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WORK FOR WOMEN.

HOW NEW FIELDS OF EMPLOYMENT HAVE BEEN OPENED.

The Veteran Virginia Penny Relates Her Experiences in Seeking Occupations for Women—She Devoted Time and Fortune to Assist Women to Support Themselves.

(Copyright, 1893, by American Press Association.)

I had been a teacher for over nine years, mostly in the western states. While teaching my health failed, and I thought I would go at something else. But when I came to study the matter carefully I found no other avenue was open to me. I asked myself why it was that men had so many occupations and women so few. I could not solve the problem, and the more I studied it the more I was puzzled. So when I came in possession of my little patrimony I determined to learn the cause, if there was one, and see that justice was done to women.

The information I gained of women's work and matters pertaining thereto cost me thousands of dollars and years of time and labor and the entire loss of health for a long period.



VIRGINIA PENNY IN 1859.

I read works on political economy, labor and capital and similar objects. I bought every book to be had on women's department, duties and spheres. But nowhere could I gain information of pursuits that women could enter and earn a livelihood, for no such printed information had been given to the world. So I determined to learn by observation and from personal inquiry what I wanted. To do so I must go to the places where men and women were at work. I usually rode and walked from 8 o'clock in the morning until places of business closed and reached my boarding place about dark. There were then no elevators in buildings, and I and my hired companion, for I always employed one, climbed up stairs, generally to the ninth, tenth and eleventh floors, all day long, week after week, month after month and year after year.

I visited between 5,000 and 6,000 places in Philadelphia, New York city, Boston and the surrounding towns. My object was to see the mode of operating, ascertain the wages paid, the time of learning, the effects of occupations on the health and many other things of a kindred nature. The one and only aim in view was to gain a knowledge of what employments were feasible to women, the qualifications needed and the pursuits to which they were best adapted; also the likelihood of gaining a footing in various occupations, the probable result pecuniarily, the length of time to prepare and the expense of living while doing so, with some inquiry into the cost of tools or the capital required for carrying on the business, if carried on independently. I found the majority of pursuits followed by men were capable of being performed by women.

The size and character of the places visited ranged from the mammoth buildings of the Harpers to the lone attic, where a maker of spectacle frames worked alone and lived with his motherless two-year-old child. I have gone to places ranging in variety from a shot tower to a cobbler's workbench in a basement.

I here take this opportunity to acknowledge the uniform kindness and courtesy I received from employers and employed wherever I went. Not a rude word, not a coarse look, did I ever have from one of the thousands of men and women I saw. Perhaps such changes have taken place that none will remember me. But my picture as I then was may recall me to the minds of a few employers or employees.

How well I succeeded in my efforts may be judged from the fact that when I commenced only about six occupations were generally engaged in by women, and they were such as our women ancestors had worked in from time immemorial. Of course there were a few in a small number of others, mostly of the higher and better class of work, as journalists, authors and artists. A woman preacher, doctor or lecturer was a curiosity. Now women are occupied in about 400 pursuits. Some of these are new occupations that time and circumstances have developed, and which were not then invented and consequently not named by me when I first studied the matter, from 1859 to 1883.

The results of my four years' labor were embodied in a volume entitled "The Employments of Women," afterward published as "Five Hundred Employments Adapted to Women," and still later as "How Women Can Make Money." The second book, kindred in nature, but not statistical, was called "Think and Act."

My first active work was commenced in Philadelphia. I recall with pleasure my trips through many of the large establishments in that city. I was shown through Power & Weightman's laboratory and permitted to talk with the employees. I remember my walk through Howells' wall paper factory, through

Lippincott's bookmaking establishment and a pleasant chat with Mr. Lippincott. Some friends and myself made a visit to Rembrandt Peale's home, where we found the artist working on the sixty-first original portrait of Washington. An intelligent guide conducted us through the mint. I had a delightful talk with George W. Childs, who wrote to me in 1886 as follows: "It might be found that in the numerous magazines devoting some columns to women's interests the contributions of such a pioneer as yourself in the statistical and suggestive histories of employments would be welcome. The sketch in 'Allibone's Dictionary' does only justice to you as the first encyclopedist on the subject of women's occupations."

