

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambroch Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Vulpius  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Morgenstern Goedicke  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Homer Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Horaz Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Machiavelli Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz  
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **Little Lost Sister**

Virginia Brooks

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AFTERWARD



# LITTLE LOST SISTER

13

## PROLOGUE

They came up suddenly over a bit of rising ground, the mill-owner and his friend the writer and student of modern industries, and stood in full view of the factory. The air was sweet with scent of apple-blossoms. A song sparrow trilled in the poplar tree.

"What do you think of our factory?" asked the man of business and of success, turning his keen, aggressive face towards his companion.

The other, the dreamer, waited for moments without speaking, carefully weighing the word, then he answered,

"Horrible."

"My dear fellow!" The owner's voice showed that he was really grieved. "Why horrible?" 14

"Your mill is a crime against Nature. Look how it violates that landscape. Look how it stands there gaunt and tawdry against these fresh green meadows edged round with billowy white clouds that herald summer. And you are proud of it. Could you not have found some arid waste for this factory? Can't you see how Nature cries out against this outrage? Can't you see that she has dedicated this country to seed-time and harvest, — these verdant fields, deep woods and brooding streams?"

"The Millville people wanted our factory. They paid us a subsidy to bring it here."

"Blind, too!" The dreamer looked backward at the town. "They tell me that the founders there called their village Farmington. Have you ever reflected what a change you are working in the lives of these people by substituting industrialism for agriculture? Have you thought of the moral transformations such a substitution must work among them?"

"We are not responsible for their morals," the mill-owner answered, impatiently. "We have spared nothing to make our fac-

tory up to date. The mill meets all the demands of modern hygiene and sanitation. We do that for them."

His friend was silent for a time.

"Your employes here are chiefly women, very young women," he said at last.

"Yes, we have two hundred girls," replied the mill-owner.

"What is your highest wage for a girl?"

"Eight dollars a week."

Again the younger man was silent. Then he took his friend's arm within his own.

"These girls are the mothers of tomorrow. To an extent the destinies of our race depend upon them. Your factory places upon you tremendous responsibilities."

"We are growing to realize our responsibilities more and more," said the man of business and of success gravely. "Perhaps we do not realize them keenly enough. It is the fault of the times."

"Yes, it is the fault of the times. Life, honor, virtue itself trampled down in the rush for the dollar." 16

"I believe that a change is coming, though slowly. I believe that the day will come when we owners of mills will regard it as a disgraceful thing for our corporations to declare a dividend while notoriously underpaying our employes."

"Yes, and perhaps the day is coming, too, when the employer who maintains conditions in his mills that subtly undermine the virtue of his women workers will be regarded as a public enemy."

"No doubt, but that time is a long way ahead!"

"We must look to the future," said his friend. "We must work for the future, too!"

## CHAPTER I

### AT THE BUTTON MILL

Elsie Welcome was the one girl in the big machine room of the Millville button factory who did not rise when the bell sounded for the short afternoon recess. She swung on her revolving stool away from her machine and looked eagerly, thirstingly towards the windows where the other girls were crowding for breath of the fresh June air, but she did not stir to follow them. A resolution stronger than her own keen need of the recreation moments was singling out this young girl from among her two hundred companions, laughing and talking together.

"I will speak to Mr. Kemble now—now," she promised herself, watching for the foreman to enter the machine room, according to his daily custom at this hour. Elsie nerved herself to a task difficult to perform, even after 18 her three years of work in the factory, even though she was one of the most skilful workers here.

She drew up her charmingly modeled little figure tensely, and held her small head high, her pure, beautiful features aglow with delicate color, her slender, shapely hands clasping and unclasping each other.

The foreman came into the room. Elsie rose from her place and went to meet him, pushing back the pretty tendrils of her hair.

"Mr. Kemble," she said, "I should like to speak to you a moment."

Hiram Kemble was a tall, thin young man, deeply conscious of his own importance and responsibilities. He had risen by assiduous devotion to the details of button making from office boy to his present exalted state. His mind had become a mere filing cabinet for information concerning the button business.

