[Box Factory]

"Lookin' up old Brunswick, are you? Well, you couldn't do that thorough without talkin' to the Box-Shop girls. I guess we know as much as anybody about folks in this town - know it from way back. Most of us come from old settlers - first families here.

"Our coat-of-arms? Yes, that's our name. Real handsome, I think? Haven't had it up long - never thought about it until folks around here got to talkin' so much about where they come from - seemed to take a lot of merit to themselves from what somebody else done. Then I just said to Jane, 'Daughters of the Revolution, of course, everybody knows we're that. Mayflower'? of course everybody's heard of our grand-mother's grand-mother that come over in that. But that ain't all we are - we're genteel English folks; there's a coat-of-arms in the family - our name on it - let's get it out. Mebbe some of the folks that make so free with us now because we're poor and make boxes and wear calico will change their tune a little.'

"Well, that's the way it worked. They'd look at that and look at great grandmother's pink lustre tea set - yes, that's it. Not a nick in it. Glad you like it - and you could just see 'em growin' respectful. We ain't been patronized by anybody since we put 'em out.

"We ain't the only old girls around here that's got pink lustre and a coat-of-arms, though in our time it didn't make

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any difference if you had one or not. We was brought up to think that 'pretty is as pretty does' and all we asked was whether a girl behaved and was neat and modest and worked good and didn't waste. You had to be all that if you got a place in the box shop. E. W. wouldn't have any other kind. Always said 'the better the help the better the goods.'

"'Who was E. W.? Never heard of him?' Land sakes! I 'sposed everybody in the world had heard of Eliphalet Dennison. Why, he made the box business and the tag business. Made it, - lived up to Boston and sold what we made here. Best man ever lived, and that smart. He used to come down here often - always knew when E.W. had come. Cigar - always smoked the best. They said he used to pay much as ten cents apiece for 'em. Only tobacco I ever did like the smell of. Same with all the girls, but mother always said it wan't real ladylike to speak about it.

"Well, E.W. always was for havin' the best people in the box shop and nobody else. Of course you could get 'em those days. Nobody but sea captains had money down here. Nothing for the men to do but fishin' and farmin' and cuttin' timber. You worked at whatever you could get - everybody did. Best people. Of course it was different then - not so much riff-raff. We was brought up different too. Loose livin' like you see now wan't tolerated - awful severe with sinners. Of course I can't remember the stocks, but I've heard my grandfather tell about seein' a girl in 'em right here in Brunswick and seein' men throw rotten eggs at her. Awful, wan't it? She'd been sayin' evil about a

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man and he made the judge believe she'd lied. I've always wondered if 'twan't one of the cases where she told the truth and he lied. Well, no way of tellin' now, but it happened.

"No, the kind you was made a difference back there. Couldn't get work if you was a loose liver. Why, I can remember myself when the cotton mill over by the falls wouldn't take help that swore or got drunk or didn't go to church. I've seen the sign up myself many a time. I wonder what they'd do for help if they'd put up such a sign now.

"'When did I start workin' in box shop?' Let's see. I must have been around twelve. 'Twas long the middle of the war - that is, the Civil War - can't get used to there havin' been another and everybody meanin' that now when they say war. But, sakes alive! that wa'n't the first I knew about the box shop. I'd always been used to it. Grandpa and grandma lived with us and long ago as I can remember I used to watch 'em stringin' tags. Aunt Tildie - she was E. W.'s sister, and a mighty smart woman - was makin' 'em down Falmouth way, where she was livin' then, and she used to send lots up here to string. Grandpa was old and couldn't do much but set by the fire and keep things from burnin'. Grandma was quite lively and she did the stringin'. Grandpa would lay up out on the table so grandma could get at 'em easy and so they'd set hour after hour, she stringin', he layin' 'em out, she chattin' all the time and he listenin' best he could - a little deaf. It put in the time and then folks was glad enough to earn

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twenty-five cents a day then. Grandpa laid out tags until the day he died and he counted 'em, too. Nearest I ever saw them come to quarrelin' was when grandma counted 'em over. He couldn't stand it to have her show she thought mebbe he'd missed one. Proud about his work and takin' such an interest. Never did anything but lay out tags, but he was a regular Dennison man. One of the last things he said was, 'Mattie, (grandma's name was Mattie) we've had a real happy time stringin' tags, ain't we?'

