

MAMIE SYMINGTON'S TRIPPLE LIFE AS A SOCIETY BELLE, NURSE AND FACTORY GIRL.

I can't take that, sir. They agreed to give me \$3, sir, and I've earned it, sir, and I need the money. It's all I've earned in two weeks.

You can take it or nothing I haven't time to bother with you any longer, and he turned away and pretended to work on another pile of clothing.

Betty followed him up and said: Please, sir, don't be so harsh with me. I need the \$3 to buy coal and food.

Some one sick at your house, I suppose. You have two little sisters and a baby brother to support, I suppose. That's the kind of a story they always give us. This was spoken with a sneer.

I didn't say any one was sick at our house or that I had two little sisters to support and a baby brother. I have no sisters and no brother. I told you my mother died when I was a baby, said Betty, with spirit.

Oh, then, I suppose you have a crippled father or something of that sort, replied the foreman, with an increased sneer.

No, I didn't say anything about my father. I said they promised to pay me \$3 to make these dozen pantaloons, and I've made them and earned the money, and I need it.

You've spoiled the cloth and are not entitled to pay. If you were worth anything we would make you pay for the goods. If you don't take your ticket and leave I'll call a policeman and have you put out of the building.

If you don't give me a ticket for \$3 I'll go and see Mr. Roltheimer.

That will do you lots of good, said the foreman, laughing ironically. He wouldn't insist to you a minute.

Well, I'll try.

See here, if you want to leave the matter to Mr. Roltheimer, I'll call him up here. He don't allow the girls in the office.

I want my \$3, and if you won't give me the order I want to see him.

The foreman whistled down the tube and Mr. Roltheimer came up.

Mr. Roltheimer asked as he got out of the elevator, Vell, vat is de matter?

This girl has spoiled a dozen pairs of pants and demands the full price for making them. I gave her an order for \$1.50, not wanting to be hard with her, and she refuses to take it and wants to see you about it. I wouldn't let her annoy you in the office.

Vell, miss, I can't bodder mit you girls. You vill hal-f to take dat dollar and a hal-f or noddings.

But, Mr. Roltheimer, the pantaloons are not spoiled, and I do need the money. I worked real hard on them.

Vat? Dem pants not spilt! Mine Gott in himmel, dem pants vill not bring dem dree dollars a dozen vat you vant? said Mr. Roltheimer without even looking at them.

Betty was getting angry and her eyes snapped as she said: Mr. Roltheimer, you owe me \$3. If you do not pay me I will sue you for it.

You pointing at Betty, vill sue me, tapping himself on the chest, for dem dree dollars. Vell, I'll pe tarot. Dat vas shee-ek. Vell, sue. Dis sheentleman, pointing to the foreman, vill shvear dem pants ver spilt and I, tapping himself on the breast again, vill shvear dem pants ver spilt.

You, pointing at Betty, vill vat you please, ve vill peat you, and he chuckled with self-satisfaction.

And, my impudent girl, that will not be the worst of it, either, for you. If you sue Mr. Roltheimer I will report you to the Clothing Manufacturers' Association, and then you can never again get work in any factory in Cincinnati or any other city in the United States.

Betty Broadbird found herself in a tight corner. She knew that what Mr. Roltheimer and the foreman would swear to would undoubtedly be believed and the suit would go against her, and she had no knowledge of what the Clothing Manufacturers' Association was or its methods, so she picked up her order for \$1.50 and turned to go down to the office to get the money. The foreman held a low, hurried conversation with Mr. Roltheimer, in which he told that gentleman that, as a matter of fact, Betty Broadbird had made her pantaloons excellently well and suggested it would be well to give her another lot to make, as the bond she had given to return the first lot was good for all goods she took away for a year. Mr. Roltheimer gave this idea an enthusiastic approval, and the foreman followed Betty to the door saying:

Now that we have this matter settled, we would like to give you a chance to do better on another lot. Shall I order another dozen sent down the elevator for you?

