life. For two, in rare cases three years, she finds satisfaction in it. If during that time she marries, her future is, in a sense, marked out for her. If she does not—the restlessness begins to manifest itself. She *must* have something to do, she tells me. She is often a splendid specimen of young womanhood, physically and mentally sound. To give her energies some field of expression, I find her "studying" more or less seriously. Sometimes it is art, often music. Now and then she decides, even in the face of great opposition, to train as a physician or nurse, and in exceptional cases she carries it through. Or she believes that she can write, and searches all phases of life for material and atmosphere. Often she begins to show a very deep interest in *causes*. Sometimes it is suffrage, again child welfare, now and then she develops a strong socialistic or radical sense and, as far as she is permitted to do so, makes associations with people who are "advanced" in thought as she believes herself to be. Occasionally she turns to the church as a field in which to express her life and energy. Often, unsatisfied by any of these means by which she seeks to train herself to contribute to life and enjoy it, she drifts from one to another and the splendid

power of her womanhood is wasted or lost. Often her lack of a great consuming interest explains the slow loss of that radiant health with which nourishing food, fresh air, exercise and scrupulous care for eighteen or twenty years had endowed her.

I see her in New York, Chicago and Boston. I meet her in the mountains or on the shore. I see her in California or Florida. She is busy—very busy. Sometimes she tells me that she has had a hectic winter. When she drops the restraint that good breeding has given her, she tells me that she is discontented and unhappy. She says the most loyal things of her father, and many a mother would thrill with joy if she could hear her daughter's testimony as to her goodness and greatness. She ends by saying that "neither father nor mother understands"—which is perfectly true. Her father believes that when he has given her *things* he has done his best. He has met every demand for her education, he has given generously to meet all her social requirements. That the long process of her development should be in any way a failure, he could not, except in rare cases, understand. Her mother has done her best. In every last detail she has been faithful. She has prepared her daughter

for the sphere in which she expects her to move. But her mother married when she was twenty, and home interests, her children, her social life and conventional charitable work claimed her full time. When her daughter leaves the shelter of her beautiful home and goes down to the dark streets over which the elevated trains crash and roar, to give the latter part of an afternoon to teaching a class of little, pale, anæmic daughters of the poor and unfortunate to sew, and returns for dinner troubled, silent, unmoved by the prospect of theater or opera for the evening, that mother *does not understand.* Her daughter has grown accustomed to theater and opera. Of late she has acquired a deep interest in the human beings who play the parts in each. She is confused and puzzled by the grave contrasts she sees in life. She writes, pathetically it seems to me, "There *is* something *wrong* in the great extremes one sees in city life. I do not believe that giving a part of my allowance and teaching a class on Thursdays and Sundays is a fair contribution. *I want to do something worth while.*"

"I want to do something worth while" gives hope to all those who are studying closely the girlhood of today that they may see what

are the signs of promise for the womanhood of tomorrow.

I believe that the girl who does not expect to "earn her own livelihood" must be taught that duty and self-respect demand that her life shall be in some fashion a real contribution to the welfare of the human race. She should be trained to shrink from the thought of receiving without giving, as from the thought of any other disgrace. One of the things in life that most deeply impresses me is the mighty power of an intangible ideal. It reaches down and out and up until it affects all life, just how or when one cannot say. Just a little while ago, a woman told me with pride and satisfaction of her daughter's presentation at the German court, of the attention paid her, because of her rare beauty and accomplishments, by officers of the highest ranks in "the military," of all the honors in the social world that had already come to her. That woman has two sons. One is now a non-commissioned officer in one of our large cantonments, the other is in the aviation service. The daughter, who was presented amidst such pomp and splendor at court, has married a young non-commissioned officer in the American Army. She is living in a very ordinary hotel so as to be near him as long as she can before he must go over-

seas. Then she plans to go into her father's office, where help is greatly needed. *And the mother is content.* But before the war she would not permit any attentions to her daughter on the part of the young man she has married. That mother never mentions the German court now. She says nothing of "the military." An ideal has seized even her ambitious soul—the ideal of democracy *versus* autocracy. And the ideal reaching out into all the ramifications of social life has made it seem perfectly natural and right for her daughter to marry the man who, when he enlisted, was only one young lawyer among thousands who had hopes and dreams.

If the ideals of democracy can persist after the war, our girls who are not expected or obliged to earn their own livelihood can be free to marry young and *start homes in simple fashion.* They can be trained to believe in simplicity of living, to believe that duty demands that children come to share their homes and that those children have a right to be brought up by their *mothers* and their *fathers.* They can be trained to see the glory of simple home life without drudgery, with time and strength for normal recreation. They can be led to believe that the nation which can evolve an economic and industrial life in which

homes may be started and maintained without that awful, deadly, soul-destroying *fear* of impending poverty or that sickening, joy-killing passion for social ladders on which to climb, will be the nation to survive longest and to rise to greatest heights of usefulness and success. They can breathe in the atmosphere of cooperation instead of competition; they can absorb the principles of humanitarian instead of commercialized governments of free peoples. When that old Virginia patriot said, "Liberty is in the very air," he spoke the truth. Girlhood breathes in from the very air more than can ever be directly and concretely taught her. *But it must be in the air.* At present it is only upon the mountain-tops.

I believe that every girl who will at the close of her school training enter upon a life at home must be trained to believe that duty and self-respect as well as personal happiness demand that she should earnestly and devotedly give herself to some one of the following or kindred means of service to the world which is constantly contributing to her welfare. She should know, by supervised observation or study under competent leadership, the conditions under which childhood and girlhood live and attempt to develop in her city or country home; she should know conditions of

labor for girls in her community; she should be intelligent on matters of local and national government, regardless of whether she expects or desires the franchise; she should be intelligent on matters of income and taxation and on matters of laws affecting the lives and privileges of children, girls and women—*that is, she should spend some part of each day or some entire days in the effort to become an intelligent, sane, well-balanced human being able to bear her share of the burden of working out the world's problems.* Girls who between eighteen and twenty have been and are devoting one hour a day to reading, study, discussion or instruction on such matters have enough material for thought to supply their active minds and need not seek out later the "isms" to satisfy their mental hunger. The years from eighteen to twenty-five should not be years of mental starvation or undisciplined will-o'-the-wisp endeavors to answer the need for mental food. Girls spending a part of their days in serious study of the causes of human success or failure, contrary to the belief of some, do not lose their interest in common men and common things, but they do develop power to make the men whose lives they may be asked to share much happier.

