

associations offer much that is both attractive and useful. A clerk, typewriter or stenographer who is out of employment can practice at the club rooms. At a stated evening of each week literary exercises are conducted for the benefit of those who desire to attend, and once a month some distinguished lecturer is invited to address the society. The initiation fee is one dollar, and additional monthly dues of fifty cents are demanded. . . .

The matrimonial achievements of women clerks have become a species of national pleasantries. So many women employed in offices and mercantile houses have married men with whom they would hardly have come in contact in another sphere, that the subject has long ceased to be a matter of speculation, and has gradually drifted from witty comment to the more sober attention that bespeaks a recognized fact. . . .

From all I am able to gather the girls make good wives. There is nothing in clerical training that detracts from the finest womanly qualities, and men have outgrown their admiration for feminine helplessness and have come to look upon independence as something worth having. Clerical training educates the mind to accuracy in details, punctuality in the daily affairs of life, economy in the adjustment of time and quickness of perception. Perhaps this is the reason why so many men choose a wife amid the deft-fingered clerks in preference to the society misses. The woman clerk has studied the value of concentration, learned the lesson that incites to work when a burden bears heavily upon her strength. She knows the worth of self-reliance, and the fine courage that springs from the consciousness that a good result has been accomplished by a well-directed effort.

Harriet Brunkhurst on the Home Problems of "Business Girls," 1910

That the girl who goes to business frequently faces home problems more difficult than those she meets in an office is a fact that comparatively few people recognize. The status of the girl in the home changes when she becomes a breadwinner, yet there are many homes where the new order not only is not accepted, but is also stoutly combated. Perhaps the main difficulty arises from the fact that although the girl is out in the world and may develop capabilities and breadth unattainable to the one whose life lies in a narrower groove, yet she is still but a girl, shrinking, sensitive, possessed of all the whims, fancies and weaknesses that have marked her sex from the beginning of things.

The mother whose daughter goes to business, as do the husband and sons, finds it difficult to realize that anything is changed beyond the mere fact that the girl is away all day. When she returns she slips into her old place; not "all in a minute" can the mother bring herself to acknowledge that the daughter's position in the home is, in fact, precisely like that of her brother. If the mother is long in recognizing this so is the rest of the world. Meanwhile the daughter may be having a hard time.

A certain little woman whose daughter is the household provider has a grievance that seems to her almost insupportable. The daughter, Rose, is advertising manager in a big store; she has a private office, a stenographer, errand-boys and clerical

workers to assist her; she employs no heavier implement than pen or scissors; her hours are from nine to five, six, seven — possibly ten at night, as the occasion may demand. She earns a comfortable salary, and she pays into the family exchequer whatever sum is necessary, with never a question as to where the money goes.

The mother is careful in her expenditure and an excellent housekeeper; she refuses to keep a maid because they have no room for her, but the rough work is done by outside hands. Her ideas of housekeeping demand rising at five-thirty A.M. She sleeps lightly, having a midday siesta, and she prefers to do her work in the early morning. She is ready for breakfast at six-thirty. There is no necessity for Rose to breakfast before eight, but the mother begins each day with a complaint at the late breakfast hour. This point of difference, trivial in itself, causes continual irritation.

Rose, capable executive head of a big department though she is, simply cannot fight the matter to a finish. The same girl who calmly gives orders right and left, once the office is reached, chokes with tears and has not a word to say when the little mother, who does not know even the rudiments of business, tells her that she is indolent and selfish. Rose knows that she herself is right — that she must have recreation and rest; deprivation of her morning sleep might be serious to the point of a breakdown — and she must not be ill, for she is the breadwinner. It is the principle of the thing, the mother avers, and she means just the best in the world, of course. But there is only one right way, and that is her way.

This mother is overlooking some very pertinent facts, even excluding the unhappiness she causes her daughter. Rose is actually, by right of her earnings, the head of the house; yet the mother, who would yield without question to husband or son occupying the same position, debates Rose's every movement simply because she is a girl. Were Rose to take her courage in her own hands and face her mother it would avail nothing. So she accepts an unnecessary unhappiness simply because she can see no solution. If the mother could see things in their true light she would be appalled.

There is another mother whose daughter, Cecil, carries a similar burden in the home. The latter finds that many little economies are necessary in order to conduct the home liberally. With fingers as nimble as her brain she finds a woman's innumerable tasks about her wardrobe — lace to be mended, fresh ribbons needed, a stitch here and there that she may be immaculate and insure the longest possible service from her clothing. When Cecil returns from her work, however, she is too weary to attempt any sewing. If she is to remain bright and alert, hold her position and not become ill, she must have relaxation in the evening. She goes to the theater, opera, concerts, has friends to see her, or spends a quiet evening with a book. At nine in the morning she is at her desk, bright-eyed and with a clear brain.

That their support is absolutely dependent upon Cecil's remaining "fit" the mother knows; but that recreation is necessary to maintain the condition she cannot grasp. Consequently, when Cecil takes Sunday morning for the little fussy tasks about her wardrobe the mother sees only sheer perversity, to say nothing of incipient depravity, about it. And there is the incontrovertible fact that Cecil "has all her evenings free." Moreover the mother wails: "She never has time to do anything for me!" It does not occur to her that she is asking of Cecil, whose strength already is fully taxed, more than she would ask from a man. She is the type of woman who

would say of her husband: "John is so tired when he returns from work!" That Cecil may be tired she never considers. . . .

