

# MORE ABOUT MUNITIONERS

OUR article on Munion Canteens last week brought a letter from a Canadian girl who spent her summer holidays—and incidentally a great deal of her hard-earned cash—in working in a canteen at the Woolwich Arsenal, where 17,000 women are employed. We have great pleasure in publishing the letter, hoping that it will be helpful to those in this country who are interested in munion canteens:

"I was somewhat amused at your article on Canteens for munitioners last week. You seemed actually to feel sorry for the women who acted as amateur waitresses for one night and part of a day each week without remuneration. Why, at the canteen where I worked in Woolwich, last summer, we gave our services for 12 hours a day (or night) six days a week, and thought little of it, for nearly all the women in England are leading equally strenuous lives, and it seems to me on returning to Canada that here we are just playing with war work.

"We fed 3,000 women at our canteen and kept up a force of 20 voluntary workers and five or six charwomen. One of these gave every cent of her earnings to the Red Cross and lived on the small allowance from her son at the front while we fed her. Our work was tiring, but not nearly so much so as standing at a machine all day long for 12 hours a day performing some monotonous detail that required great accuracy. At that time the munition workers were employed seven days a week, but since the Sunday holiday was introduced the factories have actually increased their output, so great is the benefit of the rest.

"I was amused also at the menu served to the workers here. I daresay the English women would like canned soups, beans and fruit, as well as cake and pastry, but how long do you suppose their work would continue to be efficient on such a diet? We gave them a nourishing stew made of fresh beef, potatoes, carrots and onions, taking great care to season it nicely. This we sold for sixpence. There were also two slices of bread and margarine for a penny, a cup of tea for a penny, and rice pudding. If people wanted other things they could bring them to the canteen themselves; we were organized for the munition workers' welfare and offered them only nourishing food. Our canteens were also self-supporting, and none of the profits went to canning factories. Surely war-workers should set an example of thrift.

"In comparing the prices charged at your canteens and ours, we must take into consideration the difference in wages. In England they range from a pound a week to six or seven pounds, and even now the purchasing power of a pound is greater there than it is here. A girl I knew who had been a sculptor and was consequently very skilful in gauging dimensions to a fraction of an inch, made \$29 a week, and that is considered in England a very high wage for a workman.

"The women never had so much money in their lives and never were they so well or so cheaply fed. Many whose husbands are at the front, have their separation allowances as well, yet the boys in the trenches—the English Tommies—get but 37 cents a day. It does seem that we should have universal conscription for war work, applying both to men and women, and that munition workers should be paid at the same rate as soldiers or less, owing to their comparative safety. Still the women do pay back a great deal of their earnings to the cause. There is a fund for that purpose at Woolwich and the girls fill in cards promising to give a certain per cent. of their earnings to the Red Cross, or some other war charity, and War Savings Certificates are kept on sale near the pay desk.

"We looked forward to our weekly holiday with the keenest pleasure, and we found that the very pleasantest way to spend it was in another form of war work. London is full of wounded soldiers whose time hangs heavily on their hands, and they love to ride about in a hack drawn by a decrepit old cab-horse who goes as slowly as possible. They also frequent bus-tops. One of my friends was a musical girl from Australia, who had a large studio with a balcony overlooking the road, and it used to amuse us to drop notes to the soldiers asking them to come to tea on a certain date and bring six of their friends. They always turned up, and oh how they enjoyed it! We had music and substantial refreshments, and the boys sang and told stories—such stories! We were well repaid, and they usually wrote to us afterwards to tell us how very much they enjoyed themselves. When you consider that nearly every woman

By ESTELLE M. KERR

in London is doing something to help amuse the wounded, you will believe the stories you hear of loneliness in the Canadian convalescent homes. Of course this business of 'scattering sunshine' may be a trifle overdone, especially by Canadian women in London. No Colonial women, whether married to soldiers or not, should be allowed to enter England unless they are willing to work without remuneration twelve hours a day. There is no room there for idlers or half-hearted war workers.

"In my comments on canteens I do not intend to criticize unkindly a work that is still in the experimental stage, but I am writing in the hope that my remarks will prove helpful to other war workers.

"Helen Williams."

ANOTHER Canadian woman who is helping the munition workers in England is Mrs. Lacey Amy, wife of the well-known Toronto author and journalist. She has just been appointed by the British War Office to the position of Welfare Super-



MAKING SHELL FUSES IN CANADA.