I believe that the girl at home, if she is to be saved from a self-centered existence and given an opportunity to enjoy life, must set aside certain hours of the day or week for direct service to others. Young girls need today, more than any other thing, *leadership*. The world of youth cries out for leadership—it is ready to go anywhere. The girl from eighteen to twenty-five, not obliged by circumstances to spend eight hours a day at a definite task, having herself been given athletic training, intelligent guidance in physical health and habits, and social advantages of every sort, ought to be able to furnish that leadership for younger girls. But today in America the churches, the Sunday schools, girls' clubs of every sort, the settlements, the day nurseries, the Y. W. C. A., the Camp Fire girls, the Girl Scouts, send out appeal after appeal in vain. Every effort for the welfare of girls handicapped by poverty or by carelessness, by lack of friendship and by undirected recreation, that I have seen fail or die during the last ten years has failed or died from lack of leadership. Many of the girls from eighteen to twenty-five, with whom this study is concerned, are prepared by natural gifts and training for such leadership, others can easily and in short courses secure definite training for defi-

nite tasks. When I suggest these girls as aids, to overburdened and earnest paid workers, they shrug their shoulders. "Absolutely undesirable," they tell me. "They cannot be depended upon. They serve as it pleases their fancy." "Not of much use in solving the problem. They will not take the work seriously," a finely trained and most successful college girl tells me. "I cannot depend upon any one of the four girls who thought she would like to play the piano for my gymnasium classes one night each week," says another young woman appealing for funds to pay a pianist upon whom she can depend.

Sometimes, in defending herself against these accusations, the girl at home tells me that she is very busy. I know she often is—with things that begin and end with self. Sometimes she tells me that she "is away so much of the time." I know—but it is not necessary that she should be. Often she tells me that she would gladly serve and longs to do so, but her *parents* are unwilling. I know—and here I am deeply sympathetic; the responsibility is lifted from her shoulders to theirs, and some of these parents are destined to have rude awakenings, as in pain and agony the new democracy finds its way to the light.

It does not seem fair that the young type-

writer, stenographer, bookkeeper, teacher, clerk who works eight hours a day should be asked to contribute other hours to voluntary work for the guidance of younger girls, but I find them in every church and Sunday school, in girls' clubs and Y. W. C. A., in every form of work for the other girl.

I believe that both the parents of the girl at home and the girl herself should realize that the day is coming when there shall be no parasites in the social order, when all women gladly and as though it were a high privilege will contribute, according to their ability and training, to the national life. In learning how to do this there will doubtless be many mistakes made. The over-zealous and the impatient will swing the pendulum too far, but it will return to a sane center from which growth is possible.

I have said practically nothing of the girl who, for various reasons, closed her school days upon graduation from the high school and is now a part of the life of the simple, comfortable, American home in city or town. She may belong to the group sharing the duties of the home with her mother, helping care for and train the younger children, entering into the family pleasures or finding enjoyment in her free time with

friends of her own choice. She is making a very definite contribution to community life in the work she does in that home, but one usually finds her sharing also the work of the church and helping out in other forms of organized welfare work. The danger is that she will drift through the days and lose touch with the great things of the world. One such girl told me recently that she never read the newspapers, nor did she read magazine articles on current topics or problems. She is letting her mind stagnate. This the girl at home must not do. She owes it to her community, to her family, to her future, to be well informed, intelligent, a human being alive in every fiber, who sees her own home precious and satisfying in relation to the great world in which those dear to her must work their way to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The girl who said good-bye to school days in the high or perchance the grammar school, and is at home sharing its duties and pleasures, may belong to the group I meet occasionally, a small group, comparatively speaking, in towns and manufacturing cities. The housework, which mother and daughter do themselves, is done in the morning, and I see them *shopping* in the afternoon, or going to the movies, to such matinees as

the place affords, to card-parties innumerable and teas copied after the pattern of larger cities and "society" people.

In the larger cities I find them wandering about department stores or thronging to the matinee twice a week, or to the movies whenever the program changes. They cannot talk with me about books, music, current events, great movements of human welfare. They do not seem interested in new ways and means for housekeeping. They can talk about matinee idols, clothes, movie stars, sensational novels, *and they can gossip.* These girls are receiving the training which will later, if they make homes, lead them into the group of kind-hearted, easy-going, self-centered, inefficient women who live right up to the limit of their husbands' incomes and sometimes beyond them, who have no idea of thrift, of duty or obligation to the community, no thought of preparation for the future. Save that they help do the work in the home, these girls contribute as little to the world's burden of work and life, as little to its real pleasure and happiness as do their sisters of larger means, whom, as a rule, they envy.

Over against these *girls at home,* as in every other group into which girls may be divided,

one finds, in homes of large incomes and small, the girls from eighteen to twenty-five whose strong, wise mothers and sane fathers are directing their daughters' energies into channels of real service and usefulness, giving them plenty of wholesome pleasure, encouraging them in attempts to find their places in a world big enough, varied enough and needy enough to demand the service of all. America is rich in service that is invaluable, being contributed by girls who have lost the first intensive interest in society's treadmill and have not yet seen enough of life to make them certain as to where they may best put themselves.

Interests deep, intense and real the American girl at home from eighteen to twenty-five must have if she is to keep normal, well and happy. The war has revealed in a few months all her pent-up eagerness for a place in the world's work. Girls eighteen to twenty-five are very eager for worth-while things to do. With some it is of course a fad,—the thing to do,—and they will not assume difficult tasks or training, nor will they *stand by*. They belong to the group eager, as one girl expressed it, "to have a wonderful ball or a great pageant or some theatricals to which every one would come, and we could give

the money for candy or kits or something for the soldiers. The *rehearsals* would be such *fun!*" They are willing to work hard having a good time, the surplus money to be devoted to some object needing help. Usually the surplus is small, but that does not keep them from further efforts. But with most it is not a fad. They are dead in earnest. They are working without pay eight or ten hours. They are willing, if the need shall come, to take the places in industry left vacant by lack of man-power, they are training in hospitals, in first-aid stations, as stenographers and accountants, hoping to be really needed. They are not doing it for praise, nor for a halo, nor for credit, nor as "society girls." They are doing it in answer to need.

A small group of girls in one of our great cities, seeing the necessity for standing together, laid far-reaching plans for a league of girlhood that promised real service. Because of the prominence of their families, hints regarding the organization appeared on the "society page" in the leading papers. Two of the girls sought out the editors of those papers, assured them that this was not a "society" event, that it had no place on that page, that it was a movement of *all* the girls to get together and stand together for

the good of *all*, and asked that it be treated as an important civic and community matter. The men, impressed by the earnestness and sincerity of the girls, treated the movement with dignity and the result was marvelous. The girls of the city, the whole city, in every phase of its life, five thousand of them, did get together, and the work organized is meaning much in that city's life. The spirit of genuine and sincere effort on the part of girls to get together and in mutual appreciation each of the other to accomplish things is one of the great indications of the coming of the new order.

