

F.B.

Social and economic structure.

Brissett Sylvester

Fam. Rec. 174

IV 1947.
Interview with Mrs. King
E.C.) D.D. T.O.

By J.O.

lmouth/

In Kingston/

1. The new road through the Cockpit Country. This road was built 15 to 20 years ago. ~~and it is only 5 years ago that the Crown lands and the country opened for settlers.~~ It was the idea of Mr. Guy Ewen and it was owing to his influential position that he was able to carry this plan out. "He was the biggest man in Trelawny. He was a solicitor in ~~xxxxxx~~ Town ~~/?/~~ the customs of Parish, member of the old Council and a gentleman," and that is why we know him". The district owes much to Mr. Guy Ewen. "The only thing which I owe to him is the licence which have got for the sale of the lumber from the Crown Land." Mrs King applied in the Forestry office for the licence and was put to a test which she passed most successfully. She was shown a number of wood samples and she recognised eight after one after another describing the kind of tree and its qualities. Then the examination was stopped. "Mrs. King, ~~can~~ it is enough, you are the first woman in this place who ~~has~~ has shown such a knowledge." The licence was granted to her and for years she was dealing in lumber. "I supplied timber for railways, ~~xxxx~~ and for various building enterprises. All the hospitals were provided with the lumber by me. Everybody who wanted timber had to come to me and ~~ex~~ could get what he wanted only through me. And of course I could get also some dimes out of it."

~~Mrs King has given up her licence lately because she could not bear the situation when people were given right to encroach upon her monopoly by pretending that they need lumber for building their houses and receiving the allowance to cut trees for this purpose, selling them afterwards to~~

~~Mrs King gave up her licence because she could not bear that people encroached upon her rights by having given permission to cut trees in the Crown Forests to build their houses. Actually they cut the trees for sale, pretending only that the lumber is for their houses.~~

There was also some affair with shingles which I could not understand. "I refused to retain my licence. Since other people were given similar licences and they were encroaching upon my rights I did not want to keep the licence." Mrs. King is of an opinion that the existing procedure according to which various people are allowed to enter the Crown Forests and ~~has~~ cut trees beyond the control of a monopolistic licensee is detrimental to the forests; causes much loss to the Government and leads to many irregularities.

Mrs. King gave up her licence some 5 years ago. She could not stand that other people encroached upon her rights by having given permission to enter forest and cut lumber under the pretext that the lumber is to used for building their houses. Actually the cut trees for the sale.

2. Government grants Licenses to approved persons to cut trees in Crown lands. This Agent has to approve the trees to be cut. There are Forest Rangers to supervise the cutting of lumber on C.L. preserves. Mrs King has a monopoly of this when she was the only person in the district with the License. She would receive orders from Government

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Departments, such as Railway, for sleepers or planks or shingles and would "make a few dimes" as her profits. She became less interested when other people were given Licenses and her profits diminished. She also lost prestige when she was not the only person to whom people had to come when they had a need for lumber.

Re the "affair with shingles": On Mrs Kelly Lawson's boundary with the Crown Lands men were found cutting lumber and, presumably, trespassing on Mrs K.L's land in the doing. She asked to see their license and they told her that they were authorised by Mrs K. When this was referred to Mrs K. by the Police she denied it and the men were sent to prison for 6 months.

Mrs K. was also incensed because the men given permission to "cut a tree" to build their own house, often did not use the lumber for any such purpose but sold it -- thus again encroaching on her preserves.

Mrs K. owns a number of houses in the vill ge: applied for the contract to build the new Post Office, and did not get it, and is interested therefore in the building trade. All local houses are made of local materials.

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E.C.

