**Sarah A. Robinson (‘S. A. R.’)**

‘My Duty’, 19 March 1897, *Yorkshire Factory Times*, signed Sarah A. Robinson, Padiham.

I’m trotting away to the factory,

My duty once more to begin,

My clogs keeping time to the music

That springs my heart cords within.

My comrades are hurrying past me,

Unconscious no doubt of my song,

Like them I may seem a poor creature,

Winding my way through the throng.

The wintry winds play about me,

They cruelly cut through my shawl,

But the cold and the task that awaits me

Are powerless to shatter my soul;

For I hear a soft voice ever saying –

“Thy duty makes noble thy life,

Where courage, keep strong through struggle,

Much joy follows after the strife.”

Yea; I pass through my days with the toilers,

And think myself low – not at all.

I thread through the crowd night and morning,

And feel to be near heaven’s goal.

My songs are in praise of the workers,

To help them is strongly my aim,

Love’s smile would soon gladden the nation,

If all would take part in the game.

'Another Bad Warp’, 25 February 1898, *Yorkshire Factory Times*, signed S. A. R., Padiham

This troublesome warp I am weaving  
 Has twist ever down in the “shed”  
For it, sir, I often am grieving  
 And many bad words nearly said.  
My temper, I can’t help but lose it,  
 So often this warp’s wanting me;  
It’s law, sir, I dare not refuse it,  
 Or something more dreadful I’ll see.

It wants me, I know, to stand o’er it,  
 But truly I cannot do this;  
I’ve two other looms that want minding,  
 Or I two long pieces shall miss,  
I’m running to catch every shuttle,  
 And picture the worst as I weave,  
For if I am low in my wages  
 I may get a ticket to leave.

I hardly know what I am doing,  
 This work it is driving me mad;  
Each day I am onwards pursuing,  
 With never a cause to feel glad.  
And all for the sake of a bad warp  
 I really can’t manage at all;  
If it wasn’t for seeming I’m lazy  
 I’d right away don on my shawl.

Those who at the looms have to labour  
 Just think of your comrade so sad;  
You know what it’s like in the factory  
 When towing with warps that are bad;  
You’ve all had a bit of rough weaving,  
 And know how we vary our song;  
Sometimes we go merrily at it,  
 But oft we are sad the day long.

Now this is like I am at present,  
 Take pity, and smile on me kind;  
At an ill-fated warp I’ve been standing,  
 Alas! till I’ve gone nearly blind;  
And truly my back is near broken,  
 My chest and my fingers are sore;  
These will be the likes of my troubles  
 Until this bad warp is no more.

‘Trouble Again’, 6 Oct 1899, *Yorkshire Factory Times*, signed S. A. Robinson, Padiham.

I don’t like the thoughts of complaining,

But bless me, whatever am I to do?

I’ve floats, I’ve mashes, and pullbacks,

And mi looms all want tacklering too.

There’s one that plays “danger” wit shuttle,

Another makes weft curl at side,

While the other in turn they are stopping,

And the pickers are broken beside.

I’ve tried to get straight all the morning,

But mine is all labour in vain;

I’m using the steelcomb and reedhook

Again, and again, and again.

If I haven’t a trap – I’ve a pullback –

Or else I’ve a shuttle to scrape,

And often the ends I’m dividing,

Which come up like pieces of tape.

Its all very well to be weaving

When all is straightforward you know.

But there comes quite a change in the alley

When nothing will properly go.

I don’t like the thoughts of complaining,

But weavers pray what can I do?

I ask you again to forgive me

For telling my trouble to you.

[Extract from the *Northern Weekly* letters column, 1 March 1902 (formerly *Teddy Ashton’s Journal*). This paper was edited by C. Allen Clarke (‘Teddy Ashton’), author of *The Effects of the Factory System*. Robinson was a contributor and part of its circle of authors. The meetings of this debating society were held in her parents’ house and she sometimes chaired them. She is almost certainly the author of the quoted verses.]