Betty hadn't got her \$1.50 yet for her ten days' work and she hesitated, finally answering:

Not unless you will give me \$3 for making them.

We will agree to it if they are well made; but, of course, we won't know that until you have them done.

Betty kept descending the stairs and the foreman following her. She replied:

A girl cannot live on less than \$3 for ten days work and board and lodge herself. I think that I can get some other work that will pay better.

I don't know. These are hard times. There are hundreds of girls idle and going about offering to do any kind of work for little more than enough to eat.

Betty knew that this was too true. They were now at the cashier's counter, and she handed in her order, saying: I'll wait. If I can't do better I may come for them.

But it's better to be earning a little something than walking the streets hunting for work you won't find. I only gave you the order for \$1.50 after you spoiled the first dozen, because I wanted to help you, and expected you would take another dozen, replied the foreman, motioning the cashier to hold the paltry sum he had counted out.

Betty turned to the cashier and said: Please give me my money; I am in a hurry to go home.

The cashier looked at the foreman, who again asked Betty: Then you don't propose to take another dozen?

Not now, she answered.

The cashier again looked at the foreman for instructions, and he said:

I suppose you will have to pay her, but it is an outrage.

Betty Broadbird took her \$1.50 for her ten days' hard work and hurried home. Going to her room she quickly changed her clothing, washed the color from her face and hands, and by 11 o'clock was working away on the vests in Lizzie Knowlton's room as Miss Mary Stillson.

CHAPTER IV.

SLAVES OF COMPETITION AND COMBINATION.

Miss Stillson, on sitting down to the sewing machine with some pieces of vest on which she was working, related the experiences of Betty Broadbird at Roltheimer's clothing warehouse with considerable warmth.

You see, said she, Betty made the bargain with them and was to have the money. I think it was very wrong the way they treated her, if the pantaloons were well made; and, Lizzie you say you are sure they were?

Of course they were. I don't believe they could show as good work in their entire stock. But Betty's experience is nothing new, Miss Stillson. I have been served the same way several times myself on work I have done in the factories. No matter how hard we work or how many pieces we turn out, we never know how much we are going to get until the foremen or forewomen have made the deductions for 'bad work' and for fines.

All of the factories are not alike, are they, Lizzie? asked Miss Stillson.

No, some of them are better than others; but they are all very strict and exacting. The girls who take the work home do best; but they must have a good machine, and the bundles are heavy loads to carry back and forward, for few of them can afford car-fare. Others dislike to be seen carrying the bundles in the street.

Miss Stillson expressed strong disapprobation of the manner in which the tailoresses were treated, and stated her determination to do something for them, as a class, as soon as she could see her way clear to its accomplishment. She kept busily at work on the vests and coats, Lizzie relating to her, from time to time, her struggles to get work and earn a livelihood. Occasionally Miss Stillson entertained Lizzie with the experience of a Massachusetts school girl; but she talked always of a third person, and Lizzie could only surmise that possibly the heroine was her handsome and big-hearted benefactress. Together they discussed the possibility of effecting a change of the systems in the clothing and other factories where women were employed, and the time passed pleasantly enough, Miss Stillson having got hardened to her work and Lizzie sufficiently recovered to help her considerably.

Occasionally old Doctor Hinston dropped in, changed or replenished Lizzie's medicine, brought some little delicacy for the table or a book or magazine and had a pleasant chat with the girls, always addressing the apprentice tailoress as Miss Stillson, for he, like Auntie Eunice Bradbury, was taken into the confidence of Miss Mamie Symington in a large degree.

When the dozen vests were completed Betty Broadbird called again and took them to Scott & Carmichael's wholesale clothing house, from which she had received them. Her experience was in many respects similar to that at Roltheimer's, only she was fined 33 1/3 per cent. by Scott & Carmichael, not because the vests were badly made up, but because she had been so long in making them.