While I was working Mrs K. dropped in for a chat. She had been to Kingston for two days. She said that she and Mr W. had been to the Standard Furnishing Co. and discovered that my package was still there and it was to be shipped by train today and would come up from Balacleva by the Royal Mail coach tomorrow. The package Mr Williams had signed for was not for me, Remains to be seen for whom!!
About the matter of my renting the downstairs of this house which now houses the Post Office Mrs K. puzzled to know whether she should give them notice as they were treating her with no consideration. She had tendered to build the new P.O. and been up to see the P.M.G. and offered him the choice of 2 sites -- one of which, adjacent to the Police Station and between it and the Anglican Church, was ideal in her opinion as it would "have protection on both sides". The P.M.G. had asked her to put it in writing and she had asked for pen and paper and done it on the spot in this office. She was of opinion that all that remained was for them to select one of the two sites. She had heard nothing more until Mr Helwell, the late M.H.R. for the District, had visited the town and said that they were going to have a New P.O. She told him of her arrangement with the P.M.G. but "as you know the M.H.R. now think that they are above the Governor" and all he said was that he had nothing to do with that. He made an appointment however with her to view her sites but did not keep it. And the next thing she knew was that the new building was being erected. It was finished except for the tank. All she would be able to do would be to go to Mr Bustamente. She had collected all the lumber -- thousands of shingles, were stored in her yard and planks and lumber under the Anglican Church. And the lime and stone. And she had been granted cement for her tank but she had loaned it to her sister in law. But she had "got some more anyway".

If she did not turn the P.M. out she had another house

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just below ours and abutting on to the same land. /As a matter of fact the whole village block here belongs to her/. It had been rented to a Chinaman who used the front as a shop. Behind were three or four rooms, kitchen, toilet etc. We could have it and she would open a gate into our yard. Alternatively there was plenty of room in her house now that Mr W./her nephew/ had left to go and live in Kingston, and she could give us one or two bedrooms there and would be willing to feed the guests.

Arranged to inspect these buildings and rooms when Mrs O. returned.

Later. Was taken over cottage. Also given history of late inhabitants. Chinaman related to Miss Loo who owns shop on Allsides and as her husband is very sick he has gone to take over the management of her shop for her. He had a "kept mistress -- or I suppose she was kept" living in the house with him and her sister and mother. They all lived there together. His family did not approve and were trying to break it up. So they were leaving and going to live elsewhere. He had had another shop on the patch of land between the present house and our house. It had been burnt down one night sometime ago. She had rushed over and had fought the flames with a chain of people pouring water and used her own blankets soaked in water to put out the flames. The man had been hurt and upset and she had taken him into her house and cared for him. Afterwards people had laughed at her and said did she not know that he had set it on fire himself? At the time she had a merchant staying in the house who had come down to inspect his books and that was why he burnt the shop -- to prevent his books being seen. The shop was insured.

Cottage very dirty and mistress and old mother still in it. Built of good hardwood but in bad repair. Construction very rough. Walls papered with newspapers. Outbuildings shocking condition.

Later. When we got to the Church for the Harvest Festival we found that Mrs E. had booked seats for us in front of her in the aisle very high up. We had much whispered conversation as to who was who. Mrs Rev. Father Sanguinetti is their person but they cannot afford to have one every week so he only comes once a month. He wore an alba over his soutane and then an embroidered gold vestment and a tiara on his head which he took off and on at odd moments. The preacher for the day was the Rev Canon Vens. Did I know Mr Binns? Yes I had met him at his shop in Albert Town. His wife and sister in law? No. After Church she introduced me to Mrs and Miss Gallimore as people I "ought to know". Mrs Thompson, the Sanitary Inspector's wife played the organ.

We went back to the house and she followed us up to ~~ask~~ tell me mysteriously that "of course she still did not know what we were really doing here" /Note: she has been told a dozen times/ and that there were a lot of people outside who would like to meet us and would I come down and tell them. I thought at first she meant a public meeting and

EC. with T.O.
J.O.

Village
ivals File.

shied badly but it turned out she only meant a few of "her friends". I said certainly we should be delighted to come down or would she prefer to bring them here. She decided she could find chairs and would send for us. We went down to find it was only Mr and Mrs Binns and Miss Gallimore, her sister. I had previously met Mr Binns at his shop and gas station in Albert Town, when I had discovered he is a brother of the Binns of St Elizabeth, M.P.B. and a ~~general~~ male prototype of Mrs K. Mrs Binns name was Gallimore and her father is the teacher of the School at ~~Wiltshire~~ Albert Town. Miss Gallimore teaches at St Hildas, Girls' school in Brown's Town. Mrs G. was an Enumerator in the Census and was appalled at the housing conditions, the overcrowding and the number of children in families. She said "we try to do something for them" but it seems hopeless, or words to that effect.

