

VOLUNTARY VERSUS COMPULSORY SERVICE: AN ESSAY

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Voluntary Versus Compulsory Service: An Essay by F. N. Maude

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F. N. MAUDE

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AN ESSAY

By CAPTAIN F. N. MAUDE

P.S.O., LATE R.E.

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PREFACE.

THIS book was originally intended as an essay for the R.U.S. Institution Gold Medal of last year. Unfortunately, when very nearly completed, the whole MS. was lost, and only rediscovered a fortnight after the final date fixed for the receipt of the competitors' manuscripts. Since then I have rewritten it in great part, and made various additions to render it more intelligible to the lay reader.

Though I accept the existing system as the best adapted of any to our peculiar needs, it is only with the proviso that the State supplies the indispensable means to enable it to work in accordance with its original design.

The essential feature of this design was the equality of the number of battalions of infantry at home and abroad, and the maintenance of all other units, squadrons or batteries, &c., at such a standard of numerical strength that the continuity

of system in the training of the recruit may be secured: conditions which existing establishments do not fulfil, and until they are fulfilled, the attainment of that uniform excellence of all units of the Army, on which primarily its efficiency in the field depends, will remain an unrealizable ideal.

The proposals which, I understand, are to be submitted to Parliament by the War Office in the approaching session, are the indispensable steps towards the accomplishment of this ideal; and the nation stands towards the solution of the problem in the same relation as a railway company which, soon after opening its line, finds itself overwhelmed by an increase of traffic beyond the power of its staff and accommodation to deal with. It is advised by its experts, traffic managers, locomotive superintendent and permanent way inspectors, that an increment of its capital of five per cent. will enable a very large additional dividend to be earned, and suffice to choke off the competition threatened by powerful rival concerns; and the answer which any board of business men would assuredly give, in such a case, is identically that which Parliament should now give to the proposals now to be put before it, and for the same reasons.

It would indeed be possible, given an adequate

staff of clerks, to state in terms of money the value of the gain to be anticipated, and with nearly as much accuracy as is usually attained in estimates of probable traffic. This task it is impossible for me to attempt here; but I can briefly indicate the headings under which profit must accrue.

With an adequate establishment, decentralisation of command to the captains and subalterns can be accorded. This implies greatly increased efficiency of officers and men, together with greater contentment amongst the latter, and the evolution in each individual of those qualities of character and power of concentration which ensure subsequent success in civil life. Greater contentment in the service, together with a better prospect of employment after leaving the colours, will attract a better class of recruit, which again carries with it better money value for the capital invested in the soldier's education.

I have pointed out in the text the different conditions in our labour market to those existing in Germany; but the number of men we annually turn adrift from both services is only 27,500, and this number is not too great to be handled once we get the confidence of the employers.

Moreover, there lies open to our hands a field for employment of trained soldiers as settlers in

the colonies, which cannot be overstocked in any measurable period. The idea is not new, and was tried with great success on the disbandment of the Crimean Foreign Legion, many of whom, Germans mostly, were settled in South Africa and have done admirable service for us both in peace and war. But the old long service soldier was by his training almost ruined for a colonist's life; for only the few retained after twenty years' service either the elasticity of constitution or the individuality of character necessary to meet the vicissitudes of such an existence.

With our short service soldiers and the new system of training this is no longer the case. Individuality nowadays is encouraged, not repressed, and if the training of the infantry soldier was approximated more closely to that of the engineer recruit, he would become almost an ideal colonist, and that this is so is sufficiently proved by the great success of ex-Royal Engineers in all our colonies.

The liability for five years in the Reserve might easily be adjusted—the men would merely transfer this liability to the colonial government in which they settled; and the advantage to the Empire at large of the existence of these regularly trained soldiers in those districts which will be first to