

Nora Marks, "Two Women's Work: The Misses Addams and Starr Astonish the West Siders," *Chicago Tribune* (May 19, 1890): 1-2.

Little People Benefited.

A Sort of Toynbee Hall at No. 335 South Halsted Street.

Italians Specially Interested.

Instruction and Entertainment at the New Institution.

What a Visit to the Place Disclosed.

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There was a social gathering at No. 335 South Halsted street Saturday night that was not chronicled by the society reporter. South Halsted happenings are usually ignored in this Philistine fashion. But there was a notable event that deserves special mention and persuasion.

In my ramblings last week I discovered a letter of invitation addressed to  
Mr. Agathno Harbaro,  
Fruit Store, East Polk street,  
Between the Alley and State street.

Inside the yellow envelope was a printed slip beginning "Mio Carissimo Amico" that warmly urged the recipient to come to see Le Signorine Jane Addams and Ellen Starr the evening of May 17 at No. 335 South Halsted street; to bring his family for a visit with American and Italian friends. Some hours were to be passed in "conversazione" and there would be a "concerto musicale," at which various distinguished maestros and dilettanti would entertain the company.

This unique invitation went on to say that the Misses Addams and Starr were of a distinguished family and that they had come to live among these children of Italy and desired their friendship. After a great deal more in this strain is [*sic*] was signed

Il vostro devotissimo Amico,

A. Mastro-Valerio.

There is no doubt that Mastro-Valerio is a devoted friend of his fellow-countrymen. Mastro-Valerio is an humble editor on *D'Italia*, but he is also the Chicago Garibaldi who is trying to lead all the Italians out of the bondage of ignorance. The Signorine Starr and Addams have a good ally in Mastro-Valerio. He opened the door of No. 335 South Halsted street himself the eventful night, looking a Count Cavour, Garibaldi, and Leonardo da Vinci rolled into one.

“Mio carissimo dianora!” he exclaimed in welcome, and ushered me right into a festa of Rome, held in the drawing-room of No. 335 South Halsted street, with Mastro-Valerio as master of ceremonies and the Misses Starr and Addams the central figures.

Agathno Harbaro had “brought his whole family”; so had Giovanni Vecchi and Valentino Riggio and all the padrones of South Clark street, the venders and street-cleaners and fruit-dealers. They came in peasant dress, the American costume being good enough for only ordinary occasions. The women were bare-headed, except for a fanciful scarf from Rome or Florence; the babies wore earrings, and the men long locks and innocent expressions.

“Rosina,” I said at random, holding out my arms to a red-frocked baby. My conjecture was right—her name was Rosina. So was the name of six others.

“Is this Rosina, too?”

“No; Teresina. Here is Rosina,” pointing to an older child. It was a rosy, smiling young matron who sat with two brown-skinned babies on her lap. Her hair was finely braided and filled

with silver pins. A lusty young man wearing earrings and long, shining hair had a marital arm about her.

Everybody was smiling, shaking hands, chattering, and gazing at ivory and gold walls, delicate etchings of old statues, and heads of madonnas. A photograph of Humbert and Marguerite was on the mantel.

“Him no great man,” said a grinning Italian.

“Well, who is?”

“Garibaldi, Cavour, the painter, and another—him—Washingtonio!” nodding his head vigorously. “La Signora told us about him. Neva heard before.”

Rosina, the red-frocked one, was passed over heads to the upper end of the room, where some society people were sitting.

“Society people! We are all society people,” interrupted Miss Starr, who had two Rosinas on her lap and was chattering some- [end page 1] thing that sounded much like the American baby talk.

It was pretty free and easy anyhow. The Italians seemed to feel among friends. They unburdened their simple thoughts and reveled in simple pleasures. The undisguised family affection among them was something beautiful.

Presently there was singing in Italian. The program was as finely arranged as one of Mme. Patti's. Then a violin solo with piano accompaniment, Mastro-Valerio acting as a music-rack for a Romeo.

The audience applauded heartily but judiciously and the performers all came back. There were more “conversazione” and music and then the guests said goodnight. Rosina cried, and

Miss Addams, Miss Starr, and Mastro-Valerio shook everybody by the hand and asked all to come back.

I never saw anything quite like it. Here was a simple emigrant people invited to spend a social evening with cultivated Americans and enjoying it. What does it mean?

#### THE OBJECT SOUGHT.

It is a part of a plan. It is a Toynbee Hall experiment in Chicago; a university settlement on South Halsted street living in touch with the uncultivated and under mutual obligations; a college, because there are classes; a club, because a number of people are banded together for social enjoyment. Just two young women—Miss Jane Addams and Miss Ellen Starr—got tired of keeping their culture, and wealth, and social capacity to themselves, to be turned over and over among people who had enough anyhow. And down on South Halsted street were many people who had neither money, time, nor knowledge of how these things are done.

It is the beginning of the “People’s Palace” of London; of Walter Besant’s “Palace of Delight”; of “Toynbee Hall” in Whitechapel—a community where the exchange is equal. “All sorts and conditions of men” have a part in it and are instructed.

