

ones such as the Congaree river project—which sets aside \$100,000 for a stream whose traffic in 1914 required three steamboats, in 1915, two, and in 1916 got down to one stern-wheeler. As in all omnibus bills it is almost necessary to pass the doubtful items to get at the better ones; for if one stave is knocked out, the barrel falls. By combining the membership of the House with four hundred items judiciously distributed among forty-eight states, the bill is calculated to pass itself.

Nevertheless, the project for a permanent commission of engineers, to recommend and expend the appropriations for river and harbor improvement, is receiving more support than in the past it has ever had; and the bill itself was met with a demand for revision, though it had had the advertising of a war measure, and came at a time when twenty-seven million dollars is an almost ordinary sum. War is supplying evidence of the shortcomings of the present system of making appropriations; on Friday, Mr. Sherley declared to a House better filled than is usually the case, "We need in America not to keep dividing up

power, not to keep separating it, so that nobody can abuse it, but to put it with responsibility, so that when it is abused those who are responsible for the abuse can be punished. Think what has happened in the House of Representatives. We undertook to change our rules here upon the theory that the Speaker had become a great boss and that we would prevent the abuse of power by taking power from him, and we created in lieu of that a dozen or more bosses, not one of whom is in any sense responsible and no one of whom can be held responsible for any abuse."

To come out of the war with so automatically adjustable a system of responsibility as England has, with a referendum always at hand for the opposition, is certainly not possible. But to go into the war with even one member, in a position so influential as Mr. Sherley's, continually bringing before Congress the way out of its embarrassments is in itself encouraging. It means that there will be at least a minority effort to use the war as a sign-board, and make it a reason for progress at home.

C. M.

## A COMMUNICATION

### To Conscientious Objectors

**G**ENTLEMEN: Thirteen of your number have published recently in *The New Republic* a communication which is less a defense of your position than a plea for tolerance. Your spokesmen offer little direct argument to support the contention that a citizen always does right in refusing to render military service to his country; what is maintained is rather that, whether right or wrong, such citizens ought to suffer no hardship because of their obedience to the actual dictates of their consciences. Yet it is not mere exemption from legal penalties that is claimed in your behalf; it is also exemption from social reprehension. There is to be created in America "a social setting sufficiently hospitable to all conscientious objectors." But the desirability of this, surely, depends upon whether the position of the conscientious objector is ethically defensible. It is possibly true that polygamists should not be put in jail; yet we should scarcely wish to "create a social setting hospitable" to polygamy, unless we were persuaded that a society based upon this form of marital relation is a desirable one.

It is, in short, impossible to judge fairly a plea for the kind and degree of toleration claimed for your conduct, without first raising the question whether the thing to be tolerated is a good thing or a bad thing. It is, as your representatives incontrovertibly remark, a fact—possibly even a "tremendous fact" that you exist; yet it seems not irrelevant to inquire whether you ought to exist. I venture then to present some reflections concerning this prior question.

The "conscientious objector" whom the signers of the plea have in mind is "the type of man to whom (military) participation in war is tantamount to committing murder," and who therefore can not be coerced "by any human power on God's earth" into such participation. He is, in short, the person who is opposed, not merely to this or that war, but to all wars; who condemns not one side only, but

both sides, in any armed conflict; and who refuses obedience to all laws placing upon him military duties.

1. There is implicit in this doctrine of yours a generalization which to many of us seems either very strange ethics or else very strange history—the generalization, namely, that there never has been at stake, and never will be, any human good sufficiently important to be worth fighting for. Your thesis means, for example, that it would have been better that religious liberty should never have been attained. For, as we very well know, it was attained and (in some countries) kept only because, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were men in the Netherlands, in England, in France and in Germany, who were ready to kill, and upon occasion did kill, other men who sought to deprive them of that liberty. If the friends of freedom of thought, in the circumstances of that time, had followed your principles, the history of all Europe, for the past three hundred years, would in all probability have been much like the history of Spain. For the enemies of freedom are seldom troubled by your scruples. Your thesis, again, means that it would have been better if the Ottoman Turks—whose record in the Balkan Peninsula we know—had set up their empire over the whole of southeastern Europe. For they were prevented from doing so only by that long fight which was kept up with fluctuating fortunes for more than two centuries by Hungary, Austria, Poland and Venice. Your thesis means, finally, that it would have been better if the American Republic had never been established. For it was established and could have been established only at the cost of what you are pleased to call "murders" committed by the "embattled farmers" at Concord (whose praises were sung by that "Ralph Emerson" whom you so oddly admit to your pantheon) and by Washington and his followers on a hundred battlefields.

To the rest of us, then, as we consider your position in the light of history, you seem persons whose sense of moral and social values has been perverted by an obsession. One

evil—truly a very great evil—looms so large in your imagination, that, to escape it, you would have mankind endure all other evils; one good appears to you so precious, that to keep it you would sacrifice everything else that makes up the fabric of civilization.

