

OUR STRENUOUS CIVILIZATION

Mankind and Womankind in the Struggle for the Ultimate



Shackleton's South Pole ship, Endurance, comes to a nameless port in the foot-hills of ice and snow.

EVERYBODY knows that the business of keeping alive and looking as fat and as well-dressed as one's neighbours has been growing steadily more strenuous in the last few decades. The question which may very well be asked now, however, is whether life is going to be more strenuous or less strenuous when the war is over. Will the world be so heartily sick of this culminating piece of strenuousness, so to speak, that it will react at once in favour of easier lives for everybody concerned, or will everything be speeded up in order that we may make up for the lost time in production, and for the wasted men and materials.

On the one hand there are a number of earnest people who insist that the war will not end until the belligerents have just about reached the point of exhaustion (the position in which the Germans are rapidly passing already) and that therefore the tendency of the whole world will be to slow down. They point out that the belligerents will be in a very economical frame of mind for many a year after Peace is signed. They will not be eager to import great quantities of goods from the present neutrals. They will probably compel themselves to live more simply, buying less and consuming less. If that be so—thus reason the Slower World disciples—then there is bound to be a general slowing down of production in all countries. For with reduced orders from the present belligerents to the present neutrals will come over-production by those neutrals. Hence—glutted warehouses and, in time, slowed-down factories. Yet there will be the same number of people demanding work—and they will probably effect a general slow-



Modern woman goes the Amazon woman one better in a halo of fire making shells for the War-Man.

ing-down of the rate of production everywhere.

So much for that view.

On the other hand, men say that the necessity to make up for the wastage of war, both in actual materials and in producing-time lost, will compel everyone to work harder than ever. The pace will be set, they say, by the present belligerents who will probably build up closely organized industrial enterprises for the purpose of employing the returned soldiers, and in order to pay off as rapidly as possible the debt of these nations to the neutrals. It is highly probable, say these prognosticators, that all standards of workmanship will be raised. Men will be expected and even compelled to work at higher rates of speed—under greater pressure than ever before.

So much also for that point of view.

A THIRD point of view involves the belief that we are about to see a new era in this world, an era in which there will gradually be built up "state industrialism," that is, that the state will take over, own and control all the chief industries so that all profits from, let us say, the exploitation of coal mines or the manufacture of binder-twine, or cattle breeding, will go into the central coffers of the state. This sounds Utopian. Very probably it is Utopian. Yet the apostles of this sect are extremely plausible and almost convincing in their arguments. They point out that never before have we had so much state-interference with the individual (since despotism was put down in the majority of countries) as in England to-day. Men and women are on the whole satisfied and even pleased to find it so. And women will become more strenuous.