PADIHAM NORTHERN WEEKLY DEBATING SOCIETY

Dear Teddy – This is a report of our meetings for the month of January. We started this New Year in earnest with a picnic to one of our members – Mr Alfred Burrell, Cycle Refreshment Room, Accrington-road, Hapton, which is two miles and a half from Padiham. We had a splendid tea which we all did justice to, and afterwards held a meeting, when Mr Burrell gave us an essay on “Socialism and Morality,” which enlightened us considerably, as it was splendidly given. Whenever we go among the *Northern Weekly* readers, they all seem to make us welcome. Mr Burrell says he will be glad to see our Editor anytime he comes this way. If you will give him a call you will be welcome.

January 8th – “Drink and Christianity” came on for discussion, followed by some very interesting readings, among which came the following by one of our readers: -

“Come join our class at Padiham,

For Teddy’s chums are there;

Come gradely folk, we’re ready now

Your company to share.

Once a week the members meet

The truth alone to seek;

On any subject meant for good,

All are allowed to speak.

The Padiham Debating Class

Contains a jolly lot;

Although as yet our meeting place

Is only in a cot.

But here we learn the lessons that

Are needed in our lives;

So bring your sweethearts and your friends,

Your husbands and your wives.”

**Sam Fitton, ‘A Factory Girl’s Plea’**

(A mill manager has been saying that factory girls don’t work so hard now they are receiving higher wages.)

When times were hard and wages low,

I own I made a splutter;

I had to toil a lot, I know,

To earn my bread and butter.

I used to rise at five o’clock,

And run off feeling surly;

I’d barely time to don my frock;

My hair was none too curly.

There was no chivalry in men,

Our cause was weak and lonely;

I didn’t call it living then,

‘Twas just existing only.

I’ve often met my daily strife

On merely bread and water,

And all those finer joys of life

Were given the master’s daughter.

I’ve had to fight for meat and drink

Through stormy days and breezy:

Come – be a man, sir – don’t you think

It’s time I took it easy?

Some ladies get above their share –

You must admit it’s true, sir –

Then make my load less hard to bear,

For I’m a human, too, sir.

I’m quite as loyal as the rest,

Accuse me not of treason.

If everyone will do her best,

I’ll do my best in reason.

As I would live, I must confess,

Hard work may be a treasure;

There’s dignity in Labour – yes,

And perhaps a bit in pleasure.

Equality in all we do

Should never be derided;

Well, let our work, and pleasure, too,

Be equally divided.

The hardest job we never shirk,

We are no factory floaters;

Unlike the men for whom we work,

We’ve little time for motors.

We only ask, as is our right,

That Peace shall stay our pining;

That all the clouds of yesternight

Shall show their silver lining.

A factory girl can ne’er be free,

With mind and muscle aching;

Dead are the days of slavery.

And Freedom’s in the making.

**Sam Fitton, ‘Come, Let Us Reason’**

Come, brothers, let us reason while we may,

Our cause is lost indeed if reason fail.

Think long and deep, and then – oh, blessed day!

From out this chaos order will prevail.

If man’s emancipation be our aim,

Like humans let us seek our human fruits;

With force as weapon we forego our claim

To be a little higher than the brutes.

Be sure our cause is just ere we begin,

Then, having won, we’ll easier count the cost.

By calm conference rather let us win –

By losing heads too often heads are lost.

Might is not always right all laws among,

Let force of honest reason be our might;

With human reason let us rout the wrong,

Brute force can yet make wrong resemble right.

Remember this: If justice be our quest,

We’ll aye be just according to our lights.

By rightful means our wrongs should be redressed,

By wrongs we cannot well attain our rights.

Have patience yet – one lifetime’s not so long;

The wheels of progress wear not yet away;

This many wrinkled world is only young;

You cannot make millenniums in a day.

Say not that past reformers lagged behind,

That they were weak and only good in parts;

The generations yet to come will find

That you were lacking in the saner arts.

The road is long, with sweat upon our brow

We strive to see the end, yet all in vain,

For though our eyes be further open now,

They cannot see the turning in the lane.

While we are men we’ll aye be bound with care;

It is the angels only who are free.

While men are only human men must bear

The human burden of humanity.

With all the inequalities we see,

‘Tis ours to strive to equalise the odds.

Force has its many uses, we’ll agree,

But reason is the gift of all the gods.

