



Twenty Years at Hull-House with Autobiographical Notes

Jane Addams

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Jane Addams was a prominent progressive reformer during the early 20th century, and she became one of America's most famous women. This is a memoir of her early life. From the preface: "Many times during the writing of these reminiscences, I have become convinced that the task was undertaken all too soon. One's fiftieth year is indeed an impressive milestone at which one may well pause to take an accounting, but the people with whom I have so long journeyed have become so intimate a part of my lot that they cannot be written of either in praise or blame; the public movements and causes with which I am still identified have become so endeared, some of them through their very struggles and failures, that it is difficult to discuss them. It has also been hard to determine what incidents and experiences should be selected for recital, and I have found that I might give an accurate report of each isolated event and yet give a totally misleading impression of the whole, solely by the selection of the incidents. For these reasons and many others I have found it difficult to make a faithful record of the years since the autumn of 1889 when without any preconceived social theories or economic views, I came to live in an industrial district of Chicago. If the reader should inquire why the book was ever undertaken in the face of so many difficulties, in reply I could instance two purposes, only one of which in the language of organized charity, is "worthy." Because Settlements have multiplied so easily in the United States I hoped that a simple statement of an earlier effort, including the stress and storm, might be of value in their interpretation and possibly clear them of a certain charge of superficiality. The unworthy motive was a desire to start a "backfire," as it were, to extinguish two biographies of myself, one of which had been submitted to me in outline, that made life in a Settlement all too smooth and charming."

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