

I MET THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD

by Emily Weinberg Cohen

I met the richest man in the world through coincidence.

One night in the small town in Western Pennsylvania where my husband is a leading businessman, as we drove to a Chamber of Commerce dinner at the hotel, we were struck again by the well-known evidence of all depressed mining areas: not many people out after dark, and few bright lights on the main street.

But inside the hotel, the Chamber members were cheerful. There was encouraging news. The sweater factory had brought in a woolen expert, Mr. George Brunton, a Scotsman, and had recalled its laid off employees.

Mr. Brunton's burred accent intrigued me, and his English wife was charming. Because of my English parentage I found them particularly interesting, and persuaded them to come home with us for a late cup of tea.

While they were chatting with my husband in the living room, I brewed the tea; and as I re-entered with the tray, I heard Mr. Brunton say, "The finest firm I ever worked for, the finest gentleman I've ever known, was Sir Simon Marks of Marks and Spencer, in London."

"Marks and Spencer!" I echoed, incredulous. "In my parents' home Marks and Spencer were household words!...Did I hear you say