

The Office Window

The scene of activity, as seen from the window during the past week, has been the north-west corner of John and Barrie Streets, where bulldozer and burning have removed the old gaol, the old fire hall and the rear portion of the old house. We have no memoirs of the old gaol. If anyone has, and they wish them recalled, this is the time. Come in and tell us about them. Doubtless the firemen moved out of that old fire hall with mingled feelings. It is always a pleasure to move into the new, but those boys, and, we presume, upon occasion, their wives too, have had good times together in that big room upstairs. Antiquated surroundings and the lack of nice equipment do not interfere with sociability. . . . The old fire hall was one of the old buildings of the town. As mentioned before in this column, it originally was the barn at the rear of the hotel which stood on the property which is now Mr. F. Magani's fine home. When the late Mr. Samuel Lukes made the property into a home, he did not want the barn, and the town needed a building to house its fire-fighting equipment and he gave the barn to the municipality for its removal from the property. That occurred a great many years ago. Mr. Lukes owned the flour mill here, later operated by his sons, in the building which is now the United Farms plant. . . . Without doubt, there is many an association which could be recalled with that old building, but for the women of the district it goes back in memory to the days when that big room upstairs was the Red Cross room. It may have been that during the First Great War, but that predated our knowledge, however memory of 1939-40, when the comparatively few willing work-

ers were presented with lists of dozens of coats, suits, dresses, dressing gowns, pyjamas, men's shirts, knitted sweaters of various styles and sizes, socks, scarfs, etc., to be made, together with patterns and very detailed instructions about making, sizing and packing these articles, and — that absolutely empty, dusty big room, is still quite vivid in memory. There wasn't money on hand to use for supplies. Red Cross here was as unprepared for war as was our country. We women carried from our homes and borrowed from others, the tables upon which to work and our own sewing machines were taken to the Red Cross room for service. Recall that two of us, by virtue of our offices, had to sign the order sheets, and as the debt grew, so did our concern. Who was responsible for the then several thousand dollars owing headquarters for materials? We went down to Jarvis Street to find out about it and were told that our work was beautiful and that, while they hoped we would yet be able to pay for the materials used, not to stop ordering and working, because we who signed the orders would not be held personally responsible. . . . Realizing that the public had to be made aware of the work being accomplished, if money was to be raised, the then new and lovely Holland Theatre was pressed into service and the theatre was packed with interested parents and friends while the school children served as girl and boy models for the lovely children's dresses and suits (remember those grey flannels) made up in that big room, while other clothing, some of the beautiful knitted pieces and the loveliest layettes imaginable, the latter the work of one lady, were on display. The admission fee to these evenings was trifling in comparison to the ever mounting debt, but the purpose was accomplished and soon money-raising events for Red Cross began to build up a fund, and the financial worries of a zero bank account and fast mounting expenditures

ceased. . . . But despite war and a shortage of money, one recalls that old room and the people who worked in it as a happy memory. There were the very capable and those not so capable, but very willing to work, who devoted every afternoon to doing what they could do. The experienced did the cutting of materials, and we always recall one little lady who not only knew the art of tailoring but had the ability to instruct and we learned to press every seam as we worked and to tape a sleeve to fit the armhole, then press and shrink it until perfectly flat before putting in, to get that professional look. We really did turn out beautiful work and, like the knitters, suppose it helped save war nerves. . . . The old buildings in the town with an unused room are now almost all gone, with the second floor of the town hall being about the only one remaining. That is a fine big room and, if kept in good shape, could surely be used for several purposes which do not require so much space as the community centre, or when that building is not available.