

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

MILITARY PACIFISTS: PLAYING SOLDIERS: THE ARMY OF THE  
UNEMPLOYED: CASH OR KIND.

AMONG the minor battles that are being waged in the interests of world peace, one that possesses a certain desultory interest is the dispute between rival collegiate factions as to the appropriateness of giving official approval to petitions for disarmament and at the same time providing official equipment and encouragement for bigger and better battalions. How can we, (or why should we not), ask the undergraduate journalists, petition Ottawa or Geneva to urge the nations to disarm when our intellectual and spiritual guides give tacit or vocal approval to the O. T. C? Like numerous other problems that are pondered in our higher seminaries, the question is without inherent importance and the answers for the most part devoid of either wisdom or learning; the discussion, in short, is true to its origin by being purely academic. When, recently, still another appeal for recruits went out from an institution that had not previously been conspicuous for soldiering except in times of war, one of the few peace-petitioners who refused to subscribe his name also to a receipt for the King's shilling is reported to have enquired: "What, join the Army—with a disarmament conference in February?" It may be surmised, however, that neither the next peace conference nor the next war will be noticeably advanced or retarded by a statistical examination of the military strength of our non-military colleges. Earnest seekers after peace are wont to declare that to maintain or even merely to join a military establishment is to nourish the aftermath of hatreds that followed the reaping of the last great war, and to ensure a bountiful crop for the next. The cadets retort that *they* are the peace-makers: that the military are no more militarist than the pacifists are truly peaceful. It is their frequently proclaimed contention that war and the methods and machinery of war are so distasteful to them that they are willing to suffer the humiliations and discomforts of mimic warfare in order to save the world at large from the harsher realities of genuine conflict. This justification, though often sincerely felt and as sincerely uttered, may be dismissed as the honest enthusiasm of youthful

partisanship. Nor can we feel entirely satisfied with the more moderate contentions of those who maintain that the best way to ensure peace is to prepare for war, and that therefore every true patriot should give his active personal support to a necessary and useful function of the state. One may disagree with this belief without being committed to agreement with those who maintain that, if a nation wishes peace, she should prepare for peace, and that if she prepares for war, she will undoubtedly have war. Still less need one be persuaded that to preach or support a doctrine of general preparedness gives proof of a concealed or overt wish to see either oneself or one's country display prowess in battle. But even while the nations are preparing to fight over the terms on which they may be willing to disarm, it may still be contended that the responsibility for preparedness may best be left to those who have made it their business, and that those who take up soldiering as a hobby are often attracted by something more obvious than a potential future sacrifice.

Whatever progress may be made at Geneva or the Hague, the day is surely far distant when there will be no further use for the distinguished and honourable calling of the professional soldier. In the commissioned ranks at least, long and arduous training is necessary to produce the requisite knowledge and skill; and certain non-commissioned positions demand a high degree of technical competence. So long as there are locks on our houses and police on the streets of our cities, there will be need for a superior protective force for national emergency; and as knowledge advances it becomes ever more necessary for this force to be specially trained. But professional devotion to such a vocation does not imply a desire to carry its responsibilities to the extreme. Paradoxical though it may seem, there need be neither cowardice nor inconsistency in a professional soldier who hopes that there may never be a war and that, if a war should occur, his regiment may be retained for garrison duty. A soldier may be assumed to choose his profession for the same general mixture of reasons that attracts other men to other walks of life. Most duties, once we settle down to them, are matters of routine with certain daily tasks and associations, certain limits of authority and movement, and men choose them by striking the most expedient balance between desire and opportunity. Crises and excitement, if not unwelcome at the outset, soon appear as troublesome exceptions, and even in occupations that are counted by insurance companies as "special risks", the desire for a quiet life soon becomes paramount. The soldier's life, in particular, is one in which discipline, method, and uniformity are pre-eminent;

and there is nothing more disturbing to these than the incalculable exigencies of war. In any war, the lack of sympathy between headquarters and the front line has been sufficient proof of this: professional calculations are most annoyingly upset by casualties that prevent the proper return of statistics. Small boys may dream of being soldiers and winning battles single handed, but professional soldiers are no more anxious to encounter honourably avoidable trouble than professional pugilists to court any avoidable punishment when necessity drives them to the ring. The small boy's other heroes—such as policemen and firemen—seek rather a quiet life than the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth, and leave the deliberate quest for danger to the unsatiated thirst of the amateur on his hobby horse. It was, naturally, a volunteer fire brigade that resorted to incendiary measures in order to prove itself superior in alertness and efficiency to its hated rivals in the next village. The professional fireman responds to the bell with dependable competence; but without losing speed he is able to find breath enough to curse the alarm for interrupting his brass-polishing, his poker game, or his sleep. Armies, like fire departments, are often most valuable when least conspicuous, and a professional soldier whose business it is to stand prepared for emergencies may as honestly hope to fade peacefully into the sere and yellow leaf as a police commissioner may dream of empty jails or a government psychiatrist of a populace entirely sane.