From Philadelphia I went to New York city. There most business streets have each their peculiar line of work. Many prominent men I there had occasion to talk with have gone to their long homes, Greeley, Raymond, Bryant, Leslie and the Brooks, among editors. With a note from Miss Emily Howland I called upon Cyrus Field, who greatly favored women as telegraph operators, and whose parlors, dining room and hall were frescoed by a woman artist.

Among the many places of the book-making kind that come to mind are Harper's, the Appletons, the Bible house, the Methodist Book concern and the Tract society. Many women were employed in them. I consumed much time in visiting cotton, linen, woolen and silk manufactories, and others of metal and glass were gone through. Those of the precious metals were especially interesting, as watch chains, rings, and bracelets. Cameo cutters and lapidaries were not passed by. I visited the Cooper institute, where quite a number of ladies were practicing the art of wood engraving, and some were painting portraits and landscapes.

I talked with many salesladies. The hours were long and the pay poor of the majority of them. Two of the few avocations then open to women were millinery and dressmaking, and they were crowded to excess. Hundreds of seamstresses made gentlemen's and ladies' underwear at starvation rates. Book agents plied their vocation with persistent zeal. Button factories employed a number of women, and so did knitting factories. There were immense bread and cracker bakeries, but no women were employed. However, one woman had grown rich making and selling pies. The hardest, filthiest and worst paid labor in most occupations was usually done by women.

From New York I went over to Boston and visited numerous stores, factories and workshops.

VIRGINIA PENNY.

A Senator's Daughter. Miss Lucy Aldrich, daughter of United States Senator Aldrich, is fully as well known in Washington society as in Providence, as for two or three years past most of her time has been spent at the nation's capital.



MISS LUCY ALDRICH.

Miss Aldrich has a peculiar style of beauty—light hair, clearest complexion, dreamy eyes and the sweetest of dispositions. Tall, stately appearing, Miss Aldrich is a familiar figure in the gay society of Washington, and presides over the household of Rhode Island's distinguished senator with rare grace and tact. Miss Aldrich is but twenty-three years of age and an accomplished equestrienne. Her summers she divides between Providence and Newport, and is always in her native city about half of the winter during the gayest time.

C. S.

The Decline of the Toast. I don't mean the kind of toast you drink out of glasses, which may decline as vigorously as a Latin noun if it pleases, but the kind that is served on a plate, with beautiful "amber effects," like some of the winter dress goods, and plenty of butter. Really it is worthy of a sonnet. But that's only when it's made by a person of skill, taste, judgment and conscientiousness, almost a paragon in fact. Half the people who make toast don't know how, and half those who eat it don't know any better. I have seen lunchers at a first class hotel and at a popular restaurant order toast and be served with bread that had been scorched on a gridiron and looked like a zebra.

I suppose one reason of the decline of toast is the disappearance from commerce of the old fashioned toasting fork of wire with four prongs and the substitution of a miniature gridiron. I went into a house furnishing store once and asked for a toasting fork. The proprietor ran his eyes meditatively over the shelves and said: "Now let me see what shall I sell you for a toasting fork?" I said a toasting fork would do, but he had none and seemed to consider this absurd, so I came away without one.

M. H. F. L.

In Ontario all women who are property owners are entitled to vote at municipal elections. In the town of London 950 ladies voted. An ordinance proposing to limit the liberty of drinking saloons brought out the full force of the feminine vote.

PREPARING TO OPEN THE FAIR.

Grover Cleveland Will Touch the Button. The People Will Do the Rest. (Special Correspondence.)

CHICAGO, Jan. 12.—While renewed activity and energy are, with the opening of the new year, being manifested in all departments pertaining to the World's Columbian exposition, there is one committee in particular that believes in taking time by the forelock and is carrying out the belief in practice. This is the committee on ceremonies. The recollections of the glories of dedication week are still with us. It seems but yesterday since that magnificent civic parade moved over our spacious thoroughfares; since Manufactures hall resounded with the acclaim of the greatest audience ever gathered under a covered roof.

Under although the recollection still dwells with us, Dedication Day is a thing of the past. Inauguration Day is before us in the near future. It matters not that ground has yet to be broken for the ornate structure in which it is proposed that the inauguration ceremonies shall be held. Such a little thing as that doesn't trouble anybody so long as the ground itself is actually there. That the programme should be framed before the building in which that programme is to be carried out has actually begun to rear its walls—and only four months to spare—may be regarded as simply another illustration of the go-ahead-iveness of the United States in general and of the metropolis of the west in particular.

