

# The Woman's Town; Men Play Second Fiddle

## Girl Workers Nearly Double The Number of Males at Troy



An Every Day Street Scene, the Men Very Few



**H**AVING found himself on the main business street of Troy, New York, at the noon hour one day recently, a stranger hunted up a policeman—there are few policemen in Troy, for a reason which will presently appear—and asked:

"What convention is meeting here? Is it the National Association of Co-Eds?"

"No; no convention at all, that I know of. Why?"

An excited sweep of the visitor's arm up and down the street. Then:

"But the girls! Where did they come from? Why, it must have rained girls here last night! There seem to be thousands of them in sight! Gracious, man! Have you nothing but women in this city?"

"Oh, yes, a few others"—and the blue-coat smiled broadly—"but the minority of males in our population don't keep us policemen very busy, for, you see, this is a woman's town, and the men have to behave."

Troy might well be termed the woman's city. Of its 76,000 inhabitants, by far the majority are females. Not only that, but its industrial life is composed of women, for they form over 60 per cent. of the wage earners. The wages paid to the women workers exceed those paid to men. Troy's payroll for regularly employed women workers shows a disbursement of over \$4,000,000 a year.

Balls, entertainments and public functions are supported by the women; theatre audiences are composed principally of women; women predominate everywhere. It is, perhaps the only city in the world where the order of man's rule is reversed in nearly all except political suffrage and office-holding.

**I**N NO other city in the world, so far as known, do women earn higher wages than men. That they do in Troy was brought out some time ago when a comparison was made.

It was found that a great proportion of Troy's working girls were making \$15 to \$25 a week, while the average wages paid to men—they are employed for only heavy labor and running machinery about the factories and laundries—were but \$10 to \$12 a week.

But Troy is a woman's city in other ways—in every way. Not the city of the matron, either, but of the independent bachelor woman. Nocturnal in Troy is a good time to observe the extent of feminine predominance. Look which way you will, it is girls, girls, girls. Shops, offices and stores contribute to the throng, but most of them come from the collar factories and the laundries which every week do up the boiled shirts and cuffs and collars for the half of New York State.

Yes, and some of them come from the drawing-rooms and parlors of the elite. But you'd never know the difference in dress, personal beauty or deportment. A woman's city, but more especially a working woman's city, is Troy. The number of women actually employed in gainful occupations in the city is estimated at 14,952.

An estimate of the number of men employed is 8700, or less than that of women.

Of the male wage earners probably not more than half are employed in the regular industries; the others work about the hotels, in the restaurants (it is a strange thing to see so many male waiters serving food to the girls, who occupy practically all the tables), about the livery stables, the railroad station, or in building and common laboring operations.

### PRETTY AND CLEAN

In other words, if the industries which are operated almost exclusively by female labor were to be eliminated there would be no Troy, at least not the Troy which has been famed the country over as the Collar City, but which might more aptly be termed the Woman's City. Perhaps one statement that has been made—in regard to the personal appearance of the Troy working women—should be elaborated at this point, lest the charge of exaggeration be made.

To repeat, then, these women are so well dressed and bear themselves with such grace and evidence of good breeding that on the streets they could not be distinguished from the daughters of wealth and fashion. Naturally, this will be questioned. For, you say, how can a woman go to work in her fineries, bedecked with jewelry as if on her way to church?