It may be that in time the "society page" will disappear from the daily press, that the public will cease to display any interest whatever in that part of its constituency which *takes* without a fair and just *return*. When that time comes, *the girl at home* will have found adequate employment for her talents and energies, will have found happiness as well, and, added to all that, will be in training for her part in the greatest, best and finest of all the tasks which can come to a girl, that of making for herself a home fit for the children who will be the world of tomorrow.

IX

THE COMMUNITY—DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

THE COMMUNITY—DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

I BELIEVE that every community, be it village, town or city, is a debtor to its youth. There are certain things which it owes to a girl from the moment she comes into it, helpless and dependent, until the time when she is fitted to assume her full share of responsibility.

The average community is ignorant of that debt, is indifferent to it or unwilling to pay it. America has needed, for a long time, a campaign of education regarding its debts. There have been many sporadic and spasmodic attempts which have opened the door and paved the way for a more intelligent and definite plan by which all communities may be led to pay their debts. The Child Welfare Bureau established at Washington in nineteen hundred twelve is the one big, hopeful sign that the nation is stirring in its sleep. But although progress has been made, there is still on the part of many communities less interest in propaganda regarding the housing, feeding, clothing and training of children than in any other phase of community life.

I saw not long since a great gathering of men who met to witness a demonstration of hog-raising. They willingly gave time for the necessary travel, money for tickets and other expenses; they studied charts with great interest and listened eagerly to addresses. The majority of these men were fathers of children, but that night they went contentedly to their homes enthusiastic about what they had learned regarding hogs, and less than a dozen of them attended a well-advertised and carefully planned child welfare conference, led and addressed by experts on child conservation.

Men and women follow their lines of interest. They willingly give time and money for that which seems to them important. They make the *greatest sacrifices* for those things that seem to them to be of *supreme* importance. The American community does not yet believe the conservation and development of its childhood to be of supreme importance. Only persistent, unremitting education and continual propaganda can bring it to the place where it puts the proper relative value on children, hogs, cattle and money. The present moment, when the great world struggle is helping men readjust their scale of values, is a good time in which to launch

plans for educating the public to believe that the most important product of any community is its childhood; that it owes a debt, in many instances an enormous debt, to its youth, and that if it hopes for a future nation equal to the mighty tasks that will await it, the debt must be paid.

Rather than enumerate the varied forms which that debt assumes, I am going to reproduce here a few short paragraphs written by girls themselves.

It was during a summer conference before America entered the war that I asked the girls ranging in age from fifteen to nineteen to write for me one hundred and fifty to two hundred words on the subjects, "What America Owes Me" and "What I Owe to America." I said we would personify America and we would address whatever we wrote to her directly as if presenting a case; that we would begin in this fashion: "It is my sincere belief, O America, that there are certain things which you owe to me. I believe that you owe me—" and then make our statements clearly. Some of the papers follow:

"I believe that you owe me more room to live in. I never thought so much about it until I came up here. I have often wished to be by

myself but there was no place. Up here it is beautiful and you think about so many things you never thought of before. It seems as if there shouldn't always be a crowd around, in the factory and in the street and in the house, always a noise and quarreling and talking. I've got a little sister four years old and since I've been up here I've been thinking that she ought not to have to see and hear all the things she does. It's terrible and I had to see them too. I don't see how it can be managed but I think we ought to have more room We could keep clean easier. And you owe it to lots of us to get rid of drink. It gets our men sooner or later. I think it makes women dirty and lazy. There are plenty of saloons where I live, but there isn't a saloon in this place and I ain't heard a quarrel or anything like it since I came. It don't seem right to have to live where things are like they are at home. And then we ought to get more pay for our work or else get things cheaper. I don't suppose any of these things can be done but it seems to me it's what is owed us. I don't know if I'd be good if I could have these things the way I'd like them but I know I've been a different girl this week and I am sure if I could live like this I'd be a good deal better off." (*A girl of seventeen living in a crowded section of a great city and working in a corset factory.*)

"It is my sincere belief, O America, that there are certain things which you owe me. I believe you owe me an education. No one will ever know how much I want it. I do not want to stop school now. My mother could get along without me and she is willing. It would be all right if I had relatives in the city where I could stay but I haven't. Father says he would be glad to borrow money to pay my board if he could but he doesn't know any one to borrow from. My best friend is going into the city next year to school. Then she will go to the normal school and teach. That is what I want to do. I could manage about clothes because I'm not proud. But father simply cannot pay my board. I think America owes a girl an education if she wants it as much as I do and it doesn't seem right because you have to live in a little country place away from everything that you can't have an education. I'm working up here this summer and just come to this class. I am going to try to work and save and perhaps in two years I'll get enough to start but you forget so much while you are working and you get so old. Our state lets women vote now and when I am old enough I shall vote for some way to let girls have an education if they want it." (*A girl of fifteen, living on a small, unprofitable farm several miles from the railroad.*)

"I do not believe that America owes me anything which she has not given me. I never thought much about it until these discussions we have each morning made me think. I have a lovely home and so many friends. I am well and have all the pleasures a girl could want. Some of the girls I have met up here have none of these things. I cannot help asking why I should have so much for they are brave and kind and more generous than I am. I have been thinking about it a great deal and I am going to write on the second topic." (*A girl of seventeen whose home offers every privilege and advantage.*)

"I do not know whether America owes me what I want or not but it seems to me that somebody does. My mother died of tuberculosis when I was fourteen and I left school to take care of the children. There were four younger than I. I did the best I could for them but the youngest one who had always been very delicate died of pneumonia at the end of the first year. I missed her terribly and it was awfully hard doing the work and missing my mother and then the baby. The two boys couldn't help much. The boy next to me went to work on a farm as soon as he was fourteen and lived there. They are very good to him. I worked day and night to keep things nice on my father's pay which was small. Now I'm 'most nineteen. Last month he got married

and the woman he married don't want me. She would just as soon have the other two who are younger. So I've got to find work and a place to live. I'm not fitted to do anything. I haven't had any more education than grammar school. A woman in the church where I go sent me up here. The doctor says I must not work in a factory so she will try to find something for me to do. I'd like to study. I might be a nurse if I knew a little more. I don't suppose America owes me any of these things I want but neither do I owe her anything. I guess we're about even."

