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“Settlement Work Among Jews,” 1902 May.

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Detroit, Mich.,
May, 1902.

SETTLEMENT WORK AMONG JEWS

Beginnings

The settlement movement is less than a quarter of a century old. The first social settlement, in England, Toynbee Hall, was established in 1885, and the first in America in 1889,--the College Settlement in New York and Hull House in Chicago. The first Jewish settlement--if that name be permitted--~~was~~ ^{first began work} Maxwell Street Settlement in Chicago in November, 1893.

Scope and method of investigation

It was my purpose, in ~~my~~ preparation for this report on settlement work among Jews, to discover, if possible, the strength and the importance of the work that is being done in Jewish neighborhoods under auspices Jewish and non-Jewish. Cards of inquiry were sent to ninety-two settlements and to eighty-two rabbis in all parts of the country. Although a reply postal was attached, only forty-nine settlements ~~answered~~ and forty-two rabbis answered. The card *inquiry* was a preliminary investigation to determine in what communities work was being done in Jewish neighborhoods. Then schedules of inquiry (copies of which are herewith attached) were sent to seventy-five "institutions" reported as doing work with Jews along settlement lines. Forty-nine answers were received, of which thirty-two were fairly complete and satisfactory.

Definition

I shall not attempt to define the term "settlement." For myself, it stands for the highest social service. ~~and a life of sacrifice.~~ Many institutions, not settlements in name--old organizations existing before settlements began to be--consciously and unconsciously have been deeply influenced by the settlement spirit and the settlement method. "There are settlements with no residents that have more truly the settlement spirit than many another with a number of resident workers."

The growth of cities has been the marvel of the past fifty years.

We are living in the industrial era. The tide of population is flowing to the cities everywhere. Our cities are growing more and more powerful, and the time seems not far distant, when the cities, controlling the states, will control the nation. Awful is the significance of the statement, generally accepted as true and wellfounded, that life in cities is upon the whole vicious. ¶ The new civilization of the last half of the nineteenth century has brought to us tremendous ^{questions} ~~problems~~. There are some problems which the survival of ~~the~~ medieval civilization thrusts upon our twentieth century era--~~thrusts~~ upon the world, and ~~thrusts~~ especially upon us. I need but remind you that the Russian persecution, with the enforcement of the Ignatieff May Laws in 1881, sent forth a flood of immigrants to lands of freedom, and especially to America. The renewal of the oppression and the increase of pressure surely means another outpouring. Russia and Galicia and Roumania, by restrictive legislation and by oppressive burdens, are driving out of their domains, thousands upon thousands who seek escape from their misery,--escape to the land of freedom and opportunity, and possible prosperity. These thousands are the perplexing problem of our charities. They compel the multiplication of our philanthropies. Whatever be the charges brought against them, true or false,--whatever be their physical and moral weaknesses and shortcomings,--we may be sure that they are wronged a thousandfold more than wronging. What their presence means in our great cities, Jacob Riis suggests, when he says, "The poverty they have brought us is black and bitter; they crowd as do no other beings to save space, which is rent, and where they go they make slums."

Life in cities
our perplexing problems

*conditions of
city life*

The settlements working in Jewish neighborhoods throughout the country unanimously report that they are dealing with Jews from Russia and Poland and from Eastern Europe. "By reason of causes most natural and thoroughly human, these Jews prefer to live in cities. Are the conditions of city life favorable to them and to us? How true the description of the typical conditions in every great American city: "Streets dirty--paving miserable--lacking in alleys; schools inadequate--factory legislation unenforced--stables defy ^{ing} all laws of sanitation--houses not connected with sewer in the street."¹ Says another, "conditions which tend to lower not only ^{the} physical, but ^{the} mental and moral standard of health."² Is it not a disgrace that with truth, it may be said concerning the United States, with its vast extent of territory, that there are "millions of human beings living as no human beings ^{ever} should live; sights and sounds and smells that are horrible; on all sides the signs of hopeless human slavery."³

unsanitary

From every settlement, with but one exception, comes the same answer to the question, What are the conditions, sanitary or unsanitary?--"The housing conditions are unsanitary--evil."

death rate

Thousands of men and women and children are crowded together under *conditions* the most unfavorable ~~conditions~~ ^{to} life and health. Density of population always means a high death rate--an unnecessary death rate. Call it by what name you will, you and I and all of us are responsible that men and women and children die before their time. During the past century in London, the death rate

¹ Phil. and Soc. Prog. P. 29.