When she delivered the coats to Vandevere & Choufraine she was completely discouraged, for here she was not only refused all pay, but accused of using cheaper buttons, thread and trimmings, and of retaining the goods until she learned the firm were about to send an officer after them. She was also told they were slovenly made, and was actually turned out of the house and threatened with arrest when she insisted on being paid.

Betty Broadbird went to her home, after delivering the coats. As Mamie

Symington, her thoughts were about equally composed of sadness and bitterness. She thought how cruel the result of her many weeks' hard work would have been had she been a poor girl, like Lizzie Knowlton, or as her employers had every reason to believe Betty Broadbird was. It was with the most acute sorrow she thought of the obstacles in the way of a poor, friendless girl making her way in the world. With intense anger she remembered the various subterfuges and misrepresentations which her employers had resorted to that they might increase their profits on her hard and miserably paid work. She and Aunt Bradbury discussed the matter all that day and into the evening, when a ring of the door bell and the announcement of the servant that Mr. Herbert Standish was in the parlor brought a temporary suspension.

Mamie Symington, on entering the parlor, could not help looking upon Mr. Standish as co-worker with Roltheimer, Scott & Carmichael and Vandevere & Choufraine, and her greeting was not cordial enough to overwhelm the secretary and erstwhile manager of the Symington Clothing Company.

He, however, was so well pleased with himself that he easily overlooked Miss Symington's formal greeting. Mr. Standish that day completed the annual statement for the preceding year, and had forwarded a copy of it to President Paul Symington, at Aberdeen, Scotland, where he was engaged in buying wool for the Woonsocket mills of Massachusetts, in which he was largely interested, and which mills made the cloth for his Cincinnati factory. The curiosity which Miss Mamie had shown to learn something of the business of the factory had prompted Mr. Standish to bring a copy of this statement and those of the three preceding years out with him. He said:

Miss Symington, I mailed the annual statement for 1885 to your father to-day, and I think it will greatly please him.

I hope so, Mr. Standish. I presume it shows large profits?" replied Mamie, who saw an opportunity to secure information voluntarily from Mr. Standish which she had intended soliciting him on the morrow.

"The largest in the history of the company. We have not only transacted a much larger business than in any other year, but we have made a large percentage of profit on it. I feel very much elated, especially as this is the first year I have had full control of the factory. I think your father turned the business over to me with some hesitation, and I think the statement I have sent him will assure him and put his mind at ease.

I am glad you have succeeded so well, Mr. Standish, and I hope father will be pleased. You certainly have worked hard. How is it that you have increased your percentage of profit above what father made? Was papa such a poor business man?

This put a new meaning to the statement for 1885. Could it be possible that Mr. Symington would take the increased percentage of profits as a reflection on his own management and business methods, as his daughter seemed to? That was an idea that had never entered Mr. Standish's head before, and it rather annoyed him. Answer the question he must and gallantry, discretion and policy all combined to cause him to exonerate Mr. Symington from the charge which was implied in the statement.

No, no, Miss Symington. Your father is an exceptionally good business man. I only wish I had his ability. Circumstances were exceptionally favorable last year and we had the good luck to see them all and take advantage of them. Would you like to see the statements, Miss Symington?

Certainly. Thanks. In what respects were the circumstances better this year than in previous years, Mr. Standish?

Oh, in many ways. I couldn't enumerate them off-hand, but by going through that statement and comparing it with these I have here, of former years, you may be able to discover them," and he handed Miss Symington the statements of '82, '83, '84, feeling that the analysis he suggested was too deep for her. He didn't know how thoroughly she had studied the books and statements shown her by the book-keeper, nor how practical her education had been.

You will excuse me, Mr. Standish, if I take some paper and figure a little. I have become quite a 'crank' in my desire to grasp and comprehend business methods and practices.