"I believe you owe me a good time, America. I see so many girls my age having such good times. I love to be outdoors. It's been like heaven up here. But I work long hours and it takes almost an hour to get home. By the time I get supper it's dark. The place where I live is awfully pokey. There is nothing doing and I can't afford to stay in town as some of the girls do. I've got acquainted with some boys who go in and out on my train and once in a while they ask me to something but I can't ask them to the house because it isn't convenient and my mother doesn't like it. So I just *work* and have as much fun as I can. But I believe every girl ought to have a good time while she's young. I'll be *eighteen* my next birthday."

As I read over the papers out under the trees that glorious summer day, it seemed to me that the things these two hundred girls requested of America were in the main quite fair. A great many girls expressed the thought that America had given them their full share of life's good things, and the others expressed the feeling that some one owed them what life had denied—a fair chance.

I believe that America does owe to every girl what the girl in the paragraph first quoted struggles to express. She cannot discuss the moral menace of overcrowding and its dangers to health, but she feels it; she resents the saloon, not because she realizes in any very large way its effect upon the life of the nation, but because she has *seen* what follows in its wake in the place where she lives; she could not argue on economic conditions, but she *feels* that a dollar ought to have larger purchasing value; she does not even lay the responsibility for her moral failures, whatever they are, upon these disadvantages of environment, but she vaguely senses the fact that environment does make a difference.

America is a debtor. She is a debtor to this girl and others like her just as long as the community permits overcrowding and unwholesome,

inadequate housing conditions. Of late America has been partly conscious of this debt and has here and there acknowledged it by extending park systems, setting apart streets for playgrounds and establishing roof gardens and municipal piers. America is a debtor to this girl and others like her just as long as she permits the saloon to invade the neighborhood where the girl must make her home and forces the menace of its temptations, with all the dire physical and moral consequences, upon the men and boys who make up her family and friends. America owes her and others like her the protection of surroundings that make for clean physical manhood and womanhood. The saloon never creates such surroundings.

America is in debt to her girlhood as long as communities permit an unreasonable difference between compensation received for labor and the cost of living. She is acknowledging a few of these debts, and now and then arises to struggle for justice against great odds.

In fact, girlhood, for so long at great disadvantage, for so long a creditor who could not collect, may feel a thrill of hope. Present-day girlhood will not receive payment in full, but will see the dawn of the new day and share in it.

America has found that she can pull herself together and act as a unit, and when the present conflict is over and democracy has won, she will use that new-found united force upon some things in her own community life. The most promising thing about America is that when she *sees*, she acts. She is often slow in seeing and she pays dearly for it. The duty of those who do see is plain—they must make America see. As we have said, there must be a campaign of education.

I believe that the girl who dimly felt that there ought to be a way by which she could complete her education, even if she did chance to be born in an isolated community with very limited resources, is right. I think America is a debtor to every bright, eager girl, hungry for knowledge and consumed with a desire for study. I am glad that some day she "will vote for it." It is not a thing impossible to grant. America acknowledges that an educated, intelligent, liberty-loving people is the greatest asset of any nation. She has far too large a proportion of illiterates now, and she has too small a proportion of those who can claim a *liberal* education. Great as has been her educational system, it has not yet reached its maximum power. The girl in the paragraph

quoted is not alone. She could command a fair-sized army if she called to her side all the girls in America who, like herself, "do not want to stop school." America will continue to be debtor to these girls and their brothers until it solves the problem and finds a way to give them their worthy desire.

I believe that America owes a debt to the girl who, at nineteen, after giving the five years of her fresh, young girlhood to the hard task of preserving a home, finds herself thrown upon her own untrained resources. Any one who has been in a position to receive the confidences of girls knows what a multitude of shattered hopes and dreams follows in the wake of accident or death which robs the home of father or mother and leaves the heavy burden of support or home-keeping upon the young shoulders of the eldest boy or girl. Then when the younger children are self-supporting, or through marriage the home is again able to care for itself, these young burden-bearers are set adrift, unable to fill the places which might easily have been theirs had they been given opportunity for training. Just what the community can do for these victims of circumstances, no one at the moment is able to decide, but when once it believes that it owes a debt

to youth, when it accepts the fact that the conservation of every atom of human power is its supreme task, no life which can by training be fitted to earn an adequate and satisfactory livelihood and to contribute to the general welfare of society will be left to waste the years in trying to find a place to "fit in." The girl who faithfully struggled through five years to keep a home has many of the best qualifications of a nurse. The community could do no better act than to provide for her special training with opportunity for a regular course later on if she can prove her worth. As it is, discontented and half developed, she will try first this thing, then that, either to find her place accidentally or to settle down in resignation to give service which, because it is not suitable, is but half-hearted at best. The conservation of the powers of American youth is not an act of charity, it is an act of justice, common sense and true patriotism. The day will come when the community, through some definite and responsible agency, will make self-supporting, useful and happy citizens out of its unfortunate victims of accident, disease, sin and poverty. That is, it will make intelligent connections between the work of the world that

must be done and the people who can, if trained and directed, best do it.

America owes a debt to every girl born under its flag or seeking refuge in its free democracy. America has the proud record of a nation that pays its debts. I believe that, becoming rapidly conscious of this particular debt, the present generation will not pass before she sets in motion machinery adequate to the task of paying it.

When I began to look through the papers on "What I Owe to America," with renewed conviction I told my soul that the American girl, made up of all the daughters of all the people, despite her apparent frivolous, careless irresponsibility, is deeply loyal and has great capacity for sacrifice for her country if the need should come. I did not dream then that any immediate test of loyalty would come. Now it is here and she is measuring up to its call. That summer afternoon I read:

> "I believe that every girl owes something to America. She can be happier in America than anywhere in the world. She has the privilege of an education and it is easier to get it than anywhere else in the world. People respect her if she works and she has many kinds of work to choose from. I believe every girl owes it to her

country to obey the laws and to do right so that the country can go on growing greater every year." (*A girl of fifteen attending a business college.*)

"As I said in writing on the first topic, I do not believe that America owes me anything for I have so much. But I've been thinking lately and especially since coming up here that I owe her a great deal. I believe that I ought to help girls who are less fortunate than I and little children who have hardly enough food and clothing. I think it is true that America is so large and has so many problems that she has a right to ask for help from those who have everything. I believe that I owe America any service I can give to the people who need help. I do not believe it is right for me to be so extravagant and to think just about myself. I do not know what I shall do for I am still in school but I am going to study about these things and next year I am going to try to help America, as Mr. D—— said the other day, 'live up to her ideals of liberty, justice and happiness for every one.' I know I owe America a share in all the good things I have." (*The seventeen-year-old girl who said America owed nothing to her.*)