² City Wilderness. P. 81.

³ C. Hanford Henderson. "Social Conscience." Omaha Cong. Lib. Rel.

has been reduced from thirty to twenty ~~per cent.~~ per thousand. This lowering of the death rate means a saving of fifty thousand lives a year; and who shall say how many hundreds of thousands of cases of sickness. You answer me, *The Jewish death rate in districts almost wholly Jewish is lower than the general death rate of the city.* If the Jewish death rate be lower, it is in spite of, and not because of the conditions of life and labor. "It is the marvellous vitality of the Jew which alone sustains him." ^PThe homes of the poor ~~are~~ oftentimes ^{are} unworthy the name of home. Pure air and pure water and Heaven's own sunshine are lacking. Do you wonder that there is a moral as well as ^a physical breakdown? [^]Are you overwhelmed with surprise that the cities are not alone the centers of crime? [?]but also the schools of crime? The wickedness of cities is traditional, from the time of ancient Nineveh to all the modern Babylons. ^PWhat a condemnation upon our vaunted civilization, that in our cities, which are the centers of power and of wealth and of the highest culture, we find everywhere poverty and misery and deepest destitution! In cities, live the mighty men who have developed the resources of the nation--whose wonderful energy and executive power have won for us, industrial leadership and commercial supremacy. In the cities, live also the thousands of human beings almost dehumanized, creatures brutalized by the evils which surround them everywhere. We are horrified by the slaughter on ~~the awful~~ fields of battle. The whole world is moved to pity by the volcanic eruption that destroys a city in a single day. More die at home than upon fields of battle: more perish miserably at home than by volcanic eruption. ~~More~~ More human beings have their life too soon cut off by reasons of conditions which are and which ought not be. War may be inevitable, and volcanoes

¹ See "Children of the Poor," P. 40. Note.

*cause always
of destroy roots*

beyond human control, but dirt, and pollution, and disease can be driven out and human lives saved. "The abolition of the slums and the destruction of their virus, are as feasible as the drainage of a swamp and the total dissipation of its miasmas."¹ We need to awaken the public^{to} social conscience. We need to ~~are~~ cleanse the filthy alleys and ^{to} destroy the hovels and dark cellars unfit for human habitation.

Thank God, it is true that "nothing stagnates where the Jews are. They do not rot in their slum, but rising, pull it up after them."²

*Jew as toiler
and as citizen*

The occupations of the Jews in the congested districts are various. They are reported as tailors, cigarmakers, junk dealers, hucksters, storekeepers--petty trades. They are not lazy. They work hard--too hard for the feeble strength of their frail bodies--too hard for the miserable wage they often receive. "As regards the industry, sobriety and thriftiness of the Jewish workman, all accounts are unanimous."³ If there be any complaint against the Jew as a toiler, it is not that he will not work: it is rather that he lengthens the hours of labor--that by reason of hard necessity, he lessens the wage of labor--that thereby he lowers the standard of living. Unanimous is the report that he is industrious. Unanimous is the report that he is law-abiding, although it is suggested that he is ⁱⁿ oftentimes guilty of petty evasion of the law. The law to him is still, as it was in the ~~lands~~ of Europe, oppressor and persecutor, ~~which may~~ ^{to} with justice perhaps, be evaded. Unanimous is the report that he is peaceable, although it is suggested that Jews are inclined to be quarrelsome among themselves. Unanimous is the report that he is temperate. He drinks, but there is no drunkenness.

¹ Shaw. *Albert Shaw*

² Jacob Riis. Rev. of Rev. Vol. XIII, 53.

³ Jew in London. P. 64.

