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

Within one of the handsomest apartments of a great, many-pillared hotel 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 reads the newspapers. Behind her, on her desk, rests a large gold and silver 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 conversation, one might well fancy that the next move will be an invitation to a cup of "five-o'clock tea."

But she is Sherlock Holmes could make a guess without asking questions, if he knew that the sitting young woman is no tea-pouring hostess, gloved beaux to her hospitality. She is to-day the Director of the United States Mint and the apartment into which she is welcomed by visitors is her private office in the Treasury Building. She is still there at five o'clock. By and by 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 clock is satisfied.

Miss Margaret Kelly, the young woman in question, occupies the enviable position of being the highest salaried female official in the United States Government. But this fact does not entitle her to distinction as such. That, is, that she holds a place of responsibility that is second to none in the Government, she determined to make her own way in the world and turned to such an office as this. She was not possessed of any kind to aid her.

Pursuing the examination for stenographer fifteen years ago, she was at once appointed to a place in the office 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. Then she held the position of Stenographer, Private Secretary to the Director, Assistant of Accountant, 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 of the Mint, 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 examined my duties took me through the entire Mint, from the various mines; sometimes I would go out to the Pacific Coast; oftentimes I have gone to the Philadelphia mint half a dozen times a month."

As a consequence of this, she knows 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 expertly to judge the silver and gold value of the 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, it is 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 our coin."

"Of course there is a thorough system of bookkeeping and accounting; the details are so minute that even 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 sustain any loss from the old saw, 'the devil is in the detail.'"

"It is 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. It is a curious fact to learn that she was universally approved of as their supervisor."

"We think this much of her," said one huge Telemann Ajax of a man, standing more than six feet and weighing two hundred pounds. "If it were left to popular vote among all the employees of the Bureau, 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 men."

"Are you a suffragette?" The question came from Miss Kelly. "I know there is a lot of confusion as to what difference makes whether one is a woman or a man."

"I do not consider myself a suffragette."

"No, I'm not given to hobbles or doings that are vulgarly called, though that is not due to any particular merit on my part, but to having sufficient leisure time to indulge in such luxuries."

"There is one thing I most cordially denounce," she continued, "and that is, the limitations womanly called, between the work of the sexes. The exceptions that prove the rule: 'women's work' is particularly obvious to me, as are also their compliments, 'a man's wages' and 'a woman's wages.' Now I cannot understand how it is that between work as a man and as it is done by woman, no limit is put to the one or classes I recognize in work are 'good work' and 'bad work,' 'high' and 'low' phrases. I can understand that a woman does the work, but so popular is this remarkable young woman among the clerks of the bureau that they have a great deal of satisfaction to learn that she was universally approved of as their supervisor."

I am glad to say," concluded Miss Kelly, "I have no idea of interfering in this bureau and in all the positions I have occupied I have never attempted any interference to such distinction."

"I have been talking even a few minutes to Miss Kelly, that she is wrapped up in the work of the bureau; an official that is in pleasing harmony with the men in the employment of the Government."

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