

PART II. LABOUR SUPPLY

CHAPTER III

RECRUITING AND INDUSTRY

THE first problem before the United Kingdom in August 1914, after the Navy had been mobilized and the Expeditionary Force had been dispatched, was to raise armies. Great Britain, with traditions of war in which her land forces, even if adding a decisive weight to the onset of her Allies, had always been numerically small, depended upon a small Expeditionary Force and upon her Fleet. Mons, Charleroi, the Retreat on Paris, and the engagements on the Aisne, made it clear that Britain must forget that she was an island power. Her frontiers were no longer, as her sea-captains in other wars had declared, her enemy's coast-line, but a land-line—a sparsely-held, bitterly pressed line in the heart of the country of her nearest Ally. Great Britain, that had thought of armies in thousands, had suddenly not only to think of, but to constitute, them in hundreds of thousands.

It is doubtful if at this point compulsion for military service was seriously considered. It is certain that, if the only question involved was that of obtaining the required recruits quickly, it was unnecessary to consider the problem seriously. When the appeals for the first 100,000 went up, the difficulty was not to find 100,000 but to choose the most suitable. The first rush was universal. All classes, and what, from the point of view of what follows, was even more important, all types of industry gave equally. The nation as a whole set a gigantic seal of approval upon the action of the Government.

But the price paid was high. The industries vital to munitions production may perhaps be stated in the following order, though the order constantly shifted with the varying requirements of war :

Coal and other mines.
Iron and Steel.