

The Common Cause OF HUMANITY.

The Organ of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

LAW-ABIDING.] *Societies and Branches in the Union* 561. [NON-PARTY.]

VOL. VII., No. 362.]

FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 1916.

[PRICE 1d.
Registered as a Newspaper.]

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The Music of Munitions.

By FLORA ANNIE STEEL.

It was on Tetterstone Cairn, the highest peak in the Midlands, 1,735 feet above the level of the sea, that, close on two years ago, I found this inscription on the topmost stone:—

“DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES.”

It seemed a joke then; yet, even before the war began I had changed the legend to—

“RULE, BRITANNIA.”

I remember it so well because, in the excess of my patriotism, I spelt Britannia with two t's and had to amend it!

And to-day I stand on Clee once more, looking out over the fairest view in the fairest land of the world. Sixteen counties, they say, lie spread out—north, south, east, and west—and one can well believe it; wherever the eye rests, the vista seems endless; touching the sky, reaching beyond it. January though it be, a lark was singing to-day; fit music for a place where—if anywhere—the ear should catch an echo of the music of the spheres. But a sterner sound filled mine—the music of munitions; for I had just come from a huge factory. I knew that yonder in the blue mist lay Birmingham, over there beyond the shining streak of a river, Gloucester; briefly, that on every side munition factories were springing up like mushrooms, that all the fair, peaceful land would soon be dedicated to the War God.

Verily, there seemed no room for the song of a skylark in the England of to-day; it seemed a whirr with the soft hum of the lathes, alive with the keen clank of metal upon metal. Yet what strikes one most in a munition factory, as one looks down the long length of lathes, is the silence of it all, considering the work that is being done; the silence of it, the absence of bustle, almost of movement. There is a constant burr, of course. Overhead, of course, the endless bands are circling incessantly; but the noise is so even, so continuous, as not to

attract attention, the bands are almost out of the field of vision, while the downward motion of each separate machine is almost too swift to catch the eye, and the steel shavings come up softly, soundlessly, like cheese, from the cutting tools. And the girls and boys, men and women, tending these machines, do not speak. In some factories the rule is so strict that one warning only is given if a girl is seen speaking to a man. A repetition of the offence means instant dismissal—to the girl, of course; such is the way of this man-governed world.

And, of a truth, the women workers, in their neat khaki overalls and caps, were more attractive than the menkind in sodden, oil-stained shirts; so much, at least, could be said for these new importations to the engineering trade. But the managers said more. The women, I was told frankly, unmistakably did their job better than the men. They were more trustworthy, more industrious, and quite as, if not more, intelligent. This was good hearing, even though it was qualified by the reservation—at “unskilled labour.” And, admittedly, no skill beyond what might be acquired in a week or ten days is necessary for the due tending of these automatic machines. The lifting of a crank, the turning of a tap, the due tightening of a chuck, is all that is necessary. And even in the ordinary tuning up and setting and re-setting of the twelve machines which, as a rule, are under one supervisor, the work appears to require intelligence, more than mechanical skill. Anyone of ability could learn it in a very short time. It is here, indeed, that the dilution of skilled labour with unskilled would follow the line of least resistance. The supervisors might well be women. But in the factory, as elsewhere, what is needed is general readjustment. As I write, two stalwart men of fifty are sweeping up stray



OXY-ACETYLENE WELDERS.

leaves and paring ditches on the road outside my gate. But the road could do without them, and they are both farm labourers by birth. So it is everywhere, though hordes on hordes

of women are waiting (without shame) to take the lowest place. The factory I was privileged to see held before the war a proportion of 90 per cent. skilled to 10 per cent. unskilled labour. It now has 10 per cent. skilled to 90 per cent. unskilled.

A marvellous change, and yet out of a total of 4,000 workers under 400 were women. This does not mean, of course, that the starved trade was holding back men from the fighting line, but it does mean that many men in the time of stress are doing jobs which the totally unskilled woman could do as well; and that is emphatically waste of tissue, for the man's greater strength is needed elsewhere. The curse of this last eighteen months of war has been the putting of square pegs into round holes, the round ones into square holes. It is time it ended. It is time that British men appraised their own powers, and placed them to the very uttermost at the services of the nation; leaving work that is beneath them to the unskilled women. They will not shrink from the task. Reorganisation may be necessary. To begin with, better work is got out of women who are supervised by women, than from those who are supervised by men; and this will necessitate more acumen of choice than has hitherto been displayed. Then, with such a wide field for such choice as presents itself amongst British women, the long hours of labour, which are an undoubted hindrance to the employment of females, could be changed. More frequent shifts would dislocate work slightly, but they would bring their compensations.

"Live and let live" must be the password between the man and the woman. The time is past when the former can afford to strike work because the latter is employed; when machines stood idle for long weeks because no millwright would set up the pulleys and the wheels a woman's hand would drive. How puerile, how futile that seems now in the fierce searchlights of war!

Yet still in many a factory, many a workshop, great, gaunt giant machines stand idle; grim and ghostly they look, devoid of any sign of life in spindle or gear. Veritable corpses, they, of power, done to death by man's insensate decree. For, why do they stand idle? Because men say there is not sufficient skill amongst them to set them going. Oh, rouse ye, rouse ye, mechanics who have spent your lives in factories, who have spent long years in doing kindred jobs. There is enough skill, and to spare, amongst you if you will only forget the names by which you were called in peace time, if you will only set aside for this war-time the insensate jealousy of other folks, works, and ways. Move one step upwards, or outwards—for even an unskilled man is of more use on farm or field than an unskilled woman—and leave the latter to handle the jig in an automatic machine. We are, at any rate, capable of that; for a time we are surely capable of that! So from all the sixteen counties to be seen from Cleve, aye! and from all the land beyond the Black Country and the Midlands, will come the music of a nation working its hardest for the freedom of the world.