Mrs K. told me sotta voce when I changed places with Mrs O. to let her talk to Mrs B. and Miss G. that their grandmother had been a Powell -- a white woman who had married a black man. If I got this right it is an unusual variety of mixed marriage. She said most of the coloured people here were "like that". Mr George Wiltshire's father / or grandf ther / was a German though he, George Wiltshire, "does not admit it". Milford, the young man who sang the ~~aria~~ solo in Church was a brother of our Roy Milford and his father was a white man.

Mrs K. discussed the question of illegitimacy. When she was a Registrar of Births she used to write down the father's name BEFORE the mother's for the child. e.g. Mrs X. says Mr B. is the father so she would enter the child as John B.X. She was very glad when permission was given by the Government for the father when the child is to be registered to make a "declaration" and have his name registered as the father of an illegitimate child. That was a step forward.

Mrs K. hoped that she could have taken us round the village -- we ought to meet the right people who could really give us a lot of information. But, bridleing, she saw that we had already been about-- "they", indicating Mrs O. and O, had been "all round that morning". I said yes, they were trying to talk to the people so as to get to understand what they were saying as they found it very difficult at first. But I hoped she would take me round whenever she had time. I would be glad of any help she could give us. Storm centre passed.

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My husband's name is really not Brisset. It is Nathan. His father was a merchant in Falmouth. The Nathan from Kingston is my husband's cousin. My husband's mother worked for Nathan and had a son for him. Afterwards she married Brisset. So really my husband's name is Nathan. His father was white.

My husband worked here for the Crown's land. It belonged to Americans. It was given as a security when the railway was built. Now it is Crown land. About 1920 ex-soldiers were settled there. But they left the place. Most of the places, because the land is poor. ~~xxxxxx~~ And there are no roads. They had to carry their bananas on their head. I have 12 and half acres there. But I do not care for it. One has to go there on stones. I took it on account of the timber. There was a lovely cedar, half a chain thick. But when it was felled down, it was empty inside. It was rotten. It must have been as old as the island.

I was born in Manchester, educated in St. Elisabeth and Kingston and I live now here. My mother had six girls and five boys. We all were well educated. My father's father was a white man. He left in his will provisions for his mulatto children. I have seen this will. I am of mixed parentage. ~~xxxxxx~~ Once an African missionary came and asked me whether I lean more on my white family or black. I showed him my hand. There are blue veins and red. I told him there is mixed blood in me. My father's father / grandfather ? / was English. He went to Africa for slaves. He took a little girl there and educated her in England and married her. I have never seen neither my father's family nor my mother's. All my brothers left Jamaica. One of my brothers was a lawyer. He went to England and stayed there. But the climate was not good for him. He got pneumonia and died in England. My other brother went to England too. He stayed there 30 years. He came here and is buried just here. I had a brother in Panama, in the Zone. Another brother went to Costa Rica. He had a daughter. She went to the best school there. After he died she came here. She learned English very quickly. In Costa Rica ~~xxxxxx~~ they speak Spanish. She is very good in arithmetic. She works now as an accountant. She pays the workers' wages. All my family work. One sister died and left 9 children. I had to help them out. Another sister had two daughters. One was educated and is secretary to the post master general. The other went to England to take a degree in music. She came back. My sister has a nicely furnished house in Constant Spring. She rents it and has nice money for it. She lives in the work-shop. It is not very tidy there because there is a lot of boards, mortar - it is a work-shop. But the house is just beautiful.

My relatives are better off in many ways than I am. But they always ask me for advice when they want to do something. They call me aunt. When I go to Kingston I have a dozen of places where to stay. I can arrive there at any time - in the middle of the night. I just knock at the door.