"I owe America all I have because I came from —— to this country when I was a baby. My brothers and sisters were all born here. My father and mother have worked hard and they

have done very well. I graduated from the high school this year. If I were a very good scholar I could go to college but my brother is so much smarter than I am that he is going and I am going to try the civil service examinations and do office work. I have taken the commercial course in the high school at —— where we all go to school. My father has a farm and that is the way he has earned money and he is a carpenter and builder. If we had stayed in ——, my brothers when they grew up would have to serve in the army. But the worst thing, my father says, is the taxes. In America they do not take all you have for taxes. You can harvest your own crops and you do not have to report them. When my father was a young man, my grandfather had a fine crop all ready to harvest and one of the big land-owners had a big crop. He said that all the men must come and harvest *his* crop and my grandfather and my father had to go and leave their own crop. The women could not harvest it alone and the best was spoiled, so my grandfather lost his crop and had to pay heavy taxes just the same. That winter he had to buy his food. That happened more than once but in this country it never happens. My father has told us many times that in this country we all have a chance. If the boys stay poor it will be their own fault. This is the Land of Liberty. So I owe my nice home and the chance to choose what I want to do and every-

> thing I have to America and so I must pay her with good service and good work and the laws she asks me to obey, I must obey." (*A girl of twenty born in Germany.*)

The other papers, I find, vary little in expression. The girls feel that they owe to America their "opportunity for an education," "the chance to work," their "many pleasures," "all the privileges that girls of most other countries do not enjoy." In payment for these privileges they pledge, in nearly every case, service and obedience to law. Many of the girls from homes where every advantage has been theirs express the feeling that they owe it to America to help in the great social and economic problems. All this is significant to me, for it indicates during the ten years that I have been asking girls to write on these topics a growing sense of the feeling of responsibility for things as they are and as they ought to be, on the part of every type of girl, as over against the very noticeable attitude of despair of ever making conditions any better on the part of girls who knew the struggles and burdens of life, and indifference or unwillingness to assume any responsibility on the part of those to whom life had given much.

Today the girl who is a burden-bearer herself has hope for her younger sisters. She has determination, too. She reads along lines of social problems and she attends lectures that deal with the relations of men to each other. She talks in high school about community civics, she has a sense of her own value and power in American life that is giving to her the self-respect which adds great moral force to her life. And today the girls who have every advantage and privilege are conscious of a very definite demand that some one or something is constantly making upon mind and conscience. They cannot satisfy that demand with occasional gifts of money that mean little sacrifice. They are slowly coming to the conclusion and seeking in numberless ways to express it that *taking* and giving no return is undemocratic and un-American. They are asking of themselves not only "How much did she *give?*" but "How much does she take?"

Since America has entered the war, the desire to *give* on the part of all types of American girlhood has found a means of expression, and it is most heartening and encouraging to sit with a group of girls toiling hard in the factories, a group of high-school girls, a group of girls in boarding school or just out, and hear the words

"duty," "we ought," "if we only could," "How can we truly serve?" "No one should be idle now," "I think it is *wicked* to plan a selfish summer this year." All this reveals anew the fact that deep in the human heart a sense of justice and a desire to be of use is unfailingly written. Great moments call for its expression. In the accepted and accustomed ways of life it is easily lost. But it need not be lost. America can be trained to believe that called of God as she is to demonstrate that government of the people, by the people, for the people *can* endure, she must establish a community and national life in which there are none who shirk, in which *all groups will to share the burdens of each group and each group shares the burdens of all.* America can be educated to believe in the potential power and value of every human life within her borders, and in patience and perseverance to guide and direct that human life into the place where it shall serve the whole and find happiness for itself in the serving.

America must, then, be convinced of the truth that she is debtor and creditor to every girl; that she owes to her the opportunity for the fullest development of body, mind and soul; that she has the right to demand that in return for

the opportunity given, every girl shall live at her best and contribute her full share to the good of all.

It is, after all, the ideal of our Lord, which he did not relinquish even in persecution, misunderstanding, or facing the cross. Not on the basis of master and servant did he plan his Kingdom, but on the basis of friend with friend, neighbor with neighbor, each serving and each being served.

No political party will develop this sense of the community—debtor and creditor. It will not come on clouds of glory, nor will it come through any great upheaval. It will come through the *education* of the minds and consciences of the people, of *all* the people, until gradually they come to *desire* a national life based upon a fair exchange of what each has to give.

When it *does* come, to be an American girl, young, free, full of life and hope, will be to share in the realization of human happiness. Every American is responsible for the hastening of its coming.

X

THE NEW AMERICAN GIRL

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LITERATURE offers no more fascinating study of the change and development of ideals and standards than that given in its portrayal of girlhood. There was a time in literature when girlhood was an unknown quantity. The child appeared occasionally in the background, the woman in the foreground, the girl was lost in the shadows. When, finally, the girl heroine appeared, she was not only a portrayal of the standards by which her own age and sex were to be judged, but a revelation of the standards and characteristics of the community and the nation of which she was a part.

The delicate, fragile, sheltered, timid thing that wept and fainted upon the slightest provocation held for some time the center of the stage. She was the faithful portrayal of what society believed to be the desirable expression of refinement, the subtle acknowledgment of utter dependence upon the strength and protection of another. Over against this clinging, helpless, physically inefficient girlhood, the reader could most easily be made conscious of the strength and

chivalry of young manhood. The girl of that period was practically dehumanized, all the warm, natural, free expressions of human emotion were vulgar and common and must be portrayed by girls of the lower and serving classes.

Through the various cycles of the very pious, over-conscientious, painfully religious girl; the martyr girl with her submission to suffering, a submission in which there was neither reason nor common sense, and her agonies of self-analysis and penitence; the sentimental girl who raved through pages of rhapsody on mountains and sea, clouds and moon, rivers and brooks, and through chapters on love; the frivolous girl lost in an ocean of mad pleasure, dress and gayety, we follow the record. The girl hungry for knowledge held the center for a while, and her efforts for higher education, her treatment at the hands of her brothers who would send her back to the kitchen fireside, while she struggled on to intellectual freedom, were an interesting revelation of progress.

The athletic girl followed. She was at least wholesome and refreshing, but she wandered far afield before society reacted and brought her back to a sane place in the scheme of human development.

Then came the problem girl, and problems of every sort flourished. Now she was very rich and very beautiful, discontented and unhappy, and she hungered for many things. Sometimes it was that intangible thing known as a career; sometimes her discontent brought her to the slums to live with the victims of the world's neglect and injustice. Sometimes her hunger drove her to seek adventure, and she horrified friends, male and female, by joining all sorts of organizations without the pale. The day came when she was a suffragist, and against the background of her struggle for political freedom the book trade received a good many best-sellers and the student of human nature rich material.