One of the most difficult phases of the situation appears with the subject of housework. While going to business absolves the daughter, even as it does the husband and sons, it is a fact not so fully recognized as it might be. To the mother seven or eight hours of work followed by complete release appear so easy in comparison with her own lot that a few additional duties seem no more than fair. Moreover there is the family, its relations and friends, to make the contention should the mother take a different view of the matter.

Maud's mother, for instance, is criticised severely by her relatives for her careful fostering of her daughter's strength.

"It is perfectly ridiculous for you to iron Maud's shirtwaists," declared an elderly aunt. "She doesn't work half as hard as you do, and it wouldn't hurt her a bit to do her ironing in the evening. We used to do ours, and we were none the worse for it."

Maud's mother made no reply as she hung the sixth white blouse in a row with its mates. The years had gifted her with a sweet wisdom the other had not attained, and she knew well the futility of argument.

"I did my own fine ironing at home," she said afterward, "but there was never an afternoon or a morning when I could not go out if I chose. A task in the evening, unless it was for our pleasure, we never knew. Maud goes to the office in sun and in storm; she has never a day or an afternoon, except holidays, when she is free to do as she pleases. Days of headache or other slight indisposition, when I would have been on the sofa or comfortably in bed, she trudges bravely away. Often she is too tired even for recreation, to say nothing of work, when she returns in the evening."

"But six white shirtwaists!" exclaimed the listener.

"She works in an office where the furnishings are of mahogany, with rich rugs, polished brass and other things in harmony. How long could she hold her position were she to appear in a soiled blouse?"

Now that was only plain, practical good sense, clear-eyed recognition of pertinent facts; but astonishingly few people can boast it.

Mabel's mother, for example, takes a different and a more usual view of a similar situation. True, her work is far heavier than is that of Maud's mother, but Mabel works eight hours a day while Maud works seven. She is home in time to assist in preparing dinner, she helps with the dishes afterward, and there are innumerable little "odd jobs" that frequently keep her busy until nine o'clock. If she goes out there is a mad rush to finish the dinner work and be dressed sufficiently early. She does not go out very much, however, for she must rise at six-thirty, assist with the preparation of breakfast, and be at the office by eight-thirty o'clock.

That Mabel is fagged continually is inevitable. "I am so tired, Mother," she said once, when an additional bit of work was suggested.

"Aren't you ashamed to say that when you see how your mother works?" demanded the father.

Mabel did the required work with no further comment, although the tears smarted in her eyes, her heart ached with the injustice of the taunt, and her weary little body seemed ready to fail her. She could earn her own living, but she could not fight her own battles. . . .

The problems these girls face are delicate, whichever way they are viewed. Perhaps part of the trouble arises from non-recognition of arrival at "years of discretion." We are all of us individuals first, and members of a family afterward. The family fosters and develops, but it may hamper freedom as well. There must be dependence upon one another, there must be community of interests; but in the successful home there must also be a clearly-defined recognition of individual existence. The girl attains her "majority" when she goes to business, and the home must learn when to "let go." It is not a question of independence — a word often misapplied and misunderstood — but simply one of self-reliance, and acknowledgment of the girl's right to it.

Fannie Barrier Williams, "The Problem of Employment for Negro Women," 1903

It can be broadly said that colored women know how to work, and have done their full share of the paid and unpaid service rendered to the American people by the Negro race. This is a busy world; the world's work is large, complicated, and increasing. The demand for the competent in all kinds of work is never fully supplied. Woman is constantly receiving a larger share of the work to be done. The field for her skill, her endurance, her finer instincts and faithfulness is ever enlarging; and she has become impatient of limitations, except those imposed by her own physical condition. In this generalization, colored women, of course, are largely excepted. For reasons too well understood here to be repeated, ours is a narrow sphere. While the kinds and grades of occupation open to all women of white complexion are almost beyond enumeration, those open to our women are few in number and mostly menial in quality. The girl who is white and capable is in demand in a thousand places. The capable Negro girl is usually not in demand. This is one of the stubborn facts of to-day. . . .

In the city of Chicago domestic service is the one occupation in which the demand for colored women exceeds the supply. In one employment office during the past year there were 1,500 applications for colored women and only 1,000 of this number were supplied. Girls of other nationalities do not seem to compete with colored women as domestics. It is probably safe to say that every colored woman who is in any way competent can find good employment. Her wages for general housework range from four to seven dollars per week, while a good cook receives from seven to ten dollars. Now what is the condition of this service? The two most important things are that the wages paid are higher than those given for the same grade of intelligence in any other calling; and that colored women can command almost a monopoly of this employment.

It might be safe to presume that as our women are so much in demand for this service they give perfect satisfaction. In considering that it is important to bear in mind that there are two kinds of colored women who perform domestic service: — First, there are those who take to the work naturally and whose training and habits make them perfectly satisfied with it; and second, those who have had more or less education and who are ambitious to do something in the line of "polite occupations." The women of the latter class do not take to domestic service very kindly. They do not enter the service with any pride. They feel compelled to do this work