One of my sister's daughters went to New York. She was ill. She could not eat. She could take only some whiskey and the white of an egg. She stayed in the Y.W.C.A. in New York. She wanted a job there so she asked the matron to find her a job. Her father was white. My sister married a white man. She had beautiful wavy hair. She got an answer for the advertisement. She went there and Mrs... asked her for references. She said she was Jamaican and she did not know anybody in New York to ~~give~~ ask for references. But she said if I trust you - and I do not know you - why can't you trust me. Mrs.... laughed and said all right we shall trust you, you got pluck. So she stayed with them. She got ill and Mr. .. put her in the biggest hospital, ~~where~~ for white people. The doctors said she must have an operation. She said she did not want to give her consent to be operated before her sister comes. Because in case she dies, she wants somebody of her family to assist the funeral. So I had to send the other girl too. She went to New York and went straight to the big hospital. When the sick girl saw her sister she said she will agree to have the operation. They chloroformed her. She had the longest appendicitis they have ever seen. As she was a British subject the bill was to be paid by the Jamaican government. And it was a heavy bill. But it was paid by the U.S.A because it was such a long appendicitis, so they kept it and showed it. She married a Jamaican in New York. Her boy is 2L now. He is 6 foot, two. Very good looking and very intelligent. When he was 19 they were recruiting for the Canadian forces. He was the only coloured boy who was taken in his unit. This niece wrote me she likes America. She has no use for Jamaica. All my relatives traveled. Only I did not travel. I had my trunks three times packed, but always something happened to prevent me to go abroad. So I decided now I will stay here.

Are you M.D.S... or doctor of divinity - Mrs. Brisset asked J.O. - Doctor of philosophy - So really you are a philosopher. And how many languages do you speak? I knew a man who spoke 14 languages. He was murdered. I knew many foreigners. We had even a circus company here. There are many languages in the world. It all came from this tower as the Bible says. They all got mixed up there. I think it is like that: geography teaches us that the earth is round. So there are people on the other side for whom we seem upside down. But I think if one leads a decent life, has everything - it is heaven. If one is poor and miserable - it is hell. We in Jamaica are of mixed blood. But there are black people who are nice too, educated and gentleman. My sister married a white man. Some children were white, some black. We change here like butterflies. It is called metaphore - metamorphosis / with our help/

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While we were speaking I saw the face of the little boy Standford in the window. ~~ixdxx~~ He evidently wanted something from Mrs. Brisset. I drew her attention to him as she was sitting with her back to the window. "Oh it is my vallet" - she said. The little boy brought a piece of paper. It was from her husband who wanted her to tell him the price of something in the shop. She said "Four shilling" Standford came 2 or 3 times with the same questions from her husband. She explained her husband was very ill in 1932. He had sleeping typhoid. He was in Kingston in a hospital unconscious with high fever for ten days. He does not hear so well know, and forgets things easily. He also has a cataract. ~~And he is deaf~~ He has corns on his feet, so he cannot walk ~~ixdxx~~ well. He does not want to do anything without asking Mrs. Br. in fear he may displease her. He is used that she does everything.

When I said she ought to write her memoires, because she knows so many things, interesting things, she said: I have been asked many times by people from Kingston to do it. But I do not want. I want a quiet life". ~~When they asked~~ When they asked me for "Who is Who" where I am from, I said: from everywhere. I was born in Manchester, educated in St. Catherine and Kingston and I am here now. I know everybody. When I met Miss Clarke, I told her she did not need to tell me about herself. I knew her father was honourable..... and was in the Building Society..... And I knew her cousin Miss Clarence /?/ Clarke. I know everybody.

She was pleased the windows were repaired by the carpenter. She said he did not want do it for her. Because he is not a good carpenter and can do only when one watches him. She has not time to watch him. He learned his trade when this house was built. He helped the carpenter then. It was a good carpenter, who built Mrs. Br. house. He built houses for the best, richest people in Kingston.

~~My mother joined the catholic church~~ Mrs. Br. said her mother joined the catholic church and she is burried in the catholic cemetry in Kingston. Her father belong to..... church. He was just coming from a /religious synod?/ There was an accident with the train and he broke his spine and died. He is burried by the church

21st April

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Engagement and Marriage. I never shook hands with my husband till a week before I married him. I had my sister's children to bring up. After my mother's death I had them. I was going to my sister in America. All my friends came round and told me I would be an old maid. That I was refusing everybody. I thought what is this old maid. So I said to myself You never know the world till you are married. You have to settle down sometime. I used to make dresses for the better class people who would pay what I was worth. There was an old lady for whom I made dresses. I was in a rough making dresses and I got a letter. ~~xxxxxxx~~. It was from Mr Brissett but I thought it was from her. She used to get her son (grandson?) to write her letters for her and their handwriting was alike. I thought to myself You have plenty of dresses hanging in your press which you will never live to wear. I had to make dresses for people who wanted them for the Races. So I threw the letter aside. About a week later I opened it and read it and was never so astonished. It was from Mr B. It was a proposal of marriage. Up to then I had never shaken hands with him. When he passed me he used to tip his hat. So I wrote him that I had my sister's children to care. But before I sent the letter he wrote again saying I was keeping him in suspense. He said I was keeping him waiting so long. I asked the friend with whom I was staying to ask him to the house so that I could meet him. That was the first time we shook hands.