2. Those who judge your doctrine thus, can not but look upon you as playing an unpleasantly parasitic part in the history of human progress. Other services you may, you doubtless do, render; but the costliest service of all, a service sometimes indispensable to the cause of justice or of order or of liberty, you refuse. It is upon other men's blood that you live, in so far as any of those values which others have fought for, or are now fighting for, are dear to you also. The freedom, the security, perhaps even the lasting peace based upon a reign of justice and law, which your sons, as we all hope, will enjoy, other men's sons have died, or will yet die, to win. Can you, after all, feel surprise when the fathers of those dead sons look upon you and your sons with something less than admiration or liking?

It is true that, at such a time as this, all who are debarred by age or physical disqualification from sharing in the ultimate service must feel themselves to be living by that very tragic kind of parasitism to the bitterness of which Kipling has given the ultimate expression in *The Children*. But your position is that of men who choose to have no part in the sacrifices by which, nevertheless, they do in fact profit. You plead for freedom not to fight. But the freedom even to make that plea you possess only because men in the past have fought for it. You are, indeed, the men who would never have done violence to further any evil cause. But you are also the men upon whom no good cause, in its direst peril, could ever have relied for effectual support.

3. Apparently what chiefly prevents you from realizing keenly this aspect of your position is a certain comprehensible but dangerous confusion of ideas. If all men in the past had refused to go to war, or otherwise use violence, there would have been no wars and no oppression. Is not, then—you perhaps ask—a rule of conduct which, if universally adopted, would produce results so beneficent, necessarily a good rule? The answer is that it would be good only under the condition specified; and that that is a condition contrary to fact. Not all men do now act upon your principles; nor can it very confidently be expected that all will soon begin to do so. But the test of a rule of conduct lies in its results in the real, not in an imaginary, world. And if all believers in humane ideals and in free government adhered to your rule, while the forces hostile to those ideals followed a very different rule, the inevitable result is clear; the cause of freedom and of humanity would be betrayed in the house of its friends. Oppression, intolerance and injustice would always go armed, while liberty—having taken folly for counsellor—would expose itself defenseless to their attack.

4. I seem, however, to see in your attitude also the influence of a habit of mind, not uncommon among humanitarians, which may be called ethical optimism. I mean by this a habitual disregard of the painful fact that good must often be purchased at the cost of what—in itself—is very real, and sometimes very great, evil. Anti-vivisectionists seem usually to exemplify this attitude. While the suffer-

ing caused by experimentation upon animals is frequently and grossly exaggerated, it remains, I suppose, true that a good deal of suffering is involved. And that men should inflict pain upon sentient and affectionate creatures that they have in their power is an abominable thing. Only, it is a still more abominable thing that rational beings should knowingly sacrifice a greater good to a lesser; should, through reluctance to give pain to a few animals, permit the human race, for generations, to be tortured by preventible plagues. Anti-vivisectionists seem unwilling to believe the world to be so ill ordered that the one evil is the only means of avoiding the other. So you, too, seem resolved not to face the fact that the highest ends can at times be attained only by the most tragic of means. That youths should be sent out armed to kill or maim other youths is an unspeakably abominable thing; but it is yet more abominable that through horror at this evil, the lovers of peace should become the silent partners of those that make and would perpetuate war, and that our youth should be bred up to sit by with folded hands while others are made the victims of lawless violence.

5. You will, perhaps, permit me to say in conclusion that sympathy for your position is scarcely increased by a certain line of reasoning followed by your protagonists in their manifesto. Their tone, throughout, is one of assured and condescending moral superiority; and the assumption of such superiority is expressly made one of the premises of the argument which is to persuade the rest of us to favor your exemption from military duties. You, it is urged, are at all costs to be kept safe, like queen-bees in the hive, because you constitute an elect class of "humanists," of "visionaries," who alone are capable of the "reconstructive task" of "recreating out of bloody chaos some new re-inspired internationalism." For this high duty of the future, it seems, those who serve in the war will be disqualified, because "brutalized" and "degraded" through that service.

It is, I suppose, hopeless to attempt to convey to you a sense of the feeling produced in some minds by this ineffably modest argument. Your spokesmen have apparently been undisturbed by any surmise that there is something humorous—but not agreeably humorous—in a proposal, on the part of a group of men, that they and their own particular type shall be specially preserved from both physical and moral risks, upon the ground that they have a superior or exclusive moral fitness to be the future leaders of the race. With those who regard such a proposal as altogether natural and suitable, I certainly have no desire to reason. It may, however, not be useless to observe that there seems a good deal of presumption—in more than a logical sense of the term—in taking it for granted that moral idealism and "sheer humanity" are, in the present crisis, the peculiar possession of those who keep far from the hazards of the battle-line. Every teacher of youth, every reader of the biographic literature of the war, knows what generous loyalties, what sense of arduous obligation, what visions of a world set free from the shadow of war itself, have taken, or are taking, men into the training camps and the trenches. It is not for you, gentlemen, to hold a tone of condescension towards these men! Nor have you read the records of this or previous wars to much profit, if you assume that even those who enter the struggle

from high motives must inevitably be "brutalized" and "degraded" by the experience. Take a few names almost at random from the Civil War—Lee, Jackson, Thomas, Robert Gould Shaw, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Henry Lee Higginson, Charles Francis Adams, Nathaniel S. Shaler, Justice Holmes. Such brutal and degraded characters as these seem to most of us, after all, to represent types not without a potential function in a progressive and pacific society. It is not, at any rate, because we shall not elsewhere be able to find men worthy to lead in national and international reconstruction, that we shall feel constrained to release you from a hazard which all the rest of your countrymen of military age will be called upon to face.