*Jew and
Poverty*

The labor movement is not strong with Jewish wage earners. It may be because he is individualistic.¹ I believe it is because the toiler of today hopes to be the master of tomorrow. The Jews stand forth ~~as~~ a living refutation ~~that~~ ^{of} the old familiar argument ~~is unsound~~, "Poverty is not the result of crime, vice, intemperance, sloth, unthrift; for the Jewish sweater's victims are temperate and hardworking, almost avaricious."² "All of them slave and starve and make money."³ "The Jew enters into his occupation heart and soul and wits also."⁴ What people every reveal a like eagerness to improve the social condition of their children, even at the cost of the privation of clothing and food and lodging?"⁵

*Immigration and
Immorality*

The city gives birth to moral as well as physical evils. I am especially interested in the danger which threatens our children. "In the slums, the loosening of the old ties lets in unbelief with the surrounding gloom, and leads directly to immorality and crime. The danger besets especially the young."⁶ As soon as he leaves the "Cheder," he practically leaves the Judaism of the Polish Ghetto behind him. "Nominally they remain Jewish in religion."⁷ Almost without exception, the report from east and west is that with the elders there is formal religious observance--that with the youth and the children there is little observance--lax--very small--a tendency to scoff--rapidly drifting. ~~As one has put it, there is orthodox observance and heterodox performance.~~ In the west, it seems that with the younger generation there is practically no religion. ~~As one has said,~~ "My father prays daily, I once a week, my son not

¹ Jew in London. 181

² Jacob Riis.

⁴ City Wilderness. P. 42.

⁵ Hull House Maps Etc. P. 41

⁶ Jacob Riis.

736. 3. Jew in London
35-

at all." The younger generation are drifting away more and more from the influences of home. They are selfwilled. They seem less moral. The young men are very difficult to hold. With our immigrant Jews, the faith of the fathers and the old Jewish family life was strong everywhere. The faith of the fathers and the family life safeguarded our girls under the severest temptations, and exercised some influence upon the boys. That the social evil is not more pronounced is due to the past honor of the family, fighting victoriously against conditions most dangerous to moral health.

Boy Problem

The boy problem concerns us all. The children of the rich and the children of the poor meet. They will meet, and they should meet. It is the American principle. Naturally, therefore, the evil to one threatens evil to all.

Child Worker

Children are still wage earners. ^{yet} Inhuman child slavery is not ended. Children still slave in the cotton mills of New England and of the south. The carpet mills and the silk and weaving industries hold children in bondage. Jewish children work ~~none~~ in stores^s and in factories. They are helpers at home, in the garment industries. ~~But~~ Chiefly they are newsboys and bootblacks and messenger boys. Our boys, large and ^{very} small, are upon the streets, and the street is the school of crime. It educates rather to the grosser vices than to the gentler virtues. Our boys, too young in life, are witness to all the vices of a great city. They are under a strong temptation to form evil habits and to be guilty of violation of the law. The environment of their life is evil rather than good. The "boy gangs" of the street develop naturally into ~~the~~ roughs and toughs. Therefore it is that more boys are criminals and fill our jails and

the street influence

(8)

reformatories. Our Jewish boys are ^{very rarely} ~~not~~ criminals, not even those of the poorest and the worst families. ~~But~~ [^] Conditions are changing! We live in a transition period. We are discovering new facts every day, some of them startling and contrary to all the traditions and the history of the Jewish people. The recent shocking revelation ^{of} ~~concerning the~~ immorality in the heart of ^{the} ~~our~~ Jewish district in New York City, ^{Suggests what may be} ~~is being paralleled~~ in all our Jewish centers, ~~though less in degree.~~ I note especially the universal ^{S report} ~~agreement that there is~~ a strong tendency to bet and to gamble, ^{ing} ~~which lead~~ naturally to things worse than gambling; ~~that also~~ with the youth there is much swearing and much unthrift. There seems to be no growth of crime, but there is an evident tendency to juvenile transgression of the law. ^{Proudly} ~~We have always proudly~~ boasted that Jews are not criminals. Once it was almost literally true. Now there is a Jewish Juvenile Protectory in New York; and I doubt not, in all our large Jewish centers ^{more} ~~there are more~~ arrested than we know, and more boys ^{are} ~~especially~~ in the schools for incorrigibles than we have reason to be proud of.

^{American} ~~independence~~ It is a hard world full of hard knocks. The street life teaches our ^{American} ~~boys~~ independence. It makes them strong and self-reliant. It also makes them a law unto themselves--weakens the influence of the home and sets at naught the traditional authority of the parent.