After that he said he had the house ready -- that is the house where the Teacher is now -- and that could we not get up to the parson that night and arrange for the banns. So we went for the walk up to the parson.

I have never regretted it. He is very good to me and resents anything anyone does against me. It is better if you offend Mr B. than offend me so far as he is concerned.

Sister's Engagement and Marriage. My sister was married when she was 16. My mother was 15 when she was married and so she did not think that too young. My mother was very gay. My sister had not seen her husband. She said (afterwards) that she had not wanted to get married but ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ it was arranged by her mother. On the day of the wedding the dressmaker wanted her and they found her in the yard teaching the children how to make clay puddings. She was all dirty. They said Good heavens look at this girl and she is to be married! They took her in and washed her and they said You are to be married and they gave her a prayer book to read the marriage ceremony. She read it and when she came to the part where it says To ~~xxxxxx~~ and obey she threw down the book and said: I will never say that. I will say I promise to Love and Be Gay. And when the service came -- she was married from a hotel in Kingston and she had 6 bridesmaids -- and that part came she said -- ~~xxxxxx~~ to the Rev. Downer who was the parson I will love and be gay. And he asked her to repeat it and she said again I will love and be gay. And he said You are mumbling this. Unless you say it so that I can hear it there will be no wedding. So she said it..

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Before that when the bridegroom was in the Church waiting the parson said to him Stand up and he stood up and everybody laughed. My mother had a hat for the wedding with little roses all over it. And ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the bridegroom said It is not the bride (that just came in) It is my mother in law

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to be. And the parson said If your mother in law is as young as that how old must your bride be.

My sister had (7/9??) children. She was worn out with them and died at 40. She went out and got wet and got a chill and died.

When she married she was 16 and her husband 29 or 30. He travelled a lot and she went with him.

Re Mrs Gallimore and her Marriage. (The Baptist parson and his wife). She is very gay. She likes bright dresses and to go out to parties. She goes away often. When she goes she says Good-bye parson. And he says Good-bye B (?). She does not see why she should be dowdy.

Of Mrs Margaret Cooper whose house we passed on the way. That is a popular woman. I asked why she was popular. She said well, she has a big property -- about 200 acres. And she has lumber and sells it. She is like I used to be (meaning that she sells lumber). She is tight. She makes a lot of money. She holds on it. I cannot do that. I cannot keep money. I spend it.

Of Mrs Cooper, the local mid-wife. She is a very good nurse and very experienced. The District Nurse sends her on the quiet to cases that are distant -- in the cockpit. She has saved many lives. When she says a child is dead you can know it is dead. She has the fifth generation now (i.e. of children she has brought into the world). She is old. She has been in court. I gave evidence for her. It was a man who called her in. She came and told me all about it. She said she told the man that he must call in the doctor as not she nor any Nurse could deliver the child and if he did not get the doctor his wife would die. He said what do you want me to do? Sell the land and leave the children out (i.e. without anything)? And she told me It is your land or your wife's life. So I called in the doctor but the woman died. And it was the man brought the case against her to say that she had killed his wife. But I spoke up for her and she got off.

Monday 28.4.47.
T.O.

Mrs. Brissett was fencing with barbed wire. It is the house between the police station and the church, where Mrs. Dawkins lives. I was engaged in a talk with Mrs. Br. in front of the post Office, when a man came and told her that Mr. Smith objects to the poles being put as that land belongs to him - he bought it from the previous owner / ? / The previous owner / Mrs Dawkins? / according to Mrs. Brissett's says she did not ~~sell him any vines~~ get a penny from Mr. Smith.

Mrs. Br. told the man raising her voice, that ~~she will~~ ~~not~~ ~~go~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~law~~ ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~will~~ ~~cost~~ ~~him~~ ~~dearly~~. Turning to me she said she is not going there to quarrel with the man, she will have other people to do it. Then she called to Mr. Br. who was in the shop, but he was not prepared to go there.