Week-end Relief Work.

FROM A CORRESPONDENT.

If men are going to the front, women are coming to the front in hundreds of unexpected ways, and are proving, both by their ability and by their adaptability, an equal spirit of patriotism under unaccustomed conditions of work and environment, so filling up the breaches in our industrial ranks. In no department has this new spirit shown itself to greater advantage than in munition work as now undertaken by women of all classes. The book of photographs recently published by the Ministry of Munitions shows at a glance some of the varied operations women are successfully carrying out in the engineering shops of the country.

New conditions give rise to new problems. The inexperience and lack of organisation of these new women workers have put into the hands of the armament makers malleable material which they are not slow in moulding to their own advantage. Only now, as the air clears after the first mad rush of excitement which followed the amazing announcement that our armies were short of ammunition, are we beginning to see the results of a movement unique in our industrial history. An experience of many months has proved how disastrous are the effects upon the health of women munition workers of standing for long hours, lifting heavy weights, and manipulating machines requiring continuous concentration of attention over too pro-

tracted periods in a vitiated atmosphere. Grave deficiencies in such matters as housing accommodation, travelling facilities, and rates of wages, as well as in the proper regulation of the hours of work, reveal a want of organisation which is, however, gradually being made good by the adoption of a few simple and obvious measures. That women should be compelled, as is the general practice, to work 10½ hours, exclusive of meal-hours and without counting overtime, for seven days (or seven nights) is false national economy, seriously impairing efficiency and tending to racial suicide. These difficulties were anticipated as far back as May last, when, in a letter to the Press, Mrs. W. H. Cowan outlined a scheme which, while guarding against ousting the working-woman or interfering with her wage-earning opportunities, met the difficulty of protecting her against excessive overwork while maintaining the output of shells up to the required standard essential to victory. Such a novel idea was more easily conceived of than carried out. But after much perseverance the initial difficulties were overcome and a start made on July 19th, 1915, when, for the first time in the history of the industrial life of England, between twenty and thirty English ladies took up service for their country amidst the novel surroundings of a shell factory at Erith.

Arrangements had been made with Messrs. Vickers to train a body of educated women in munition work, who, when efficient, were to take up on Saturdays and Sundays the work laid down by the ordinary wage-earners, so enabling them to take the rest necessary to keep their efficiency unimpaired. The training period for the volunteer week-end workers was three weeks, after which they were considered, and have proved themselves, to be efficient and capable of carrying out their contract. As a first step towards the realisation of their scheme, Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Moir took a large house at Erith and furnished it as a hostel, with accommodation for about thirty workers. For this purpose a small private company, "The Women Munition Workers, Ltd.," was formed, and was described, in the *Financial Times*, as "unique in the annals of company promoting": Mrs. Moir (chairman) and Mrs. Cowan acting as managing directors. As soon as it became known that ladies desiring to undertake National War Service as shell workers with a view to obtaining employment in a factory as week-end relief workers could commence at once, thousands of applications poured into Lesney House, the registered office of the company. The scheme is now working successfully, not only at Erith but also in Glasgow, Newcastle, and Paisley. The issue of a special badge (a ring of white enamel encircling two shells, and the letters W.R.M.W. in blue enamel) has been sanctioned by the Minister of Munitions for the Lesney House Women Relief Munition Workers.

In a recent communication sent out to "all controlled establishments," Mr. Lloyd George recommended that Sunday labour should cease, it being stated that the Minister desired to bring to the notice of such firms the "possibilities of using voluntary week-end labour, which in certain areas has proved a successful expedient." This is obviously a reference to Mrs. Cowan's scheme, of which the Minister of Munitions was fully informed from its inception. After this recommendation regarding Sunday labour was issued, and to remove any possible misapprehension as to its intention, a question was asked (on March 2nd) in the House of Commons in the following terms: "Whether, in order to ensure that the production of shells and other munitions of war in adequate quantity may not be endangered by the necessity, particularly in the case of women, of allowing one day's rest in seven, he will recommend the employment of week-end relief workers in controlled and other munition factories, and take steps to provide further facilities for the training of additional workers of this class." Mr. Lloyd George's reply was practically an avowal of the adoption of the Lesney House scheme by his Department. It ran: "I am entirely in agreement with my hon. friend, and a special branch of the Labour Supply Department has been formed at the Ministry of Munitions to encourage the use and organise the supply of special shifts of labour for week-end work. This is done in order to give a necessary day of rest to regular workers, and at the same time to secure the minimum diminution of output. The head of this branch is now visiting various munition areas with a view to furthering the policy."

It is gratifying to observe that the Ministry of Munitions has appropriated the policy of these women pioneers, which is but another testimony to the patriotic services they are rendering to the country. Under these circumstances, it might have been expected that, when selecting the peripatetic "head" of the new branch, Mr. Lloyd George would have chosen someone—preferably a woman—whose practical experience would have been a guarantee for the sympathetic handling of problems

which must present many difficulties to the uninitiated. Indeed, it is not easy to discover any valid reason for the creation of a new organisation within the Ministry while an efficient machinery was already in successful operation and ready to place its experience freely at the disposal of the State. If the nation were not fighting for its very existence, it might be permissible to smile at this fresh manifestation of the jealous exclusiveness of a Department whose ways are truly past finding out.

Housing of Munition Workers.

WORK OF THE Y.W.C.A.