Then came the sex problems, and as the girl in the center of the stage struggled to find "her fullest expression," one by one all the laws that the ages had developed for the protection and well-being of the human race were set aside and we saw the girl a believer in free love, trial marriage, and all the rest. In the first appearance of girlhood upon the pages of literature, fainting in her parlor, she reached for smelling salts and was borne tenderly away, but now she appeared at the cabaret, at the races, reached

for her cigarette or lifted her glass to her lips, and became "a man among men."

Meanwhile, through all the varied stages, the average girl went her way. She loved, she married, she held her children in her arms, she enjoyed, she suffered, she laughed and wept and prayed, or if for scores of reasons she failed of these things, she sought substitute interests and gave her share of service to the world through other channels, as she is still doing at this moment.

Nevertheless, all the stages and changes in the process of the development of a larger and finer womanhood have left their stamp upon the girlhood of the present day. There are girls, even in this present day, who have inherited the physical weaknesses developed in those years when lack of exercise, improper dressing and wrong feeding laid the foundation for ills of which the peasant girls of all races know nothing. There are girls of the present hour who must struggle against the desire for martyrdom, the self-analysis, the supersensitiveness which have been passed down the centuries from that period of over-development. There are girls at this hour paying the price for those years of struggle for a higher education which won some very precious things and lost others. There are girls

of the present day paying for the exaggerated athletic reaction, and there are multitudes of girls paying the price for the over-emphasis upon the problems of sex which left them and their brothers stranded upon a dangerous sea without pilot or anchor.

All that the girls of the past have experienced, the girls of the present in greater or less degree inherit, and that is why, century by century as the race develops, girlhood grows more complex, more difficult of analysis, harder to direct into paths that will insure happiness.

Then how dares one prophesy as to the girl that is to be, the new American girl? Perhaps one would not, were it not for the roar of guns, the blaze of bursting shells, the wild hell across the sea through which men in utter self-forgetfulness win the painful way to liberty for their fellow men. Had it not come, I do not know which of the conflicting forces might have dominated girlhood. But for the past year, looking into the eager faces of thousands of girls and the longing faces of hundreds of women, I am quite sure of the new American girl. There will be exceptions, of course, as there must always be, but in the main, certain things will be true of her.

The American girl ranging from fourteen to twenty-one years, as I am thinking of her, is finding new paths of experience and expression so rapidly that I believe she not only reveals the new American girl of the present but indicates the girl of the future whose trend of action she is marking out.

I believe that the new American girl will not be dominated by the pronoun *I*. The difference in the evidence of that pronoun this past year as compared with other years is most significant. She will live in a world where "they" is of as great importance as "I." It will be a larger world which crowds out pettiness.

"Think of the girls of Belgium and northern France," said an eighteen-year-old to me the other day, "and then think of *us*. One night last week, we girls were talking about it and we were saying that it doesn't seem as if some of us were worth dying for. What have we ever done for our country or for any one? Now the girls in the —— Club are different. They have always worked. Some of them support mothers and younger children and all support themselves. We *must* find something to do or be trained for something."

I hear it on every side as over against the calm

discussion of where "*I* can best develop my talents," "find the most enjoyment," "make the biggest place for myself," of other years.

The new American girl, not in a wild outburst of enthusiasm but in deep determination, seeks genuine service. She does not seek to perform it in a spirit of heroic sacrifice or as if she were doing a great and wonderful thing, or as a matter of charity. And in the main she is not seeking it because "it is the thing to do" but because she has become suddenly aware of the fact that there is work to be done and only a coward and a shirk will fail to do her full share. The new American girl will be a contributor to American life and through it to the life of the world.

The new American girl will continue to seek intellectual freedom and development, but not in the feverish spirit in which her sisters sought it in years when it was a thing denied, and what she can now enjoy so easily had to be won by many a struggle through much persecution. She will seek it because she wants to understand the world's needs and her place in the answering of them. It has been very stimulating, this month, to hear the discussions of girls who next fall are going to college. They all express the desire to be *fitted* to serve wisely and well, to train their

minds to meet great problems. "In our city," said one of them, "not a single college-trained man asked for exemption and most volunteered for service. I believe the same would be true of college women. My father says that a trained man sees how big the problems are and knows he *must* share them. I did not think I wanted to go to college, but now I do, for I want to be able to do my share of all that will have to be done."

I believe she expresses the new spirit—a sincere desire to be ready for intelligent service.

The new American girl will have a highly developed spirit of sacrifice, but there will be in it no consciousness of martyrdom. It will be the sacrifice that many girls have been making for generations, plus a deep sense of *willingness*. I sat, not long since, with a girl just returning from a port of embarkation. She had a two-months-old baby in her arms. She had made a long, hard journey east to show the young father his little son. "He held him in his arms till the last moment," she said. "He adored him even more than I do, and he saw him only two days." As we talked, she revealed her willingness to make the great sacrifice, to let that man go into all that is waiting for him. I do not see how any one can help standing amazed, thrilled,

confident of the future, in the presence of girls of the type one finds everywhere these days. The new American girl will be and is capable of a wonderful, willing sacrifice, claiming no honor for what she is doing. It is the martyr spirit of her sisters of the past, glorified and made unselfish and sane.

The new American girl will be athletic in the sense that she will train her body to be her servant. She will make it act intelligently. If she has the opportunity for out-of-door exercise, she will take it. She is already beginning to walk where once she took the easy way and rode. The popularity of the gymnasium and the swimming pools shows very clearly the desire on the part of girls for good physical machinery with which to work, and the attendance on health lectures, the reading of books on subjects relating to the care of the body, the attention being given by untrained girls to the rules of hygiene as regards food and sleep, point to a generation just ahead that will have a stronger physical life than that of the present.

When it comes to the matter of the problem of the sexes, one cannot prophesy with assurance. The girls of the present generation have felt the full force of the discussions as to how much in-

struction and information should be given them. They have been the experiment stations and have been dealt with in varying fashion. They have also had great freedom, and they have lived through a period in which appeals to emotion and passion have been constantly made through popular types of plays, dances and motion pictures. During this period there has been comparatively little to demand self-discipline and self-restraint. And now while they are still half-informed and but little trained in self-restraint and self-control, they have to meet the additional strain of conditions that always follow in the wake of war. It is inevitable that some should succumb. Those longing most to help them stand up under the strain find that they must themselves experiment as to ways and means.