"Of course, 'twas slow. Jane, my sister who went with the box shop when they took it away from here up to Massachusetts and is livin' there now, says they don't string 'em by hand any more. Do it by machine. String 8000 an hour on one machine, and have a whole room full of machines. My nephew, who heard her tellin' that, said, 'She's stringin' you, Aunt Sue, don't believe it.' Such language as boys do use now-a-days! My father would'a smacked one of us good if we'd said that, but I had to laugh. That's the way now, we laugh instead of smackin' 'em. Well, anyway, that's what Jane told. Makes you dizzy thinkin' about it.

"When I was bigger - nine or so, mother used to let me bring work from the box shop for her. We lived a mile out. She'd learned before she married and had us, and she was glad enough to get a little work at home to help out. Pinchin' times, - and she liked it. I used to love to watch her - so clean and quick and lively - just held me to see her foldin' over the cardboard and pastin' on the paper. You might say that I grew up on trochees.

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"'What was trochees?' Why, don't you know that? That's what Aunt Tildie made mostly - boxes to put trochees in, of course. Made millions of 'em here, I guess. Mother loved to make 'em, and we children used to hang around rainy days and watch her. She'd tell us stories while she worked and teach us to sing. We was always great for singin' in this town. Seemed as if all the old box shop girls sang - some of them in the choirs. There was Salinie and Patience Brooks sang soprano and alto for I don't know how many years in that old church on the hill. And 'twas same with the box shop boys - all singers. Dannie Lufkin was the finest tenor in these parts - led the choir - sang solers - travelled around to near by towns. Dannie's seventy now but he's still singin'. My grandniece says he cracks and they oughtn't to invite him but I don't care whether he does or not, it does me good to see somebody I've known all my life in that choir now and then. Anyway we children learned lots of songs from mother, while she sat makin' trochees.

"No, she didn't learn me to make boxes. Learned in the shop. Mother never'd let me touch a thing at home, she was that careful of what they sent in. If a single speck got on a piece she'd lay it out and take it back herself and explain. She always said 'You can't take too much pains bein' honest with yourself. I wouldn't be happy if I didn't explain to Tildie what I done.'

"As I said, I learned when I was 'round twelve. 'Twas on account of father bein' killed in the war. Left mother with nine of us, oldest only about fifteen. 'Big family?' Yes.

Big families was the rule then. There's Tillie Goodman - she's one of eleven, but her father had two more wives and both of 'em had big families. I don't believe Tillie ever did know how many children he fathered.

"'Twa'n't only children mother had, there was grandpa and grandma, both feeble. We had the farm and the boys worked hard, but we was all too young to run it and go to school as mother wanted we should, so she sold and bought a little place in town and she made more and more trochees, and Iwent into the box shop and soon after Janie came.

"Seemed real natural. The times I'd played there when I went for mother's work. They was real good to children and used to let us pick out all the nicest pieces of paper in the waste barrel, and Jane and I used to make dresses and hats for our dolls with 'em. Such pretty paper as they had! Seems to me they don't get anything like it now. Jane laughs at me when I say that and tells me I ought to see what they make for dolls up to Framingham now. But I tell her that if they'd been as smart as we was they'd made dolls' things sixty years ago instead of just takin' it up.

"And then this talk of paper dresses and hats for grown up people. Nutthin' new in that. Why, my sister Beckie and Maudie Jones - Maudie lived with us - lost her mother when she was seven weeks old and her father soon after, and she was passed around. We got her before the war and she stayed on with us long as she lived. Well, Beckie and Maudie went out one day and bought blue

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tissue paper and made dresses and hats - the prettiest things you ever saw - and put 'em on and walked on Main Street. Humph, they ain't got much in Framingham we didn't have first. They may be big, but they started here - right here in Brunswick.

"I 'spose you've heard the story of how it began. Mother used to tell us over and over again - couldn't get over the wonder of its getting so big and givin' work to so many. It was all on account of Aaron.

"W'Who was Aaron?' Well, I declare. Haven't you ever heard of Aaron Dennison? Father used to say he was the most wonderful boy ever born here, the kind interested in the insides of things. And, more'an that, he was the kind that saw new things to do - things nobody had ever thought of doin', but that the minute you heard about it you knew it ought to be done. He was interested in everything, but particularly watches and clocks - began here down on Main Street. Father said he used to see him there when he went down to watch the sign ring.