It has already been pointed out in *THE COMMON CAUSE* that there is a serious shortage of accommodation for munition workers in many districts. In some towns there is such overcrowding that the same bed is used by night for one person, and by day for another, so that the room is never properly aired. Yet the workers who can arrange to play "Box and Cox" in this fashion often think themselves lucky. Many others have to join night and morning in a scrimmage for "bus or tram, and take a long journey after waiting half an hour, perhaps, in the cold and rain, and getting their boots soaked through. Such conditions as these are bound to prove injurious to the health of women working on twelve-hour shifts, and in the organisation of hostels for women munition makers, the Y.W.C.A. are undertaking a most urgently needed piece of work.

In the course of a talk with Miss Picton-Turberville, Vice-Chairman of the Y.W.C.A. Executive Committee, I learnt that four or five hostels have been started already, and that others are shortly to be opened.

"Many people seem to think," said Miss Picton-Turberville, "that women munition workers are all being well paid, and can afford to pay a good price for board and lodging, so that there is no need to help them. This is far from being the case. My impression is that the average is from 15s. to 20s., while I know that in some places girls are being paid as little as 9s. a week.

"Besides, even if they were all well paid, they could not obtain what is not there. In some places, there are literally no rooms to be had, and it has been necessary to put up wooden huts for the accommodation of workers.

"We have a model colony at —, a new village of wooden houses erected by a munition firm for its women employees, and accommodating some 700. The firm has put the entire management of the place into our hands, and we have some of our best workers in charge. There is a public hall, club, chapel, hospital, restaurant, and everything is done for the girls' comfort and welfare."

In answer to inquiries about the cost of lodging in the colony, I learnt that the charge is 14s. a week, inclusive, with a deduction of 2s. 6d. if the week-end is not spent in the colony. For this each girl has a cosy little cubicle, very fresh and airy, and complete board, which includes three substantial meals a day, a supply of food neatly done up in little bowls and packets being given out as the girls start for work.

Standing by itself in the grounds is a large, airy recreation-room, with sitting and writing rooms attached, containing comfortable lounge chairs for the girls to rest in. Facilities for rest are absolutely necessary for a girl who is working long hours in a factory if she is to keep in good health, and Miss Picton-Turberville told me that, wherever possible, the Y.W.C.A. establishes a rest room in connection with the canteens they are running. Where a separate room cannot be obtained, deck chairs are placed at one end of the dining-room. Out of the dinner hour, only about twenty minutes are usually spent in eating, and it makes a great difference to the workers if they can spend the remaining forty minutes in a quiet, airy rest-room instead of in the stifling atmosphere of a canteen in which some hundreds of people have had a meal.

Another feature of the village is the little hospital, with one room set aside as a dispensary. With the constant handling of explosive materials, accidents are bound to happen sometimes, even when the greatest possible care is exercised.

This model "colony" has proved such a success that the Government has just put another large area into the charge of the Y.W.C.A., and in the course of the next few months it

should be possible to open many more hostels for munitions if only funds permit. The Association is making an urgent appeal for donations, and every penny of the fund which is now being raised will be used for the benefit of women workers.* It is not only—by the way—for women munition workers that accommodation is lacking. Thousands of women have come up to London and into other cities, to take up men's work in various capacities, and there is an increasing need for hostels where good board and lodging can be obtained at a moderate price. Several hostels have already been opened by the Y.W.C.A. for clerical and other workers. At Bedford House (formerly Bedford College), for example, accommodation has been arranged for eighty or ninety women, and there is a long waiting list, which shows how much such hostels are appreciated.

Women and Machines.

Until now it has always been popularly believed that there was something in the nature of a woman that prevented her from liking or understanding, or even wishing to like or understand a machine of any sort (except a sewing-machine), and the amazing aptitude of women for mechanical work has been one of the facts brought to light since the war. The public, indeed, are now ready to fall into the other extreme, and to believe that a woman without training or teaching can perform in half the time (and at half the wages) all the work of skilled engineers.

The fact is, of course, that some women have mechanical gifts and others have not, and that the greater part of the munitions work upon which women have been so successfully employed requires no more than energy, industry, quick fingers, and goodwill.

It is, however, true that there are now real openings for engineering work for women, and these openings grow more numerous every day. If the women who love machines can seize the chances they now have, they can be trained in a great many fascinating processes, and can put themselves in the position of commanding the work and the wages of really skilled men.

Instead, therefore, of rushing blindly into munition work or supervising, which seems at first sight the obvious thing for any young woman who feels interested in machinery to do, it is now much wiser to look for mechanical training, and to consider the possibilities of instrument making, or optics, or motoring or farm machinery. By foresight and preparation now we may bring about, even in the world of machinery, a state of justice, and women as well as men in the future may be free to learn what they can, even if it is engineering, and to do what work they are fitted to do, even if it is a skilled trade. The ordinary munition work which is being taken up by so many thousands of women is, after all, a purely temporary and "blind-alley" trade, and the unemployment that will face these women after the war is a terribly serious problem. The complexity of it is greatly increased by the fact that the great majority of the women now engaged in munition factories have gone there from other trades, to which they will be unwilling and unable to return.

The reason for this present dislocation is, of course, to be found in the rates of wages, the standard in munition factories being, on the whole, distinctly higher than elsewhere. But this will not help to solve the problem when these factories close, for the girls who left poorly-paid trades to enter them are dependent upon their earnings, and can hardly be expected to save very largely on £1 a week.

There is, of course, another reason why women of all sorts enter munition factories at the present time, and that is their burning desire to "do their bit." It is this desire, rather than innate excellence, that makes them do such good work; and it is, of course, exactly the same spirit as makes men wish to enlist in the Army.

There are other things for a skilled man to do besides fighting, and there are other things, too, for the woman capable of being skilled besides ordinary munition work. It is no economy to use a good instrument upon bad work, and, for the mechanically-minded girl, munition work, in its ordinary form, is not now the best available good opening.

RAY STRACHEY.

* See page 653.

Separation Allowances.

AN EXPERIMENT IN THE STATE ENDOWMENT OF MATERNITY.—II.

