

INHUMAN INDIFFERENCE DISPLAYED BY EMPLOYING MISTRESSES

BY NIXOLA GREELEY-SMITH

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"What a girl of fourteen knows is not much; it couldn't be—but what she is eager to know is the test of her worth to herself and to her world. If her eagerness is to know how to dance the turkey-trot, how to marcel her hair, how to buy silk stockings on a \$5 weekly wage, in short how to catch a beau, she is, indeed, only following the dictates of her nature in its passionate adolescence.

"But a girl is less intelligent than any other animal, from the lowest up, if she trusts to the presumption that mating and motherhood will absolve her from all further struggle for life. Of course, she may be that exceptional woman who will never again, after entering wedlock, have to earn a dollar for her own support or for the support of others; but she will be a less efficient mother than any she-wolf if she cannot give her children better instruction than they get elsewhere in how and where to forage and when and how to fight. And if she were as effectively trained as a she-wolf is, she would have eagerness for self-sufficiency. It is reserved for the complacent human species to provide the only female in nature who tries to get her living by her charms rather than by her intelligence!"

So Clara F. Laughlin, noted writer, summarizes her indictment of American home and school conditions which, year after year, send thousands of very young girls out into the world to earn a living with no adequate moral or mental equipment for the struggle which confronts them.

Miss Laughlin has made a special study of those girls who leave school at fourteen to take out "working papers" and who practically, as children, set about the stern and sober business of self-support. She presents the result of her observations in her very interesting new book, called "The Work-A-Day-Girl," and they are, briefly, that neither the girl's home nor her school equips her properly for her place on the firing-line of that gallant army of 7,000,000 women who earn their own living in the United States.

"A girl goes to work now as eagerly as a boy does—but with a different purpose," Miss Laughlin says. "She has seldom any idea of developing high proficiency—I am not speaking now of the trained professional girl, but of the great mass of girl-labor. She goes to work for two reasons, PLEASURE and MATRIMONY."

It is this second unacknowledged search for a mate which makes it necessary for society to take a special interest in the conditions of work and play of the girl who earns \$6 or less a week.

Incidentally Miss Laughlin favors the establishment of a minimum wage of \$8 a week, not because she thinks the untrained girl worker is worth so much money—she says she

is not in many cases—but because she believes that it is good business policy to develop efficiency by paying new employes, practically apprentices, money enough to enable them to have proper sleeping quarters and an adequate supply of food and clothes.

She accepts work as the antidote to temptation and regards efficiency as the greatest shield and protection a girl can have. In the picture she presents of the night court of New York, that grim tribunal where girls who have deserted from the army of toil are arraigned and sentenced, she traces the moral downfall of two young women to the door of their own homes.

In one case a girl's life was wrecked by the over-indulgence of a fool-