

EMBATTLED WOMANHOOD

While Helping Nation at War, English Women
Are Winning Equality by Conquering
Man's Deepest Prejudice



Can any man look at this picture and question woman's physical courage? The "weaker sex"! "Pit brow" girls, long familiar in Lancashire, since the war have been employed also in South Wales. The woman in this picture is tipping a heavy coal truck. Little skill is required. Civilization is going backward when it is necessary for women to do work requiring brute strength. But that is not the point. The [text of this article] tells how this woman is making history.

WOMAN'S hour has come! One of the splendid things that have come out of the bloody carnage of war to challenge the admiration of the world is the heroic exhibition of physical strength and courage shown by the women of the belligerent countries. They are doing more than merely substituting at men's work. In England they are winning their struggle for equality with men. What the Pankhurst window smashers could not gain by their sensational antics, these women are quietly achieving in English shops, streets, and fields.

These embattled women are proving that they possess physical stamina, will power, heroism. By undertaking the sort of heavy physical labor from which Englishwomen as a class were freed many years ago, these cultivated ladies are giving the lie to that masculine shibboleth, "the weaker sex." Man has learned to respect woman's mind; henceforth he must respect her strength and courage. This is what feminists want: equality with men, equal citizenship.

Two hundred years ago the great mass of women in England were brutalized by drudgery and the meanest tasks, while fashionable women became the mere playthings of men. Meekness and submission were forced upon women by the church and the law. Lord Chesterfield declared that "women are only children of a larger growth." There was only one profession outside the home in which women could generally indulge.

The revolutions in America and France aroused a few women to agitate for their rights and lib-

