

The New Army.

I LIKE the term "New Army" better than "Kitchener's Army." For one thing, it reminds us of the "New Model," that stern array of warriors, previously inexperienced, who entered into warfare at the call of patriotism, and were welded into a perfect fighting machine. The New Model and Cromwell—the New Army and Kitchener—and may the second be even more successful than the first!

The armies of those days, however, seem almost tiny when compared with the colossal forces of the present crisis. Since the English came to England they have never known, never dreamt of such a display of armed might. It is true it manœuvres in a fog, which the hand of the Censor does not allow to lift, but you can feel the vibration of the ground and the throb of the air. Strangely enough, until the time of the Boer War the largest forces raised by England have been those of her civil wars. Now all differences are forgotten, whether of race, religion, or politics, and a new England is seen which will perhaps give birth to a newer England still, in which this sinking of antagonisms will prove to be permanent, so that out of a cause which is most unchristian, effects may be produced which are of the highest Christian quality.

A remarkable feature about this army is that the national intelligence is represented probably for the first time on an adequate scale. In putting this hypothesis forward I must not be misunderstood. The men in our Regular Army, heroes as they are, and saviours of the country, did not as a rule represent highly skilled trades. Enough of the old unreasoning prejudice against the "soger" still lingered to ensure that in many cases a man only enlisted because he was tired of, or not a success in, his occupation, or had an uncongenial employment. That has been completely changed by the call of patriotism, and skilled and organized labour is now represented in a most marked and interesting degree. Moreover, the officers of the Regular Army (though here again I must not be misunder-

stood) were drawn from a limited class—those, namely, who possessed private means of about £100 a year. Obviously many able and aspiring youths, sons of clergy and the like, were unable to join, and, on the other hand, men of means possessing brilliant abilities thought that they would be more adequately rewarded in other services. Now, however, the career of at least a temporary officer is open to all, and every one of us knows instances of men of the highest education and professional skill who have sacrificed, or at least suspended their prospects, to serve their country, while, again, more than 1,500 commissions have been given from the ranks of the Regular Army alone.

In sending round the “fiery cross” to summon this enthusiastic host, two instincts deeply rooted in the average Englishman have been worked for all they were worth.

The first is *local patriotism*. How ingrained this is in the Anglo-Dane we all know. It may become a snare—it was in the days of the “Heptarchy,” and before. But when it becomes the feeder of a larger patriotism it is a strength so that a man can cry “Good old Kent!” and can still think, in his sluggish English way, though probably he cannot express it, the native equivalent for “England ueber alles.” The fact is, of course, that we base our thoughts of our country as a whole on the part we know best and love most dearly in our shy, inarticulate manner.

“God gave all men all earth to love,
 But since man’s heart is small,
 Ordained for each one spot should prove
 Beloved over all.
 Each to his choice, and I rejoice
 The lot has fallen to me
 In a fair place, in a fair place,
 Yea, Sussex by the sea.”

Substitute, with the appropriate setting, Shoreditch or Shropshire or Sutherland, and you have the seed from which there flowers the passionate love of country seen in the local battalions.

The second instinct is that of *personal ties*. The average Englishman is shy. Give him a friend and he is happier. Hence the extraordinary success of the "special" battalions, such as the Public School regiments of the Royal Fusiliers and the Middlesex; the Church Lads' battalion of the King's Royal Rifles; the special "City" battalion of the 10th Royal Fusiliers—"Pals'" battalions, Sportsmen's, Bantams', Navvies', Frontiersmen's, Footballers', and all the other wonderful legions which are marshalling their ranks to join ultimately in one firm and unswerving friendship for the common cause.

All the long winter months, while the models on which they strove to fashion themselves were suffering and dying in the trenches, these new millions were hiding in the bosom of Mother England, soon to appear, like the blooms from the bulbs, with the hope of deliverance from a tyranny that we all pray will soon be overpast. And we older ones, who stay at home perforce, clenching and unclenching our hands, will send after them such a surging tide of hope and prayer as never yet has flowed from English shores. A noble cause makes noble warriors. Freedom is a better stimulant than "frightfulness." And perhaps the most impressive feature of the New Army is its high quality in education and behaviour. Of course, when multitudes of young men are herded together, subject to new conditions of life, and severed from the usual conventional restrictions of civilized intercourse, there must be sporadic cases of irregularity, just as there must be attacks of cerebro-spinal meningitis. The wonder is there have not been more. But, I think, the ungrudging agreement of all beholders is that, generally speaking, their conduct has been marvellous. When we think of the drunken, foul-mouthed old heroes of the Peninsular War, and remember that it is only a hundred years since the Battle of Waterloo, we are astounded at the alteration in the language and demeanour of the modern soldier. You get into a railway-carriage, and your neighbour is a private quietly smiling over a cheap copy of "Pickwick." You see a dozen of the new Tommies boarding a motor-bus and throwing away