Mamie went diligently at work, with the statements of four years spread out before her on a stand she had cleared for the purpose. Occasionally she took the statements over to where Mr. Standish sat, and asked him to explain various items. Her aunt came into the room, and Mamie said:

I am glad, auntie, you came in so soon. Mr. Standish has given me a pretty hard problem in arithmetic, and I fear he finds me a very stupid pupil, and his visit very dull. I know you will entertain him while I puzzle my little head over something a women's brain was not made to understand.

Figuring is certainly a new way for

young ladies to entertain their company, but if Mr. Standish doesn't object, I am sure it is a much better method than the usual gabble one hears in society parlors, replied Eunice Bradbury.

You see, Mrs. Bradbury, I've just completed last year's statement, and I felt so good over the balance I thought I would bring a copy of it up and show it to Miss Symington, who has conceived such a passion for business. She drew a very wrong inference from it, I am sorry to say, and now she is figuring to find the whys and wherefores of the increased profit, explain Mr. Standish.

Well, Mamie will find them before she quits figuring. She has the grit of her Scotch and English ancestors, and has a pretty good head on her, though she takes some novel means of employing herself.

Yes, I never knew of a young lady in her position voluntarily devoting days after day studying tiresome figures in her father's office for amusement.

I hope you do not think I do everything for amusement, Mr. Standish. I cannot conceive of anything less amusing than a strain of brain to grasp complicated problems for which you think a woman's mind was never intended. I took lessons from your book-keeper as a duty, not as a means of amusing myself.

I beg your pardon, Miss Symington. I had no intention of making light of your ideas of occupation. I did not see in what way it could be your duty to study book-keeping, and, not considering it an accomplishment, I took it for granted you undertook it as an odd amusement.

I am my father's only child, Mr. Standish, and according to the natural course of things I shall outlive him. As he has no son or other near relative to leave his large business to, I feel it my duty to at least get a slight idea of commercial methods and systems. My aunt quite agrees with me and I am sure father will also when he knows of my desire. I hope to surprise him on his return home by my proficiency in a business education.

Herbert Standish opened his eyes very wide at the advanced ideas expressed by Mamie, and at heart regretted bringing to her the yearly statements or making any reference to them. He determined, however, to keep in favor with her, and from jesting at her study of book-keeping, and sneering at a woman's mental inferiority, he made a complete right-about-face and began complimenting her. Men of thirty or over, deeply absorbed in business, do make love in a bungling manner. They seem to have the most superficial knowledge of the mysterious workings of a woman's mind and sentiments. He said:

Now that you have told me why you undertook the study of book-keeping I can praise as a brave aspiration what I have heretofore considered a girlish eccentricity. Miss Symington, I tender you my apology for any general allusion I may have made about your sex not being adapted to business. I meant no personal application of my remarks. You, I am sure, will prove an exception, even if my restrictions were correct in the main. But I am disturbing you and interfering with your figuring. I shall converse with Mrs. Bradbury until you have finished your work.

There is plenty of time for me to complete this comparison of yearly statements at my leisure. I did not take your remark about the adaptability of women to business as a personal matter at all. My objection to it was because it egotistically declared one-half of the human race incapable of performing something they had not been allowed to try, except in isolated cases, and then under the most advantageous circumstances. Personally, I am not vain enough to think I should succeed where ninety-nine out of every hundred of my sex would fail. Somehow I have gotten the idea that it does not require the highest order of mind to succeed in business pursuits, and that is why I think it possible for me to acquire a fair knowledge of commercial methods.

Herbert Standish winced under this bold statement of Mamie of her position, and would have given much to drop a subject that was becoming decidedly unpleasant. Mamie, on the other hand, was pleased at the opportunity of relieving herself of the righteous indignation which had been accumulating ever since Mr. Standish had spoken so harshly in her presence to Lizzie Knowlton. Mrs. Bradbury had never heard Mamie talk so radically before, and, in fact, she had never done so, for at bottom she was mild as an autumn sunset and loving as Cupid. The harsh experience she had gone through as a tailoress had rapidly developed her, by revealing to her the severe struggles a majority of humanity have to undergo that they may be allowed to rest their treading feet upon the soil of mother earth until a kind nature changes their abode to the potter's field.