"'Nobody told you about that sign? Queer, and they knowin' you was studyin' up old Brunswick. Never saw anything so neat as that was. We children used to just beg to go down and see it strike. Amos - 'twas Amos kept the shop - made watches and clocks - rigged up the sign himself. Nice, kind man - liked to have us come. It was over the door. Nothing but a sign, but neat as I say. Horse might'a been more natural, but I didn't think so then. Black boy with a whip ridin' him. When the hour came, boy

Transfer

struck the horse and the horse kicked the bell - cute. We just used to scream. Kicked once for one o'clock, twice for two o'clock and so on up to twelve, - just like a clock. 'Spose 'twas a clock. Father always said so.

"Well, Aaron liked to watch it - but he did more. He went inside and learned how it was made and how to make watches and clocks, and he went up to Boston and had a store of his own and he did well. Soon after that he got his great idear that father always talked about so much. It came of his bein' so set on havin' things right. Didn't make no difference what it was, Aaron always must have it just as good as it could be - neat and solid and something you wa'n't ashamed to hand out. 'Particular', some of them called him, but as father always said, it showed how it paid to be particular - if you was particular with brains, nut just plain fussy.

"Well, Aaron was all out of conceit with the jewelry boxes he was gettin' from England. Seems queer but nobody was makin' 'em on this side then. They was homely and cheap lookin', and came to pieces while you was openin' 'em. Always did appear to me that England's cheap things look worse and are worse than anybody else's. Aaron got ashamed to handle 'em, and one day he said, 'Want a thing well done, do it yourself,' and he up and got a lot of pasteboard and paper and made some patterns and started right down here - had to foot it part of the way, too.

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His idear was that mebbe his father could cut 'em out and his sisters paste 'em up. And that was the way it turned. The old colonel - that was Aaron's and E. W.'s father - called him colonel because he was head of militia - father said he was something grand to see on Trainin' Day - well, the colonel was tickled to death to do something to beat the English. Bein' born close to the Revolution and havin' been brought up on it, so to speak, like we was on the Civil War, nothin' suited him better than some such proposition, and he said, 'Course, we can make 'em, Aaron, and we'll whip the Britisher out of this market'- and that was the way it turned out.

"Would you believe it? He cut out the first box with an old shoe knife on his cobbler's bench in his shop over the woodshed. Yes, he was a shoemaker beside bein' a farmer and a colonel and takin' a lot of interest in politics. He cut 'em out and Aaron's sisters - one of 'em was Tildie that I was tellin' you about - they made 'em and sent 'em up to Aaron and 'twa'n't long before he wrote back that people liked 'em and that he'd got a lot of orders and they'd have to do something to cut 'em out quicker, and get more girls to work 'em up. Aaron came down again, and would you believe it, he and the colonel got up a machine for cuttin' that they're usin' still. Jane says there's rows and rows of 'em up to Framingham today - same kind they worked out here in '44.

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"Well, it kept growin' and growin' and they had to get a bigger place to work in and they began to send out to women who couldn't leave home, until nigh about all the women around here was makin' boxes.

"But 'twa'n't Aaron that worked up the business like that. He wa'n't that kind. He was always after something new - principally set on makin' a new kind of watch. And he done it - kind that's made all over this country now. Havin' showed the colonel how to make boxes, it didn't interest him any more. But it did E. W. He was just a born seller. Give him a good thing and he'd make 'em and sell 'em. And that's what he did with 'Aaron's baby' as he always called the boxes. And then he added tags. And, land sakes, the way they increased and multiplied! When I went to work in '63, things was just boomin'.

"'How much did I make to start with?' Twenty-five cents a day first two years. Seemed a lot of money then. I bought all my own clothes on that. Second year paid mother board and saved $40.00. I always was proud of that. But then all the old girls was like that - brought up to save. Wastin' was looked on in good families like ours as bein' almost as bad as lyin'. We was careful of things - watched the paper and the paste and the brushes. I knew one girl who used a brush four years, and was real worried when it give out. I never used one longer than three years, seemed to me that's long enough, workin' it every day as we did.