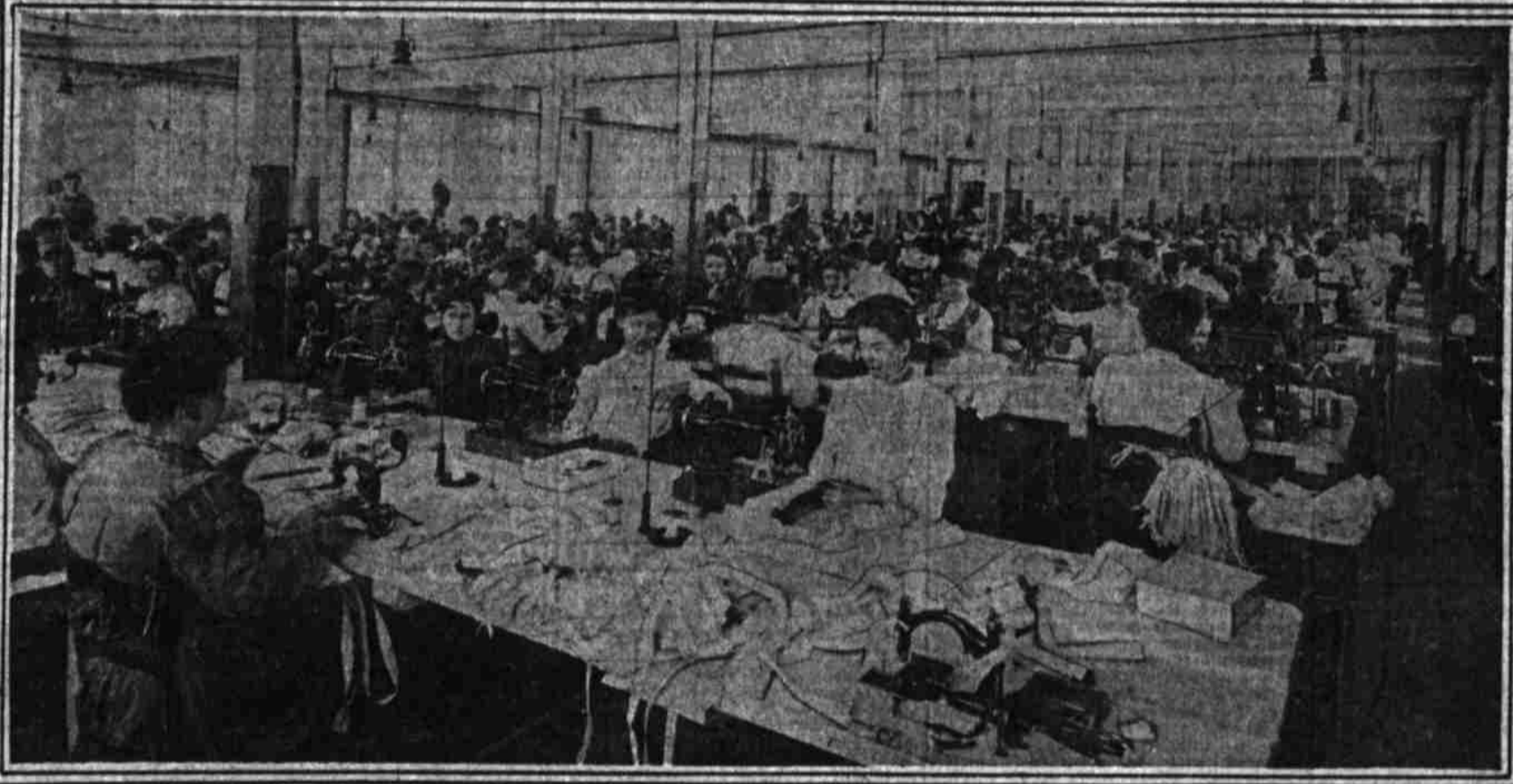
In Troy it is possible because the work done by the women is eminently clean. What is there to soil the hands or clothes in the collar factory, where the raw material is handled in nothing but clean, white linen and thread just as spotless? And, as to the machinery—well, that's the men's work. (They don't go to work clad in their Sunday best.)

In the laundries, of course, the work isn't quite so cleanly, but this doesn't prevent the girls from arranging their toilets carefully before leaving work, and detaching themselves in the morning of street costume, obliterated the evidences of toil.

The dress of the girls as they go to or from the factories amazes the visitor. It is rather the rule than the exception to see them clad in silks, satins, expensive furs, Paris hats and the latest and best gloves and shoes. No noticeable in this that the untidying sometimes refer to it as extravagance. It is not. It is simply an evidence of a high grade of intelligence.



