

LUTON LASSES FOR THE LAND.

Town's Recruiting Demonstration on Saturday.



Saturday was Maiden's Day in Luton, and the girls in smocks, breeches and leggings made a brave show in the town, in the appeal for recruits for the splendid Women's Land Army. A public meeting was held outside the Town Hall, and there was a stirring call to those of the large audience of women and girls who could do so, to join the land workers. The response was very satisfactory for many recruits were afterwards obtained.

Some time ago a committee was formed in Luton to organise the demonstration, and it was most appropriate that the Mayor as a farmer should be chairman. Other members are the Mayoress, Miss Brown of Hitchfield (hon. sec.), Mrs. Crawley, Mr. B. Hartop, Mr. Pike, Mr. James Baker, Mrs. Carruthers, Mrs. Ebbs, Mrs. Shams, and Mrs. Couprea. There was a strong desire that Luton should go one better than Bedford, where a demonstration was held a week previously, especially in view of the fact that the Army is taking so many male farm workers. On Saturday a big platform was erected in front of the Town Hall, and the front of the building bore several banners bearing words of appeal, such as: "Men in the field; women in the fields." Before the meeting the contingent of land girls paraded the town, which was crowded, and brought quite a number of recruits. They afterwards took up positions behind the speakers on the platform. The Mayor presided, and amongst those supporting were members of the Committee, Lady Trustram Eve, Miss Hyde Harrison, Miss Dymock (organising secretary for Beds), and Miss Bedford, a land worker. Miss Bedford was one of the National Service Corps (honorary teachers), which came from London. She has been working for a long time on Mr. Sammie's Manor Farm at Caddington. She and her colleagues worked in snow and hail, and slept in a leaky barn until accommodation could be found for them. They struggled on day after day, and on the first day sowed a big field. Their employer could not speak too highly of them.

At the outset the Mayor said that at least 80,000 women were wanted at once. There was a great shortage of men on the farms, and he appealed to the women of Luton to do their best. The prospects for the next harvest were never better, but the labour was needed, and he knew Luton would not fall behind.

LADY EVE'S APPEAL.

Lady Eve was then called upon, and had a hearty reception. She declared that it largely depended on the women to win the war. The trenches were to be filled here as well as in France, and every man who went should leave a woman here to do his work as far as possible. The Government would not ask for 500,000 more farm workers if it was not necessary, and women must now go into work which was of the first importance in the war. England now produced more food than ever, but they knew what work the growing of food entailed. Therefore the appeal to women came with more urgency than ever. The men had to keep the line in France, and most of the women at home were anxious about someone out there. Those men had to be fed, and how could the women keep back in the face of such an appeal for their own loved ones? Of course great numbers of women were doing splendid work on munitions, and where they were expert at this work the Land Army would not take them. But there were women in work which, however good in peace time, was not of the first importance in war. Food growing was of the first importance now, and there were thousands more acres under cultivation this year. The girls must

KEEP THE LINE

at home. She was not going to make them all

sorts of promises, for she knew our girls better than to think they would be persuaded by soft promises. They had to be convinced that they were wanted. It was hard work and they had to stick it, and not give up at the first moment when things went wrong. There was no place for the wrong sort of girl; but she believed Luton would turn out the right sort. They had to do men's work. They had to get up early, and the work was often muddy and dirty. It was a very healthy life but a hard one, and the pay was not like that on munitions. But against that they could put the fact of the healthy life. After six months of it a girl would not look like the same girl at all. Lady Eve went on to give details as to holidays, uniform, etc., and spoke of the benefit of the life to girls after the war, especially those who would want to go to the Colonies. She hoped Luton girls would do their bit in the war.—(applause).

Miss Bedford made a strong appeal, from her three years' actual experience, and agreed that it was not all honey. The food question, however, was one of the main arteries to the heart of Britain, and she asked the women not to let work of national importance to come forward.

THE SPORTING GIRL

"It is I want," cried Miss Bedford. "The girl who can keep her lips up when everything goes dead wrong—(applause)—and so wins the respect and admiration of us all. It is the cry of the old country for you, and I am sure had it were necessary we would even take the rifle"—(applause).

Alderman Staddon first directed his appeal to the men present to give up their women folk. He also said that the question had been raised that the salary was not equal to that on munitions or the hat trade. He denied that there was any intention to cripple the hat trade, but said there was a suggestion that some of the women could now be spared for six months or more. At present they were tied to their work rooms year in and year out. Six months on the farm and 10s. a week would mean 1s. a week more in health. And in the hat trade he found that week the wages of some women had gone down from 30s. to 2s. 6d. They were wrong in remaining during

THE DULL SEASON.

Some could be spared, and it was their duty in the interests of the country to go on the land. Luton could beat Bedford easily, and they did not want a description of women. They should have four or five hundred volunteers in the county. He intended to do all he could for the hat trade, for it must keep efficient for the after-war situation, but they must first get on with the war.—(applause).

Councillor Primett, in a homely speech, referred to his past recruiting speeches to the men, and to his added pleasure in appealing to the women, who were actually being the men in many ways. He advised girls who thought they were not strong enough to try the work before giving in, and he added, "It is one way to get a husband. The young ladies who will get the best husbands will be those who have joined the Land Army"—(laughter).

Mr. James Baker proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor, and spoke of the splendid and willing work of the land girls on Lady Wornher's estate at Luton Hoe.

Mr. B. Hartop seconded, and the resolution was carried.

The meeting over, the land girls again got busy, and recruits commenced to flow, among them being lasses of excellent physique.

THE RESULT.

We understand that about 80 recruits were obtained, which is regarded as satisfactory in a centre like Luton.