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"I'm a mild woman, byt my temper rises up when I see things spoiled by people not payin' attention. I must say I don't think they're always as careful up to Framingham as they might be. They send all our work down here and every now and then there's something's been cut too small or too big or is twisted so you can't use it. Worries me most sick sometimes, thinkin' of all that good paper just clean ruined. But 'tain't thecutters so much as 'tis them that's over 'em. They don,t watch all the time like Aunt Tildie did and make you see how ugly it is to waste - ugly and wicked, too, in a world where so many has to go without.

"When E.W. was alive and Aunt Tildie around, everything had to be right - everything first class. They wouldn't send out much as a trochee box that wa'n't just what it ought to be. Well, 'twas easier for them because that was the way most of us old girls was brought up. There was mother - wouldn't stand for us slightin' anything - made us do it over. What was worth doin' at all was worth doin' well, she was always sayin.' Hard livin' up to that when you're poor and a big family, but she did. And clean! We might not have but one dress but she'd set up all night washin' and mendin' rather than let us go to school not lookin' neat. All the old girls just natually habits bein' neat. Mebbe you'll find some of us don't wear anything but calico, but it's clean calico and our hair is combed. You take notice of our hair - always brushed glossy - keep it so. Some of us grey.

"'No grey hairs in my head?' Think of your noticin' that!

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There are some - don't show much - not near so many as Jane has, though she's younger. She gets real fretty about it sometimes.

"Well, as I was sayin', things had to be right when E.W. was alive. Quality - that was what he always preached. Pasteboard, paper, paste, all had to be best to be had. Work had to be right. Bundlin' and packin' and markin' right. Why, I've seen boxes sold in this town no old girl would have touched - wouldn't make 'em. We always said we needn't ever be ashamed of sayin' we worked for the Dennison's. Everything first class.

"Sometimes I wonder if they're as particular up to Framingham about things as E.W. always was. Look at this paper I'm workin' on. 'Tain't fit for one of our boxes - not what we're used to. Takes me almost twice as long to cover a box with it as right kind. Hard to get it smooth, and I won't slight it. I ain't complainin', but I can't help thinkin' that E.W. would never have let that paper go out. Mebbe it's the war, but it frets me to death to see things wrong. Somebody's sure to say some time, 'Dennison's ain't doin' what they used to when E.W. was alive - more interested in makin' money than doin' best work.' Bad for the business, if that gets around. More'an that, I don't want to have a hand in makin' anything I wouldn't want to buy.

"'I needn't fret? Think it's all right?' Well, I'm glad to hear you say so for of course you've been around and know how people feel about it. Still, I'd feel better if I could see Framingham myself and see just how they are carryin' on the business.

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Jane says it's wonderful, but then it wouldn't be anything strange if Jane made it out better'n it is. She's that way over things she's in. But I must admit the pictures she brings up and the Round Robin and what they all tell when they come down here on their vacations seems to show it's real fine.

"You know, it may seem funny to you; but there ain't no place in the world I want to go to, as much as I do to Framingham. I guess there's always something one has to die wantin' to see. My Uncle George died wantin' to see Mt. Vernon - said everybody out to go to see it because where we'd have been if it hadn't been for George Washington; and grandfather he died wantin' to see Jerusalem - come of him always bein' a Sunday school teacher. But it's Framingham I want to see, and I guess I'll die wantin'. Of course I might go back with Jane some summer, but I can't make up my mind to it. Such a trip! And I'd be worryin' about things here and missin' the work.

"My feelin' comes I 'spose from so many folks I know goin' away with the box shop - went nearly thirty years ago, and I ain't got over missin' it yet. You see I hadn't hardly lost a day from time I started, back in the war, and then it was the nicest place to work. Such fun as we had! Something always happenin'. Everybody so kind. No, Aunt Tildie was that way, and she sorter gave the key for them that came after. She couldn't even see a cat suffer, - take it home - had a house full of stray cats. And if she saw a man abusin' an animal, she'd take him before the police.

Started that society that looks after animals - good thing, I always thought. Aunt Tildie was just as good to folks. I've known her on stormy nights to get a hack and send all the girls home that lived any distance. Jane says that when they first went up to Massachusetts she was always comin' around and askin', 'Girls, are you happy? Think you're goin' to like it?' Anxious lest somebody get home-sick. Just like her. 'Great Heart,' some called her. Aunt Tildie Great Heart! I like that, don't you?