Those with the needs and interests of the generation-to-be pulling at their heart-strings cannot help asking questions as they watch girls of eighteen to twenty-one waving good-bye to long lines of men in khaki and blue. These men ought to be the natural mates of the girls who are trying so hard to "send them away with a smile." When one reads that the weekly casualty list of a certain date, in England alone, was nearly forty-two thousand, and knows that

America must duplicate it, perhaps for years, if the war continues, he feels great compassion for the girls of the present and the immediate future, and at times he is completely staggered by the problems that cold facts present. Then he goes back to the girls themselves and again is confident that the new American girl will measure up to the need of the hour. He finds that she is facing some facts herself, that she has some ideas as to what should be taught her. It is from the serious discussion of young women from twenty-five to thirty that I have gathered certain facts that seem to me well worth the earnest study and consideration of those who hope to share in guiding girlhood through the present crisis of pain and self-denial into the years of happiness that surely are ahead.

First of all, these young women from twenty-five to thirty have accepted the fact that there will be fewer homes; that some of them who have looked forward to home life must forego their dreams. They have accepted the fact that there will be fewer children and that therefore *all* child life *must* be conserved, trained, raised to the highest level. They have been volunteering very eagerly for child conservation work. One young woman of twenty-seven has taken three

little children from three broken homes to care for and train, as her patriotic duty. Others will follow her example.

Because they are young women who think, they have said that if there are to be few homes, those that *are* made must be of the finest type, and the girls now twelve to twenty must be given the highest standards—they must be taught the fine art of home-making, especially those who have had little opportunity through observation and none through training to see what a home ought to be.

They feel that here is a great work for them to do, and that if they are denied the privilege of making homes for themselves, they can serve indirectly if they are able to help create better homes for the nation.

They speak quite frankly in regard to the problem of sex instruction. They say that they do not believe that ignorance on any subject ever added to the safety of any individual. They believe that all girls should know the facts of sex life and relationship; that definite, clear-cut instruction which satisfies curiosity should be given without evasion, sincerely and frankly; that questions should be answered when asked and other questions anticipated; but that the whole matter of sex instruction should take a *secondary* place.

in the life of a girl. "While one acknowledges," said one young woman of twenty-six with two children of her own, "that matters of sex form the basis of the relationship between men and women, it is a very small part of the whole relationship, and if a girl does not find a true friend and fine companion in the man she has married, there is absolutely no hope for happiness. I think every girl ought to know that."

I think these young women are absolutely right. I believe that girls *before* their teens should be given a few definite facts, by their mothers if possible; if not, by the physical director in the school or by a carefully chosen teacher. Before the teens and always after that, I believe *questions should be answered.* When a girl is fourteen I am sure that in the light of new emotional experiences other and more definite facts should be given to her which will make further curiosity and questioning negligible. Then she should be given protection by nation, state, city and home, adequate opportunity for amusement, recreation and association with boys and girls under wholesome conditions, plenty of work to do, and opportunity to have any special interests cultivated and special talents trained. If these things are done, they will go a long way toward safeguarding all

American girlhood even in times of unusual danger.

I believe that the American girl should know how large a proportion of girls who enter a life of prostitution are sub-normal, lived as little children in overcrowded, unsanitary homes, were the victims of false promises or of ignorance for which they have to pay a final, awful price; that of all women on earth they are most to be pitied, and of all things on earth the condition which made them what they are should be most desperately fought. I believe they should know the deadly menace to all humanity that these victims of ignorance, weakness and circumstances have proven to be.

I believe that facts should be given to girlhood through *instruction*, not through the mass meeting or the public address, never through certain types of sentimental literature, in itself vague and only serving to stimulate unhealthy curiosity. When the home is unwilling to assume the task or unable to undertake it, I believe there should be group instruction, the groups made up of girls as nearly alike in age, mental ability and environment as possible. I believe that the woman who gives the instruction should be accurate in statement and, no matter what her position, of

attractive personality and fine sensibilities, fully capable of every normal emotion and reaction, a woman who has won the control and restraint she recommends to them. She should never be the type of woman who impresses the girls as being "different."

But I found that the group of girls discussing the subject believed that when the handicap of ignorance has been removed, all has not been done; that the girl, to be safe, must have safeguarding ideals; that the girl who has had them from earliest childhood is safest, but that even if she has missed them then, they may still come to her with a mighty grip in the teens. An ideal is the most vital force on earth. It is the character-making or destroying force.

The girls expressed the opinion that the strongest pull upward comes through a real religious experience, and I agree with them absolutely. It does not so much matter in what way the experience comes, but before a girl can reach the surest plane of safety and develop from a girl who needs help into a girl who gives it, I believe she must have a spiritual experience. This experience cannot come to a Hebrew girl in the same way that it comes to a Christian, or to a Protestant girl as it does to a Catholic, or to an

unchurched girl as it comes to a girl within the Church, but it can come to every girl as truly as it is coming now to the men in the trenches and in the camps, whose lives have been remade, enriched and ennobled by it. But it must be a real experience, and I believe it to be the duty of the Church of every creed and name to expend its very soul in the effort to give American girlhood the spiritual experience which will call her to the high planes of sacrifice and devotion, which will keep her life pure and her soul fired with a passion to save and to serve. Such inspired service, unselfish in its very essence, leaves little room for ideals that give the downward pull. This call of the Church must be given in concrete form, that it may be heard by every girl, no matter what her handicaps may be, and it must be reiterated patiently, that those who miss it at first shall not lose it altogether.

We have only just begun to realize the compelling power of the Church in action. Shorn of all the lesser things that hide its heart and confuse those whom it would help, the Church is a tremendous force that may be counted upon when used as its Lord and Master meant it to be, in the service of all mankind.

This supreme task of the Church, *the awaken-*

ing of the spiritual life and power, will not wait. The need is here, the girls are here, the hour has come! The new American girl is being made now, and what we want her to be must be determined now. More than that, what we make now, good or bad, will endure through generations. The Church cannot afford to make mistakes.

If, in the midst of the turmoil of the near and the pressure of the immediate future which always narrows one's horizon, I am tempted to doubt the power of the men and women of our day to leave indelible impressions upon the children who are to be the men and women of the day ahead, I gather up the facts and *know* that what is written in wax cannot be effaced when the wax has hardened to marble.

