

"Where are our muskets, Mr. Whitney?"

"What have you been doing all this time?"

"We want those guns at once!"

The men were from the War Department. Two years before, they had ordered 10,000 muskets from Eli Whitney. They needed the guns badly. For the War of 1812 had begun. The army needed weapons to fight the British.

And where were those weapons? The first batch—4000—should have been ready months before. Not one had been turned over. No wonder the men from Washington were angry!

Whitney pointed to a table. On it were piles of musket parts.

"Each pile holds a different musket part," explained Whitney. "Look at this pile. These are flintlocks. And all of them are exactly alike.

"Now *this* pile is triggers. And all of them are exactly alike too. In the other piles are barrels and stocks and . . ."

"And all of them are just alike," finished one visitor.

"Yes," said Whitney.

The War Department men only smiled. Parts just the same? How silly! They knew that each part was made by hand. Each was carefully cut and shaped. But each was a little

bigger or smaller than the next. And so a musket had to be carefully fitted together. No one could pick up just any part and expect it to fit.

But Whitney began to do just that! He picked up a piece from this pile and that pile. In a short time he had ten finished muskets.

"There, gentlemen," he said proudly. "There are your first ten muskets. You will get others soon."

"Look, Mr. Whitney," said one man. "This must be some trick. How did you get all those parts to fit?"

"That is a trick I have been working on for the last two years," said Whitney. "The trick is simple. I make the parts by machine. And that was what took time. First I had to make the machines. Now that I have them, I can make any number of parts. And I can put them together in no time."

What he said was true. Soon he finished all 10,000 guns. The War Department ordered more and more. In fact, most of the muskets used in the war were made by Eli Whitney.

This great inventor had found a better way to make guns. And not just guns. Anything with many parts could be made this way. Today almost everything is. All big factories use Whitney's "trick." That is one reason why America leads the world in making machines.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. **Whitney's visitors were angry because he had turned over**
 - A only 10,000 muskets
 - B only 4000 muskets
 - C no muskets at all

2. **At the time of this story the United States was fighting**
 - A England
 - B France
 - C Germany

3. **Whitney's musket parts were**
 - A stored in baskets
 - B piled on a table
 - C stacked in a corner

4. **When Whitney said that all the flintlocks were just alike, the men**
 - A looked more hopeful
 - B did not believe him
 - C became very angry

5. **Parts made by hand were not**
 - A very strong
 - B of the same size
 - C smooth enough

6. **While the visitors watched, Whitney put together**
 - A two muskets
 - B five muskets
 - C ten muskets

7. **When the visitors saw this, they thought Whitney was**
 - A losing his head
 - B playing a trick
 - C making a mistake

8. **Whitney said that his secret was that he**
 - A used fewer parts
 - B made parts by machine
 - C copied old parts

9. **Whitney said that making his machines took about**
 - A a year
 - B two years
 - C five years

10. **The War Department must have been pleased with Whitney's muskets, because it**
 - A paid him extra
 - B ordered more
 - C rented his machines