"'What did I make?' Well, most everything after them first two years I told you about, but trochees mostly for a long time. They put me on piece work, and I got so fast they used to laugh when they came around lookin' after things and say I wasn't workin' if I didn't keep a box in the air. I made as much as $1.50 a day, and I could'a made more but the girls said I'd better not for if I did they might cut the rate. You see, they thought then a girl shouldn't make more'n a dollar and a quarter a day - so I kept myself in and never did really know how many trochees I could'a made.

"Jane says it ain't so now up to Framingham, and it ain't so here. You can earn as much as you can. There's girls workin' on velvets over in the barn that's makin' much as $25 a week.

"'What's the barn?' Well, I 'spose I shouldn't call it the barn. Factory is what some wants to call it, and others are for box shop. You must go in. It's right there back of the house

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the Colonel and Aaron and E. W. and Tildie all lived in - right beside the first place a box was ever made in, in the United States. Historic, I call it. Be sure to go in and see the girls workin'.

"You see, it come about in this way, - their takin' the barn to work in. As I told you, goin' on thirty years ago, they moved the box shop away from here - took everything. I've always said that if E.W. been alive he'd never done it. Still, Jane says that ain't so, that Framingham's more central and a great big plant like that - that's what Jane calls it, 'plant' - I never did see the connection - a great big plant like that must be on the main line and close to a big city. Mebbe so, but I can't help thinkin' that if E.W. 'd lived - but then it wa'n't to be so.

"'Twas dreadful for us old girls who couldn't go. Lots did - whole families. Jane went, and I was glad enough, she could. but cried. We'd had a disappointment - was lookin' forward to inheritin' and we didn't, and Jane was awful cut up. And then she'd had blows in the business that made her bitter to home. She never said anything outside - wa'n't that kind. Once was when they was thinkin' of startin' box makin' in England, and they talked about sendin' some girls over from here to teach. Jane was just a natural-born teacher, besides knowin' how to make everything the shop made, and they spoke to her about goin' and she thought 'twas all settled and took $100. she'd saved - all she had in the world - and fixed herself up fit for the trip. And then they changed their minds, and she with all them things on her hands and her money gone. It

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was a blow. She felt as if by rights they ought to'a paid her back her money, but I told her it wouldn't be becomin' to say anything about it, that if they didn't offer we couldn't be the first to speak.

"And later she had another blow. That was after the big fire.

"'What fire?' Fancy your not knowin' that. No, no, not the Boston fire. Ain't nobody told you yet how the whole box shop burned down on Christmas night in '79? Nothing left but the key to the big front door - not a pattern nor a machine nor a piece of paper. Everything went up in smoke except what blowed away. They found paper twenty miles from here - wind so high.

"Funny, but that was the only fire that ever happened in this town since I can remember that I didn't go to. Slept all through it. I could'a cried next morning when I found what had happened. Everybody been there and seen it and had something to tell all their lives. All I could say was, 'I slept all through.' I was so ashamed.

"But I tell you that fire made work. We was getting out a couple hundred gross of trochees a week then - sendin' every Saturday. Well, you better believe, we wa'n't goin' to fail on a regular order like that, fire or no fire, and everybody just flew. They got things down from Boston and found little places around town to put machines and benches in. And, would you believe it, we got out the trochees. I worked eighteen hours for four days.

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Never had anything so excitin' - and everybody felt the same. Such fun as we had workin' our heads off, gettin' out that order.

"'Pay us extra?' 'Course not. We never heard of time and a half and all that talk them days. If there was something extra to be done or somebody in a tight place, we just naturally fell to and helped out.

"Well, how I do ramble on. I was tellin' you about Jane, wasn't I? How the fire was back of her second blow. There bein' no big place building here for the box shop until they could build again, the work was scattered around and some taken out of town, and one place they went was Yarmouth. And Jane went as teacher. She trained many as seventy-five girls - a fine crew. And she thought sure they'd put her in charge, and that's what she'd always wanted; and then just about the time she was sure, they stopped work in Yarmouth. Of course she had her place here to home but she was all cut up and never could forget. Jane's the kind that when she's riled about anything, she don't let you forget it - even if you hadn't anything to do with it. So I was glad she could go to Massachusetts and get a change of idears.