With the amateur, on the other hand, it is possible to argue, from the very fact that he is indulging an avocation rather than pursuing a vocation, that he will be seized with the spirit of adventure that belongs to all vacation exercises, and seek factitious opportunities to play with his somewhat dangerous toys. Reprimands for excessive zeal are bestowed more commonly upon special constables than upon regular policemen, and fire-arms are less likely to "go off" in the hands of trained and authorized persons than with those who feel impelled to have them ready "just in case". In the United States, for example, increasing ownership of revolvers and similar lethal weapons among professionally non-combatant citizens has not resulted in any observable diminution of homicide, but has rather enlarged the probability, *per capita*, of intercepting a casual bullet. Even the most skilful and highly trained of amateurs are commonly found to be possessed with an enthusiasm entirely foreign to the professional. The amateur photographer is known not by his inferior work but by his indiscriminate shooting; the surgeon who is a guest in your house will not volunteer to operate on members of your family.

but if he happens also to be a gardener, he will give an hour to prune your roses. And so it may be contended that the amateur soldier may be led, by the same praiseworthy desire to exercise an extraneous accomplishment, to encourage at least unconsciously and indirectly the provision of a serious call for his unused talent and an opportunity to get his light from under a bushel.

Such an assumption, however, presupposes the absence of more obvious and immediate attractions in peace-time soldiering. It has occasionally happened that men who were able to find consolation in an active interest in the militia before and after the war discovered that they could best serve their country in a civil capacity during the intervening hostilities. And while there was an admirable response from members of militia and territorial units, it would be rash to assert that their eagerness was greater than that of men who had not previously been drilled. The writer happened to be present at a recruiting station, shortly after the outbreak of war, where all territorials volunteering for service were required to report in uniform. The great majority of candidates appeared to be in mufti; they explained, usually, that they were inexperienced in military matters, but that if there should be any occasion at a war for those who could drive trucks or shoe horses or dig ditches or do any of the thousand things, not including forming fours, that are required of the modern soldier on active service, then they would like to help. At recent memorial parades it has been noted that men with overseas service are commonly not in uniform, the spectacular element being provided, with commendable precision and efficiency, by youthful companies of militia and cadets.

There is a natural and proper attraction to a young man in being smartly dressed, and in having his body well controlled as a unit in a well co-ordinated machine. Still more attraction lies in being dressed with conspicuous smartness, and in having the authority and the ability to co-ordinate the movements of others. At an impressionable age and in impressionable eyes civilian garb has never been able to compete with the drabbest of khaki fatigue kits, let alone with whip-cord and leggings; just as the policeman's blandishments are received more favourably than those of the milkman. And there is a certain pleasure in being privileged to impose one's will upon those who in other circumstances might be inclined to display active resentment; which explains why certain men elect to become traffic-police. Once, in another clime, it fell within the writer's duty to discuss with a parent the university course of a son who was determined to elect what was known as "Military Science". Reasons for this preference were solicited,

and proved with becoming frankness to be as follows: the boy looked well in uniform; parades and camps were more healthful, and more profitable, than lectures and laboratories; in the event of war, some provision should have been made for comfort and emolument, and where orders are concerned, it is more blessed to give than to receive. This last, indeed, explains the chief difficulty in the average Officers' Training Corps, especially in our colleges. Being an officer is more important than having the training, which is not an insurmountable obstacle to young men whose main business is to circumvent examinations. Consequently there is often a plethora of subalterns and a corporal's guard of "other ranks", who put in a sufficient number of perfunctory attendances at lectures or parades to qualify for their pay and for an annual camp.

