


WRIGHT'S
for
Defence



WRIGHT'S
COAL TAR
SOAP

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THEY COUNT IN THOUSANDS

Red Cross Workers Make Surgical Dressings

IN the winter of that unhappy year, 1939, some Auckland women were attending V.A.D. classes; on the evening of September 1, two days before the Empire declared war on Germany, some of them were sitting their transport examination—trembling from a worse cause than examinationitis and one week later, on Friday, September 8, six of them met for the first time as a sewing circle, led by Mrs. Dorothy Landon, to make pyjamas, slippers, hot-water bottle covers, and any other comforts they could think of to send to the military hospitals in England.

Yesterday I went to see these sewing women. I found they have changed their name, their habitat, and their work, but they are still the same women (four of them—one is away ill, and another has gone into an essential industry) with an additional 40 or more, and Mrs. Landon is still their leader. They are now known as the Surgical Section of the Comforts Committee of the Red Cross and they are supplied with materials and patterns for their work by the Joint Council of the Order of

St. John and the New Zealand Red Cross in Wellington; the St. John Surgical Section in Auckland is similarly supplied. Early this year, these women were burnt out of their home, and now they work in premises lent to the Red Cross by Sir Ernest Davis, chairman of the Auckland Provincial Committee of the Joint Council. It is an enormous room, much sub-divided by screens and curtains, and the path from one end to the other winds a tortuous way between machines, chairs, spindles, packing cases and enormous piles of clothing. For this room is used temporarily by the Surgical Section two days a week, the Spinning Section another two days, and the Refugee Section (packing clothing for distribution to distressed people overseas) another two days.

No More Pyjamas

The members of the Surgical Section no longer make pyjamas, slippers, etc.—at least, not officially, and not in section time. What they do at home is a horse of a different colour, and a pretty substantial horse, too (for instance, I discovered that, as a private war effort, these women subscribe regularly for the welfare of a prisoner-of-war, whom they adopted through the Red Cross). During their first six months, they bought all their own materials, made their own patterns, and made the garments anywhere, at home, in the group, or at friends' houses. Since March, 1940, they have been officially organised. Under the leadership of Mrs. Landon and Mrs. L. Neville, they amalgamated with the Comforts Committee, of which Mrs. H. Lobb is the chairwoman, and have since had their patterns and materials distributed by the Comforts Committee after they are received from headquarters in Wellington. Mrs. Landon and Mrs. A. Warring are this year joint leaders of the section, and Miss V. Collard is deputy-leader.

These 40 women (sometimes there are more of them) make all kinds of surgical bandages for use in hospitals at home and overseas. Great numbers, for instance, go to the Pacific, others to base hospitals in the Middle East, and others to military hospitals in New Zealand. They work at huge tables covered with sheets; for although everything is sterilised at the hospitals before use, it is necessary to keep all bandages and dressings as clean as possible. I watched them working, and I was astonished at their speed; they told me that it takes about six minutes to make the smallest and simplest dressing, about 45 minutes to make the most complicated. Machines (most of which are lent or given) in a row along by the windows were whirring, a group of women at one table were cutting out; and another group stitching edges. The particular article being mass-produced at the moment was an anaesthetic mask. I looked at it with distaste, thinking of the last (I mean the *last*) time I wore one. An innocent-looking square of padded white material, a slit in the middle, tapes on the corners: and it takes about 13 minutes to make by mass production methods; they turn out from 50 to 60 a day.

But watch them making dysentery pads and burns dressings. Flat pads of

(continued on next page)



has not changed.

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