He stood regarding the girl before him, feeling the attraction of her beauty and resenting it. He did not dislike her; he did not understand her, and it was his nature to distrust what he did not understand. 19

"Well," he said, with professional brusqueness, "what is it?"

"I wanted to ask you to—to—" Elsie hesitated, then went on with courage, "to raise my wages."

He looked at her in amazement, displeased. "How much are you getting now?"

"Only eight dollars a week."

"Only!" Hiram Kemble was satirical. "That's as much as the others are getting."

"I know it. But it's not enough. Our expenses are heavy. My mother has begun to—to—" Elsie choked. "My mother is compelled to take in washing. She's not strong enough for such heavy work."

"Your sister has a good job."

"She earns only nine dollars."

"Your father—"

Tears sprang to Elsie's eyes, but she would not let them fall. "He's not earning anything."

"I know." Kemble spoke accusingly. "He is drinking."

Elsie showed a flash of spirit: "That's not my fault!" 20

"Just so. But you can't hold the Millville Button Company responsible for your father's misbehavior."

"Is there any chance for me to get more pay?" There was a note of despair in her question.

"Not the least chance in the world. You are getting our maximum wage for women. I couldn't raise your pay if I wanted to without being specially authorized to do so by our board of directors."

"And I can never earn—never get any more here?"

"No."

The minute hand of the electric clock pushed forward. Again a bell sounded. Two hundred American girls who had had a few moments' respite came trooping wearily back to their places at the machines.

At the clang of the bell Kemble walked up the room. Elsie went back to her place drooping; she wore a beaten air as if he had struck her visibly.

The girls on either hand spoke to her as they slipped into their places, but she did not hear them. Hours of swift work followed. The machines whirred and the deft hands of the girls flew. These button workers had nearly all been recruited from the district around Millville. With rare exceptions they were descendants of the hardy Americans who had founded the town while it was still called Farmington. The founders had passed away. The outside world had pressed around the village until its people longed to play a more active role in the world. It had seemed a great day when the button factory came, and the town name was changed to Millville.

Now these daughters of the strong elder race were factory workers. The world had been made better by an output of thousands of shiny new buttons when at last the six o'clock whistle blew on this bright June day.

Elsie Welcome got up from her machine and picked up her hat listlessly. She walked to a window and looked out. Suddenly animation came into her face. A young man waved a handkerchief from an automobile which spun by on the gray turnpike below the mill. Elsie waved her handkerchief in return. 22

Kemble, watching the girl from across the room, saw the episode. He hurried across to her, with the air of pouncing on a victim.

"We'll have none of that here, Miss Welcome," he said. "If you have to flirt, don't flirt on the company's premises."

She turned upon him indignantly. "I am not flirting! That gentleman is a friend of mine."

Kemble sneered. "Oh, he is a friend, is he? Where does a factory girl like you meet men who ride in automobiles?"

Elsie flushed scarlet; she bit her quivering lips.

"Ashamed to tell where you met him, are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I'm responsible to my employers for the character of the girls I employ here."

Elsie looked her contempt of him. She laughed a little low scornful laugh which made Kemble thoroughly angry.

"Look here, my girl," he said. "You don't know when you're well off. You are too independent." His tone of anger roused her temper, but she held herself in leash and answered with cold politeness:

"Mr. Kemble, when I feel myself getting independent, the first thing I shall do will be to get away from the Millville button factory."

Kemble was ready to retreat now. The interview was getting beyond his expectation. Elsie was one of the company's fastest workers. He could not afford to have her throw up her place. He did not want to lose her.

"Oh, but you like the factory, Miss Welcome," he said in a suddenly pacific tone.

"Like—the—factory! I hate it," returned the girl, all her pent-up wrongs finding expression. "I hate the mill and everything about it. Do you suppose any girl could like the prospect of being bottled up in this hole year after year for eight dollars a week? Why, some day, Mr. Kemble, I expect to pay eight dollars for a hat, for just one hat."

