

BIRMINGHAM BUSIEST CITY IN WORLD, SPENDS TIME IN WINNING WAR

Politics and Such Other Nonsense have No Place in the Minds of the People who Work Twenty-four Hours a Day in Making Guns, Shells and Other Little Things Used in Killing Germans.

By Arthur S. Draper.

London, April 26.—Birmingham is the centre of England. It is the greatest manufacturing area in the British Isles. Its slogan is—"Busier Than Usual."

London is the political centre of the British Empire; Birmingham is its industrial centre. London is no more representative of the war spirit of the Midlands of Great Britain than New York is representative of the feelings of the Middle West of the States. After the dull, depressing atmosphere of London, where they make laws, manufacture rumors and hatch political crises, Birmingham is a refreshing change. There they talk shells, fuses, tanks and aeroplanes and war bonuses and profit sharing and production.

Birmingham is an inspiration, a resort for nerves shaken and jaded by war. It is driving on to victory. It leaves politics to politicians, makes munitions twenty-four hours a day, and radiates confidence and determination. And what is true of Birmingham applies also to Coventry, its near neighbor, where Lady Godiva tried to camouflage herself from the eyes of Old Peeping Tom.

I have just spent a week in Birmingham and Coventry; I have seen miles and miles of lathes, milling machines and blast furnaces; I have seen thousands of girls employed on jobs which were closed to them three years ago; I have seen aeroplanes and air engines turned out almost as rapidly as Mr. Ford produces autos or chewing gum drops out of a machine; I have talked with big and little manufacturers, with machinists grown gray at lathes and with girls who now handle micrometer or a capstan lathe as skillfully as they did a broom or a frying pan a few months back. A week at Birmingham is calculated to make one a Birmingham booster.

They Think in War Machinery. Up in the Midlands of England they think this is a war of machinery. Birmingham has expanded industrially in the last three years in a truly remarkable manner. The big business men are studying the future carefully, but not with alarm. The temporary military reverses, the incomplete military successes are viewed through the eyes of men who have been foreboding about the final result, who do not hesitate to scrap old machinery and old views for something more productive, who accept their handicaps as a compliment to their industrial prowess.

No English, Scotch, Welsh or Irish girl has won the Victoria Cross, a Military Medal or the D. S. O., but today there are plants in Birmingham where more than 90 per cent of the workers are girls. Think what that means in a war of machinery! Think what it

means in the great industrial revolution which has already spread over the British Isles! Out of every hundred persons turning out shells, fuses, etc., only ten of them are men. Yesterday those other ninety workers—the women—were servants, housewives, clerks, salesgirls or idlers; to-day they have increased their earnings two, three, four times over, and they have given the state an asset of inestimable value. The women of England have saved the Allies from defeat; they have become a force second to none. There are some jobs female labor has not yet filled, but they are mighty few.

British women are revolutionizing labor. And British employers are thoroughly alive to the great new problem which has opened up. Plants have and are still being erected with special thought to the employment of female labor; machines are being constructed in a way to reduce to a minimum the physical effort necessary for their operation; rest rooms, surgeries, restaurants, welfare clubs, savings institutions, have made their debut in many of the large plants since British women became manual laborers; the munitions girls have raised the standard of the shops to a higher level and the workmen have not lagged behind.

Woman's Wages Are Quadrupled. To-day many British women are earning wages which are much higher than those paid skilled workmen in pre-war days. They have shown amazing adaptability and quickness in mastering some of the most difficult jobs. Already it has been proven that the girl of fourteen years and the boy of the same age are two totally different types. The boy is a restless creature, who cannot stand the monotony of constant work at a lathe, while the girl, who is perfectly satisfied to knit or crochet for hours on end, is thoroughly happy to run a lathe or feed a stamping machine. At a time when standardization is absolutely essential for the production of the necessary quantity of munitions, the patience and steadiness of the girls and women are extremely valuable assets to the manufacturer and to the state.

Birmingham and Coventry have nearly doubled in population in the last two years. These cities are crowded with workers who have been drawn from all parts of the United Kingdom. The housing, feeding and entertainment of this "alien" population has been a tremendous problem, which has not yet been entirely or satisfactorily solved.