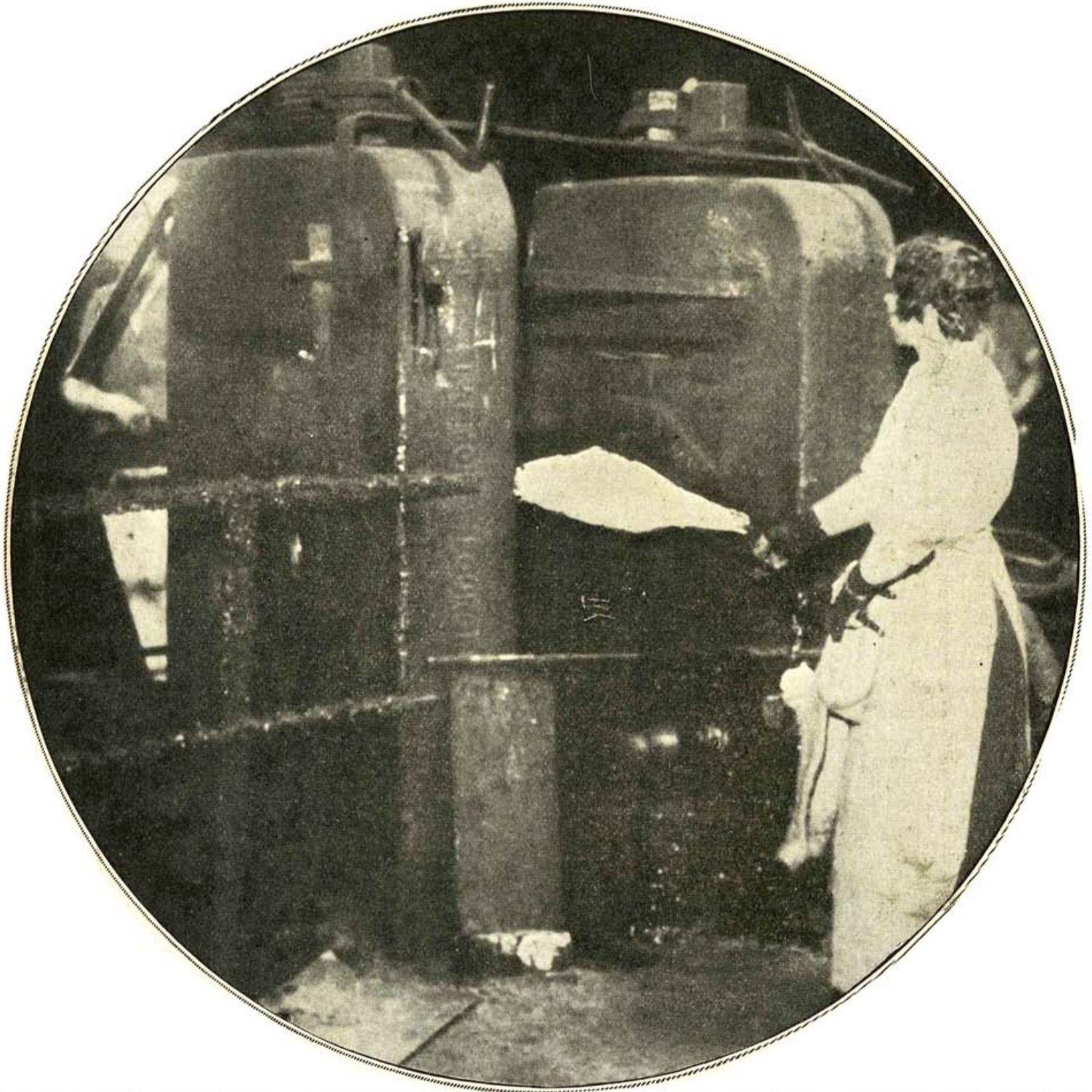
English Women



Labor being scarce in Devizes, the leading townswomen and their children formed a "Navy Brigade" to repair a dangerous roadway. Women passionately protested against their subjection, but were ridiculed as "bluestockings." Men insisted that women remain "delicate," "innocent," weak.

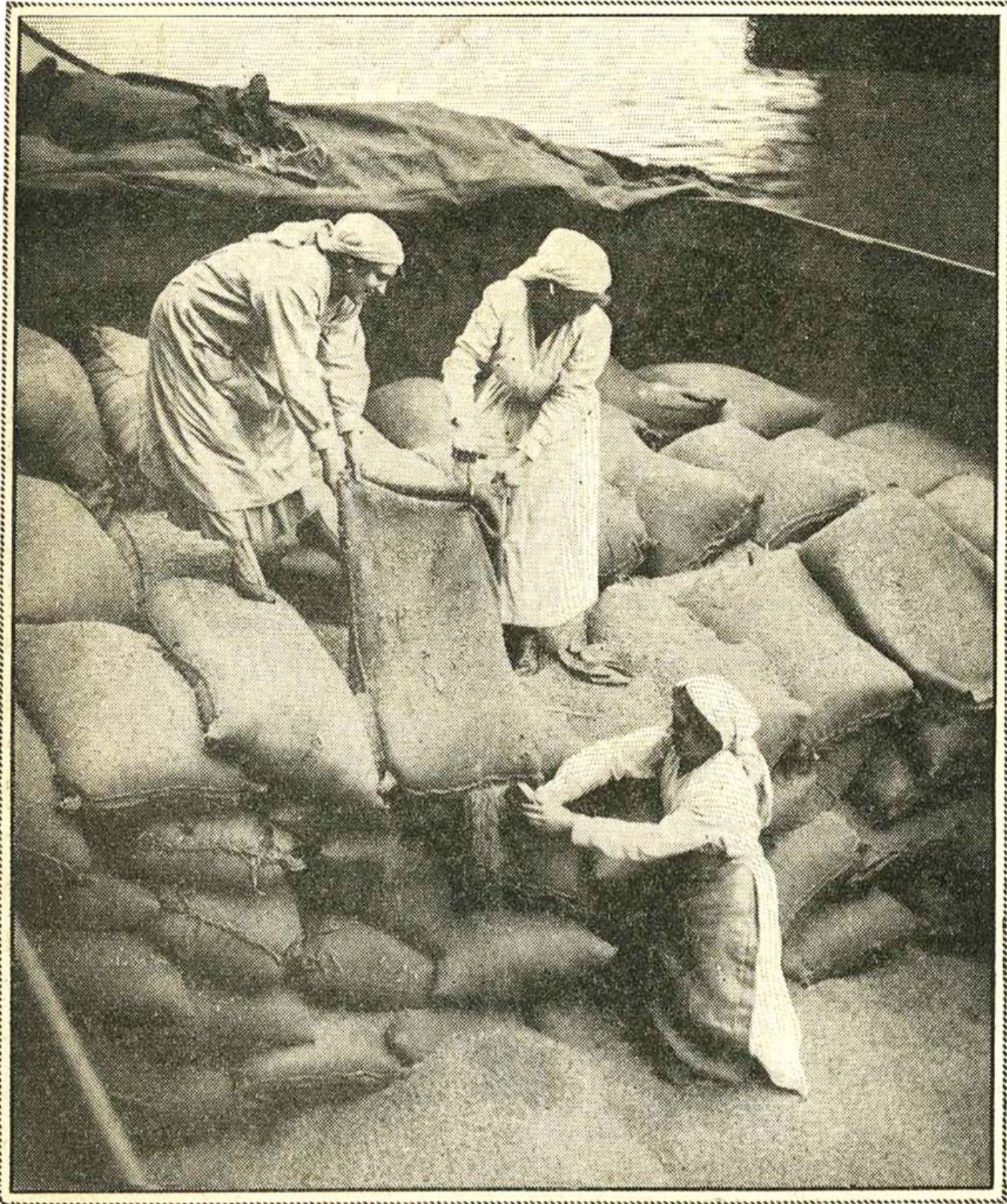
During the first half of last century women, forced to engage in trade, saw the need of education, yet Englishmen paid more attention to the training of their dogs and horses than to the training of their daughters. They were afraid of clever women. Woman's supreme duties were considered to be those which arose directly out of her sex.