**Sam Fitton, ‘Paradise as Pictured by a Piecer’**

“CANVAS SHOES HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED FOR SPINNERS.”

They’re bown to save eawr souls, lads, to

Prevent a cut or bruise,

There’s some’dy bin suggestin’ we

Should o’ wear canvas shoes.

They’n often thowt us wrong I’th’yed,

Becose we wore bare feet;

They seem quite anxious now to keep

Eawr understandin’s reet.

Wi’ th’ road we’n had to use eawr feet,

We met be wrong I’ th’ roof;

We’n never made mich money, but

We’n piled up lots o’ oof.

Eawr feet are rough an’ ready, an’

They met be noan so clen;

But when we get eawr canvas shoes

We’st o’ be gentlemen!

We han elastic bodies, we

Con spring o’er mule an’ creel;

But shan’t we do some bouncin’ when

We’n rubber soles as weel?

We’ll rub ‘em up wi’ pipe-clay, an’

By gum, we’ll make a show;

So come, let’s do it gradely, lads.

An’ wear clock socks an’ o;.

Then, when the bloomin’ summer comes,

We’st feel quite smart an’ faddy,

We’st fancy we’re on t’ golf-links, wi’

Eawr creeler for a caddy.

We’n filled eawr feet wi’ splinters for

A long spell neaw, I’m sure:

We’n piked eawr share o’ planks up if

We never kick no moor.

We hanno’ sipped much wine o’ life;

Too bitter’s bin eawr cup;

Wi’ puncin’ bits o’ screws an’ slips

We’n often felt cut up.

But when we get eawr canvas shoes

We’st happen feel new made;

We’st fancy we’re a lot o’ “nuts”

On th’ Blackpool promenade.

We’n had blue toes I’ th’ winter time,

They’n borne a nation’s scars;

We’n had a taste o’ trench feet, if

We hanno’ bin o’ th’ wars.

When th’ flure’s sparkled o’er wi’ frost

They don’t know heaw we feel;

If they could feel eawr ankles then

They’d give us spats as weel.

We’n had blue noses lots o’ times,

An chilblains quite a ream;

They’n blown a lot o’ gas off, if

They’n left us short o’ steam.

These canvas shoes will shift eawr blues;

We’st get ‘em – I don’t think!

I’st dye mine dolly crimson, too,

I’st then feel in the pink.

So cheer up, lads! There’ll come a time

As happy as con be,

They’ll cover t’flure wi’ carpet

We’ll nobbut wait an’ see!

**Sam Fitton, ‘Shuttle-Kissin’’**

Matilda Curly Toppin’ wer a weighver, an’ a lass,

Who did her share o’ laughin’, an earned her share o’ brass;

Hoo kissed her share o’ shuttles, too, but if they’d nobbut ler her,

Hoo’d rather pass her time away i’ kissin’ summat better.

Matilda had a tackler who’d getten very free

Wi’ bonny Curly Toppin’, for he kept her in his e’e;

But th’ way this felly pestered her amounted to a craze,

An’ hoo’ wer’ getting’ wary of his spooney little ways.

Her couldna stir a peg but he wer ‘awlus at her heels,

He followed her i’ th’ factory, or gooin’ to her meals;

So once as hoo wer’ comin’ wi’ a shuttle fro’ his bench,

He blurted eawt, “Matilda, th’art a gradely pratty wench;

I dunno’ want to see thi kissin’ shuttles o’ thi life,

So if I wer’ to ax thi, wouldta come an’ be mi wife?

If tha’ll gi’ me thi kisses – for I think tha’s mony left –

I’ll mak a patent thingammy for suckin’ up thi weft.”

At that Matilda cocked her e’e, an’ shook her curly yed,

Then givin’ him a little smile hoo wagged her yed an’ said:

“I’m very much obliged for o’ thi’ promises, shuzsheaw,

An’ yet I conno’ marry thi, for th’art so very feaw,

I’m sick o’ bein’ single, an’ I’m sick o’ suckin’ weft,

Mi teeth are getting’ rotten, an’ I haven’t mony left,

I thank thi for thi offer, which I very much decline,

For I’d rayther kiss a shuttle than a face like thine!”