^{Knoll} ~~playgrounds~~ Welcome every opportunity for recreation. Demand that neighborhood parks and playgrounds be established before beautiful parks and splendid boulevards absorb the public money. There must be room for play where children are. Nothing could be more beneficial and nothing seems to me more important than the multiplication of small parks and playgrounds in the poorest and densest

quarter of the city."¹ Boys with "steam up" need an escape valve. If there are no parks, use the neighborhood lots and the public school yards. Take our children out of the filthy backyards and keep them off the dangerous streets,-- dangerous to life and limb, and dangerous to character. *P* We, all of us, should make a more careful social study. Our eyes should be opened to see the evil environment which threatens to engulf our children ~~and the various influences which threaten~~ their moral health and character. Frankly, we are not meeting our problems. We do not know them, or knowing, we fail to comprehend their meaning and their danger. *Was it not* Dr. Holmes ~~it was, I believe,~~ who said that the training of a child begins with its grandparents? It is the fortune of our children that they are born to a heritage of moral strength ^{yet} ~~moral strength~~ in the Russian Jewish immigrants in spite of all the evils of Russia. The Jews are morally clean. *a* It is ^{thus} ~~is~~ warning for the future. We should train the children, that there be moral strength in the future grandparents.

The hope of our work I believe the strength ~~of our work~~ and the hope of all our work is with the boys and girls. It is encouraging to receive the report from everywhere that our boys and girls read more ^{than others,} are more eager to learn, and ~~that~~ the boys especially are ambitious for a higher education. Almost universal is the answer, "The immigrant children are earnest, ambitious and appreciative."

Yes, Jewish children are eager to learn. ^u They join literary and academic clubs, but are not interested in mechanical pursuits and training. ^u The report from New England does not agree with this familiar statement. Lincoln House, Boston, reports forty manual training classes, mostly Jews, with an average attendance of ninety per cent.

Formers not reformers The crucial thought is here. Said Horace Mann: "Wherever anything is forming, one former is worth a thousand reformers." Says Riis, "No investment

gives a better return today on the capital put out than work among the children of the poor." Spend for formative influences rather than for reformatories.

new life in synagogue

The time has come for a new life in the synagogue and new power in the temple,--life and power to appeal to and to influence the growing generation which seems everywhere to be drifting. The temples should follow the churches and should inspire their communities to establish and to sustain "missions," if you will. There is no work more religious, if religion be, as we are fond of emphasizing, ~~concerned with life.~~ "Work not to save the church, but the church to save society."¹ We work too much to save the temples and to save Judaism. Judaism should order and inspire the life and the thought of Jews and the world. ¶ Familiar the thought, "No Zionism for me. America is our country. Our duty is at home." We must solve the problems here." I cannot too strongly impress upon you the importance of ~~the~~ ^{our} Jewish problem ~~everywhere~~. It is not enough that the Jew should be no burden to the state. It is not enough that he should live true to the pledge given two and one-half centuries ago, when the Jews were admitted to the New Netherlands with the condition that "the poor among them should not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation." Jews should be assimilated, ~~not merged~~ and not lost, but assimilated so that they be a vital part of the nation that is theirs by birth or by adoption. ¶ Splendid ^{is} thought of Professor Zeublin:²

Jews be assimilated not merged not lost.

Justice and opportunity for the Jew

"A closer study of the institutions and habits of this community may give us a standard of judgment, a desideratum not only that we may do justice to the Jew in these latter days of anti-Semitism, but also because of the magnitude of the problem forced on the city and the country in the necessity of absorbing these foreign elements. Both by the persistence of their traits when

¹ Josiah Strong.

² Hull House Maps Etc. Jewish Ghetto. 96

segregated, and the readiness with which they assimilate when encouraged, the Jews furnish the most instructive element in our population. We shall find that though the Jew would be characterized by many Americans in the Shakespearean utterance, 'God made him, let him pass for a man,' the open sesame for the inhabitant of the Ghetto is, 'God made him, let him pass for a man.' Opportunity is what the foreigner in our cities needs."

*Americanize
Heart & Soul*
In the ghetto the ^{unfavorable} conditions of life are ~~unfavorable~~, made more difficult by language foreign and habits strange. Ours is the duty to make easy ~~for them~~ the adjustment to American laws and customs. Upon us is the responsibility to lead ^{the immigrants to the} ~~them to~~ understanding of American life and American liberty. We should prepare them for useful citizenship. We should make them thoroughly American in heart and in soul. ^POur minds and our conscience need to be awakened--our hearts need to be stirred. We do not begin to comprehend our problem.