"I couldn't go. I'd'a loved to; but there was mother, and I knew well enough we'd never wean mother from here, though she'd gone and been that sweet about it. I meant mother should have things just as she was used to long as she lived. Of course she wasn't so old then, only about my age now, 'round seventy, but mother had had lots of work and heavy liftin' and though she

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was always chipper and happy - singin' and chattin' and thinkin' about the sick and sufferin', she was failin'. I could see it - gettin' so white, not so spry on her feet, tirin' easily. She'd say sometimes, 'Sue, it 'pears to me as if I ain't so spry as I used to be.' But I always said, 'Now, Mother, what's the use of talkin' like that. Don't get such idears into your head. You'd think you was old Mrs. Smith.' That always made her sniff, for the complainin'est woman we ever had in this town was old Mrs. Smith. And mother never could abide her. So, right up to the end she kept goin'.

"No, she didn't suffer to speak of, just faded away. She'd set with a box in her hand, not seein' a thing, not movin', and sudden she'd start up and say, 'Why, Sue, I must'a been asleep. And then one morning she didn't get up, and I found her in bed - smilin' and young lookin'. She'd passed over. Seemed to me I couldn't live without her.

"Well, I think mebbe I'd gone to Massachusetts then and lived with Jane, but there was Mandie Jones lived with mother and me, and you don't often find anybody harder to live with than Mandie. She'd been ailin' for years and she thought she had cancer. Nothin' to do but a little while before mother died, Mandie must go to Portland to a cancer doctor and have it cut out. It cost a lot of money, and we hadn't much, and I wasn't makin' anything now the box shop was gone and mother so feeble, so I borrowed. She went and stayed and though I was worried about

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borrowin' and not tellin' mother or Jane what I'd done, it was so peaceful with her gone it was worth it. But she hadn't cancer, nobody ever knew what it was. She came back about the time mother passed and took to her bed and there she stayed for five years. Maudie was hard to take care of - nothin' ever right - spit out her medicine - wouldn't turn herself in bed, make me do it - and that particular about havin' things fresh washed. I tried to be patient but sometimes I did get all tired out and I was close to bein' cross. The doctor, he didn't have no patience at all with her. He'd say, 'Sue Bradley, I'd never come near if 'twa'n't for you. Send her to the poor house. She's killin' you with her tantrims. She ain't your relation.'

"But I couldn't do that. She was just like a relation, havin' been years in the family, and mother doin' so much for her. Always had tantrums. Mother said it just showed you couldn't break a child of 'em unless you had it from the start.

"I don't see what I'd done after mother went and Maudie took to her bed, if it hadn't been that they began to send work up here from Massachusetts for the old hands. I always felt real proud of that. Looked as if they couldn't get along without us. Still, it wa'n't strange that them that had been trained under E.W. and Aunt Tildie would do better than folks that never been in Brunswick and didn't know anything about their idears, so they sent work up here - all we'd take. I'd get great big boxes sent right to my house, directed to me. That excitin', when they

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came, to know whatI'd got - sometimes 'twas nests - and sometimes 'twas wedding cake - and sometimes 'twine handies' - but mostly it was ring. And most of all I like to make ring.

"'Why?' Well, you just look here and you'll see. I got a big drawer full of all the kinds I've made. See there - every color in the world and every kind of paper that's made - plain and figured and satin and velvety.And look at the names on the top. Them's the names of the men that's ordered 'em and the towns they live in. Go all over the world our ring boxes do. Once I made 'em for Honolulu and once I had a big batch for India. Think of me settin' here in Brunswick, Maine, makin' things for a man who lives in a town in India - don't seem possible.

"Curious, ain't it, how different they are. Seems as if you could tell sometimes about a man from kind of boxes he ordered and something about the folks he sells to. Now you'd know that was for a genteel man - that nice gray with white letters and that touch of gold. I don't believe I'd like that man - too gaudy - still, you can't always tell by appearances.

"Here's a box with our name on it - Bradley. I've made boxes for him time and time and again. Guess they send 'em to me because name's the same. I've come near writin' to him about this shade of blue he has. I think it would be prettier if it was a mite lighter, don't you? I never did - might seem to him I was makin' a little too free even if our names are the same, and I've been workin' for him, so to speak, for years.

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"Wouldn't you like one? Take the one you like best. No, I wouldn't want you to have that - it ain't perfect, and they always said in the box shop, 'When you're givin', give the best.'

