

The condition of women throughout Continental Europe is one that grates on one's feelings most exasperatingly, and one to which, however familiar it may become, Canadians can never be reconciled. It is bad enough to see women standing with signal flags at every railway crossing, but to see them acting as scavengers in the street, mixing mortar, sawing wood, and performing other unwomanly work, wrings one's very soul. "Woman's rights" in Europe strike one chiefly as woman's wrongs. I saw one old woman carrying heavy stones on her head out of a quarry. I saw another at Strasburg, near the magnificent new palace of the Kaiser, pushing a handcart before her and dragging behind her four others—empty, of course, but still a difficult task. A friend told me that he saw a woman and a cow harnessed together to a plough in a field. This I did not see, but I can well believe it, for I have repeatedly seen a woman and a dog harnessed to a waggon.

From the castle fortress of Ehrenbreitstein one may enjoy a magnificent view of the winding Mosel and of the vine-clad slopes of the Rhine. Yet to me all the beauty of these scenes was marred by the spectacle of a gang of women unloading military stores from railway cars, while five thousand German soldiers were polishing their bayonets and pipe-claying their belts in the adjacent barrack-yard.

The universal militarism of Europe is crushing the life out of the people, withdrawing millions of stalwart men from productive industries, training them at immense cost in the art of destruction, and rolling on the shoulders of millions of women burdens of toil that men should bear. Small wonder that mothers often weep when a male-child is born into the world, foreseeing for it only the terrors of the conscription and a bloody death in the passes of the Balkans or Carpathians.

Great Britain is the freest country in Europe, but it is not so free as Canada. To one brought up in this favoured land there is an irksome feeling of restraint in the rigid class distinctions of the Old World. The poor man is sadly handicapped in the race of life. The crowding of the wage-workers in the factory towns, and the grimy atmosphere and unsanitary condition in which they live, are in striking contrast to the favourable environment of the workingman in this new country. The condition of Hodge and Giles in Dorset and Devon is still far from realizing Joseph Arch's ideal paradise—the possession of "three acres and a cow."

In the great cities the drink curse inflicts its tyranny upon the masses to a degree unknown in Canada. In the most wretched purlieus of London, Liverpool and Glasgow the drink shops, those