There remains the ulterior question of toleration. Into

the reasons—which seem to me in large part mistaken reasons—offered by your spokesmen in support of their contention upon this point, there is no space to enter; nor is it needful to do so. From the conclusion that genuinely "conscientious" objectors should be given non-combatant duties to perform, few, I take it, will dissent. Your number appears to be small; and of your scruples, the country may well be generously considerate. I have sought only to set before you a part of the reasons why many who favor extending toleration to your refusal of a recognized civic duty, regard this, nevertheless, as the toleration, not simply of an erroneous opinion, but also of an anti-social attitude and mode of conduct.

ARTHUR O. LOVEJOY.

Baltimore, Maryland.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### What Montclair is Doing

**S**IR: For the woman who "does not call herself patriotic" I have no message, but for the woman who can endure a conversation on the subject, I am glad to send a suggestion. It is one not of theory but of actual fact. It tells about eleven hundred women and two hundred young girls in one small town who are not ashamed to be called "patriotic" and yet who are using the term not for "sentimentality" nor for "self-advertising" but for a merely human amount of "efficiency." The organization of which they are members is locally but a year old.

I will mention only a part of the work of the past three months:

Eighty units of about ten each meet regularly once a week making surgical dressings, surgical clothing, etc.

Fifty emergency beds in the Mountainside Hospital are now nearly completely equipped with the type outfits of sheets, pillow-cases, surgical shirts, pajamas, bed-socks, towels, etc. These beds will be available for any emergency due to war such as an explosion in a nearby munitions works. In connection with them a sufficient supply of surgical dressings has been stored and the women are now trained to take care of any local emergency that may arise. Therefore the later work of the "units" mentioned above now goes directly to France. Not because that is "humanitarian" work but because they are "our allies."

When the local militia, "K" Company, was ordered out recently, the automobile committee assisted in their mobilization and the only food they got from Sunday night to late Monday was what the Commissariat Committee provided. Since that time several occasions have arisen when national guardsmen doing guard duty in the vicinity but at some distance from food supplies, have been fed—always at very short notice. To get ready for such work in an "efficient" manner, many of the women organized and worked in a course in "canteen cooking" under a competent director who gave costs and food-values. The Montclair Battalion has been doing guard duty in night shifts. The Commissariat Committee has provided mid-night lunches for them.

When "K" Company was located "somewhere in Jersey," such "practical" wants as a loan fund for spending money—(Do you know how Uncle Sam pays the soldiers?)—field typewriter, messenger motor, etc.—were got for them, as well as the usual gifts dear to the female

heart, the tender chocolate and the sentimental cigarette.

Before our official recruiting tent was opened with due and patriotic ceremony, the Society's headquarters were at the disposal of the recruiting officer and its telephone and messengers worked for him.

Knitted "sets"—sleeveless jackets, wristlets and mufflers—for the navy, socks for the army, and aviation sets are needs that women can meet. The knitting section of this society is now completing its two hundred and fiftieth set—and going strong.

A call came from a certain base hospital for reading matter. Within two hours a package of *recent* and appropriate magazines (not the Millinery Number of Vogue and the Ladies' Home Journal for 1914) were in the express office. Instances of this sort could be multiplied.

The garden movement became important. The organization did not immediately make that movement its own. It simply got in touch with the regular gardening organizations—the Mayor's Food Committee, the Plant, Fruit and Flower Guild, and again used its headquarters and its personnel to cooperate in active work along lines suggested by the garden specialists.

I have mentioned only some of the things lately and already done.

Ten young women who have completed courses in home nursing, first aid and diet cooking are now ready to go into the hospital and complete training to take the place of nurses to be ordered to the front. They are only a beginning—these ten. Such other classes as are necessary to the successful prosecution of all work as it arises are provided for from time to time.

A number of houses are already registered to be used as convalescent homes. Some of these are to be turned over entirely, but for the most part the offer is of one to six rooms, with competent care. The care is planned in this way: One person from the organization has charge of the cooking and care of the patient. A visiting nurse and a regular physician will take general supervision over all.

The mobilization of all work is accomplished through a telephone and an automobile committee.

But I do not recount these things because I think they are of any consequence in themselves. They are, we all know, very very little! All too little! I only go over them because I wish to point out that at least here is such an organization, working steadily at steady things, but also ready to be called on for any unforeseeable emergency

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