

# A TALK WITH MISS MARGARET KELLY, DIRECTOR OF THE U. S. MINT

## Work Done by the Highest Salaried Female Official in the United States.

WITHIN one of the handsomest apartments of a great, many-pillared mansion in the City of Washington there may be seen sitting at five o'clock every evening a young woman. She is dressed in a suit of spotless white and every detail of her toilet marks the wearer as one possessed of a delicate feminine judgment in matters of taste. She is seated before a rosewood table and, when the visitor, after sending in his card, is ushered, by a well-trained waiting-man, into her presence, she graciously greets him and invites him to be seated.

From the hour, the environment and the charming feminine personality one might well fancy that the next move will be an invitation to a cup of "five-o'clock tea."

But no Sherlock Holmes could make a guess wider from the facts. This pleasing young woman is no tea-pouring hostess, welcoming gilded beaux to her hospitality. She is to-day the Director of the United States Mint and the apartment into which she welcomes her visitors is her private office in the Treasury Building. She is still there at five o'clock, long after all her subordinates have left, because she always remains and checks over the day's work of the bureau—and she always stays until the check is satisfactory.

Miss Margaret Kelly, the young woman in question, occupies the enviable position of being the highest salaried female official in the employ of the United States Government. But this fact does not so much entitle her to distinction as this: that, in her present position, she holds a place of responsibility that is second only to those of the Cabinet officers, a place that is so far above any other official position held by a woman that it may be said it is first—and there is no second.

Last week Miss Kelly, who has for

years been employed in the Bureau of the Mint in the Treasury Department, was promoted to be Assistant Director of the Mint. Almost immediately upon this appointment Director Roberts left for an absence of two or three months during which time he will be thousands of miles from his office—and all its duties and responsibilities will be and are now ably being assumed by Miss Kelly.

"Miss Kelly's appointment marks an epoch in the history of the advancement and development of woman in the business world," said Hon. Edward Taylor, Member of the House of Representatives from Colorado, who was a member of the Assembly of that State when, seventeen years ago, it voted to give to women the right of suffrage. "I think even Colorado, as advanced as are her ideas in the matter of the rights due to women, will open her eyes in astonishment when she learns that one of the most important and responsible offices in the National government has been conferred on a woman."

Miss Kelly's appointment was due to merit. When, after leaving her native hills of New Hampshire and obtaining the best education that the private schools of Boston could give her, she determined to make her own way in the world and turned to the Civil Service, she had no influence of any kind to aid her.

Passing the examination for stenographer fifteen years ago, she was at once appointed to a place in the office of the Appointment Clerk of the Treasury Department at Washington. After a year's service, she was transferred to

work as a stenographer in the Bureau of the Mint in the same department. Since that time she has remained in that bureau, advancing steadily until she has now reached the highest point in it.

"In the fourteen years I have been in the Mint Bureau," she said, "I have held the position of Stenographer, Private Secretary to the Director, Adjuster of Accounts, Examiner, Assistant Director, and now, that Director Roberts is absent, I am Acting Director of the Mint—surely a most admirable record for one who, fifteen years ago, entered the service as a stenographer without influence to aid me."

Her training has thoroughly qualified her for the duties she has assumed. "When I was Private Secretary to the Director, I had to know—well, I had to know everything about the bureau, from auditing accounts to how to coin gold ingots into eagles," she said in discussing her schooling for her position. "Then, when I was examiner my duties took me traveling all over the country to the various mints; sometimes I would go out to the Pacific Coast; oftentimes I have gone to the Philadelphia mint half a dozen times a month."

A cursory glance at the details of the bureau will make one more appreciative of the burden that is on this young woman's shoulders. There are three coinage mints, with their complicated business mechanism and nine minor mints, where bullion is bought, but no money coined. There are employed in the mint service more than fourteen hundred people, many of them experts detailed in a high class of scientific work, whose

individual salaries are five-thousand dollars a year or more. Miss Kelly's salary, he it said, is only three thousand a year.

There was purchased by the various mints of the country last year about one hundred and fifty millions of dollars worth of gold and about one hundred and twenty-five millions of dollars coined.

Of course there is a thorough system of bookkeeping and accounting, the details of which Miss Kelly must keep at her fingers' ends, but there is in addition a "yearly settlement," as it is called, which she must closely superintend.

In this settlement everything pertaining to the mint, including not only the great heaps of gold coin and bullion stored away but every small instrument and utensil used in the mints, must be accurately accounted for, lest Uncle Sam be the loser by small particles of gold dust, invisible to the naked eye, adhering to this or that utensil of humble wood or iron.

It was a delicate question, and one that could not be asked Miss Kelly, how the multitude of men, many of them scientific experts of large salaries, liked having a woman as their superior official. But, so popular is this remarkable young woman among the clerks of the bureau that it needed but slight investigation to learn that she was universally approved of as their supervisor.

"We think this much of her," said one huge Telamonian Ajax of a man, standing more than six feet and weighing close to two hundred pounds. "If it were left to popular vote among us all whom we should select for the position she now holds, she would carry the election unanimously."

"You see, I have come up so gradually from one position to the other," Miss Kelly said herself, when asked if her appointment did not create a sensation in the bureau, "that it has never seemed to strike any one at any particular time that the positions were not generally held by women."

"Are you a suffragette?" The question was bluntly put.

"There!" laughed Miss Kelly. "I knew that question was coming. I hardly see what difference it makes whether one is a suffragette here in Washington, where not even the men have votes. I do think, however, that women ought to have the right to vote. I am not radical or hysterical on the subject though. Indeed, I've never had time to attend a suffragette meeting; nor do I know whether if I had such time, I should do so. No, I'm not given to hobbies or 'fads,' as vulgarly called, though that is not due to any particular merit on my part, but rather to my not having sufficient leisure time to indulge in such luxuries."

"There is one thing I most cordially detest," she continued, when her likes and dislikes were inquired into. "That is the distinction one constantly hears made between the work of the sexes. The expression 'a man's work' or 'a woman's work' is particularly obnoxious to me, as are also their complements, 'a man's wages' and 'a woman's wages.' Now I cannot see any necessary distinction between work as a man does it and as it is done by a woman. The only distinctions or classes I recognize in work are 'good work' and 'bad work.' The phrases, as used, however, always imply some slur on the woman, as though a woman's work, or rather, any work that a woman does, were, by necessity of the fact that she is a woman, inferior to the same work as done by a man. There should be no distinction either between the wages of men and women for the same kind of work."

"I am glad to say," concluded Miss Kelly, "that in all the years I have been in this bureau and in all the positions I have filled, I have never heard any reference to such distinction."

It is plain to one who talks even a few minutes to Miss Kelly, that she is wrapped up completely in her work in the Mint Bureau; an engrossment that is in pleasing contrast to the majority of those in the employment of the Government.