To accuse these boys of unrestrained militarism is absurd. They are simply accepting a convenient opportunity to do those things which most of them would in any circumstances find means to accomplish in one way or another, as an outlet to the natural healthy instincts of their age and sex. And the most natural of these is the desire to congregate with their own kind. Much needless worry could be saved if we remembered that for associations with a purpose the chief purpose is usually association. We like to meet our fellows, and to give ourselves distinction from the world without and the distinctions of an ordered hierarchy within. To join the O. T. C. may be regarded as a social act like becoming a mason, and a crack regiment or a senior arm of the service confers an elevation comparable to that of a shriner. To advance from lance-corporal to lieutenant-colonel implies a progression parallel to that from junior deacon to lord high potentate of the benevolent and protective order of hippopotami, and the successive degrees are correspondingly valued by the recipient and his friends. The cadet companies are simply aggregations of healthy young men who want to get together and do something and be somebody. They acquire health, and a certain measure of social experience and of self-control. They divert surplus energy into harmless channels, and in the event of war they are probably not much worse equipped than their fellows who have devoted their time to the pursuit of the specialized knowledge that war increasingly demands, or to the professional soldiers whose best laid plans are so rapidly nullified by the diversion of warfare to science, engineering and manufacture. The most useful acquirement a young man can take from college is to have learned how to learn. And one of the best ways of doing this is to follow the somewhat discredited method of working honestly at the academic studies that are set before him. The most con-

spicuously successful soldier of the writer's immediate acquaintance was notorious for his disregard of the appeal—much stronger then than now—to train in preparation for the inevitable next war. When the Great War came to his attention, in 1914, he interrupted his studies and enlisted as a private. Applying to soldiering the same diligent attention that he had given to the work for which he attended college, he returned to his studies after four years of active service and quietly discarded the embellishments of high commissioned rank and a colourful string of British and foreign decorations. War offered a job to be done, and it was taken as it came, to the best of his general training and ability. If another war should be allowed to darken the earth, such men, with trained minds and self discipline, will be more than ever valuable. The others will do no harm, for their preconceived notions of warfare will be rendered out of date on the first day of hostilities; scientific and mechanical knowledge, and experience in business and transportation, will be infinitely more important than any merely military training. But in the meantime, for those who want to be soldiers, let them be. The desire is natural to their years, though it is cause for wonder that some of their leaders have not yet outgrown it. Nor, from those who have never, in soldiers' parlance, "heard a shot fired in anger," is it easy to accept the solemn unction with which the glories of a soldier's life are depicted, with appeals to valour couched in language reminiscent of the war-time ferocity of sewing-circles, base chaplains, and camp-fire girls. But the boys mean no harm, and will do no harm. To condemn them or even their amateur militaristic elders is to be with those who demand that there shall be no more tin soldiers for our children to play with. Those who exalt and those who deplore our modern train-bands might do well to remind themselves that the disputed maxim "Be Prepared" is the very appropriate motto of boy scouts.

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**S**INCE every nation appears to believe that disarmament is an excellent policy to be first established by one of its neighbours, the expensive necessity of maintaining a permanent military establishment might possibly be met by matching it against the equally troublesome problem of what to do with the unemployed. In every newspaper one sees a constantly recurring pair of debates. The first, whether standing armies are to be maintained because they are necessary for safety, or abandoned by reason of their enormous and unproductive cost; the other, whether any form of labour for those not provided with employment in the ordinary

competitive market is not merely a disguised variant of patronage and the dole. No one to-day is rash enough to proclaim a belief in the justice of a mechanical solution by *laissez-faire*, and there are few people who would contend that the obligation to feed and clothe all law-abiding members of the community is not met more adequately by an exchange of activity for money than by the pauperizing method of offering subsidies for idleness. But so far the obvious practical difficulties have diverted attention from the possibilities of reconciling two equally obvious sets of generally unrelated conditions. In the first place, work that is designed to relieve unemployment is by definition unnecessary according to the operation of economic law, and in practice is found to be generally wasteful and unsatisfactory even as a temporary expedient of charitable relief. Relief employment has often been found to produce a doubtful good at the expense of a certain loss, which must ultimately be carried by the tax-payer. From the standpoint of the man who pays for the munificent gestures of politicians, it may be preferable to suffer an immediate appropriation of cash than to be committed to the purchase and subsequent maintenance of a herd of white elephants. Soldiers, on the other hand, though not commonly employed upon useful tasks, are at least comfortably and economically provided with adequate food, clothing and shelter, and there appears to be no reason except convention why the health and energy of a standing army should not be employed and developed by organized responsibility for necessary public works. The frequently encountered journalistic metaphor about "the vast army of the unemployed" would suggest that it might be added, without loss of appropriateness or economy, to the ranks of our vast unemployed armies, and therein set to work.