In my former article* I pointed out that the system of Separation Allowances possessed the two main characteristics that we should expect to find in a State system of endowment of maternity, *viz.*, that it is a payment to married women in respect of their functions as wives and mothers, and that it is proportioned in amount to the number of their children. I tried to show that the system was beneficial to the race, since it removed the inducement to an artificial limitation in the size of families and made it possible for younger children in working-class homes to be as well fed and cared for as their elder brothers and sisters.

Still more marked is the effect of the system upon the health and happiness and upon the status of the wife and mother. The civilian workman's wife, unless she works for wages, is abjectly dependent upon the goodwill of her husband for every penny that she spends upon her household and upon herself. Theoretically, a man is legally obliged to maintain his wife and children, but the law as it stands fails egregiously to enforce this obligation in all save the most extreme instances of neglect, and frequently even in those. The proportion of his wages which a man gives his wife for her housekeeping depends upon his pleasure, but it is influenced to some extent by customs, which vary largely in different districts and different trades, the lowest levels being usually found in occupations where earnings are irregular, even where they are high on the average. I have known of colliery districts where earnings fluctuate from £2 to £4, but where a man is considered a good average husband if he allows his wife 18s. a week, and keeps the whole of the rest for himself. Among dock labourers £1 for housekeeping money seems often to be considered the right thing to aim at, though the actual earnings may vary from 10s. to £4. (Even in these professions, of course, a husband who is "one of the best" habitually empties his pockets at the week-end into his wife's lap and meekly accepts from her whatever she thinks fit to allow him. But such husbands are painfully rare.) Among seamen a really appalling proportion of men leave their wives nothing except what is left of a month's advance of pay after a big hole has been made in it for clothing, "donkey's breakfast," and other necessities; and her chance of redeeming her pawn-tickets and debts to the moneylender depends upon whether she or the various harpies that haunt the dock side succeed in getting the first call upon her husband's pay when he returns.

I have often wished that the numerous men who seem to think that the sanctity of the marriage tie would be broken down if wives were no longer economically dependent on their husbands could know a little of the real feelings of many of these dependent wives—the depth of inarticulate bitterness, which only finds broken utterance when they are talking "as woman to woman." Readers of the invaluable book "Maternity," issued by the Women's Co-operative Guild, have realised, many of them for the first time, the price that is paid for motherhood, even by happily married women, when the means of subsistence are insufficient. The wife of the really neglectful or cruel husband is sunk too deep in a sea of physical misery and moral humiliation for her cry to reach the outer world. One knows her, literally, "by her fruits," by the stunted, degenerate, often tainted children that she brings into the world.

The difference which the Separation Allowance system has made to many of these women, the sense of security, of ease, of dignity that they are tasting for the first time in their lives, is one of the very few good things that the ill-wind of the war has brought. But even this has, of course, its painful side. It is not pleasant to reflect how many prototypes there are of the two women in *Punch's* cartoon who "didn't suppose the war would last long. It was too good to last." Also, the worst sort of husband has a knack of getting himself discharged as "not likely to become an efficient soldier," and is back on his wife's hands just as she is beginning to get accustomed to the bliss of being without him. But it is not by any means only unhappily married women who are appreciating keenly the advantages of a regular allowance, proportioned to the number of their children and paid directly to themselves. Even a good husband may be "out of work," and, when in work, can be guilty of the kind of selfishness or tyranny which comes from want of imagination and not from want of affection. It will be interesting to see how these women will take it when the war is over and they are asked to go back to their old status

* THE COMMON CAUSE, February 25th.

of dependency. I confess to hoping that the seeds of "divine discontent" will have been implanted in them too deeply to be eradicated, and that we feminists will then find our opportunity.

The economic soundness of the State endowment of maternity has always appealed to me, even more strongly, if possible, than its humanitarian and eugenic advantages, and it is certainly the most neglected aspect of the matter. Many people do not seem even to have grasped the elementary truth that the work of bearing and rearing the rising generation is the occupation of all occupations that is most absolutely essential to the existence of the State. If it were not performed the race would die out, and upon the skill with which it is performed depends, perhaps more than upon any other single factor, the quantity and the quality of the citizens who comprise the State. The women who are engaged in this occupation have to be maintained, and so have their children until they are of an age to keep themselves. The money that this costs has to come from somewhere. In peace time, under those conditions which we describe as normal because we have grown used to them, the money comes out of the earnings of the male parent, if he chooses so to spend it. If he does not so choose, wife and children are kept in existence somehow, by charity or by friends and relations, or, most commonly, by the earnings of some subsidiary occupation which the woman has been obliged to adopt to the neglect of her proper business. Yet the earnings which the man is allowed then to divert from their proper use are really given him, though probably neither his employer nor himself are conscious of it, partly in respect of the needs of his wife and family. It is because the great majority of men wage-earners either have, or look forward to having, a wife and children to support that the cost of doing this has become included in the standard of life or standard of expectation, which has so large a share in determining wages, even in unorganised trades. It is chiefly, though not solely, because the majority of women have not this expectation that their wages are so much lower, even in occupations where they do the same or equivalent work. Indirectly and sub-consciously, by the blind working of economic forces, the community pays, through the wages of male workers, for the cost of its own renewal. It is a clumsy method, and it has many unfortunate results, which can only be very briefly summarised here.

First, it bears cruelly hard on the wives and children of those men who, regarding their earnings as their own, as indeed the law and society encourage them to do, refuse to recognise this claim of their families to a share.