- (a) Soldering the cap of No. 80 fuse.  
(b) Turning, facing and inspecting top and bottom rings No. 100 fuse.

intendent of 3,000 munition workers. Mr. Lacey Amy, whose articles appear frequently in our papers, has written often and forcefully to discourage Canadian women from going to England and so putting an extra burden on the motherland at a time when her resources are taxed to the uttermost.

Welfare supervisors spend much of their time in visiting homes where children have been left behind with relatives or friends, or in making friendly inquiries in the homes from which the girls come who are bad time-keepers or who are unsatisfactory in ways which seem to point to home conditions, which might be improved for the girl who is out working all day. Girls under sixteen are not employed, but so long as a woman is capable of honest, hard work, it does not matter what her age is. Sometimes a grandmother and granddaughter are employed in the same factory. Married women are always reminded that their first duty is to their children.

SOME notion of the hardships undergone by English women of all social grades who have given their services to the State, may be seen in the reports of munition workers. Night work for women has come back again after it had been abolished. An Act, in 1844, made it illegal in the textile trades,

and ten years ago, at Berne, England and the other Great Powers agreed as to its inadvisability. But now, the war has rendered it imperative in certain cases.

In a group of 75 women selected from one factory, it was found that, though the majority lived within a mile or a mile and a half of their work, they did not get more than seven and a half, and many only seven hours' rest a night. The majority rose at 5 a.m., and were employed from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Only 19 of the 75 were over 21; many were between 16 and 18.

Transit is another difficulty. Work is made more arduous by the long journey from and to the home. Trams and omnibuses are crowded at the ends of the day, and the superintendent of a factory in a congested district says that women constantly arrive at work with their dresses torn in the struggle to enter a tram. Sometimes the satchel containing the ingredients for the afternoon tea is carried away. The sufferers are generally refined women, unaccustomed to such usage, but they bear it uncomplainingly.

The committee frowns on night labour, though it is sometimes unavoidable. There is a diversity of opinion amongst employers as to whether it is better to employ one set of women regularly at night work or whether it is better to vary the spells by day work. In any case, employers are growing sceptical of the value of prolonged labour whether by day or night. Both the quality and quantity of the work diminishes after eight hours. Firms are more and more inclined to establish three shifts of eight hours in the 24. Where that has been done, the best results have been obtained. Rest pauses of 10 minutes, in which tea or chocolate can be taken, have also proved valuable.

Women are often tired out by protracted labour at night, and sleep beside their work, too fatigued to go to the canteen for refreshments. Nor do the meals taken at night appear to nourish as well as the day meals. Clearly, female labour needs special supervision at night, and at all times requires careful treatment. A muscular strain, easily borne by a lad, may prove detrimental to a girl. The half-holiday on Saturday and Sunday rest, as well as the statutory holidays, are almost imperative for women. The weight of scientific evidence, indeed, is on the side of limitation, and the whole history of factory legislation points that way. Where work for any cause has been curtailed to eight hours, the amount of the output has been maintained.

THE Woolwich Arsenal, in addition to the 17,000 women, employs 50,000 men as well, for great strength is required in the manufacture of the big guns, but there is in the centre of England a "Women's Factory," where scarcely a man is to be seen, just lines of girls at the benches, young and girlish most of them, in their khaki or dark blue overalls, with faces smiling and merry.

This is the factory that turns out the best fuses and has the most rapid output in the country. And it is because the workers are so well looked after.

Fuse-making and filling is the chief branch of munion work here. The girls handle without a trace of nervousness the deadly T. N. T., and the even more deadly fulminate of mercury.

Every possible precaution to eliminate danger is taken; for the processes such as the screwing up of the finished fuse, where the chance of an explosion must be risked, a machine called a safety gig, invented by one of the owners of the factory, is in use. It is a globe of hardened metal, into which the fuse is inserted for tightening, so that if any explosion takes place it is inside the globe, which is strong enough to resist it, and the operator goes unharmed.

All the workers engaged in handling explosives wear masks and shields for the eyes, and an attempt is to be made to adapt the gas helmet used in the trenches for the use of the girls.

In order that the workers in these particular processes should be well looked after, a stipulation is made that they must live in the firm's hostel. This is a block of buildings in the grounds, with 32 separate hostels, each accommodating some 106 girls. Further extensions are also in progress, and when completed 36 more hostels will be added.

The Government are completing new arsenals everywhere, and to run them women are needed. The professional woman can do her bit as well as the working girl.