Wind and weather, contractors and walking delegates and various other concomitants permitting, the ceremonies that are to signalize the formal opening of the exposition to the people of the universe will be held in Festival hall. The site of this structure—when it is a structure—will be on the west side of the lagoon east of the Transportation building, near by the Administration building, and easy of access to the Sixty-seventh street entrance.

Just now the ground is occupied by a frame restaurant, within which at noon-day Major Moses P. Handy may oftentimes be found diligently engaged in the task of keeping those whiskers of national reputation out of a bowl of mock turtle soup or exploring with a fork the mysteries of a dish of pork and beans, while on the other side of the table Director General George R. Davis or President T. W. Palmer may be cracking jokes or exchanging witticisms between mouthfuls of mush and milk or ham and eggs.

The frame restaurant, however, has a limited lease of life. Within a few weeks it will be razed to the ground, and Festival hall will rise upon the ruins. It will have a seating capacity of 5,000 souls, and, as its name indicates, will be available for reunions, state gatherings and festivities of a general character. Should there be conditions, however, that militate against the completion of this building on time, the inauguration exercises will be held in Music hall. This is located between the Agricultural and Manufactures buildings, just about northeast of the latter building. Its seating capacity will be about 2,000.

Possibly a good many people may be inclined to ask why the exercises should not take place in the open air, or why the Manufactures building, in which the dedication exercises were held, cannot be utilized next May. As to the latter suggestion, the building itself will be crowded with exhibits, and the possibility of reserving sufficient space even to construct a temporary auditorium is out of the question. So far as open air exercises are concerned, none of us who have lived in Chicago for even a decade is likely to be entranced with the idea. We don't dance about May poles hereabouts with the opening of the month of flowers, nor as a general rule do we begin to warble "Spring, spring, gentle spring," until we are well into June.

It is not so many years ago since trains were snowbound within fifty miles of Chicago for two or three days in the last week in April. What happened then is likely to happen again. Open air exercises on the 1st of May might mean colds and catarrh and that fendish monster, la grippe, and its consort, pneumonia, and bronchitis and numberless other ills to thousands if not tens of thousands of patriotic Americans. And so an open air inauguration has been tabooed and very wisely tabooed. It would be a profitable thing for the medical fraternity, but neither the Illinois nor the National Medical association has offered a percentage on the professional fees that such a programme would bring forth, and hence it has no place in the list of concessions.

That energetic secretary of the committee on ceremonies, Colonel E. C. Culp, to whom much of the success of dedication week may be fairly attributed, expresses the opinion that a quarter of a million people will pass through the gates of Jackson park on opening day. Hence, if his estimate comes anywhere near being correct, it follows that 245,000 of them will get neither within seeing nor hearing of the special exercises, although that entire number and as many more may gather in Machinery hall and the other structures and look upon the machinery as it starts in motion from the pressure upon the electric button.

Of the 5,000 more fortunate individuals one-fifth will comprise the official guests of the national commission. These may be classified in this order: President and members of the cabinet, the diplomatic corps, the members of both branches of congress, the members of the supreme court, the national commission, the board of lady managers, the city council of Chicago, the park commissioners, the board of managers of the government exhibit, and last, but not least, the representatives of the press.

The other 4,000 spectators will, according to the present programme, put up five dollars apiece for the privilege. It will be cheap at that, for at the Paris exposition the price of tickets ranged from two to twelve dollars, according to location, and for days before the inauguration they commanded a premium of 100 per cent. The exercises will be brief dignified and at the same time impressive. Grover Cleveland will press the button. The people will do the rest. HENRY M. HUNT.

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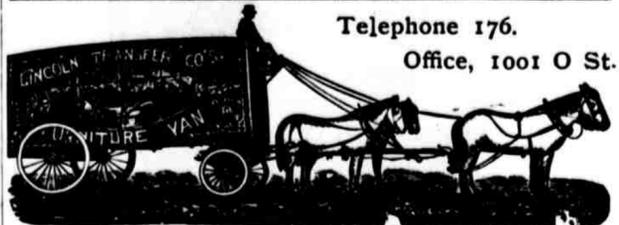
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