

GETTING A JOB IN MUNITIONS

By ESTELLE M. KERR

It was in a tea-room one day at noon, The Brown Inn or The Blue Tea-pot or The Green something-or-other—one of those places where the waitresses wear very large caps and serve you very small helpings. I endeavoured to catch the eye of one of them, although previous experience had taught me that this was impossible until all the men who came in ten minutes after me, had been served. Then I tried to amuse myself by watching the people. At the next table a rather drab-looking girl was seated with her back to the light. Presently another girl entered, with rosy cheeks shining above a mass of furs and parcels. She glanced around for an empty table, then started towards mine, but, perceiving my neighbour, she altered her course.

"Why, Elizabeth, you quitter!" she exclaimed, "I thought you were working at munitions!"

"Stopped last pay-day, my dear. I was busy—with other things."

"I thought you were too patriotic for that, but it must be horribly strenuous so near Christmas time. I've been shopping till I'm nearly dead. May I lunch with you?"

"Do sit down," said Elizabeth. "I'm meeting a friend here, but I arrived ahead of time, so we can talk until he comes."

"At which instant I shall tactfully retire," said the new-comer. "But do tell me about your work. I'm seriously thinking of taking it up myself."

"I was thrilled by it! Of course it was strenuous, but we worked in six-hour shifts—quite long enough to go without eating. Some of the girls smuggle in sandwiches, but that is strictly against orders. You may eat at the canteens up to the minute your work begins, and commence the minute it is over. You may also chew gum. The machines never stop—or they're not supposed to—they do get out of order and then we sit around while they repair them."

"Yes, I heard that something they were repairing fell on a worker and broke her leg."

"Accidents happen everywhere, and they have a hospital with a trained nurse, but she hasn't much to do. I was on a lathe and the steel filings would fly in my face. I had to wear goggles, and used to get grimy as a blacksmith. Of course if you're careless."

"Wasn't it dreadful about those girls who had their fingers cut off?" said the Rosy One. "Why, haven't you heard? There were two sisters—twins, and one was working at her machine and she turned to speak to the forewoman without taking her hand away, and her finger got cut off, and the next day her sister was showing someone how it happened and hers was cut off, too—in the very same place!"

"Horrible! How did you hear about it? From your kid sister, I suppose—she's out there, isn't she?"

"No. Babe only stood it for two days after waiting a week to get a place. She sat there six days—getting paid at the rate of ten cents an hour for waiting, just in case a vacancy occurred. They had a nice big room with comfortable chairs and tables, and they could knit and patronize the canteen. There were thirty-five of them then, and during all that time only one woman got taken on. Then someone asked Babe how old she was, and told her that eighteen was too young for factory work, and how would she like to be a messenger? Babe was delighted and all the other girls said: 'Oh you lucky thing!'"

"They took her down to an inner office in the basement, where a lot of clerks were smoking in their shirt sleeves and there was just one other girl—a dirty little thing who used to work at Wilbur's biscuit factory and chewed gum all the time. All Babe had to do was to run messages and take papers up to other offices, but what she really couldn't stand was the dirty little girl from Wilbur's, who was always pulling her gum in and out."

"What were the men like?"

"I asked Babe that and she said she didn't know, that she never so much as looked in their direction. . . . Must have been popular! The dirty little girl from Wilbur's was more sociable; when one of the men told her to get some more paper she slapped his face and said:

"Oh, g'wan, get it yourself and see how you like

it! And she said to Babe, 'Gee, there's lots of swell girls coming out here now. You'd like it if you only stuck it out a little longer!'"

"Now Babe goes about with an injured air: she feels that her country does not appreciate her. 'See what I get for telling the truth,' she says. 'If I'd only said I was 20 I'd been on a machine by this time making record outputs of shells!' They always seem to be trying to beat the record. Don't you think it's bad for them to work so hard?"

"Oh, you can't do much damage in six hours, but in the factories, where they work in 8, 10 and even 12-hour shifts lots of the girls break down. There's Mollie P.—one of the most athletic girls I know, champion swimmer and tennis player, works for purely patriotic reasons and gives her money to the Red Cross. She's down with nervous pros. now. Of course, worrying about her fiance at the front may

turn out, and this sometimes amounts to a good deal. One girl who broke the record earned \$41 in one week, but that means pretty strenuous work!"

"I see you're wearing your munition badge."

"Yes. I'm very proud of it—only wish I could have stuck at it till I got a six months' service bar attached to it."

"Well, why didn't you? If you were as thrilled with it as you pretend to be, I shouldn't think you would give it up at the approach of Christmas."

"Oh, it wasn't Christmas, it was the approach of—here comes my friend now—don't go. I want you to meet him!"

A tall young man in khaki hurried towards them.

"So that is why!"

"Yes, we are to be married before he goes back to the front—that's why. But do take up munitions, you really ought to—and besides, you'll like it. . . ."

At that moment a mob-capped queen deigned to notice me and took my order.

WHEREVER one goes, munition-making is the great topic of conversation. Just as every one has a personal interest in some man at the front, people in every walk in life are coming to have a personal interest in some woman in munitions.

