

**COMPULSORY SERVICE: A
STUDY OF THE
QUESTION IN THE
LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE**

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Compulsory service: a study of the question in the light of experience by Sir Ian Hamilton & R. B. Haldane

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SIR IAN HAMILTON & R. B. HALDANE

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COMPULSORY SERVICE

A STUDY OF THE QUESTION IN
THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE

g. 18.

BY GENERAL SIR IAN HAMILTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE
RIGHT HON. R. B. HALDANE



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INTRODUCTION

INTEREST in the question of compulsory military service in these islands is very general, and it is important that materials for forming a judgment on the subject should be before the public. I have therefore thought it right to publish a memorandum written for me by one who has very recently held the position of Adjutant-General—Sir Ian Hamilton. It is an unofficial document, originally prepared for my private information, and it does not profess to do more than record the conclusions about various alternatives to the existing system at which he has individually arrived, after study of facts and figures which came before him during the period of his work as Adjutant-General.

For the information of the lay reader, I may mention that the work of organising the British Army at headquarters is one which is carefully distributed. The General Staff plans out the scheme of the various

10 THE ORGANISATION OF THE ARMY

forces on the basis of preparation for war; determines the number, structure, and proper size or establishment of the cadres in war, and the purposes and standard of their equipment, accessories, and weapons. These last are supplied by the Quartermaster-General and the Master-General of the Ordnance. To the Department of the Adjutant-General falls, among other duties, that of finding and organising in peace the men to fill the cadres which the General Staff demands for war. These cadres may be on paper the best in the world, but their reality depends on whether it is possible to get recruits, adequate in number and in quality, to fill them. To an Adjutant-General, therefore, the idea of compulsory service is naturally an attractive one. He looks with envy on the easy fashion in which cadres are filled in Germany, France, and Switzerland. He thinks of the physical training and habits of exactness which compulsory service makes general.

But, as a great critic of life has told us, he who acts on only one maxim is a pedant and spoils things for himself and for others. The Adjutant-General of the British Army has more than one thing to consider, and he must resist temptations into which the