Practically every instrument of warfare on land and sea is manufactured in the Birmingham district. Primers, fuses, cartridge cases and clips, aeroplanes and tanks, 4.5-inch high explosive shells, Hotchkiss and Lewis rapid fire guns are just a few of the multi-

tude of war products included in Birmingham's output, which is under the control and management of one of the fourteen munitions boards directing and encouraging the nation's war industries. All the members of this board are volunteers, who receive no remuneration, though they are handling the greatest industrial undertaking in the history of British manufacture.

From Silver Spoons to Shell Parts. Before the war Birmingham was famous as a jewelry manufacturing centre. The old house of Elkington & Co., Ltd., whose silver plate is almost as well known in the United States as it is in the United Kingdom, began to curtail the manufacture of spoons and forks in 1915 and to substitute brass stampings for fuse bodies and shrapnel sockets. In a short time they were turning out tons of these things weekly. These silverware makers are no exception; dozens of other companies have converted their works to the production of instruments of war. Bedstead manufacturers are now manufacturing shells, bicycle makers have become producers of machine guns, auto manufacturers are turning out aeroplanes.

Even in the potteries of North Staffordshire, famous for its Wedgwood ware, the manufacture of munitions has been going on steadily and in constantly increasing amounts since 1915. They are a conservative people there, as Arnold Bennett's readers know, but they have taken to the manufacture of shells, transport wagons, gun mountings, as if they had been at it all their lives. Their patriotism is of a kind which does not run to flag waving and burning, but it lasts long and wears well.

No establishment impressed me more than that of Chance & Hunt, Ltd., where TNT is manufactured on a large scale. Before the war they were the largest manufacturers of chemicals in the Midlands. For a long time Britain depended entirely on their output, but to-day other manufacturers are supplying large quantities of this high explosive. At its head is Clinton F. Chance, a comparatively young man, who is already a leader among British manufacturers. Here is a plant where work of a most dangerous character is carried on largely by young girls. Everything calculated to make their working quarters clean, airy, comfortable, has been done without regard to cost. The welfare of the workers has been the first thought of the management, and results have proven the wisdom of the course.

Tanks were one of the few surprises of the war. The development of the tank is now almost as rapid as the improvement in aeroplane construction, and further surprises may be confidently expected. In the Birmingham district they are manufactured by the Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon and Finance Company, Ltd., an organization formed sixteen years ago. A great amount of the rolling stock used on British railways has been built in its shops, where some 14,000 men were employed before the war reduced its forces. Today it is building tanks. A testing ground, adjoining its works, gives these monsters an opportunity for high and lofty tumbling which no battlefield along the British front in Flanders and France would offer.

They crawl through a sea of mud, mount a precipitous cliff and toboggan down on their hind quarters like a trained elephant performing in a circus. Their mechanism has been perfected so that now they are much more mobile. Twenty-eight tons, which is their weight, will flatten barbed wire entanglements, level trenches and parapets, however strong and high the enemy may construct them. With their armament of rapid-fire guns they can cut a trench and spit fire and bullets in every direction.

The British have not yet produced a winged tank, but they are turning out some battleplanes which make ordinary planes look like mosquitoes. These giants of the air ask no odds; Gothas are the finest type of aircraft production in Britain or any other country. Some appreciation of their size may be gained when I state that a mechanic can walk along on their wings like an ant on a bridge of a cruiser, and with almost equal safety, so steady are they even in a wind, which three years ago would have been considered too dangerous for flying.

Birmingham will soon be exporting to German cities far beyond the Rhine home-made bombs carried by home-made aeroplanes. For obvious reasons the dimensions, speed and weight, carrying capacity of the machines cannot be given, being state secrets, being hated in Birmingham will go a long way toward bringing the peace every one wants.

There have been strikes in Birmingham and Coventry and there will probably be others before the war is over, but there is undoubtedly less industrial unrest in this section of England than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Why? There are several reasons. In the first place the employers have not concentrated on war profits without regard to the earnings of the workers; the manufacturers have been quicker to appreciate the extent of the growth of the industrial revolution and to take measures to cope with it. A spirit of compromise has filled the negotiations between capital and labor. Climatic conditions have a lot to do with the morale of workers, who are living under the strain incident to war. Fortunately for the state, Birmingham is blessed with an exceptionally fine climate.