Present measures for relief are based too much upon the idea that man's chief need is money rather than health and comfort. Actually, the difficulty with under-paid or unemployed heads of families is attributable less to the smallness and uncertainty of their incomes than to the less effective buying power produced by their lack of credit and capital. Coal by the scuttle and sugar by the pound make the household expenses proportionally and even actually greater as the need for economy becomes urgent. Rents in a tenement district often double and quadruple those for an equivalent floor-space in what are called the more expensive as well as the more desirable sections of our cities. Any government or municipal institution, even the notoriously extravagant army, can provide the necessities of life at a fraction of the cost incurred by a family living at the margin of subsistence. Along with the

responsibility for seeing that no one shall suffer through inability to earn money, the state has the right and the duty to ensure that persons furnished with state relief shall be given as much comfort as is reasonably possible for the least expenditure that is practicable. The first step in such a course would be to provide state housing for a casual drifting tenantry, and to substitute bed and board for money as the first return for services rendered. To those who object by ejaculating "pauperization" the reply is that those who are "unemployed", in the technical sense, are already paupers in the sense that they are a charge on their fellows. Those who object to the destruction of family life and the sanctity of the home should first become acquainted with the kind of homes in which the families in question live now. The term "work-house" may occur to some, with reminiscences of Dickens, though "workers' houses" would be a more accurately descriptive title. But even the old-fashioned work-house was wrong in the spirit and method of its management rather than in the basic principle that it was designed to enforce. Most of its abuses differed in kind rather than in magnitude from those prevalent under the dole, and with certain familiar charitable or political devices for soliciting the good-will of the indigent. To live in a state home may be suggestive of the poor-house, but it differs in no essential from the acceptance, as a matter of course, of similar communal shelter by those who are self-supporting or even wealthy. If a seaman prefers the sailors' home to a water-front dive, if a young clerk decides that a room in the Y. M. C. A. offers more comfort than the best private lodging house that he can afford, they are no more branded as paupers than the soldier in barracks, the student in his dormitory, or the prosperous bachelor who chooses to live at his club.

Certainly a home of one's own is to be preferred by those whose means permit them to live in it. But we should not be too hasty in talking of humiliation when our concern is for those whom misfortune has placed under the necessity of accepting relief from the municipal bread-line and the Red Cross depôts for cast-off clothing, and whose present roof-trees offer a travesty of the name of home. The name of Socialism will also be raised, as though the thing itself were not already with us, in our hospitals and dispensaries, our labour bureaus and Workers' Compensation Acts, and especially in every measure for the relief of general unemployment. The trouble is not with Socialism but with Socialists; and even these could hardly prove more inept than the instigators of some present schemes for dealing with the problem. What is chiefly required is organization that will attempt to deal



with unemployment as an inevitable consequence of our present economic system, and adjust it as far as possible to present opportunities. According to one economist, men with machinery can produce so much more than they need that the proper solution is to give every man a two-hour working day. This, of course, is merely an extension of the plan that has been practised for some time, with doubtful success, in many large factories. It has the merit of ensuring an even distribution of work and wages, and of establishing a predictable uniformity in established industry. It leaves unsolved the problems of absorbing inexperienced men and of persuading those regularly employed to adjust lower wages to a high standard of living; and it does not provide a means for the skilled operative to make use of the time left unexpectedly hanging on his hands. But at least it shows us the way by pointing in the direction of a steady regulated stream of industry instead of indeterminate alternations of gluts and stoppage. And such uniformity is more than ever important in an age when the earnings of prosperity are devoted largely to first instalments on luxuries which become heavy liabilities in times of depression.

The difficulty of arranging regular work, or failing that, of providing for regular payments of wages, is naturally greatest with unskilled casual labour, but some attention to it would produce better work for less money. Governments and the governed appear, in this respect, to be equally improvident for the future. Of the present hordes of Canadian destitute unemployed, it may safely be asserted that during the summer one very large section was employed and receiving money of which some fraction might with advantage have been saved against the inevitable difficulties of winter; and that another was unemployed, with small hope for future work, and would therefore have been more providently employed in the summer when they could work with greater efficiency and profit both to themselves and to the state. In better periods, the climatic necessities of this continent and the resultant irregularities of seasonal employment have made it necessary for governing bodies to provide in the winter for those who were able to support themselves adequately during the summer. But if it is necessary for men to be idle during one half of the year and supported by wages from public works during the other, it is surely wiser to alternate idleness and labour in harmony and not in conflict with the seasons. During the past summer thousands of men have been barely maintaining a primitive hand to mouth subsistence in the wilderness. Civic provincial and federal authorities have looked at them and said: "These men are nearly starving now; by the

middle of winter they will be completely starving, and cold, and sick, and weak; *then* we shall provide them with employment, making roads and digging ditches. They will not be able to work so well, but they will be correspondingly more grateful; drills and dynamite will be required to support pick and shovel and blast a way to prosperity, and that will be good for trade; there will be much lost time and many difficulties and discomforts for both contractors and workmen, so that the work will not be well done; but it is all in a good cause, and subsequent repairs will help to take care of future problems of unemployment."