*Why not in favor
the spirit of
Social service*
Why are our Jewish men not possessed of the social sense, not filled with the spirit of social service? Why are there more non-Jews than Jews working in distinctively Jewish neighborhoods? There are some settlements whose work among Jews is one hundred per cent., and ~~the average~~ ^{the average is} of the important settlements working in Jewish neighborhoods ~~is~~ more than seventy per cent. One settlement ~~alone~~ in New York City has a \$100,000 plant, spends \$18,000 a year, with an average attendance of 30,000 per month, one hundred per cent. Jewish. The number of Jewish resident workers is exceedingly small in the settlements under non-Jewish control. It is reported from more than one source that the Jews avail themselves of all the privileges, but that Jews do not support the settlements. And what is the report concerning the settlements under Jewish auspices: "The community does not properly support the work, not even with money." Compare the annual expense ^{of} and the money invested in our settlements with the annual

expenditure and investment made for our temples and synagogues. You may not believe it, but it is my conviction that through the settlements our money will produce a far larger and more important return in real influence upon life. Is it true that "the American point of view is better presented to our Jewish immigrants by Gentile workers?" It should not be true that our "Jewish young men will not do pioneer work." Is it true that a real democracy of social feeling is unusual between Russian and German Jews, and therefore there are no Jewish workers? Our workers---the workers that should be, are all too busy---too selfish, I think---busy with self and the pursuit of gain and of pleasure, and therefore they have no time and no spirit for the nobler service. We do not know the lives nor the heart of the poor, and they do not know us and neither do they understand our purposes. Therefore there is mutual distrust. Jews not orthodox are under suspicion; In England, Anglicization is denounced; In America, there is ^{not} perfect confidence.

the settlement The social settlement is the meeting place for the privileged and the unprivileged, for the educated and the uneducated, for the "haves" and the "have nots." "What our country needs today is not men who are willing to die for it, but men who are willing to live for it."¹ There is a nobler heroism than the heroism of war---the heroism of the war against poverty and disease and crime.

its spirit I urge the truer appreciation of the spirit of the settlement worker. It is not the false spirit of self-sacrifice, nor yet the glowing enthusiasm of the missionary, but the spirit of genuine democracy. Here is revealed a new social relationship, to make plain a truer view of the worth of life. It has been said that there can be no real progress without the ~~real~~ progress of the

race. Of Jews especially, this is true. All must move upward together. We can solve our problem ^{of the poor} by the expenditure of one-tenth of the energy and the thought and the sacrifice ~~that~~ we so willingly give to our business.

Judaism and Justice

"The world's morality, its health, its happiness, its beauty, its progress, are today checked by the failure of justice in the human heart."¹ Humanity was not destined to be enslaved. Unfortunate Jews are not appointed of God to pass from under the yoke of modern Pharaohs ^{in Europe} to slavery under the lash of industrial taskmasters ^{in America}. Let us meet human misery, not with charity, but with justice. We believe that Judaism is a religion of life. We proclaim that it is a living religion. Justice is fundamental to Judaism. Let it stir our social conscience.

motives for the settlement

Jane Addams gives three motives for the social settlement: "I have divided the motives which constitute the subjective pressure toward Social Settlements into three great lines: the first contains the desire to make the entire social organism democratic, to extend democracy beyond its political expression; the second is the impulse to share the race life and to bring as much as possible of social energy and the accumulation of civilization to those portions of the race which have little; the third springs from a certain renaissance of Christianity, a movement toward its early humanitarian aspects."²

Is it not more true for Jews? We should lead from despotism to democracy. We should share our education and culture and power: and chiefly, Judaism, old mother of religions, should prove itself possessed of life and power, and should reveal its true humanitarian spirit.

¹ C. H. Henderson.

² Phil. and Soc. Prog. P. 2.

"Let me live in my house by the side of the road,

Where the race of men go by--

They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,

Wise, foolish--so am I.

"Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,

Or hurl the cynic's ban?

Let me live in my house by the side of the road

And be a friend to man."¹



¹The House by the Side of the Road. Foss.