Most of the employees—men and women—are doing piece work, and they are earning fabulous wages compared with the pre-war incomes. Despite the great increase in living expenses, thousands of these munitions workers are investing tidy sums in war loan certificates. The youngest of the workers is fourteen; there is no maximum limit. Many a grandmother and even a few great-grandmothers have deserted their homes for a place in a factory. It is a libel on labor to accuse it of being prospective simply by the desire to earn money. Labor is

just as patriotic as the capitalists; it is just as anxious to win the war. It grows restless sometimes and utters dire threats, but so do the capitalists, only the latter are a little more diplomatic, a little more skillful at turning a phrase.

It is only necessary to visit one of the great plants such as the Austin Motor Company, Limited, or any one of a hundred others in the Midlands and see the number of women substitutes for their brothers and fathers to realize the extent of labor's heart-interest in the war. The working men and women have better credit, but too many of them have lost something more than riches. That is why labor is sound at the core and the great force of Britain.

At a private dinner I heard Mr. Chance, of Chance & Hunt, Limited, and several other leading Birmingham manufacturers discuss with great seriousness some of the country's labor problems, which, if not already averted, will soon hold an importance second only to that of the war itself. Make no mistake, England's business men are thoroughly awake to the changes which are rapidly taking place in the industrial and political life of this and other European countries. There was a time when these leaders thought that they could battle successfully for the defence of the privileged class they have enjoyed for generations, but in a strong conservative who holds these views to-day. These men realize that the longer the war lasts the greater must be their concessions to labor. And no higher commitment can be paid British capitalists than to say that, however heavy the financial sacrifices, they are still prepared to make them. That is the real test of patriotism and the Birmingham manufacturers are meeting it.

America should be proud of her industrial leaders; they have set the pace for the world. Their methods will stand comparison with those in any other country. Not that England does not turn out many things of a higher quality than those produced in America, not that English manufacturers have not been able to undersell some of their American rivals in the world's markets. But when American manufacturers have assumed an unquestioned leadership in the hand-ling of their employees, Mr. Ford, the National Cash Register, the United States Steel Corporation and the Bethlehem Steel Works, have taught British manufacturers some valuable lessons, and there are plenty of signs in Birmingham that England is going to profit by them.

As I write the world's greatest battle is being fought in France. Germany is hurling a gigantic mass of men and metal against Haig's troops in an effort to crush her way through the British defences. British manufacturers, British munitions workers, the men and women of the Midlands of England, are deserving of praise secondly to that accorded their fathers of the war. They have lived through a hurricane of fire and fury and are still able to fight back. Birmingham is the heart of Britain, and it beats strongly.

ECONOMY applied with a Paint Brush

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"When I think have gone down times, some people until it hurts, to money to build ships, and to send canned goods, will refuse to feed there women and in France, when we are all eating a common meal seem to fear that enough food for the So far as the Food foresee our needs, this happen."

"There are only the world which production during land, by the use of the labor of the men in the field, since their production Canada increased terribly. I feel like to Canada. When men in proportion to us, with his 5,000,000 soldiers increase our production in increasing very important fact exception of wheat, a heavy loss of a "Again maintain but she has never food for her people she has she is sending parts of the earth rent the amount of wheat has an of the amount normal consumption by her 15 per cent. The men are broken people in the rural to secure sufficient in the cities are pangs of actual produced from 60 her normal crop, 10 cent. France produced per cent, of her crops. Italy succeeded her corn and out heavily on other crops was a common sight women harnessed titivators doing the fields. They were this because the army or too crippled. In addition to this en are taking care have been invalidated of tubercular trouble crippled and maimed no longer fit for service."

"We cannot over- portance of the let me tell you just food situation in due just a fair por- crop was a failure. "We cannot over- that Germany has because of the fact neutral nations are numbers of their de- account of lack of to support her people she did last year harvest."

"Argentine produ- about 50 million bush- while it was hoped be necessary to send for food supplies, as so long to make the Argentine or Europe America, the entire food has completed so. Australia had