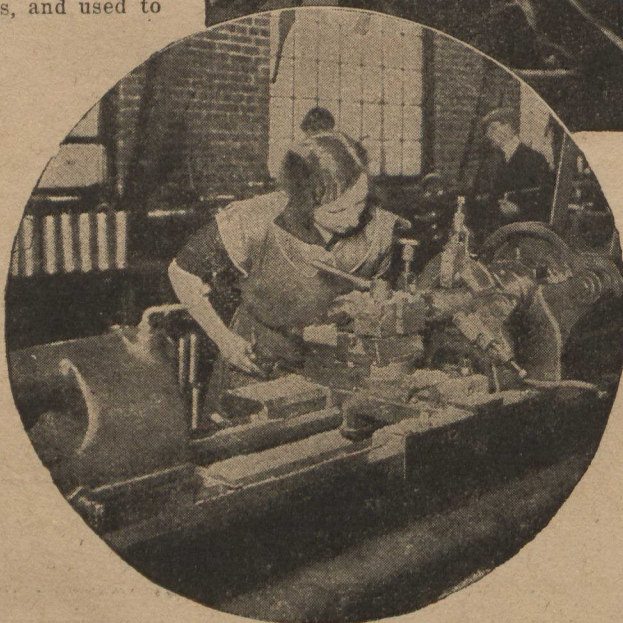
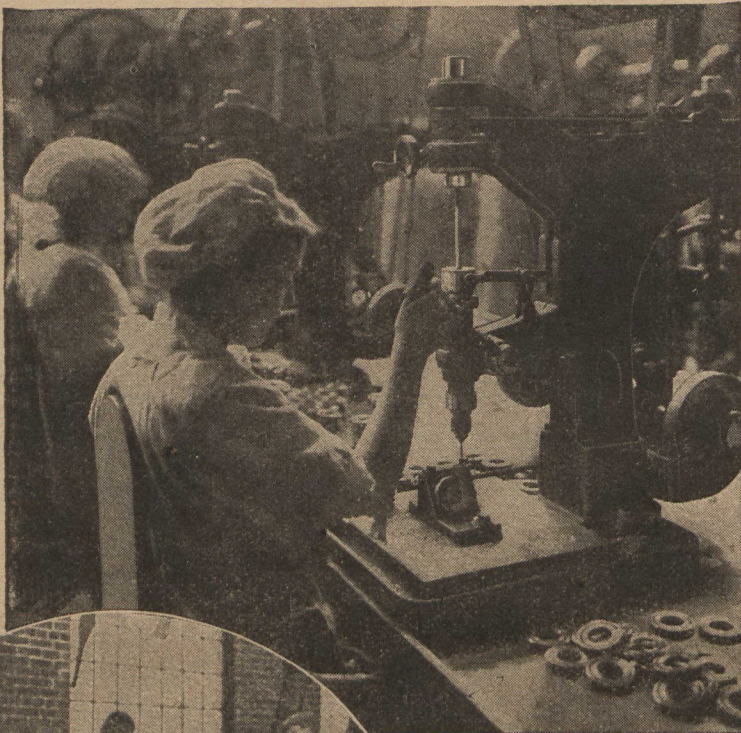
Practically all the women are inexperienced, but they quickly learn to fill or file or shape, or cut, or turn or do whatever their own particular job may be—they don't let you have a machine at first. In the little details where delicacy and accuracy are needed, women workers have been found to be better than men. One woman at a factory in St. Catharines equalled in eight hours the best record made in ten hours by a man on the same operation; during the day she handled 1,200 shells, with an aggregate weight of a ton and a half.

Miss Wiseman, who is attached to the Munitions Board, has organized classes at the Technical School, Toronto, for training educated women to become inspectors in munition plants. Graduates have to sign for six months' service and be willing to go to whatever part of the country they may be sent.

It has been stated that preference is given to society girls, but munition factories are business concerns who naturally give the preference to the best workers, and women of education are quick to learn and more capable to command, and soon rise to responsible positions. In recruiting women for munition work, an effort is made to reach women of leisure, who will not suffer by being thrown out of employment after the war, rather than those already employed in useful occupations—stenographers, domestic servants, clerks, and girls from other factories. What's to become of our country if the women of the upper classes won't do their share of the

work? But amongst the munition workers in Canada there is a good sprinkling of officers' sisters and daughters and wives at our factory, daughters of knights, judges, good old families and wealthy new ones. At present there are many names on the waiting lists of the most popular firms, and many others have been registered through the Emergency Corps, but the time will come when every good worker will be needed and the women of Canada must be ready to serve.

The world is being gradually made over by women. It is no longer necessary to talk of the new woman. There is really no such person. When women rise to the opportunities of the country they belong to they are rising to their own. The real woman of all time is the woman who spends more of herself for the good of others, and in the gratification she gets from such good-doing gets a reward of an exaltedly selfish character. Making munitions is good pay; it's a novelty in experience; because it is this it's a new democracy among the women themselves. It's more; because to all these combined it's an opportunity to do good to the bigger thing than self which is ourselves in the commonwealth.



IN A CANADIAN MUNITION FACTORY.

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Drilling Shell Fuses.

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Turning brass socket on 18-pounder Shrapnel.

have something to do with it, but twelve hours a day and the noise helps! Lots of girls have left other places to come to our factory. There are 700 women employed there now, and they expect to have 1,000 soon, with a building all to themselves! The employees are not all women, however, some of the men look perfectly eligible—of course they may have flat feet. . . . They have to have a number of skilled mechanics."

"One of my friends lost her chauffeur—a perfectly healthy young man—because he was offered more money at a factory. Then someone tried to interest her in the War Workers' Welfare and get her to serve in a canteen one night a week."

"And why, pray, should I give up my sleep?" she said, "in order that Blake can get his coffee for three cents instead of five! If they can afford to pay him more than I did (he gets seven a day, I believe) surely they can pay waitresses to serve him!"

"Their pay is very good, nearly all the girls make \$15 a week with a bonus of \$3 a week if they are neither late nor absent. Most of them have to work on Sunday. The machine workers get a premium for all the shells over a certain number that they