I read again with deep satisfaction and joy Daudet's story of the last lesson in French. I can see Monsieur Hamel, dressed in the suit he wore only on great days, the people of the village sad and hushed, the ex-mayor and the postmaster respectful, with arms folded, standing about the schoolroom. I can hear the orders of the Prussian commander drilling his troops in the square, and then the teacher's voice:

"My children, this is the last time that I shall teach you. Orders have come from Berlin that

nothing but German shall be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new teacher arrives tomorrow. *This is the last class in French;* oh, I beg of you to be very attentive."

The morning wears on, and the children, usually so careless in their studying, toil diligently; the master, often impatient with their dulness, seems on fire with the passion to tell them in this one short morning all he knows. At last the noon hour comes. Prussian bugles blare, then the angelus rings. Monsieur Hamel, pale as death, rises from his chair. "My friends," he says, "my friends, I—I—" but he cannot speak. He turns to the blackboard and writes in the largest letters he can make:

"VIVE LA FRANCE!"

Then he motions with his hand, and the children, their eyes resting till the last moment upon the words on the board, pass slowly out of the room. They will never see those words in their schoolroom again. Alsace-Lorraine is German.

But the other day when the French troops that had driven back the German army from a section of Alsace-Lorraine entered a little old town, the children stood in the schoolhouse to welcome them. At sight of the officers' uniforms, a little girl who had been taught every lesson she had ever had in

school by a German teacher and in the German tongue, cried aloud "Vive la France!" and another stepped to the board and wrote it:

"Vive la France!"

What the old French teacher wrote on the board that last day burned itself into the souls of his pupils. They never forgot. They learned to speak the German tongue, but they kept the French heart, and now from their children's lips, after a generation, the burning words burst forth.

Yes, I am sure that what America wants the future American girl to be, she can teach her to be if she *will*. There are no forces of evil strong enough, anywhere on earth, to thwart that *will*.

Because of all that I have seen and heard these past months, because of the earnest words of loyalty and devotion that have come hot from the heart of girlhood, because of a thousand acts of kindness, sacrifice and genuine love that I have witnessed, because of the simple heroism that asks for nothing and gives all, I believe that the new American girl will be more nearly normal, natural, well-balanced, healthful and wholesome than girlhood has ever been before. The new American girl will be keen, alert, intelligent, more efficient, more able to work together with her fellows than

ever before. She will be warm-hearted, affectionate, loving, genuine. She will be minus the sham and subterfuge which has robbed life of so much charm and the world of so much happiness. She will accept the duties of community life, eager to do her full share; she will accept the duties of the home as they come to her without fear or dread. I believe she will desire, to a far greater degree than have the girls of the previous generation, to share with the man she loves the joys and responsibilities of parenthood, better parenthood than the world has seen before, because more intelligent and more fully aware of the fact that earth's richest treasure, the most precious possession that life can give, is a child, well born and started upon its journey without a handicap.

I believe that the new American girl will, through her religion, find her God—find in him pardon for sin, strength in weakness, help over hard places, sympathy in moments of great joy, *friendship* and the *companionship* which, beginning here, makes death but an incident, another turn in the road that leads to more abundant life.

I greet the new American girl with faith and hope. I know that, made up of *all the daughters of all the people*, she will enrich America's soul, enlarge her power and develop increasingly in her

the steadiness of purpose and the passion for justice that will keep her equal to the task of a true Democracy.

AND THE COMMUNITY? THE COMMUNITY DARE NOT FAIL THIS NEW AMERICAN GIRL.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

No attempt has been made to furnish a complete or adequate bibliography but rather to place before the reader a few of the books, varying greatly in style, which since nineteen hundred have been written regarding the girl or problems that touch her directly. Many of the books listed have very comprehensive bibliographies which the reader, interested to study further any special subject, will find most helpful. The Pilgrim Press will be glad to furnish prices, which are impossible to list on account of the unsettled conditions in paper and book-making.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING

I THE AMERICAN GIRL

The City Girl

The Long Day. Century.

The Promised Land, Mary Antin. Houghton Mifflin.

One of Them, Elizabeth Hasanovitz. Houghton Mifflin.

The Business of Being a Woman, Ida M. Tarbell. Macmillan.

Saleswomen in Mercantile Stores. Russell Sage Foundation.

Wage Earning Women, Annie M. Maclean. Macmillan.

The Work-a-Day Girl, Clara E. Laughlin. Revell.
The American Girl, Anne Morgan. Harper.
The Neglected Girl, Ruth Trice. Russell Sage Foundation.
Publications of National Board of Y. W. C. A.

The Rural Girl
The American Country Girl, Martha Foote Crow. Stokes.
Farm Boys and Girls, William A. McKeever. Macmillan.
Training the Girl, William A. McKeever. Macmillan.
Publications of National Board of Y. W. C. A.

The Schoolgirl
Working Girls in Evening Schools. Russell Sage Foundation.
The High-School Age, Irving King. Bobbs-Merrill.
Pamphlets published by U. S. Department of Education
Pamphlets published by National Board of Y. W. C. A.

II Community Problems and Responsibilities
The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets, Jane Addams. Macmillan.
A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil, Jane Addams. Macmillan.

Popular Amusements, Richard H. Edwards. Association Press.
Play in Education, Joseph Lee. Macmillan.
The House on Henry Street, Lillian D. Wald. Holt.
Young Working Girls, Woods and Kennedy. Houghton Mifflin.
The Wayward Child, Hannah K. Schoff. Bobbs-Merrill.
Youth, School, and Vacation, Meyer Bloomfield. Houghton Mifflin.
Vocations for Girls, Laselle and Wiley. Houghton Mifflin.

The Survey. Published by The Survey Publishing Co., 112 E. 19th St., New York City. Books reviewed by The Survey give most recent and reliable information on civic problems. The magazine is invaluable for all interested in the modern attempt to create a true democracy.

III Other Books Suggestive to All Workers with All Girls

Girlhood and Character, Mary C. Moxcey.
The Bent Twig, Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Holt.
The Sunday School and the Teens. International Sunday School Association, Chicago.
Education in Religion and Morals, George A. Coe. Revell.

Religious Education in the Family, Henry F. Cope. University of Chicago Press.
Sex in Life, Dr. and Mrs. D. B. Armstrong. American Social Hygiene Association.
Sex Education, Maurice A. Bigelow. Macmillan.
The Christian Approach to Social Morality. Y. W. C. A.
Life Problems. American Medical Association, Chicago.
Towards Racial Health, Norah H. March. Routledge. Imported.
The American Girl, Winifred Buck. Macmillan.
Christian Citizenship for Girls, Helen Thoburn. Y. W. C. A.

IV Other Books by the Author—Published by The Pilgrim Press

The Girl in Her Teens
The Girl and Her Religion
The Girls' Book of Prayer
Just Over the Hill