their "fags," because "No smoking allowed" is inconspicuously posted up. You see them helping to wash up where they are billeted. You see them in the railway refreshment-room drinking tea. You hear them asking for a lemonade when someone offers a drink. They walk the streets quietly—these are not Hawkwood's freelances, nor even the White Company. Phrases like this occur quite casually in letters to friends: "I spent Easter very quietly, going to the 7.45 service, the Church parade, and also the evening service." A mother tells you her son "jowned the army because 'e thought 'e ought to do 'is bit." They grumble at the grub—well, is not that the Englishman's relaxation? Many a man gives up his thirty shillings a week for a shilling a day, knowing quite well that England does not pay her sons so much as Canada or Australia. He follows intelligently the events of the war, and the casualty lists only make him more eager to go out. And, crowning point of all, he does not reproach those others who have not joined the service!

It has often been pointed out that, though war is a hideous evil and an unspeakable waste of good material, it can call out the best that is in man as well as the worst. Self-sacrifice is the essence of saintliness. Physical science teaches us the difference between potential and kinetic energy. The New Army is now possessed of potential self-sacrifice soon to become kinetic. We may therefore expect, in a sense, the greatest development of devotedness that these islands have ever known. May the impression made on the national character prove real and permanent!

It is interesting to speculate whether the high quality of the bulk of the new soldiery can be traced to any common cause. In the "Drums of the Fore and Aft," Kipling's fine story, there is this passage: "About thirty years from this date, when we have succeeded in half-educating everything that wears trousers, our Army will be a beautifully unreliable machine. It will know too much, and it will do too little. Later still, when all men are at the mental level of the officer of to-day, it will sweep the earth." Are we anywhere near that level now in our Army,

both the New and the Old? If so—and there seems to be some ground for thinking that there is at least an approximation, as, for instance, is evidenced by the wonderful quality of those “letters from the front” which have been such an interesting feature in the newspapers—to what is it due?

We can, of course, talk in a vague way about the Advance of Civilization and the March of Progress, but even capital letters cannot prevent us from thinking that there must have been concrete factors at work. Movements do not happen unless somebody is shoving.

Do people always see clearly the credit that is due to the schoolmaster and the parson? I mean, in this instance, the elementary school-teacher, as I am writing about the private soldier; and under the term “parson” we may include any minister of religion.

The Radicals made education compulsory in 1870; the Tories made it gratis in 1891. It has taken some time for education to soak in, down to the second or third generation. But at last it is beginning to bear real fruit. Some of us think that not enough is done even yet, but let that pass. The country is educated now; it was not before. And in these years how much patient work has been carried on in the elementary schools. Step by step, with many mistakes, much groping and fumbling, the worthy task has gone on, until at last some really adequate result has been arrived at.

So, too, during the last fifty years the Church has been making every effort to remove the hereditary distrust of her by the working classes which was the appalling legacy of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. And, altogether apart from religion, do people always realize the *refining* influence due to Confirmation classes, the training of a church choir, the atmosphere of a Sunday-school with gently born and well-bred teachers, and the like? We move so fast nowadays that the Boys' Brigade, for instance, seems quite old-fashioned; yet it is only about thirty years old, and in my humble opinion the influence on boys of that organization and

the Church Lads' Brigade is likely to be more permanent and beneficial than that of the Boy Scout movement, good though it undoubtedly is. It would be futile in such a magazine as this to enumerate the countless activities of the parson among the young, but perhaps it is as well to emphasize once more the fact of their importance as regards "culture" (how we hate that word now!) of a real sort.

So for the past half-century the parson and the teacher have drudged and toiled to make the New Army. The cinematograph and the gramophone and the motor omnibus have helped, so far as to make the men alert and up-to-date, but it was not in their power to supply the education and refinement which Private Thomas Atkins now enjoys. Patient spade-work by his master and his pastor have given him that. Not always with due appreciation, either. Benevolent old gentlemen have grumbled about the school rates going up, and venerable old ladies have questioned the propriety of educating the "lower orders" out of their sphere; while people have complained of the clergyman because he was always collecting money for his Church Lads' Brigade or other unnecessary schemes; and have wondered that his wife should interest herself in the Mothers' Union and other gatherings of poor people. But at this hour of the nation's need, when country and Empire are trembling in the balance, the teacher and the parson have come into their own.

W. A. PURTON.

