

PETTICOAT ARMY LIFE

Women Volunteers Have Systematic Organizations. Store Girls Have Companies

A petticoat army behind the firing lines would double the efficiency of the fighting forces, according to the National League for Woman's Service—and women, both in and out of that organization, are ready to prove to the skeptical that this is no exaggeration.

They point to the thousands of women, patriotically inspired, who rose at the first call, or suggestion of a call, for their services—women who actually shouldered guns and drilled and women who abandoned all other activities for target practice. What could they do in an actual battle? Not much, perhaps, and maybe a great deal. But actual fighting isn't the sole, nor even the primary, purpose of the petticoat army.

The petticoat army is not disorganized. It is divided into several different organizations, but each is working along well-directed, carefully-planned lines, with but slight conflict one with the other, and it is worth while noting that Washington has encouraged their efforts in every way.

There are many small, volunteer organizations, more or less local. Such, for instance, is the company formed by the girls working in a group of large department stores, and the association of society women who are practising to become sharpshooters.

There are hundreds of other ways that the petticoat army's work and influence can be brought to bear not only to increase the fighting efficiency of the soldiers, but to make their work less arduous and unpleasant.

What greater boon would a soldier ask of the women than that they shall look after his family while he is away? Than that these organized women furnish their wives with companionship and sympathetic help and take a keen interest in the children left behind?

What more would soldiers want for themselves than that the women "busy" themselves around their training and rest camps; give their tender devotion to those who are injured; provide wholesome pleasures meeting any possible problem of unemployment, if such problems are to be met. They have mapped out arrangements which provide suitable work for those who have to support themselves, and another line of duties for women of leisure.

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