"Well, as I was sayin,' it was a real comfort to have boxes to make while I was tendin' Maudie. She hung on for years, gettin' more and more cantankerous, but of course gettin' weaker. 'Twas easier when she couldn't flounce around in bed so much and couldn't holler so loud if I kept her waitin' a minute. She'd go days when she wouldn't speak to me and wouldn't touch a bite while I was in the room. It was discouragin' but I had the boxes and that kept me busy when I wan't waitin' on her and sort'a settled my nerves. Mother always said that one of the most soothin' things in the world was havin' nice clean settin'-down work to do when you was bothered. 'Twas so with me while I was takin' care of Maudie.

"But then I was always one of those who took to box makin' I don't believe there ever was nicer work. It just held me. I never seen the time since I was a grown woman when I wouldn't rather make boxes than eat.

"'Monotonus'? I call it fascinatin' - everything about it pleased me and of course I can't be too thankful now I've got it to do - for, as you see, I ain't livin' in the home any more. Couldn't be helped - sellin' couldn't - came hard but wa'n't no other way.

"You see, I got in debt on account of bein' out of work

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and takin' care of mother and then Maudie cost a lot - had to have things or thought she had to. I borrowed and borrowed and mortgaged the house, thinkin' I could make it up when she was gone, for Jane said she'd help. But when 'twas over two nephews - only ones of the name - father's dead - both good boys wantin' an education and willin' to work for it, so Jane and I said, we'll sell and pay the mortgage and use the rest to help the boys through college. They'll be able to help us mebbe when we get too old to work. At any rate, we'll have done what mother would.

"The boys are through. Yes, them's their pictures - taken when they graduated. Handsome, ain't they? But of course, 'handsome is as handsome does,' so I ain't braggin' though I think Jane's a little that way. One of 'em went through right here in this town - Bowdoin College. Mother'd been that proud - always wanted some one in family to graduate from Bowdoin. They're good boys and beginnin' to pay back already.

"Mebbe we'll get ahead now and have a home of our own, with a garden and hens. 'Twould seem like Heaven. But I ain't complainin'. I'm thankful to have boxes and have 'em regular. I don't know what people in this town would'a done this last year if it hadn't been for the boxes comin' steady. The box shop was always for keepin' work goin' on regular. Studied to do it. Why, E.W. set out onct to get our work goin' in England so he wouldn't ever have to lay off help here. Now, that's what I call bein' a Christian. Takes brains of course to do that - and it takes heart - rememberin' your fellow-man. But that was

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E. W. all over.

"If you'd go down to the barn and see the folks that come in there every mornin' and all day bringin' back work and gettin' more to take home - folks that now everything is shut down wouldn't be earnin' anything at all - you'd see what it means to 'em. Must be as many as two hundred takin' work home.

"'Where is the barn?' Land sakes, how I do ramble! Seems to habit ramblin' in my talk more and more as I get along in years. Well, it was this way about the barn, as I started to tell you. They kept sendin' more and more work down here every year, spite of their growin' bigger and bigger up there. Work came direct, but a few years ago they seemed to think it would be better to have some one to look after things - send things to - give out the work - look it over when it came back - pay off and all that. And when it was bein' talked over one of the old girls said, 'Why not take the barn on the old Dennison place?' Every one saw right away how fittin' that would be - havin' the work goin' on right under the eye, so to speak, of the very room the Colonel cut out the first box in. So they took it and they've made it real nice and pleasant, though they do say it took a sight of sulphur to get it fit to stay in.

"No, I don't work there - just go there to get what I want and take boxes back. I habit home work now just as I used to habit the box shop. But I must say it's a regular God-send to some of the old girls who have things aggravatin' at home. There's Tillie Goodman. She goes every day though she's older than me.

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Tillie has to take care of her aunt Tabbie nights and Tabbie is more of a cross than Maudie Jones ever was and less excuse. She's the cryin' kind - thinks Tillie don't sympathize with her and Tillie workin' all day to get money to buy her medicine and gettin' up forty 'leven times nights to wait on her.

"She's that thankful for the box shop days! 'Sue,' she says to me, 'it seems like Heaven to have a place where you can work in peace. I ain't supposed to look after her days. Betsie does that, but if I'm in the house, no matter how busy, nothing will do but that both of us should be runnin' all the time. When I don't go, only Betsie, she falls to moanin' and moanin'. Says she'll pass away some time when I ain't around and she don't see how I can have the heart to let that happen. Well, I can. Mebbe I'm hard, but you can't wait and work, too, and there's got to be something comin' in.'

