

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. She founded the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Hull House, a settlement house where hundreds of immigrants and poor learned skills and received help in their quest for citizenship and stability. Born in a small Illinois town to a wealthy mill owner and state representative, Addams early learned the virtues of community and the importance of service. Lincoln was her father's hero and her own, and she often used Lincoln's work as a touchstone for her own.

Addams wrote dozens of books on her activist work for peace, women's rights, economic justice, and the rights of the disenfranchised. During World War I and its aftermath of anti-Communist hysteria, Addams was often called a naïve pacifist and a Bolshevik traitor. But she never abandoned her commitment to peace and civil rights for all. *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*, excerpted here, is drawn from Addams's experiences with the residents of Hull House and their neighbors.

From *The Long Road of Woman's Memory*

Quite as it would be hard for any one of us to select the summer in which he ceased to live that life, so ardent in childhood and early youth, when all the real happenings are in the future, so it must be difficult for old people to tell at what period they began to regard the present chiefly as a prolongation of the past. There is no doubt, however, that such instinctive shiftings and reversals have taken place for many old people who, under the control of Memory, are actually living much more in the past than in the ephemeral^o present.

ephemeral: brief, fleeting

It is most fortunate, therefore, that in some subtle fashion these old people, reviewing the long road they have travelled, are able to transmute^o their own untoward^o experiences into that which seems to make even the most wretched life acceptable. This may possibly be due to an instinct of self-preservation, which checks the devastating bitterness that would result did they recall over and over again the sordid detail of events long past; it is even possible that those people who were not able thus to inhibit their bitterness have died earlier, for as one old man recently reminded me, "It is a true word that worry can kill a cat."

This permanent and elemental function of Memory was graphically demonstrated at Hull-House during a period of several weeks when we were reported to be harboring within its walls a so-called "Devil Baby."

The knowledge of his existence burst upon the residents of Hull-House one day when three Italian women, with an excited rush through the door, demanded that he be shown to them. No amount of denial convinced them that he was not there, for they knew exactly what he was like with his cloven hoofs, his pointed ears and diminutive^o tail; the Devil Baby had, moreover, been able to speak as soon as he was born and was most shockingly profane.

The three women were but the forerunners of a veritable^o multitude; for six weeks from every part of the city and suburbs the streams of visitors to this mythical baby poured in all day long and so far into the night that the regular activities of the settlement were almost swamped.

The Italian version, with a hundred variations, dealt with a pious Italian girl married to an atheist. Her husband in a rage had torn a holy picture from the bedroom wall saying that he would quite as soon have a devil in the house as such a thing, whereupon the devil incarnated himself in her coming child. As soon as the Devil Baby was born, he ran about the table shaking his finger in deep reproach at his father, who finally caught him and, in fear and trembling, brought him to Hull-House.

When the residents there, in spite of the baby's shocking appearance, wishing to save his soul, took him to church for baptism, they found that the shawl was empty and the Devil Baby, fleeing from the holy water, was running lightly over the backs of the pews.

transmute: transform

untoward: unfortunate

diminutive: small, tiny

veritable: regular, genuine