

THE WAR AND EMPLOYMENT¹

IMMEDIATELY before the declaration of war employment was good in the industries of the United Kingdom taken as a whole. The depression of 1908-9 had given place to good trade in 1911-12, and to such industrial prosperity in 1913 that till October of that year unemployment had been less than in any years for which comparable records exist. Some slight signs of reaction appeared in the winter 1913-14, but trade recovered in the spring and was in April only inferior to that of the previous year. During June and July, however, the adverse symptoms spread: the production of pig iron, the raw material of all the iron and steel trades, had fallen off considerably; coal mines were not so busy; shipbuilding showed some slackness of demand; the woollen industry was definitely on the down grade, though the worsted manufacturers were still busy meeting the great American demand which had arisen from their lowered tariff. The most serious trouble was in Lancashire; employment in the cotton mills was still good in July, but it was quite definitely foreseen that the future demand would be less and arrangements had been made for working short time for three months. There were no labour disputes of any magnitude unsettled, except the long-drawn-out trouble in the London building trade, which was reported in the *Labour Gazette* to be practically at an end. The statistics of foreign trade were by no

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