Men Not Necessary for Enjoyment, Outing Party at Suburban Hotel



Stitching Room in a Troy Collar Factory

These girls know that their moral tenor and their social standing are improved by neat appearance on the streets, whether going to work or out for a promenade; and, as to the expensiveness of their dress, they consider it false economy to buy anything cheap. Besides, they pay promptly for what they buy, and why shouldn't they suit themselves?

The obvious result is that at no time does the working girl feel that she is off duty as to etiquette. She carries her confidence and self-respect with her to her machine. She need not be ashamed to meet her most exclusive friend on the street. And even while at work she is made cheerful by the air of refinement about herself and her fellow-workers.

Fashionably attired, displaying costly jewelry, working girls by the thousands may be seen on the streets any fine night. At first thought this might seem improper, but it must be considered that the rules of propriety which obtain at a young woman's seminary may not be applied here.



do marry at times, for they are women. But they do not marry indiscriminately, as do many women elsewhere.

There is hardly one of them who has not rejected several proposals of marriage. The collar girl makes it a practice to look well over the man who seeks her hand, to study his prospects, his family, his past record, his propensity for work. It is common enough to hear a Troy girl say: "I liked him because I prefer to keep on supporting myself rather than undertake to support two." Those who say they have no intention of marrying are by far in the majority.

And those who do marry? Usually they do very well, much better than the average working girl elsewhere.

Several factory girls have become mistresses of mansions in Troy. A former laundry girl is the wife of one of the principal laundry owners, a very wealthy man. His society friends in Troy say that he displayed commendable judgment and independence in marrying the



The Matinee Hour

girl of his choice, and they associate with her on perfect equality.

Another girl who was what is commonly known as a "belle girl" in a Troy telephone exchange is the wife of a local millionaire.

A young woman who was employed as a stitcher in a collar factory married one of the partners in the business, and is now a leader in local society.

Remarkable as these incidents are, they are almost equaled by many others in which lawyers, physicians, dentists and successful business men have married collar girls.

Assuredly, these women have charms. Otherwise marriageable men of Troy could easily find life partners by going to the surrounding towns. As a matter of fact, it is remarked by all visitors to Troy that the collar girls are exceptionally attractive as a class.

They have their own social life, differing from that of other cities mainly in that men are a negligible quality, and all the arrangements are made and the bills paid by the women.

Some time ago the women of some factories and laundries arranged an entertainment and dance, which was attended by some 4000 girls and only 600 men. Each girl contributed \$1, which entitled her to bring a friend. Some men received as high as forty invitations, not, perhaps, so much on account of their great popularity as of the death of men in the city.

### CAN HAVE BRIDESMAIDS GALORE

So strong are friendship's ties among the Troy working girls that when one weds she usually has thirty or forty bridesmaids; the number has reached one hundred.

This might appear like imposing on the bridegroom, but in Troy the custom of giving presents to bridesmaids is reversed, and they usually give presents to the bride.

While the general tenor of the collar girl's life is one of brightness, there is many a little life tragedy being slowly, silently, acted out in the whirring maelstrom dirge for them—their sewing machines, or the chugging of the washing machinery.

Some of the workers are old women. Seated at a machine the other day was a woman of almost 70, patiently, laboriously sewing bands on collars—stitching, stitching, with the thread of her life which, from appearance, the Fates might soon cut forever.

Another woman said she had begun as a collar girl 43 years ago, had married, had been deprived by death of one after another of her relatives, and had finally drifted back to the occupation of her girlhood for a living.

An operative of 69 related that she had married a talented man, had a home, children, money, the comforts of life; her three children died, her husband was killed in a railroad accident, and she, inexperienced in business matters, lost her money through deals with land promoters; then—a return to the collar machine, where now every vibration of the treadle is paving her way down the path of swiftly passing years.

Besides those regularly employed in the factories, there are thousands who do collar work at home. A common sight in Troy is a girl—maybe a married woman—seated near the window of her home, with nimble fingers stitching collars and cuffs. A hasty glance reveals mounds of white unfinished work near at hand, and one may note quick flashes of white as each collar is softly turned, creased, points picked out with a bread-saw and bunched for pressing. This work is called for by men and boys who cart it to the factories in wagons. Another minor use to which more men is put in Troy.