Miss Addams and Miss Starr got the inspiration first from one of those “waves of ideas” that become epidemic and get the Patent-Office mixed up. They didn’t talk about it much, but went down to the desired locality, rented a dilapidated old house that was set back from the street and put it in order. The walls were made ivory and gold like the Auditorium [Theater]; there were Venuses with broken arms, Apollos, heads of Madonnas, art rugs, oak tables, china, silver, porcelain-lined baths, and the latest improved range. Then they went into the highways and byways for their guests.

This is a bill of fare for the week: The things they do, the amount of life and thought they set in motion, the practical happiness and help they bring the people with whom they live in touch and give a part in their esthetic, social, and intellectual life—literally in touch. These young women believe that all luxury is right that can be and is shared. They have taken their books, pictures, learning, gentle manner, esthetic taste—all—down to South Halsted street. This is how they are shared.

From 9 to 12 a kindergarten under the direction of Miss [Jenny] Dow is held in the long drawing-room. In the afternoon the kindergarten furniture is removed and the hall is devoted to the use of various clubs and classes. With its beautiful walls and pictures it is easily turned into a drawing-room with the addition of a rug and chairs.

Monday afternoon this drawing-room is filled with Italian girls who sew, play games, and dance, and the little ones cut out pictures and past them in scrap-books. Sometimes they take a bath when they can be convinced of the beauty of the porcelain tubs, and clean clothes are talked about as a desideratum.

Every day the laundry is at the disposal of those who wish to make use of it.

Monday afternoon a club of young women meets and reads Romola, aided by pictures of Florence, contemporary art, and lectures by Miss [Eliza Allen] Starr on Florentine artists. Mastro-Valerio talks about the Medici and Savonarola. Monday evening belongs to the French, who are reviewing the old salons of Paris. Music, conversation, and coffee form the excuse for a brilliant evening, with an occasional lecture on Marie Antoinette and kindred subjects.

Tuesday afternoon the Schoolboys' Club meets, gets books from the circulating library, and has reading aloud. At the same time a girls' cooking class is at work in the kitchen. In the evening the boys come back and have a lecture on what to do in emergencies, or simple chemical

experiments. One class is reading Shakspeare [*sic*] and others not so far advanced are studying the three Rs.

Wednesday evening the Workingmen's Discussion Club has the floor. The membership is already twenty-five, and many others who are interested attend. The Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Mr. H. D. Lloyd, or some other well-known man delivers a short address, which is followed by the freest discussion on strikes, labor unions, the eight-hour question, child labor, etc.

Thursday afternoon Dr. Leilla [*sic*] Bedell talks to the women on physiology and hygiene and how to raise healthy children, even near the Chicago River. A cooking class is also being instructed. Thursday evening the German population turns out en masse for a social evening of reading, music, and "cakes and ale."

Friday afternoon the Schoolgirls' Club comes in to sew, embroider, and cook, each taking home a book from the library. Friday evening the working girls come in to enjoy a lecture or concert, and Saturday evening there is a typical Italian entertainment. Already they have celebrated Washington's birthday, witnessed a comedietta by the Circola Salvini and been entertained by the Mandolin Club of the North Side.

These entertainments are crowded.

When I visited No. 335 South Halsted street Friday afternoon the play-room was full; five rooms were occupied by schoolgirls who were sewing and listening to a young lady read from "Christmas Carols" or "Twice-Told Tales." A cooking class was turning out eggs in every style in the kitchen; the bath-room was occupied, and a heap of sand kept half a dozen diligent pie-makers busy. The long porch was filled with children who were arranging violets and buttercups into bouquets.

Lectures and concerts and classes and parties—work and play and social enjoyment. And then the life in the background—the daily contact of these opposite classes, the individual give and take that can not be measured except by posterity.

#### FUTURE PLANS.

One of the most successful and enjoyable of the London Toynbee Hall experiments is the art exhibits in the “People’s Palace.” Before pictures go to the academy they come to the people. Ruskin encouraged this. Holman Hunt, Watts, Whistler, and Wilde talk it up so that it is fairly a cult. Bad pictures are being taken out of the shop windows, and for a penny Whitechapel can see “The Triumph of the Innocents” before St. James can pay a guinea for the same privilege.

Why not here?

There is a wide, bright livery stable at No. 331 South Halsted street that could be secured for a moderate rental. Skylights could be put in and the brick walls decorated. Then it could be a gallery for loan exhibits, a studio for instruction, a dance-hall.

“Why not?” says Miss Starr. “The worst thing about these crowded districts is the fact of there being no private places for dancing. Young people will dance. These people cannot do it in private houses—hence public balls. “Why not a dance where the amusement could be indulged in innocently and without danger?”

It is expected, too, that a college-extension course on the plan of the university annex of Toynbee Hall will be realized. This has already been meditated by college women, and several men and women have volunteered to give instruction. For these things a small fee will be charged and this new movement is to be greater than any charity. [ends on page 2]