Secondly, it bears equally hard on widows and their children. Here the "normal" source of maintenance has dried up, and, in the case of civilians, the State has hitherto refused to recognise their claim or to supply their needs, except through the detested channel of a Poor Law designed especially to be "deterrent." Their unhappy lot is thrown into blacker relief by the very different treatment meted out to the widows and dependants of soldiers. It is difficult to understand the attitude of those Labour members and trade union leaders who were so clamorous recently in asserting the right of "the widows of our dead heroes" to a minimum pension of at least £1 a week, but who, during all the years that are past, have never made an effort worth the name to secure for the widows of their own fellow-workmen anything better than the bitter bread of pauperism.

Thirdly, the different standards on which the wages of men and women-workers are based is the chief reason of the clashing of their interests in the industrial world, which has hitherto led to the exclusion of women from nearly all the more skilled and more highly-paid occupations. Men workers have justly dreaded the competition of women-workers, who—not being expected to have families to keep, and being, in addition, unorganised—could be forced to accept wages based on the minimum subsistence of an individual. Aided by the traditional conservatism of British employers, they have, till lately, been amazingly successful in keeping women out. Now that the emergency of the war has broken down the barriers and dispelled the comfortable tradition of feminine incapacity, intelligent observers of industrial matters are wondering anxiously what will happen when the war is over and the market is flooded with discharged men. It seems not unlikely that we may have a clashing of interests between the sexes such as we have never seen before.

Certainly this will not be averted by merely preach-

ing to women and to employers the doctrine of equal wages for equal work. It is true that if female labour were no longer scab labour the competition between the sexes would lose most of its bitterness. But this consummation seems unlikely ever to be attained so long as the plea that "men have families to keep" remains not merely as an excuse but as a real justification for the lower pay of women. Place directly upon the State the burden of meeting the prime cost of rearing fresh generations and healthy natural competition between the sexes in the industrial sphere will become for the first time possible; since the remuneration of their labour will tend to depend more on its quantity and quality and upon the strength of their organisation, and less upon the presence or absence of hypothetical family responsibilities. Probably the process will never become quite complete, since most men will not be satisfied with the rate of subsistence for their wives and children provided by the State, and this fact is bound (it seems to me) to exercise an upward pull upon the wages as compared with those of women.

It would be outside the scope of the present article to discuss the great and exceedingly difficult question of what should be the basis, the scale, and the machinery of a permanent State endowment of maternity. Doubtless it would have to be a much more carefully-thought-out, and probably a more complicated, affair than the system of Separation Allowances. But I hope I have said enough to show that that temporary system, called into existence by the emergency of the war, is worth careful study as an object lesson in some, though not in all, of the probable advantages of a permanent State system, whereby a payment would be made directly to married women in respect of their functions as mothers and contingent upon the proper performance of those functions. There is a general expectation that the period that follows the war will be one of social reconstruction. If women resolve that such a change as I have foreshadowed is desirable, it is essential that the married women, whom it most concerns, should be admitted to the franchise, so that they may have a voice in determining their own future economic status in the nation.

ELEANOR F. RATHBONE.

[As I have in these articles touched upon many controversial issues, which it has been impossible to deal with fully, perhaps I may be permitted to refer readers who are interested in these questions to three pamphlets bearing on some of the issues touched on which are published by the Liverpool Women's Industrial Council and can be obtained from its office at 18, Colquitt-street, Liverpool, price 2d. each: *The Problem of Women's Wages, The Condition of Widows Under the Poor Law, and The Position of Seamen's Wives.*]

"Common Cause" Scholarships for Commercial Chemistry.

"Whatever the actual nature of the research work may be, the nation ought to have the best brains of the country applied to its service," is the conclusion of the writer of an article in the *Times Educational Supplement*, of March 7th, on "Chemistry in British Universities." "That is," he explains, "the profession of chemical research ought to be made to possess a reasonable amount of attractiveness for young men."

To the most brilliant of these some inducement should be held out . . . to pursue their work beyond the usual time limit . . . by the foundation of studentships in chemical research." As it is, only a very small fraction of the Government's grant in aid of technological and professional work is given to chemistry, though the special national significance of chemical knowledge and training is by this time widely acknowledged. Nor is it certain how far any of this fraction is available for scholarships open to women, yet the work of women in chemistry will be more than ever needed in the future; and not only in such subordinate posts as dispensing druggists, laboratory assistants, and assistant analysts, which have been open to them in the past, but in the wider fields of research, and in commercial and industrial chemistry.

The Two COMMON CAUSE Scholarships, for which we are hoping to raise the total sum of £100, to enable two women science students to take a year's course of specialised study, represent, we believe, the first attempt to prepare for this coming need. We are therefore appealing to our readers to further a piece of pioneer work for women.

With great pleasure we acknowledge the following sums sent during the week for the fund. Three friends have come forward in response to the offer of £2, if four will give the same amount. Who will be the fourth?

DONATIONS.		£ s. d.	
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TECHNICAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN.

MADAM.—The appeal recently made by the London Society for funds in order to give women technical instruction in such subjects as watch and clock-making, and optical and scientific instrument making, gives much food for thought. For the fact that such an appeal is necessary itself shows that our technical institutes throughout the country, maintained for many years out of public funds, have produced unsatisfactory results, as far as women are concerned. There are those who would even pronounce them costly failures from the woman's point of view.

If we inquire why such instruction as that now asked for has not long ago been given to women students, as well as to the men attending the usual institutes, we are met with the reply that women are not in these trades. It is obviously impossible for them to enter these trades while the necessary technical training is denied them! We hear with admiration of the success of the experiment in training women as oxy-acetylene welders. But why was this training not obtainable at those public technical institutes to the upkeep of which women as well as men are forced to contribute?