Herbert Standish despised anything and everything that was remotely tainted with woman rights, and Mamie's last remarks aggravated him till he had to use considerable self-restraint to keep from making a strong reply to that phase of them. He was playing for large stakes, however, and he knew it would never

do to handicap myself by antagonizing Mamie at the very outset. He used discretion, and said:

Of course, Miss Symington, it is impossible to tell what the ladies would accomplish in business if they were all educated to the same extent as you are by home. They might succeed beyond our hopes, but the world has employed them in other vocations, in which they have done much more for humanity than they ever could have in the business field, and I am well satisfied it has been for the best. But there are exceptions to every rule, and it may be that, under the conditions in which you are placed as an only child, you should be an exception. But I am more anxious to have you figure on those statements than to discuss political economy.

All right; I have no desire to discuss anything unpleasant, and I'll attend to my work and let you and auntie talk about some congenial subject.

This was spoken with a slight tinge of irony in the tone, but Herbert Standish gladly overlooked that and once turned to Mrs. Bradbury.

Addressing Mrs. Bradbury, Herbert Standish said:

I suppose you get letters regularly from Mr. Symington? He writes to the office frequently and is evidently enjoying his life abroad very much.

Oh, yes, we get one or two letters a week. He states that he is in perfect health, weighing the most he ever did. His letters to Mamie give long descriptions of the places he visits, the people he meets and their manners and customs. They are very interesting. He would like to have Mamie and I join him, but I dread an ocean Mamie has an idea she would rather see more of her own country before visiting distant lands.

I am glad to hear you do not contemplate going, and I do think Miss Symington is correct in desiring to see the sights at home before going abroad.

This last was said a little louder, so Mamie could hear it, and so understanding, she said:

Thank you, Mr. Standish, I am glad you approve my course. Father, I think, was a trifle impatient with me last summer for visiting in the East and making a trip around the lakes instead of joining him in a tour of Europe, but he thinks differently now, I hope.

Mr. Symington writes that he has not succeeded in making his purchase of wool and other material for his Eastern mills, as he had expected, said Mr. Standish, unable to longer keep from talking shop, which engrossed his mind at all times, even when contemplating the wooing of a bride.

No, said Mrs. Bradbury, and I am very sorry, as it prolongs his stay indefinitely, as he is now contemplating a trip to Australia or South America to see if he cannot do better by buying directly from the wool-growers of those countries.

That is news to me. He made no mention of that in his letters to me. That would keep him absent all summer.

Yes. He writes that if he goes to either he will not be home for a year more at least. It has been a great disappointment to Mamie and me.

Herbert Standish and Mrs. Bradbury chatted for a long time together, during which Mamie figured diligently in comparing the statements. At last she seemed to have arrived at some conclusion, and, calling Mr. Standish, said:

I am not through yet, nor am I clear I am exactly correct; but I figure that in 1884 you made 24 per cent. profit on the output, and this year it is 32 per cent. You paid a life more insurance and taxes this year, and added something to the plant, but you figured the last in as profit. Your repairs were less and your fuel bill higher. The cost of your raw material averaged within a small fraction of one per cent. lower, making your gain come almost entirely on wages, as your selling price fell a trifle, if anything. I figure your labor was gotten 78 per cent. cheaper than what father paid in 1884. Am I right?"

Well, Miss Symington, you have been analyzing those statements with a vengeance, said Herbert Standish, with intense surprise. I have not yet time to go through them in that way, and cannot say whether you are correct or not, but I presume you are.

Assuming I am correct, Mr. Standish, until we discover the error, will you please tell me how it was that you got the work done so cheaply?

Oh, I watched everything very closely. You see times are pretty hard, and a great many men cannot get work they must send their wives and girls out to search for it, and that reduces wages. You could hire girls at almost nothing, and the only thing was to select those who did the best work and pay them the reduced wages.

