

WOMEN'S WORK IN WAR TIME

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Women's Work in War Time by W. Irving Bullard

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WOMEN'S WORK IN WAR TIME

"**M**AN POWER" is rightly accounted one of the decisive elements in the world war. But "Woman power" also must be included in any survey of the myriad forces enlisted in the tremendous conflict.

Such a war, summoning all the energies of nations, has revealed to the belligerent powers a huge reservoir of latent human energy in their women, and even their children. Woman in the harvest fields had before now been a common sight in Europe; but to-day her toil has been almost infinitely multiplied in amount, scope and in its sources of social origin. What Europe has achieved, and what mistakes Europe has made, are to-day of keen interest to the employers of America, now that we are ourselves in the war and are facing a steadily growing shortage of labor.

The "dilution" of industrial labor in Europe through the advent of women workers is now a commonplace. Women are not only the harvest hands, but to a large degree the munitions makers, and in a host of the common processes of industry they have taken over vocational tasks that were generally assumed to be capable only of masculine performance. In manufacturing, transportation, commerce and finance the

female fraction of the payroll has increased steadily to large proportions. The possibilities and the limitations alike revealed by this new order of things possess much significance for the American business man.

In England to-day about 1,256,000 women have undertaken work formerly done almost wholly by men, raising their employment total from about 3,282,000 to 4,538,000. This total employment does not include domestic servants, women in small shops or on farms, or nurses in military, naval or Red Cross hospitals. Slightly over 200,000 are now engaged in agricultural labor. Still more are employed in the great war-time industry of munitions-making. How vast that industry has become is indicated by the fact that the ministry of munitions is now employing 2,000,000 persons and is spending nearly \$3,500,000,000 a year.

The degree to which the range of munitions work by women has spread beyond purely unskilled labor is indicated by the following official advertisement carried in October issues of British newspapers:

MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS

Educated Women Wanted for Training

The Ministry of Munitions invites applications from women of education for training in Engineering Work involving accuracy and a certain degree of skill. There are many openings in Aircraft and other Factories doing urgent Government work.

Applicants should be between the ages of 18 and 35,

not less than 5 feet 2 inches in height, and of good physique.

Maintenance grants are payable during training and railway fares allowed to those living at a distance. Lists of suitable lodgings are available.

The extent to which women have entered munitions work in Great Britain was brought out on the recent visit of the King and Queen to Scotland, when the Queen inspected munitions works and living quarters in the famous town of Coventry, the 140,000 inhabitants of which now include 40,000 girl and women workers.

Putting millions of men into the field, out of a population of 46,000,000, naturally meant a great diminution and derangement in the British labor supply. As early as December, 1914, the loss of male help in ten leading industries had been 12.6 per cent, and in most cases that figure has since been trebled or quadrupled. The ratio of unemployment among trade union members was 7.1 per cent in August, 1914, and for many months recently has been practically zero. From the British mines, despite some recalling from the trenches, over 170,000 recruits have been taken.

The same process of substitution of female for male labor has naturally been even more marked in Germany, where in several major industries the proportion of total work done by women has risen from slightly under 18 per cent in 1914 to practically 60 per cent in 1917. In the past three years the number of women employed in the German metal trade has increased 325

per cent. France also now depends largely upon her women in the factories as well as on the farms.

How hard many British enterprises have been hit by the war service is interestingly indicated in a very recent issue of the London Economist wherein there happened to be printed in succession three financial reports each stating incidentally their losses in working staff. Dorman, Long & Co., steel and coal, report that 8825 of their men joined the colors, of whom 264 were killed and considerably more were wounded; Spillers & Bakers, Ltd., millers, report that 1158 of their men went to the war, of whom 51 had been killed and 90 wounded; and the British Thomson-Houston Co. reports 1309 enlisted, 152 killed and 138 wounded. On the British railways the number of female workers has increased during war time from 11,000 to nearly 60,000.

Practically universal tribute has been paid in Great Britain to both the spirit and the capacity of the women workers in war time, their zeal and their deftness in a host of crafts being a subject of general comment. Dr. Wm. Garnett writes in "After-War Problems": "We have trained women to become skilled at mechanical trades which no woman had touched before, and an intensive system of training has revealed that we have tapped an almost limitless amount of emergency labor capable of doing what had hitherto been a trade mystery." Very recently Mrs. Lloyd George remarked: "Women are now doing highly skilled work. When I was in Dundee the other day I