**Slum Life**

Enough of the [tenements] everywhere. Suppose we look into one?...Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms…That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access…In the summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain…Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail-what do you mean?...Oh! a sadly familiar story-before they day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. The dark bedroom killed it.

-Jacob A. Riis, How the Other Lives:

Studies Among the Tenements of New York, 1890

**Unsafe Products**

**And then there was” potted game” and ”potted grouse,” “potted ham” and “devilled ham”- de-vyled, as the men called it. “De-vyled” ham was made out of the waste ends of smoked beef that were too small to be sliced by the machines; and also tripe, dyed with chemicals so that it would not show white; and trimmings of ham and corned beef; and potatoes, skins and all; and finally the hard cartilaginous gullets of the beef, after the tongues had been cut out. All this ingenious mixture was ground up and flavored with spices to make it taste like something.**

**-Upton Sinclair, The Jungle, 1906**

**The Workplace**

The management assured me that no lead was used in the coatings and invited me to inspect the workroom, where I found six Polish painters applying enamel paint to metal bathtubs……I [later] learned that the air is thick with enamel dust and that this may be rich in red oxide of lead…

Lead is the oldest of the industrial poisons except carbon monoxide…It is a poison which can act in many different ways, some of them so unusual and outside the experience of the ordinary physician the he fails to recognize the cause…

An Italian, who spoke no English, worked for a month in a white- lead plant but without any idea that the harmless looking stuff was poisonous. There was a great deal of dust in his work. One day he was seized with an agonizing pain in his head which came on him so suddenly that he fell to the ground. He was sent to the hospital, semiconscious, with convulsive attacks, and was there for two weeks; when he came home, he had a relapse and had to go back to the hospital. Three months later he was still in poor health and could not do a full day’s work.

-Alice Hamilton, The Poisonous Occupations in Illinois: Physician Alice Hamilton Explores the “Dangerous Trades” at the turn of the Century, 1943

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**Pollution**

One of the striking features of our neighborhood….was the presence of huge wooden garbage boxes fastened to the street pavement in which the undisturbed refuse [garbage] accumulated day by day.

The system of garbage collecting was inadequate throughout the city but it became the greatest menace in a ward such as ours, where the normal amount of waste was much increased by the decayed fruit and vegetables discarded by the….fruit peddlers, and by the residuum [residue] left over from the piles of filthy rags which were fished out of the city dumps and brought to the homes of the rag pickers for further sorting and washing.

-Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, 1912

**Social Class**

The world’s workers have always been and still are the world’s slaves. They have borne all the burdens of the race and built all the monuments along the track of civilization: they have produced all the worlds’ wealth and supported all the world’s governments. They have conquered all things but their own freedom. They are still the subject class in every nation on earth and the chief function of every government is to keep them at the mercy of their masters…

They [workers] looked about them and saw a land of wonderful resources; they saw the productive machinery made by their own hands and the vast wealth produced by their own labor, in the shadow of which their wives and children were perishing in the skeleton clutch of famine…

Poverty, high prices, unemployment, child slavery, widespread misery and haggard [tired] want in a land bursting with abundance; prostitution and insanity, suicide and crime, these in solemn numbers tell the tragic story.

-Eugene V. Debs “Speech of Acceptance,”

International Socialist Review, October 1912

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**African American**

For nearly twenty years lynching [hanging] crimes… have been committed and permitted by this Christian nation. Nowhere in the civilized world save the United States of America do men, possessing

all civil and political power, go out in bands of 50 and 5000 to hunt down, shoot, hang or burn to death a single individual, unarmed and absolutely powerless. Statistics show that nearly 10,000 American citizens have been lynched in the past 20 years. To our appeals for justice the stereotyped reply has been that the government could not interfere in a state matter…. We refuse to believe this country, so powerful to defend its citizens abroad, is unable to protect its citizens at home. Italy and China have been indemnified [condemned] by this government for the lynching of their citizens. We ask that the government do as much for its own.

-Ida B. Wells-Barnett, petition to President William McKinley,

Cleveland Gazette, April 9, 1898

**Women**

To the man, the whole world was his world; his because he was male; and the whole world of woman was the home; because she was female. She had her prescribed sphere, strictly limited to her feminine occupations and interests; he had all the rest of his life; and not only so, but, having it, insisted on calling it male.

This accounts for the general attitude of men toward the now rapid humanization of woman. From her first faint struggles toward freedom and justice, to her present valiant efforts toward economic and political equality, each step has been termed ”unfeminine” and resented as an intrusion upon man’s place and power.

-Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Man-Made World:

Or, Our Androcentric Culture, 1911

**Families**

I could not do that work and live, but there were boys of ten and twelve years of age doing it for fifty and sixty cents a day. Some of them had never been inside of a school; few of them could read a child’s primer [reading textbook]. True, some of them attended the night schools, but after working ten hours….the educational results from attending school were practically nil…

Boys twelve years of age may be legally employed in the mines of West Virginia, by day or by night, and for as many hours as the employees care to make them toil or their bodies would stand the strain. Where the disregard of child life is such that this may be done openly and with legal sanction [approval], it is easy to believe what miners have again and again told me- that there are hundreds of little boys of nine and ten years of age employed in the coal mines of this state.

-John Spargo, The Bitter Cry of Children, 1906