### MANY WORK SECRETLY

There are others—how many hundreds it would be difficult to say—who work daily at collars and cuffs in their homes, but behind drawn curtains, for their sensitiveness rather balks at the term "working woman."

At the theatre, whether at matinee or evening performance, the audience is mainly female. Handsomely gowned, the factory girls occupy the best seats—the price to them makes no difference. They are chronic theatregoers, and patronize the high-priced stars fully as well as the vaudeville.

Besides supplying their personal comforts and necessities, they have money for the church and for charity. When one becomes ill, it is customary for the others to make a collection and pay her the same wages as if she were working. Another custom is for a group of girls to divide among them the work of the absent one and do it in addition to their own.

When death occurs, there is a provision for insurance to be paid to surviving relatives. There is a vacation fund to which a girl contributes what she can throughout the year, and in the summer enjoys a rest at seashore or mountain resort on this fund.

The Troy savings banks show a large gross sum to the credit of the working girls. One bank stays open certain evenings to accommodate them. They are the principal depositors at all the savings banks.

So the Troy working girl—the queen of her kind—goes serenely along her course, demonstrating her independence, and asking no odds of any one.

When they arrived at Mombasa, the people were amazed. The chiefs were dressed in spotless white, and although the day was clear, carried huge gingham umbrellas.

It was learned these were marks of power. The Botic chiefs rule over tribes in southern Nigeria, and are appointed by the paramount ruler. Of course, they felt their exalted position and wished to display it to the world.

Recently these chiefs got possession of their prized umbrellas. The king gradually saw that the possession of power must be kept out of reach of lesser rulers, but one day a lot of gingham umbrellas were discovered in a store kept by a European. In a short time each chief had one.

Less brilliant in color, and less fine in texture than those of the sovereigns, the umbrellas of the chiefs, nevertheless, served to impress upon the awed blacks their high position.

Each savage king possesses an umbrella decorated in a distinct style. On solemn occasions, when various kings meet, they are distinguished from each other by the umbrella trimmings.

Most pictures show native kings making treaties with Europeans while squatting on the ground, with slaves holding an umbrella above them.

In the days of the Pharaohs umbrellas were regarded as the highest emblems of sovereignty. They were used above the kings of upper and lower Egypt on all state occasions.

The Greeks, practical as well as poetical, borrowed the sign of power of Egypt and used it to protect themselves from the sun. The Roman women, seeing the value in preserving a close complexion in a hot day, adopted it. From them the custom descended to the British, the French and the Spanish women.

From them the English ladies borrowed the custom, and not from the Persians, as was once thought. The native Africans still favor it as their people and women, retaining its previous use.

## WHERE THE BADGE OF UMBRELLA IS A ROYALTY



**I**N SOME parts of Africa the umbrella is used, not to protect the tribal chiefs from the glare of the sun or a heavy rainstorm, but as an insignia of high rank. Woe betide him among the blacks of Africa who carries this mark of nobility if he does not have royal blood in his veins, or represent a dusky-hued sovereign. By their umbrellas are kings and chiefs known; by the fabric, the fringes and tassels is the degree of veneration accorded them determined. This use of the umbrellas as a mark of distinction is ancient, originating with the Egyptians. It was only during the course of centuries that it was adopted for practical use.

Now you have got a shadow, an umbrella. To keep the sun off your eyes. From your fair credit. —From "Use a Wife and Have a Wife."

**O**NE chooses an umbrella of silk and cotton in this country by the price one can pay, and by judging the durability of the article. In Africa only a king uses silk; lesser chiefs use gingham or cotton. My lady chooses her sunshade, most likely, to match her dress, pausing over the many shades and picking an artistic creation according to the contents of her purse.

In Africa women are not allowed such a luxury as a parasol; even the native queens pine in vain. The king alone may use umbrellas of gay colors, and by the amount of fancy work in his power and wealth unfolded to neighboring sovereigns.

Recently a number of Botic chiefs went to Mombasa to celebrate the birthday of the King of England. Out of the wild they came, pursuing their journey on the Uganda Railway. They had never seen a railroad before.