"So that's it," said Kemble, "fine feathers, eh? I know, you're like a lot of other girls who have come and gone in this factory. 24 You've heard of Chicago's bright lights and you want to singe your wings in them. Let me tell you something, my girl, girls in your position don't get eight dollar hats without paying for them and if they haven't got the money they give something else. They give—"

"Stop," ordered the girl. "You shan't say that to me. I don't believe it. You can't convince me that there isn't something better in life for a girl like me than Millville and eight dollars a week."

"I pity your ignorance," said Kemble, loftily.

"It's not ignorance to want something better than this," replied Elsie. "Why should you taunt me with ignorance, anyway? What do you know about the world? You're just a foreman in a little country

mill and because you are satisfied with a narrow little life like that you think everyone else ought to be."

The truth in this goaded Kemble into violation of rule number twelve for button factory foremen which exhorts such employes to be polite to women workers. 25

"Why the devil don't you go to Chicago and be done with it then?" he demanded. "You're one of these people that has to learn by experience." He sneered at her. "Perhaps you can get your friend in the auto to take you. Why don't you try it?"

Tears rushed to the girl's eyes. She began fastening on her hat to conceal her emotion.

"I'm going to Chicago," she muttered, "just as soon as I am able. Nothing there can be much worse than being compelled to work in Millville under you. Good gracious," she added maliciously, after giving him a thorough inspection, "it's no use to stand here arguing with you."

With this taunt Miss Elsie gave her hat a final adjustment, then, leaving Mr. Hiram Kemble speechless with rage and injured dignity, she walked out of the factory door.



## CHAPTER II

### SEEING MILLVILLE

The distance from the Millville button factory to the corner of Main and Pine streets in Millville itself is, if you take the short cut through Nutting's Grove, as all sensible Millvillians do, a five minutes' walk. If the reader, touring Millville in search of the beginnings of this story, will make that journey in his imagination he will find himself standing on the rough board walk in front of John Price's general store.

From her eminence on the top of one of Mr. John Price's high stools Patience Welcome glanced up from the ledger over which she was toiling, put the blunt end of her pen into her mouth and looked out into the street drenched in sunshine. A half dozen farmers' horses, moored to the hitching rack in front of the store, threshed restlessly with their tails at enthusiastic banqueting flies, new-born into a world that seemed to be filled with juicy horses.

The scene did not interest Patience. Her glance went on across the street where an overdressed young man, just alighted from an automobile, stood surveying his surroundings. His eyes met hers. He removed his hat with an elaborate bow. The girl, a little piqued and a little amused, reached over very quietly and drew down the window curtain. Then she resumed operations on the ledger with the sharp end of the pen.

Patience Welcome, like her sister, was dark of hair and eyes. Her hair, too, had the quality of forming into tendrils about her cheeks which glowed with a happy, if not a robust, healthfulness. But there the resemblance ended. The two girls were widely different personalities. Elsie, the younger, was impetuous by nature, imaginative, and easily swept off her mental balance by her emotions. She was ambitious, too, and Millville did not please her. Patience, no less imaginative, perhaps, possessed a stronger hold upon herself. 29 She admired her daring sister, but she was sensible of the dangers of such daring and did not imitate her. She possessed the great gift of contentedness. It colored all her thoughts, created pleasant places for her in what, to Elsie, seemed a desolate life; it made Millville not

only a bearable but even a happy place to live in. Millville understood Patience and loved her; Elsie, being less understandable, was less popular.

It had been a busy day in John Price's store and Patience was entering in her books items from a pile of bills on the desk before her. It was five minutes after her usual leaving time, but the girl accepted extra duty with a cheerfulness that was part of her nature.

In the midst of her work there was a bustle at the back of the store. John Price, local merchant prince and owner of this establishment, had returned from the yard at the rear of the store where he had been superintending the storing of goods, arrived on the late afternoon train. He was a wiry little old man of sixty, abrupt, nervous, irritable and given to sharpness of speech which, he was profoundly convinced, hid from outside perception a heart given to unbusinesslike tenderness. He busied himself noisily about the shelves for a few minutes, then suddenly stuck his head through the door of the little office in which Patience was working.

"What," he said, "you here? Get out. Go home."

"I'll be through in a few minutes," rejoined Patience, without taking her eyes from her figures.

