

- 7 -

When Janie brought forth her copy of the poem I put it hastily into my purse. I explained to her that I'd have to read it later because I must try to reach the bus station before it rained.

By the time I had reached the crossing point of Spanish Oak Lane tiny drops of rain peppered down on my new hat. I turned to the right and at once noticed that the houses here were better than any I had seen. They had better roofs, newer paint, attractive shrubby plantings, and radios sounded forth from a number of them. The houses grew progressively better. The road of the mill village terminated in the highway which links up with Faculty Drive. The houses I had just passed, I realized suddenly, were the only ones close to a highway.

The rain peppered down with greater force. Quite a little stretch lay between me and the bus station. The alternative to ruining the new hat was to seek shelter in a filling station across the way. While I stood within its warm interior and watched the rain beat against the windowpanes (I thought of the expression on Mary's face as she had told me, "This poem may not sound like much but it puts down on paper what most of us feel.")

I took from my purse the dim pencil copy of Mary's poem and read:

"Textile Life"

"The life of a textile worker is trouble and worry
and fears,
We can never get through what we are expected to do
if we work at it ninety nine years.

- 8 -

- 2 -

"There are lots and scores of people
Don't seem to understand
That when God made man, he made him out of sand
And he only gave him two hands.

- 3 -

"With these two hands he said labor,
And that we are willing to do.
But he gave us six days to do our work,
And not try to do it all in two.

- 4 -

"We have the stretch-out system
And it spreads throughout the mill
Two-thirds of the people it has sent to hospitals
And the other one-third it has killed.

- 5 -

"We have what is called a production
And it hurts us in many ways,
If we can't reach that we must get our hat
And stay out a couple of days.

- 9 -

- 6 -

"We get our pay envelope, and oh how ugly it looks
It is mashed so flat until it looks
Just like it was stamped by an elephant's foot.

- 7 -

"Our troubles and trials are many
Our dollars and cents are few
The Butcher, the Doctor, the Merchant we owe
And sometimes the undertaker too.

- 8 -

"There is one little word called unearned
And that causes us evil to think
It appears on the face of our pay envelope
And its surely put there with red ink.

- 9 -

"Sometimes the snow is fast falling
And we don't even have wood or coal
This is only part of a textile life
But the half can never be told."