During the latter half of the last century, however, women broke into nearly every field of masculine endeavor. Marriage was no longer considered a fated necessity. It was no longer contemptible to be an "old maid." In 1851 Englishwomen first asked for the vote, and in 1869 they first achieved it in municipal elections. A woman's college was established at Cambridge. Women were educated equally with men.



Can you imagine a woman leaving her tea table to work in the puddling room of a steel mill? This Sheffield woman has done it. Englishmen are at war! She handles molten steel being made into army shells. She catches the white hot plates as they emerge and returns them through the mill to the doubler. The work is arduous even for strong men. This woman doesn't like this work. She fainted from it at first. "I must do my duty," she declared.

English Women



Women "stevedores" are now unloading grain barges on the Thames, work demanding nerve and muscle



Here is a scene worthy of Rosa Bonheur! See how magnificently these two young daughters in Devonshire have risen to the occasion to perform the hardest kind of farm labor



This matron of the Barry Hospital does not squeal at sight of a mouse. Flesh from her arm was grafted to the arm of a wounded soldier

English Women

To-day woman's fight is for the vote. Stubbornly Englishmen have resisted it, maintaining that women are physically weaker than men, that only they who fight should vote, that all government is based upon police power. Now Englishwomen are capably handling this argument. Like their men at war, they are, some of them, taking dangerous risks; like soldiers, they are showing their power.

The story of the emancipation of women is the history of their advancement from sex subordination to companionship with men. They are proving that no means of expression of bodily and mental energy employed by man can rightfully be denied to them. It is now even argued that companionship in labor may produce a sisterhood of woman, which, because it is largely free of the racial and economic jealousies felt by men, might do even more than the brotherhood of man to bring peace to the world.