But I suppose you paid by the piece—at so much a dozen for the different garments?

We do.

And has the scale been reduced sufficiently for you to make 8 per cent. on the entire output? That would be an enormous reduction.

Oh, no; not so much as that. I have never figured out the percentage. I got better foremen and forewomen,

and they saw that the girls worked steadier and turned out more goods per machine.

How did you get your cloth cheaper? You must have gotten your cloth nearly 2 per cent. cheaper.

Perhaps we used a trifle inferior grade. In fact, I am quite sure we did, but got the same figure for the manufactured goods we did in 1884.

Then, if my figures are correct, Mr. Standish, your extraordinary good showing for 1885 results from two things—paying cheaper wages and furnishing inferior goods?

Herbert Standish did not want to admit this, but there seemed no way out, and after hesitating he said:

Well, according to your figures; that would seem to be two of the causes.

Now, the goods you manufacture are sold principally to the poorer classes, so called—from clerks down to day laborers—are they not?

Yes. The wealthy merchants, business men, have their clothes made by custom tailors.

Then, as a matter of fact, your increased profits come from pinching poor girls' wages down on the one hand and forcing an inferior quality of cloth upon their mothers and fathers on the other? That, then, is the genesis of business?

Why, Miss Symington, said Mr. Standish, in an indignation he could no longer restrain, you figure and talk like a labor agitator. It is a business man's duty to take advantage of the law of supply and demand in labor as much as in the materials he buys for his store or his factory. Laboring men take advantage of it in securing the high as possible wages when the demand for their services is great.

Yes; both sides take advantage of that inexorable law, but can the laborer take such advantage of it as his employer?

Certainly.

"I do not see how he can. He must take advantage of it when times are good and labor is in demand. Can he at such times take such advantage of as to entirely absorb his employer's profits?"

Well, no. Such a thing would simply shut down the factories and stop all employment.

But when times are hard the employer takes advantage of the superabundance of labor to cut wages down until the laborer's profits are entirely eliminated and often an actual loss of his capital follows."

I cannot see how that can be, nor do I understand what you mean by a laborer's profits and capital.

I call all a laborer earns over the bare necessity of sustaining himself and family profits—what he may invest in the purchase of a home, a nice dress for his wife or daughter, an extra piece of furniture, some books or the like.

I understand the profit, but how about the capital of a laborer?

Often a laborer is forced from the low wages he receives consequent upon the surplus supply of labor, to run in debt for a portion of the mere necessities of life; or he is forced to put a mortgage on his home. These debts must be paid when his wages are increased. His capital is decreased to the extent of that debt. His strength and years are also reduced, and thus again is his capital reduced.

I understand you, and understanding you, I must change my answer to your main question from no to yes. Manufacturers frequent lose money on account of the high wages they have to pay.

Do I understand you to say that manufacturers deliberately continue business after they are paying are they realize that the wages they are paying are causing them to lose money, or that they deliberately start in on enterprise when they know the wages they must pay will cause a loss of all profit and an absorption of capital?

No; I wouldn't say they deliberately do, but such incidents do occur.

Then they are no more exceptions. But laborers, in hard times are forced by a general law to work for prices which extinguish their profits and absorb portions of their capital. They have no alternative. It is work or starve, and starvation means not only a loss of all profits but of all capital."

Of course, Miss Symington, I know the laborer suffers at times, but we cannot control the supply and demand of labor.

True, Mr. Standish, but to some measure you can control the wages paid him. This year, you say, was an exceedingly bad one for working people. Yet you made it an exceedingly good one for your company by increasing hardships for your laborer in two ways—cutting his wages and deteriorating his clothing.

Our factory alone didn't abolish the scale of wages. It was made by the general supply of labor.

Yes; but there was nothing to compel you to take advantage of the cruel law of supply and demand.

Oh, yes, Miss Symington, the Clothing Manufacturers' Association, of which we are a member, fixed the scale, and it would have expelled us if we had increased the wages paid.

What if it did?