So, at the closing in of winter, regiments of unemployed abandon the countryside, and establish a precarious residence in the tenements and shacks that are dumped in the slums or scattered on the ragged outskirts of our cities. Something must be done about it, and it is wrong to give direct encouragement to idleness; so these men are sent, for a week at a time, to construction jobs where they spend much of their time freezing in huddled capitulation to the rigours of wind and snow, and where they have seldom gained the strength and skill to be usefully employed before they are dismissed to make room for another quota. Such methods, which are especially common in municipal forms of relief, have little to recommend them except that they make an obvious show of labour and expense. They resemble certain spectacular forms of Christmas charity that consist in presenting the needy with a single turkey dinner, "with the fixings," at a cost that would meet ordinary needs for a week. Any suggestion that it is preferable to offer more modest and effective relief is met with scorn for those who would rob the poor of their only pleasure. This sentiment may be justified, for the charities are in effect private ones, to be distributed as the donors see fit. But state relief, especially in present conditions of debt and taxation, should not allow sentiment or advertisement to interfere with effectiveness and economy. The general principle of state interference is already well established, and accepted as a matter of course, so long as it is not called by its proper name. Employment is already rationed over the winter by labour bureaus and relief commissions, and labourers with experience on large contracts are accustomed to being housed in camps and barracks. All that is required is to carry the present haphazard system to a logical and effective conclusion.

It may be asked how in times of depression the public can provide housing for the least predictable and responsible element of its population. The first answer is that we are already provided with unused camps, barracks, and hospitals made necessary for the

period of the war, and that every community has halls or armouries or abandoned churches. The second is that where housing is required, the "unemployed" might more profitably be occupied in tearing down slums and erecting new municipal tenements than in constructing boulevards and amusement parks. Private enterprise in the building trade has already in certain cities given practical proof of the efficacy of this policy by constructing during slack periods apartment houses to be occupied by the workers, who employ themselves by helping to build their own homes and receive stock certificates from which the dividends are taken in the form of rent. For men without families, in particular, a municipality could easily provide accommodation at a cost to itself of one dollar that would be superior to that which the average workman is able to find for himself for three or four. And so also with food: the community can save for itself and its dependents by giving not money but money's worth. Payment by meal ticket and rent vouchers would also remove the waste incidental to the drunkenness, gambling, and incompetent spending that with some people inevitably follow the receipt of ready cash. In terms of dollars and cents few workers are inferior to farm labourers and domestic servants, but their net rewards are greater than those of junior shop-assistants and unskilled labourers who are obliged to "find" themselves. Neither the employer nor the servant would profit from a substitution of money for food and shelter, and it is suggested that the state might best provide for its odd-job men by taking them into the house and having them at call.

It is the duty of unemployment commissions to absorb the potential unemployed into some organized system of labour-control before they are left to become objects of direct or indirect charity. Instead of local and temporary palliatives applied when the evil becomes acute, an organization whose activities covered the whole country and the whole year could allow for a proper adjustment of means to ends. Casual adherents to the upper edge of vagrancy, and workmen who are left without prospect of regular income, might be drafted into an industrial army as boys are sent to school or as young men are called up for military service in a conscript standing army. From such a body they can be passed back and forth across the country as from an industrial clearing house according to the most suitable times and places to utilize their energies. In the intervals of productive industrial employment, they can receive physical training and further instruction in craftsmanship, or be made to apply themselves to tasks of building and development that armies were so effective in accomplishing for the destructive

purposes of war, but have somehow failed to continue during the reconstruction that was promised to follow. Even forming fours is better than congregating in pool-rooms and standing on street-corners. Peace-time armies, as has already been explained, are neither specially military nor unduly ferocious, and if we must prepare for war it may better be done by transferring to the reserves those who would otherwise be left without the necessary conditions for physical well-being, than by spending money on those who are already provided with clothes, food, and petty cash.

It may be objected that such an army would add to the already too great financial burden of defence; but the savings from the present methods of dealing with unemployment might prove to be considerable in cold figures, and even greater when account is taken of the wastefulness and extravagance. Whichever way we choose to take it, we are charged with the responsibility for being our brothers' keepers, or with making them our partners. But the method suggested conveys no suggestion of offering a direct reward, and will probably not commend itself to those whose business it is to secure votes from a satisfied democracy.

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