

Europe Toils to Avert Famine

While Men and Horses Fight at the Front, Women Draw the Ploughs and Harrows and Feed the Pigs. Tag Days and Tango Bazaars are out of date "Over There"

Written especially for *Everywoman's World*

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THE history of war is not told by words alone. One glance at a picture sometimes gives more poignant realization than all the scenes that pen can paint.

It may be just a cross standing out in clear relief against the sky line; or a little tumble-down village in France; or a woman waiting for one who will not return. But it grips the on-looker by the heart. It is the most primitive way of teaching a lesson; it is often the most effective.

We could present to you pictures which would tell their own story and cast a side-light on the harshness of war. They would show with intense realism where war reaches past the man on the battlefield and clutches the woman, casting her forth from a sheltered existence to hard and unaccustomed toil in the fields.

They would represent France—once reported as the gay, frivolous France of butterfly women and foppish men. Now what do we call it? "Enduring" France, "gallant" France, "magnificent" France. And the women, workers and heroines, every one.

Women taking the places of horses—the dauntless women of France! With heavy chains around their bodies they are straining and pulling the harrow over rough and broken soil. Bent double, with the sun shining down on their heads, theirs is no easy task.

Did the Government force them to go out and draw the harrow and the plough? Were they even asked to do this thing?

No! It was for Jean, for Henri. Most of all—it was for France.

Mute Doggedness

THERE is something about the mute doggedness of these women that is infinitely pathetic. A nurse recently returned from France tells of village after village where the women are working away with never a smile on their faces nor a murmur on their lips. Simply dogged endurance carries them along and an infinite capacity for uncomplaining toil. They are just like the brave poilus, but a little less gay and light-hearted.

It is by such labor as this on the part of the daughters of France that there have been crops and harvests since war broke out. It has been said a hundred times, and it cannot be too often repeated, that the women, the old men and the children did it all—for there were no other men to work in the fields, with the honor and safety of their beautiful land at stake. Had it not been for these women there would be even less food than there is in Europe to-day.

Passionately fond of their country, war cemented every element of the French populace, bound up every little cleavage, made it a unit, ready to fight to the death, putting neither reserve nor limit on life and material resource.

Doesn't this picture engrave itself on the minds of Canadian women? Shouldn't it hang ever before them to remind them of how much more the women of other countries have experienced of the travail of war than they? Might it not serve as a warning against indifference and as an impetus to useful effort?

These women were perhaps no more used to manual labor than you or I before 1914. They are no stronger physically than you or I. But they have the superhuman strength born of necessity, the grit to endure, the will to do.

When the sun shines on France again and the country is cleared of its enemies and crops are growing where once there were blood-stained battlefields, the picture of those women toiling for their country will not readily fade from memory. There are hundreds of Joans of Arc in France to-day—not dying for their country, though that they would gladly do were it asked of them—but living for it and working for it and wearing their bodies out in serving it.

So much for France!

Novelist Enlists

TURNING to another picture—the work of the Englishwoman is typified. What did one girl of whom we know do before the war broke out? Well—she

wrote novels. Now she is looking after cows and pigs, all the men who used to work on this particular farm in Cornwall being in the army. This is not the tale of a pretty novelist playing Phyllis for effect, with the real farm hand in hiding behind the barn. Miss Matheson gives the pigs their breakfast—not for long enough to have her picture taken, but just as she does every day. She isn't doing it for that elusive thing called "local color" either. She is simply doing it—for England.

There is nothing diletantic about the war work the women of England and France are doing. They came to grips with realities early in the war. They have no rose-colored glasses or long-distance illusions about the food situation. They have seen things and suffered things that we, on this continent, have not dreamed of yet. They feel the dark menace that broods over them night and day, and they realize the uncertainty of the future. So it takes no law, no compulsion to get them hitched to the ploughs, to feed swill to pigs, to toil in the fields. All that they do now—they do for their country. It is a thrilling story, the history of what these women have done.

And Canada? Here women have not reached the stage of intense realism that is mirrored in these pictures. Their war work is still diletantic to some extent—more especially the kind of work that means the production of food.

Two girls were discussing the future in a well-known tea-room in Ottawa the other day. They were obviously daughters of the rich. One had just returned from the South and her companion was telling her of her latest activities.

The Shirker

"DO you know what I am actually doing now, Mabel?" she giggled, "I'm going to business college! It's terribly funny, and I'm not a scrap of use, but I had to do something to get out of farming. This talk of registration gave me such a fright. You don't get me going on a farm whatever happens. So by the time we are all registered, I'll be safely established in an office."

She did have the grace to add that she would be sorry for her employer—and no wonder!

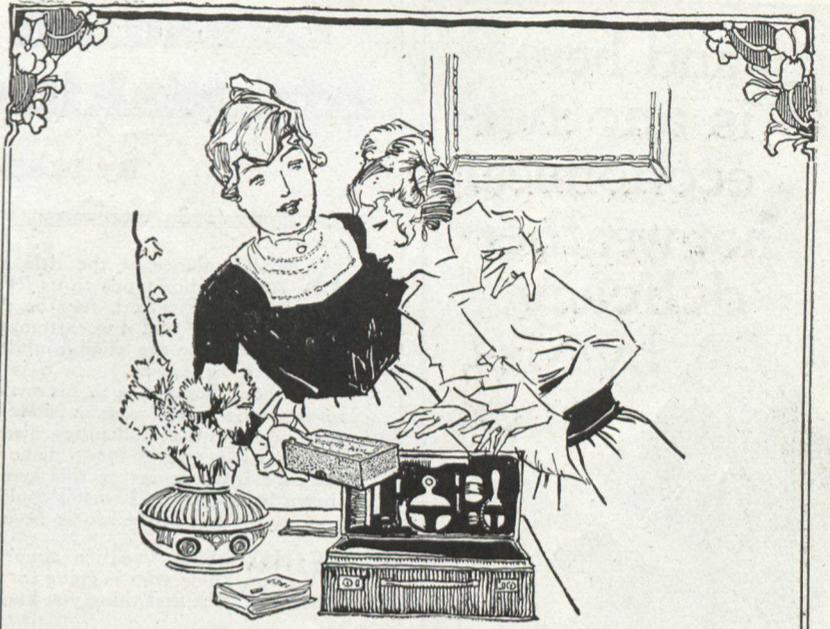
She did not want to do anything, but was thoroughly alarmed at the prospect of having to farm, so she was going to swell the already overflowing ranks of office girls.

That is the case of a girl of education and refinement who yet has not sufficient imagination to realize the terrible conditions in Europe, or to see that her help is needed to add to the world's rapidly diminishing food supply. There are many other girls in Canada just like her, and there is a very large proportion who have not yet taken stock of their equipment, or tried to find out where they would best fit in so that their work might be effective and genuinely helpful to the country at large.

It is not that one would cast any reflection on Canadian women in general. Thousands of them are doing most magnificent and self-sacrificing work. But there are others who are not working, or who are engaged in non-essential work. These would be a thousand times better off in the outdoors—yes, even feeding swill to pigs! After all, isn't it the kind of thing to exercise a good deal of imagination and a little humor over?

If we don't interest ourselves in those things now, we may yet reach the stage of the women who are chained to the plows.

There is an unfortunate prejudice against outdoor work, many women failing to realize that they are not only going to benefit their country, but that they will improve their own physiques by "roughing it" a little. Unless they have had a test of this already, they will be best qualified to pass judgment on whether or not they are strong enough for heavy outdoor work after they have given it a fair trial. In the meantime, they should be getting used to the idea that the "farmerette" has come to stay—even in Canada.



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