"Tush," said Mr. Price. "What are you trying to do, give me a bad name with my trade? People will think I'm a slave driver. Get out."

"In just a minute," smiled Patience.

"Go home, I say," almost shouted Price. He took off his alpaca coat and hung it on a nail. Then he stepped up suddenly behind Patience, took the pen deliberately from her hand and pushed her off the stool.

"Must I throw you out?" he demanded. "Must I? Must I, eh?"

He pointed towards the door.

"All right, Mr. Price," said Patience submissively, gathering up her bills and thrusting them into a drawer.

"Hurry," said Price. "You'll be late for your supper."

"No, I won't," returned Patience, putting on her jacket and hat. "This is wash day at our house. Supper is always late on wash day."

"Wash day, eh? Then you ought to be home helping your mother."

"Elsie will help mother," replied Patience quietly.

"Are you sure about that?" demanded Mr. Price.

"Of course, I'm sure, Mr. Price," said Patience, hurt.

"Well," said Mr. Price, "I'm not so sure. But don't stand here arguing. I haven't any time to argue with a snip of a girl like you. Get out. Go home!"

Patience, still a little hurt by her employer's expressed doubt about her sister, started for the front door. Looking out, she saw the overdressed young man with the automobile still standing across the street. He saw her, 32 too, and waved his cigarette. Patience turned back into the store.

"Girl," demanded Mr. Price, his patience now seemingly exhausted, "where in the devil are you going?"

"Out the back way, if you please, Mr. Price."

Mr. Price got up deliberately from the stool which he had occupied as soon as Patience had vacated it and looked out of the front door.

"The young whelp," he said, apostrophizing the overdressed youth with the cigarette. Then to Patience: "Dodging him, eh? Now don't blush, girl. I don't blame him for looking at you. You're worth looking at. But you show mighty good sense in keeping away from him."

"Why, Mr. Price, I—" Patience stammered.

"O, that's all right, dodge him, keep him guessing. One of those freshies from the city, eh? Well, there's mighty little good in 'em. Give your ma my best regards. Tell her she's got a fine daughter. Good night."

Patience left the store by the rear door and 33 started briskly for her home. She had gone but a block when she heard a wagon rumbling behind her and a voice called out:

"'Lo, there, Patience, late, ain't you?"

It was Harvey Spencer, ambitious “all round” clerk, hostler, collector for Millville’s leading grocer. He drove a roan colt which went rather skittishly. There was an older man in the wagon with him. Harvey drew up the colt beside Patience with a vociferous “Whoa.”

“Yes,” replied Patience, “I’m a little late. Lots of business these days, Harvey?”

“You bet,” he retorted, “Millville is flourishing. We’ll soon have a real city here. Oh, Miss Welcome, let me make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Michael Grogan of Chicago.”

Patience accepted the introduction with flushed reserve.

“I’m right glad to know you,” stated Mr. Grogan, removing his hat gallantly and wiping a perspiring brow with his handkerchief. “But let me tell you I don’t think much of your friend, Harvey Spencer. Sure, I’ve 34 been riding with him for two hours and you’re the first pleasant object he’s shown me. And such a ride! It’s a certainty that this young fellow knows every bump and thank-ye-ma’am in the village and he’s taken me full speed over all of them. I feel like I’d been churned. But I’ll forgive him all that now—now that he’s shown me you.”

There was a sincerity in Mr. Grogan’s raillery that swept away Patience’s reserve. Besides, he was over fifty.

“Sure,” she said, slyly imitating Mr. Grogan’s brogue, “you’ve been kissing the blarney stone, Mr. Grogan.”

“Will ye listen to that now?” said Grogan enthusiastically, as he started to clamber off the wagon.

“Sit still, Mr. Grogan,” said Harvey, laughing.

“But didn’t you hear her, man alive? Sure, she’s Irish—”

“No, I’m not,” put in Patience, “but I’ve heard of the blarney stone.”

“Look at that, now,” said Grogan, returning to his seat with an air of keen disappointment. 35 “And I was just longin’ to see someone from the Ould Sod. I thought—”