Previously she told that the site which is being fenced now she destined for the post office. She has 6000 shingles and lumber all ready. One part of the government /?/ made her sign the contract and other withdrew it. She said it is because she was not with the government. But she is not afraid of the law. She lived long enough to know the law of this country.

After the parley with the man she said she wants live the place. All her family is in Kingston and she has no one here. In case Mr. Brissett dies first he wants her to stay with his sister in Kingston. Mrs. Br. said that should she die first she wants her husband to stay with her sister in Kingston. She got now only one sister. All her brothers and sisters went away and died in far away countries.

She seemed disgusted with Warsop. The post office building business displeased her immensely. "some other people" got it / Henlon Ryland. But she says she does not care for it. She has better ways of investing her money. If she builds in Kingston she will get a better ~~xxx~~ rent for the house.

She told about a similar affair her father had. He had a quarrel with a neighbour - Lewis over a land. He apparently won it in court. But he was prepared to fight it both with his "tongue and fists". The man Lewis wanted a fight and they agreed on a time and place. Several hundreds people gathered to see the fight. Mr. Gooden - Mrs. Br. father - knocked down his opponent and the wife of the later implored him to spare her husband's life. So did also the "conductor" of the fight. So he let the man there and walked triumphantly out.

Queens.

Interview
with Mrs. and
Miss Lovely.
12.5.47.

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Mr. Queen is disliked in the village. He is especially hated by laboureres whom he employs. He exploited them always paying 9d. only for clearing from bush one square chain of land. He used to run over the fields with the rope with which he measured the fields took the measure of the ground cleared and examined whether the work done corresponds to what he offered to pay for it. They call him in the village "hoggy" or "clapper". He claps from time to time with his teeth, especially when he is excited, Hence the nickname.

Mrs. Lovely does not believe his father could be an overseer on Allsides property. "He never could be an overseer - just a man who worked on other people's fields carrying his pan with him to cook food for himself on the field."

sitting in an upright position in a corner of her dimly lit by a petro~~p~~ lamp drawing room, she told me about her childhood.

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I started to work when I was seven. I made chochet things and had quite a big clientele. For this money I bought dresses and ribbons - which none of my friends had. I was determined to win a scholarship. While reading the lessons at the teacher's cottage all the time I kept my fingers busy with crochet work. I immitated Queen Victoria and my fingers went quick all the time.

In spite of her 67 years, Mrs. King moves and looks quite "middle aged". Always busy, full of plans to direct othe people. Very interested in our work. She makes her crinkle hair into a chiguion at the back or in two chiguions: one in the front and the other at the back, on special occasions. Today atharvest service in the anglican church she wore a white linen frock with $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves, a black straw hat with a large brim perched at a very becoming angle. Round the edge the hat was decorated in the white cotton. Big pearls round her neck, a sun like broack and good sized ear rings completed her sunday attire. She work black patent shoes and stockings. A stiff corset outlined her dignified bust and on the whole she looked like a respectable and domineering parent of 1900 epoch with a touch of exotism.

I got up at 7 a.m. and never ~~w~~ saw my bed before 10:00 p.m. While in bed I recited to myself the next day's lessons and if I could not remember something I would get up, light the lamp and look it up in my text books. I won the scholarship for high school. My brother wanted me to go to Canada. He said he will pay all my expenses while I will study there. But I did not want to go. I wanted work. When I was 15 I ran away from my mother and started here in this small house opposite (?) a sewing school for girls. I paid them one shipling per week and they did work for me. I trained them in sewing and crochet. Every week in turn a girl would do the house work. Their parents supplied food. I touched all kinds of trade in my life and I always learned quickly. In this very room I had a post office. I started the post office savings.

A woman never knows what her life would be till she marries. My sister married, she was the eldest. We were 7 children. She had 15 children. Her husband died and she died leaving 9 children. I took care of them - my mother was a widow then. I gave them all education and helped them to stand on their own legs. They are in America. This shoes I have, these stock - ings - they are presents from them. This neckless and this broach it is all from them.

Yes, I made money in my life. I hav also losses, and I began only with my 10 fingers."