

PASSPORTS *and* PATRIOTS



FIFTY thousand Canadian women in England are trying to come home. Five thousand endeavoured to get transportation on one ocean liner. How many are trying to cross in the other direction only the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs at Ottawa can say, for no one can set foot on an ocean liner without a passport and only through his office can these precious documents be obtained.

Since all able-bodied men are going overseas it is but natural that the women should want to go, too. They want to join their husbands, marry their fiancés, they want to care for their wounded sons or brothers, be as near as possible to their loved ones who are fighting, and, more than all, they want to do their share in this war—to nurse, drive ambulances, make munitions—to do one of the many things for which women are now being used to replace men.

England and France are very far away. We are safe here, warm, well-fed, but in spite of the danger of submarines, and air-raids; in spite of the shortage of coal and food, the passport office at Ottawa is deluged with applications from women who wish to leave comfort and ease behind them and face danger, discomfort, adventure.

But it would never do to permit all these women to cross the ocean when transportation is so difficult, and so the government has, within the last few months, imposed strict limitations to safeguard reckless women and see that none are allowed to go and become a burden on the motherland, to permit only the most essential war-workers to proceed to posts of duty. That is the underlying idea of the Order-in-Council, but it is so worded that in its literal interpretation the only women allowed to cross are Nursing Sisters, members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force or of Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service, proceeding upon duty with certificates from the Department of Militia and Defence; and V. A. D. nurses, on presenting a certificate signed by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Red Cross Society, or by the Assistant Commissioner of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and approved by the Department of Militia and Defence.

OF course exceptions are made, and the chief amongst these is in favour of women who want to marry soldiers. Nearly every day we hear of some girl who has obtained a passport without the slightest trouble on presentation of the necessary credentials to show that she is going to marry a soldier on her arrival in England, yet qualified war workers who have been engaged for service by officially recognized societies overseas are refused transportation!

Even the girls who got married just before their husbands went to the war, two years ago, don't think it is fair, but surely a girl can be a bride or wife and still be a qualified war-worker! England needs workers, and only women who are able to bear their share of the burden should cross the ocean just now. A passport has just been issued for the bride of the air-hero, Major Bishop, D.S.O., V.C., M.C., but usually it is only London weddings that are encouraged.

We know of one Canadian woman who has lived in France and, hearing of the great need for chauffeurs in connection with the French Military hospitals, has spent six months in qualifying herself to do this work, but even with a requisition from Paris for her services, stamped by the French War Office, and the best credentials, she has been trying for two months to obtain a passport without success, yet two of her acquaintances, delicate young girls, who suddenly decided to go overseas and marry young lieutenants in England,

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obtained passports without the slightest difficulty. The first woman planned to take for her outfit, a substantial suit of khaki, a warm overcoat of the same material, and heavy boots; the others laid in a large supply of elaborate hand-embroidered lingerie, the clothes they bought were all Paris models which the French call "fashions for neutrals," they are in no way equipped to do war-work of any kind, nor have they the slightest intention of doing it. When their young husbands have gone to France they will probably be quite ready to come home again and will find that transportation this way is very difficult to obtain.

We know of an English woman who bought a through ticket from China to London. She has travelled from China and all through Canada and now is not allowed to sail and is in great distress. It is hard for the authorities to discriminate amongst so many, but letters from England make us feel that no one, man or woman, should be allowed to cross without being well equipped to help win the war. Surely the prospective brides would not object to qualifying themselves to act as V. A. D. nurses or in some other useful capacity!

AN English lady writes:

"We used to have our tea in the garden, but now we cannot bear to sit comfortably and drink tea while we hear the big guns booming away across the Channel, and know that our brave boys are being killed; we have to carry the table indoors and shut out the sound. By night it is still worse, for the air-raids are far more frequent and more disastrous than the papers say. Many city people leave town each evening and sleep in the country away from the noise and terror. You can only be happy in London if you are doing useful war work that is sufficiently strenuous to tire you out completely, so that you sleep like the just and don't care whether the Zeppelin drops a bomb through your roof or not."

Not only in Canada are passports hard to obtain, the difficulty of leaving England is tremendous, and when we hear the tales of those who have crossed we do not wonder. After they have embarked there are long delays, and from the time they start to the time they reach Halifax Harbour there is always danger from submarines. People wear their life-belts all the time, the passengers as well as the crew must go through life-boat drill, and many women of wealth find it so hard to obtain a passport that they are content to travel steerage. Sometimes the liners are accompanied by a "mystery boat," painted in all sorts of futurist colours, so composed that it is hardly visible from a distance, and bristling with most effectively concealed guns. Their smokestacks can be lowered and it is impossible to tell in which direction the ship is heading. We hear, too, that the passengers are more than ordinarily interesting. Most of the men are returning from

the front, many are badly wounded, but all have been through greater experiences during the past year or two than were contained in all their previous lives. The women, too, have lived and suffered deeply. There is one lovely young girl who has nursed in a convalescent home in England for the past two years and is now coming home for a short leave. Her sweetheart died in France in the early days of the war, and she feels that she must return to "carry on."

ANOTHER passenger is a young woman who has crossed the ocean several times since war broke out. She is starting on her second lecture tour in the United States and tells graphic tales of the war work women are doing in England and France. Before the war she was an ardent suffragist and went to prison for "the cause." Now she is serving another cause with equal fervour and has filled the position of chauffeur and nurse in France and also worked on the land army in England. There is nothing concerning women's war work she can't tell us.

Another girl has been nursing in the American Ambulance in Paris. That lovely city is quite gay, she says, much brighter than London. The air defence is excellent. Paris is divided into districts, and all night long the air-ship in charge of your district hovers overhead like a guardian angel; its tiny blue light tells you that all is well, but should it sight an enemy plane it shows a red light, which tells you to take refuge in your cellars. Yes, she had enough to eat, she tells us, the war bread is very good and they had one hot meal a day. Of course they suffered from the cold in winter time, but with coal at \$90 a ton what could you expect? Most of the nurses wore heavy stockings over their boots.

Still another nurse is returning from Saloniki, where she was attached to the "Toronto University" base hospital, and her health and nerves have quite given away in that trying climate. She has had a long and perilous voyage dodging submarines in the Mediterranean, travelling by night and taking refuge in some port in the day-time. Nearly all the nurses have impaired health, she tells us, so it is doubly sad that 30 nurses who were going to relieve them went down in the "Transylvania" off the coast of Tunis. But whatever hardships they may have suffered, they all seem glad to have served and quite willing to return to duty as soon as their health permits.

ONLY one of the passengers—an Anglo-Canadian woman who has been in London for a year without doing any war work worth mentioning—says she hates England in war-time, loathes the war bread, is so happy to get back to Canada! She longed for it during the dreadful year in England; she thought she would never get her passport! Her married sister is still in England waiting for hers, though her soldier-husband has been wounded, discharged and sent back to Canada, she cannot return to join him. She was quite willing to travel steerage, if necessary—anything, anything to get to Canada and as far away from the horrors of war as possible!

"Life on the ocean wave" is not like that of which the poets sang in peaceful days. It is beset with the gravest perils, but who's afraid? If our country needs us we are willing—eager to go. It is difficult to enlist in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in

England from this side of the water, but we hear that six expert women chauffeurs from Winnipeg and a professional cook from Toronto have been accepted, and it is gratifying to know that Canadian women will not lack representation in the recent call that has been issued for ten thousand recruits.