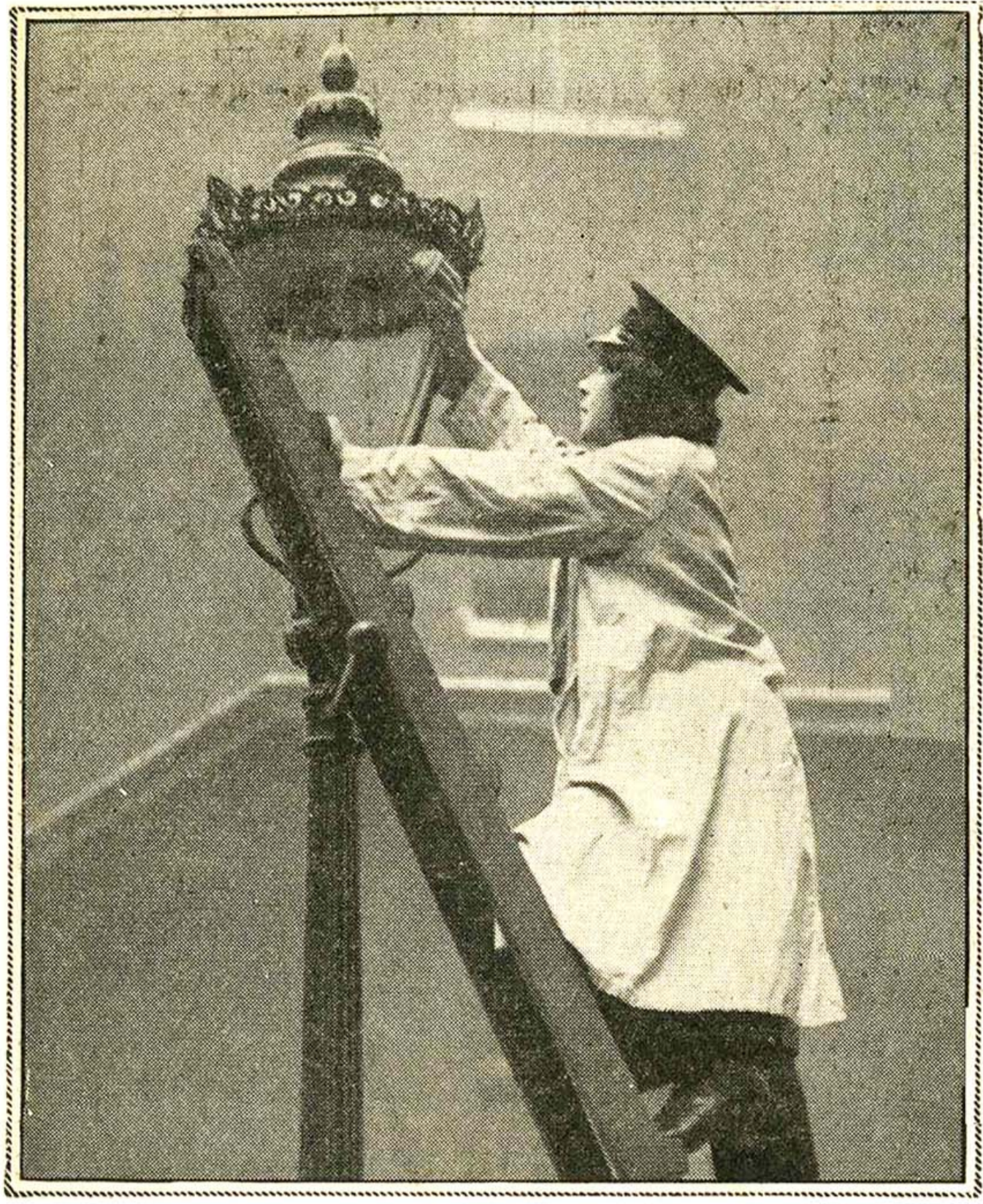


The Municipal Gas Works at Coventry says: "Strong women, if well housed and fed, can do strong men's work." Fifty such women now wash coke and wheel it up planks



Lady Howard of Llanelly, Wales, who is filling the unexpired term of the mayor, her husband, who died

English Women



This girl, employed by a London firm, cleans windows and street lamps. Her costume, which she calls her "overalls," is being copied



These women of culture are now doing all the dairy work on a Cornish farm. The girl at the right is the daughter of a naval officer

Collier's

October 28, 1916: p. 20

OldMagazineArticles.com