

The First World War Taught Us A Remarkable Thing



IN THAT FIRST great upheaval of the century, when we all chipped in to fight the war to end all wars, the American woman came face to face with an extraordinary fact. When the great shortage of *man-power* occurred, she discovered that *woman power* worked just as well! She discovered that she could do a great number of things in many fields that had hitherto been sacred precincts of the male. She could swing a meat cleaver in a butcher shop, or handle a switch in a railroad yard, attend the sick and dying on the battlefield itself. She discovered her own latent capabilities—that was the overwhelming fact, the great revelation of our day and age. It was directly responsible for the first female revolution of the 20th century . . .

FROM THE VERY beginning of the century certain groups of women had fought tooth and nail for the right to vote. But they were small groups, and scattered, and they did not have even the support of the majority of women. The war changed that. When American woman realized that she could do a man's work, she knew she was entitled to a voice in government. The great enemy of universal suffrage, of course, had always been the male of the species. But with the advent of war he too had to admit that his wife had earned the right to cast a vote for those who would govern her. In the year of grace, 1920, American woman was granted suffrage.

PAGEANT

February, 1951: p. 55