

“Our Girls in Wartime” (1915)

Abstract

This cartoon with accompanying little ditty is meant to humorously comment on the changing gender roles, as men were conscripted and sent to the front, leaving women to take on more and more duties and jobs that had traditionally been in the domain of men. Here, women are shown as coach-drivers, barbers, snow shovelers, coal-deliverers, police, and window-washers. The tone, however, is as much patronizing—with a sort of children's book cant to the poem—as it is laudatory.

Source



Our girls in wartime

When there's a labor shortage,
 our girls do everything!

Oh yes!

Wherever there's work to be done

- This is what I'll illustrate -

They're there!

Look, there the little girl is defiantly
 driving her “Bolle,” cheeky and cute:

“White horse, go!”

Ringing the bell, splashing

She swings her whip:

“Tally ho!”

Can girls shave too?
Why, you should try it!
Take a seat!
And now it goes chop, chop,
The stubble flies from the cheek:
Scratch scratch!

Even in winter, for shoveling,
Well—who could do it better!
They show up!
No matter how thick the snow lies,
Marie swings the shovel, broom, spade, pickaxe.

Everything they undertake, they succeed at!
Even as train dispatchers,
they're great!
Without swearing and rushing
they slam the door shut in front of your nose.

Even Kraetke* can be happy
about his pretty, new postillions!
Money, letters, product samples
are delivered to Müllers above
and to Cohns!

And who could ever think
that they also swing the baskets
heavy with coal!
“Mother, have you heard yet?
The young lady has brought the coal!
Pay her the money!”

Even “security and order”
Heitza! Are now women's business!
Have you noticed?
Do you want to go on nightly rampages?
Hey, how quickly they'll arrest you!
No kidding!

Window cleaning maids in droves!
You can recognize them by their jaunty
step and gait.
Look! In short, plump panties
Minna, Agnes, and Röschen wash
Everything until it is shiny!

And one doubter still wants to know:
“whether a girl can sweep chimneys?”
She'll gladly follow your beckoning
And climb up on the roof in her black make-up!

M. Brinkmann

*Reinhold Kraetke was the administrative head of the Postal Ministry

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