The truth is that women's technical education has not kept pace with the growth of women's secondary education. The latter has, in the great majority of cases, been housed in its own buildings, each school being directed by a woman head chosen for her special fitness for the post. Women's technical classes, on the other hand, have almost universally found a humble home in men's technical institutes, under the direction of a male head, to whom they are of very secondary importance, and who owes his appointment to qualifications which do not include expert knowledge of women students and their requirements, or of women's industries. Woman has been accorded a training in the domestic arts; that is, she has been taught how to eke out an income rather than how to earn one.

Surely it is time to take the whole question more seriously. We are only now discovering what the country has lost by this chronic injustice to women and their needs. Let us henceforth have institutes planned for the technical training of women in all the subjects which their industries demand; let women, moreover, take a far more prominent part than heretofore in the direction and management of the work in these institutes. Then only will the nation draw upon its full resources.

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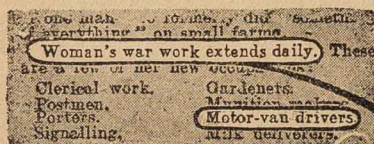
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ALL BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS to be addressed to The Manager, THE COMMON CAUSE, 14, Great Smith St., Westminster, S.W., and all ADVERTISEMENTS must reach the Office not later than first post on Wednesday. Advertisement representative, S. R. Le Mare.

The N.U.W.S.S. is an association of over 52,000 men and women who have banded themselves together, under the leadership of Mrs. Henry Fawcett, for the purpose of obtaining the Parliamentary vote for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men. At this great national crisis, however, they have for the time suspended their ordinary political activities, in order to put themselves and their Union at the service of those who are organising the relief of distress caused by the war.

Women in Munition Work.

By SUSAN LAWRENCE.

We have heard a great deal about women in munition work. Probably there is no subject on which such a flood of talk has been poured out; and, curiously enough, no topic on which the talk has been so unanimous. Women are wanted, women are necessary, women are all-important. No one denies this, and no one denies the further proposition that women who do Government work must do so under fair conditions and reasonable wages; and that if they do a man's work they must receive a man's wage. It is the object of this article to see how far those indispensable conditions are being carried out.

The situation has changed since Christmas. Up to that time it would have been true to say that, in despite of everyone's good intentions, nothing very much had been done in practice. Since then, however, action has been taken by the Government—action of an effective and resolute kind as far as one class of women is concerned, and action which holds out great promises of good to a second class. I refer, of course, to the Munitions Amendment Act, and to the orders recently issued under that Act.

Two classes of workers are concerned, each with a different status and different privileges—munition workers, generally, and munition workers who need clearance cards.

The term "munitions of war" has been extended by the new Act. "Munitions" now mean not merely guns or ships, but "any article required for use in war." It would seem, therefore, to cover boots and tents, tinned food, biscuits, shirts, and uniforms—all the thousand-and-one miscellaneous articles which an army may need. All these workers come under the rules with regard to the prohibition of strikes and lock-outs, and the reference of disputes to arbitration. The Minister of Munitions has now power to fix wages for munition workers generally. The War Office has certain powers, under the Fair Wages Clause in its contracts, but these powers have not proved sufficient in practice to protect the badly-paid worker, for whom no reasonable standard of wages exists.

The Minister of Munitions has power, however, over a limited class of munition workers. Section 7 of the Munitions Act gives the Minister power to make orders restricting the liberty of labour in any class of work that he may think fit. Workers who come under this order are not free to leave their employers. If they leave without providing themselves with a clearance card no other employer may give them work for a period of six weeks. If the employer is unreasonable they may appeal to the Munitions Court, but if both the employer and the Munitions Court are obdurate the worker has no choice. She must either remain in her old situation, however distasteful it may be, or face a period of six weeks' unemployment. The trades which come under these rules are the following: engineering, shipbuilding, the production of arms, ammunition, and explosives, and of the "substances required for the manufacture thereof." From the wages point of view, these trades include a most miscellaneous mass of labour. Some of them—such as shell making—include the trades where some women are earning good wages. Others—such as powder work, a great part of cartridge work, and certain parts of fuses—include work which has habitually been performed by very poorly-paid women's labour in the past. The Women's Trade Union League, as long ago as 1907, attempted to include powder work and cartridge

work among the list of sweated trades for which a minimum wage might be prescribed by law; and even now wages in force in these occupations are deplorably low. A few weeks ago a cartridge worker for one of the greatest London firms was able to show, at the Central Munition Court, that her wages were on an average only about 13s. per week. For such classes of women the order under the Munitions Act has meant that they have been prevented from bargaining for a reasonable wage.

The Munitions Amendment Act gives the Minister power to fix wages for every woman to whom Section 7 applies; that is, for every woman for whom a clearance card is necessary.

One order so far has been issued with regard to the wages for women engaged on men's work. The general effect of this order is to prescribe equality of remuneration, except in the not unimportant case where payment depends only on the length of time worked. Very heavy penalties are attached to a violation of this order. With regard to the other classes of workers nothing has yet been done. A special tribunal, however, has been set up, which has, among its other duties, that of advising the Minister on such matters.

It will be seen, therefore, that there is every hope of an advance in the direction of securing a reasonable living wage for women. The Ministry has the power; it has set up the necessary machinery. A very little "push and go" will accomplish this task. Will that push be given?

More About Girls' Work On Khaki.

The present position of women in the tailoring trade is not so favourable as it was when the first Government contracts were given out by the Contracts Department. Soon after war was declared, when it became apparent that our Army would have to be enormously increased and that millions of uniforms would be required, the Government decided, after consultation with the employers' associations, to pay the employers a uniform rate of pay, thus removing competition between employers in tendering for contracts. This was the wisest thing the Government could do, and created between employers a healthy competition for workers, as employers who paid fair rates secured hands, and the position of the workers in the clothing industry was in a more favourable state than it had been for a long period. In the present contracts, however, the Government has withdrawn the flat-rate and allowed employers to compete with each other in tendering for contracts, with the evil result that unscrupulous employers have cut prices too low to allow for a fair rate of pay to the worker. And it should be noted that reductions of wages are always drawn from the women's section. They are the weakest, they are practically unorganised, they are mostly engaged on piece-work, and it is to the piece-worker that the employer turns to recuperate his profits. The men in the trade have their standard rate, and would take action if their standard rate was threatened. The women's wages are therefore cut down, and it is a fact that the women's wages have suffered a reduction of between 40 and 50 per cent. by the action of the Government in throwing open to competition the making of khaki uniforms.