"Yes, you must go in and see 'em workin' there, and when you go don't forget to look at the elm - biggest one in town, nigh to fourteen feet around, and I don't know how tall - pretty as a picture. It was the Colonel planted it. You might say it grew up with the box shop - sort of twins. Both of 'em best of their kind, too. We're all real proud of that elm and always take pains to point it out to visitors, just like we point out the house where Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote 'Uncle Tom's Cain' and Longfellow used to room when he was goin' to college here.

"'Ever seen 'em?' Certain. I used to see Mrs. Stowe real often on the street and onct when Longfellow came back here

after he was great, they gave him a reception and I went and he shook hands with me. Pleasant man - not a bit stuck-up. Interestin' town - always has been. I don't see how anybody ever gets weaned from here. Jane says she is, and that I ought to see Framingham. But I notice she comes back pretty regular for vacations and is always talkin' of when we can get a home again.

"There's more hopes of that now I've got a pension and Jane's in the business. Yes, she's a partner - got stock - just happened lately. It's only right that if anybody was to be takin' in that way it should be Jane. She's hardly missed a day for fifty years - never'd think of goin' to anybody else, in spite of the blows she got. Anyway, as I said, she never talked about them outside, only to home. Never was a time Jane wouldn't have followed 'em to China, she was that devoted. So it's only right she should be remembered when there was any rememberin' bein' done, and she always has been. Jane says there'll be something extra comin' in regular from her stock every year that the business makes money.

"Of course I couldn't expect to come in like Jane, on account of not workin' regular years I was takin' care of mother and Maudie, and then, too, we ain't really in the business down here, since the shop left. I don't see why. We work just the same, but it seems it ain't the same, and Jane says of course it wain't, though she don't explain. But then that's Jane's way. What she says is so she expects you to take as so.

"But they didn't forget me. Fixed it by givin' me a

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pension. 'Tain't big, but it's regular and helps a lot. Jane says it's for life. I hope so. Nobody ever told me so though. 'Tain't the money so much though that comes in mighty handy - it's bein' remembered. It's like as if they'd said, 'We know you always did your best, never slighted, carried out E. W.'s idears best you could'. It's showin' that they know about us and don't forget that they started here and that 'twas us old girls that always stood by 'em.

"There's some say they don't see why they give 'em, that they didn't have to. Well, they did and they didn't. They did if they carried out E. W.'s ideaers. He was always for fixin' it so everybody shared. Sight of difference between what's happenin' to us and what's always happened in this town to folks that had grown old workin' in other kinds of business. Take Davie Babcock - old box shop boy, 'bout my age - went in before me - but didn't go up to Massachusetts with 'em, left and travelled around the world for years doin' other things. He's got a pension. Lot of difference between that and what happened to his father. Nice, quiet, industrious old man, steady as a clock, worked forty-five years in one place in this town - dropped dead in his tracks, so to speak - that is, they found him dead at his bench. They paid him by the month and his month was up lackin' two days, and they took the pay for them two days out. Mean, even for them times. And here's his son gettin' a pension - not a very big one nebbe but something though there was years he wa'n't workin' at all for 'em.

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"Well, it ain't anything but what E.W. would have liked to do. Only reason he didn't fix it as it is now when he was livin' was because he had to take all the money he could get to build up the business. Still, you must admit there ain't many men would have gone ahead on his lines. Jane says they're the best firm in the United States - couldn't be better, that she's told 'em that often. Well, I ain't willin' to go quite that far. Nobody's perfect so far as I ever see, but I will say they're the best I ever heard of.

"I'd admire to see what they're doin' tried everywhere. I can't help thinkin' that if E. W.'s idears was carried out more general there wouldn't be so much strikin' and hard feelin' and failin' in business. Take this thing of keepin' half busy - not layin' 'em off. Why, the box shop's the only place in this town where there was always something to do and just as I said, it was because E.W. was always studyin' to find something. One thing give out, he had something else - been lookin' ahead - takin' pains to get ready for hard times, watchin' out for what war does - seems as if we'd had enough wars for people to learn something by this time. Way they've acted over this war, think we'd never been in one before. E. W. would'a studied out what to do and they must have done that up to Framingham for as I say there's always been work.

"And then this dividin' they're doin', like takin' Jane in and givin' me a pension. Don't you see what a difference that makes? Gives us something sure, now we're gettin' so we can't do

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