One way out of the difficulty would have been to include the making of military uniforms under the Munitions Act. Mr. Lloyd George was asked to include this section of the trade under the Munitions Act by the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses, but although the Government admits boots for soldiers are munitions of war it declines to admit clothing; a piece of inconsistency on their part, as uniforms are quite as necessary as boots. The result is that the women are suffering a reduction of wage in the clothing trade, while the workers in the boot trade are receiving a 7 per cent. war bonus on their wages. I comment, in passing, on the fact that the boot trade has more men than women employed, and the reverse exists in the tailoring trade, where 90 per cent. are women, and voteless. Have the Government no regard for the women they employ? They have abolished the flat-rate; they refuse to include uniforms as munitions of war. Have they a basis for women's wages as they have for men's? Yes, with this difference: that a man's standard has been won by the aid of trade unions and political power with regard to his responsibilities and standard in life. But in a woman's case she has had a lower standard of life imposed upon her; she is unorganised because she has not been encouraged to take an intelligent interest in her trade or craft, and she lacks political power to enforce her claims. She is weak and, as yet, inarticulate. And because she has not been able to do much for herself the Government which, by refusing her enfranchisement, has kept her weak; has made for her a minimum wage, which is

agreed on all sides to be insufficient for a woman to live on, even in normal times.

The Trades Board Act, of 1909, promised a minimum wage to certain trades, of which the tailoring trade was one. But up to the present the highest rate fixed by the Boards is only 3½d. per hour for women workers. It was admitted that this rate was inadequate before the war, and how women can be expected to live on this rate on the present high war prices is a mystery. Yet it is a fact that the only condition imposed on employers in accepting contracts is that he shall pay the Trade Board rate.

The Government will not interfere if this is done. But it cannot be too often insisted upon that a minimum rate can and is, in the present case, a sweated rate.

The remedy is to urge the Government to agree that military uniforms are "munitions of war," and to pay a pound-a-week minimum for a forty-eight hours week, or to give a flat-rate of pay to employers as before, thus preventing cut-throat competition between employers for contracts, a policy which reacts so disastrously on the women.

The earnings of women employed on khaki show a large decrease on the present contracts, and, unless the Government can be induced to alter their decision, in all probability the undercutting will go on, and the next contracts will be lower still, and the girls will have to meet increased taxes on a lower rate of pay. One cannot close a discussion on the position of women in the clothing trade without mentioning a position which has arisen partly owing to the war. In our trade, as in other trades, the call to serve their country has been responded to by our men. Many have gone, others are ready to go when the time comes. This has necessitated, in some cases, the placing of women in the men's position. This has given rise to apprehension on the part of the men that women will be retained in their places when they return, and that women will be exploited by the employers in order to reduce the men's standard. So strong has been the feeling of the men in the cutting and pressing rooms—"sections which have been considered men's work"—that they have threatened to strike if guarantees are not given that the men will be reinstated and the women dismissed on the conclusion of the war. That the employment of women is a danger to be reckoned with we recognise, as women are easy prey for the exploiter. The men's standard rate is not by any means a generous one, and to lower wages would be a calamity we would all deplore. But to avoid this state of things I think the men are going on the wrong lines. The only effective way of dealing with women's so-called "intrusion" into "men's trades" is that men make common cause with women.

Men must recognise women as their equals; must admit them to their trades and unions. They must raise women's standard of life and must realise that so long as women are allowed to work for sweated wages in what is considered women's work, that there exists a large reserve army of cheap labour to be drawn upon when needed by the capitalist. Let men compare their own wages "inadequate, as they often are," with the wages paid to women, and remember that women often bear equal responsibilities with themselves, though they do not always receive the same pay, even when they do the same work. Women have proved their efficiency, but it required a European war to make their capabilities known. Let us hope that the lessons of this terrible time will not be forgotten; that the country will never again consent that the greatest part of its community should remain inactive and untrained; that women will be allowed to develop on the lines that are best suited to themselves, and will be allowed to train and compete for occupations for which the only test is efficiency. Above all, let us hope that they will soon be given a vote in the affairs of their own life and for the good of the country they have served so well. This is the only way to deal with the question of women's work.

A. HOLMES.

How to Obtain Training and Work.

The enormous, and still increasing, extension of the munition factories of this country, and the widespread, and still increasing, withdrawal of the men from industrial occupations has left a truly gigantic opening for women in munition work, of which they are not slow to avail themselves. Ever since the premature appeals that Mr. Lloyd George made last July to the women of Britain to come forward to help to supply the Army with arms, hundreds of thousands of women have been longing to take up this work, and although a great many thousands have succeeded in obtaining it, there remain as many thousand more only too eager to do the work and utterly unable to find out how to obtain it.

It may therefore be interesting to explain the usual conditions of the work and the methods of obtaining the labour:—

Women Police.

The crowded and influential meeting held at the Mansion House, with the Lord Mayor as president, is a sign of the times. The need of women police was admitted, and even urged, on all sides and from very different points of view.

At Royaumont.

Emile Cailion, Occupant of the "Netherton" Bed.

The young Parisian who has occupied the "Netherton" Bed since the week of the famous attack in Artois and Champagne last September is a general favourite at Royaumont, and has gradually become known to the entire staff, from the Médecin-chef to the chauffeurs, as "Sunny Jim."

He has beautiful manners, and a most engaging way of ignoring pain and inconvenience as though they were something utterly beneath his condescension. The courage of these town-bred youths is something even finer than the wonderful endurance of the peasants, because for them the miseries of war are added on to the unwonted misery of persistent exposure to the cold and wet—a thing that has become part of the daily life of the cultivateur.

Sunny Jim is a private of the 204th Infantry, and he went up to the front just a year ago. It was in the attack on La Lorette that he was wounded last September. In this part of the line the attack succeeded, but the losses were heavy. Cailion says all the section leaders of his company were killed, and so he, "being educated," rallied the different sections, and restored the proper "liaison" between them in the front line. It was then that he was wounded in the left arm. He did not lose consciousness, and his comrades rendered first aid. Two hours afterwards he was taken to the rear and evacuated to a hospital behind the lines.

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The Hon. Treasurer begs once more to thank all those who have helped and are helping to carry on the work, and will gratefully receive further donations.

LONDON UNITS OF THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITALS.

Miss Burke's tour in the United States to raise money for the N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospitals, is meeting with great success. She has been received, in a half-hour's audience, by President Wilson, who expressed great interest in the Hospital; and Mr. Carnegie has given £1,000 towards the London Unit.

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What Some of Our Societies are Doing.

Manchester and District Federation. This Federation has for some months been devoting a good deal of energy to collecting funds and equipment for a field hospital to work in Serbia under the Scottish Women's Hospitals; it is not necessary to explain why these efforts have been differently directed, it is enough to state that the Hospital for Serbian Refugees under Dr. Mary Blair at Ajaccio is now called the Manchester and District Federation Unit.

The same evening a lantern lecture was given by the Women's Liberal Association in the Conservative Club at Cheadle. Mrs. J. Watts was the chairman of a large and representative audience, who showed very real and practical appreciation by their applause and collection of £14 18s.

The tour ended with a lantern lecture at Higher Broughton, Manchester, on the evening of the 4th to a deeply interested audience, where a collection of over £3 15s. was taken and literature sold.

Oxford. Our Society forbore its usual annual meeting last term from motives of economy. This term the members' meeting, necessary on account of the Council meeting, was held on Monday, February 14th, Miss Burrows, Principal of St. Hilda's Hall, in the chair.

Surrey, Sussex, and Hants Federation. CROYDON.—On February 23rd Miss Susan Lawrence addressed a conference in the Pembroke Hall in place of Miss Bondfield, who was prevented from coming. The subject was "How to Prevent Industrial Rivalry Between Men and Women After the War."

Lowestoft. At the annual meeting, February 25th, Mrs. Corbett Ashby gave a very interesting lecture on "Suffrage Service in 1915-1916."

Leeds. The annual meeting was held on March 25th at 35, Park-square, and was presided over by Rev. F. S. K. Cregson. There was a good attendance. After the business meeting Mrs. Strachey gave an interesting address on Women and War Work and the connection of the new work women were doing with the franchise.

Forthcoming Meetings.

- MARCH 17. Coventry—Scottish Women's Hospitals—Lecture—Dr. Mary Phillips 3.0. Norwich—School of Music, Annual Meeting—Chair, Mrs. J. Stuart—Speakers, Dr. Alice Hutchison, on the work of the Scottish Women's Hospitals, and Mrs. Corbett Ashby.

Working Parties. Birkenhead—Theosophical Society's Rooms, 48A, Hamilton Street—Working Party for the N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospitals.

Blackheath and Greenwich Sewing Party for Scottish Women's Hospital—at 8, Shooter's Hill Road—Hostess, Mrs. Monk Every Tuesday, 2.0-6.0.

Bridlington—Sewing Party for the N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospitals Every Wednesday, 3.0-6.0.

Croydon—Working Party Every Monday for Serbian Unit, at Walden, Stanhope Road. This address is the depot for the Surrey, Sussex, and Hants Federation, where all work and appliances can be sent.

Highgate—At 25, West Hill—Hostess, Mrs. Garnett—Members and friends cordially invited every 3rd Friday 3.0-5.0.

Redhill—At Miss Woodward's, 10, Fenngate Road—Sewing Party Every Wednesday, 2.15.

South Kensington—Belgian Hostel, 1, Argyll Road—Working Party for London Units of the N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospitals Every Tuesday and Friday, 2 to 4.30.

Warwick and Leamington—35, Warwick Street, Leamington—Working Party to make Sand Bags Every Tuesday and Friday, 2.30.

Under the auspices of the Women Writers' League, Mrs. Fawcett will speak on "The Status of Women after the War," in the Caxton Hall, on March 28th, at 3.0 p.m. Admission will be free, but a few seats are reserved at 1s., and tea can be had at 1s.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FRANCHISE CLUB, 19, Grafton-st., Piccadilly, W.—Lecture, March 22nd, at 8 p.m., "Shakespeare as a National Hero," by Sir Sidney Lee.

MISS A. MAUDE ROYDEN WILL GIVE AN ADDRESS ON

"THE FUTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION," AT

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(Continued on page 656.)

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Continued from page 655.]

THE WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL PARTY.—Thursday, March 23rd, 3 p.m., at Sunderland House, Curzon-street, W. MONSIEUR EMILE CAMMAERTS will lecture (in English) on "The Belgian Temperament." Chair, Mr. Edmund Gosse, C.B., LL.D. Tickets, 10s., 5s., and 2s. 6d., from the Duchess of Marlborough, Sunderland House, Mayfair, or from Mrs. G. F. Abbott, 7, Evelyn House, 62, Oxford-st., W. Half proceeds to the Belgian Red Cross.

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