

# All of Them Looking for a Man's Job

## That's What the Soldiers Seek, but Their Notions Vary—A Toe Dancer Scorned \$30,000 a Year and Turned Farmer, and a Shoe Salesman Went in for Exporting

**M**OST of the men who come back from the war want to do something of more consequence than the work they did before. Having had a hand in the biggest job ever cut out for humankind, they are inclined to look down on the usual workaday task. It isn't necessarily that they want to make more money. They just want to do something that seems to them of more importance to the world. There was the toe dancer, for instance, who scorned to sign a year's contract at \$30,000, and insisted on becoming a farmer. Let the women do the toe dancing! He wanted a man's job. He —

But let Mrs. Alexander Kohut, Chairman of the Re-employment Council of the United States Employment Service, tell about him.

"This toe dancer," she explained, "said he wanted his brains and his hands to help his toes earn a living. The \$30,000 contract made no difference.

"I've lived too long in the open," he said, "to go back into the theatre. I've been out under the sun and stars. No more of the white lights for me. I don't want to be paid \$2,000 a month for twirling my body on my toes. If I'm going to do any twirling from now on, I'll do it with my hands and the muscles of my back. I want a man's job, in God's world."

"He got his man's job."

Mrs. Kohut took occasion to point out that there were not enough good farm jobs within the vicinity of New York to meet the demands of the men.

"There are hundreds of men who want to work on farms or in gardens who have not yet been placed," she said. "They want to work within easy reach of New York City. They don't want to go away up-State, where they can't get into town occasionally for a meeting with their old pals, nor do they want to go off into Pennsylvania or away down-State in New Jersey. They are New York boys who love their homes, but who want to live in the open and do farm or garden work.

"There is no reason why truck gardeners on Long Island or anywhere within a reasonable distance of New York City should be short of labor." The Re-employment Bureau of New York City has any number of soldiers, sailors, and marines who would be glad of an opportunity to do such work. But of course they want good pay and comfortable living accommodations."

Mrs. Kohut, who, with Mrs. Willard Straight, helped to make farmerettes of hundreds of Greater New York's debutantes during the war, and, as an active member of the National League for Woman's Service, was instrumental in finding thousands of volunteers for other essential industries, is now turning her talents and the experience gained toward helping discharged service men to jobs. In other words, instead of women for work that must be done she is finding jobs for men who must have work. She is now associated with the Re-employment Bureau of New York City for Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines at 505 Pearl Street.

"My work for the Re-employment Bureau is more in the nature of finding out just what the men can do and starting them off in the right direction than it is in actual job hunting," she said the other day. "These boys who are just getting out of uniform know a lot of things we women can never know, but they are often pitifully ignorant about themselves and the sort of work they can do."

Mrs. Kohut wants training schools for workers established as a part of the working system of every big industrial concern.

"England is making a big success of this employe's training school idea," she said. "They call such departments 'vestibule schools' in Great Britain, and they have become a regular feature of almost every big business organization. They take the place, on a much larger scale, of the old system of apprenticing once popular in England, and, in some industries, like printing and tailoring, in this country. One noteworthy point of difference, however, between the old-time apprentice and the present is that while the former received nothing for his



Underwood & Underwood.  
Mrs. Alexander Kohut, Who Is Helping Discharged Soldiers Find the Jobs They Want.

services but his training and a job when his apprenticeship was over, the modern worker in the school is paid from the day he begins his training.

"We are making this point clear with regard to the soldiers, sailors, and marines who are taken on as student-employes. The Re-employment Bureau of New York City, with its numerous commercial affiliations, does not list any opening which pays less than \$18 a week. It has to keep in mind that the men who were soldiers, sailors, and marines while we were at war must live while they are

fitting themselves for their future occupations, and to live decently on less than \$18 a week in Greater New York is rapidly becoming an impossibility.

"Moreover, the men earn their weekly stipend of \$18 or \$20, and sometimes more, while learning the work. Such industries in New York as have given the training school a fair tryout are more than willing to admit this. It gives the men, too, a new interest in their work, and the work itself an added dignity. As for men in occupations where no special training is required, to expect them to work for less than \$18 or \$20 a week is folly, as we all know who try to get common labor of any sort done at this time."

Mrs. Kohut spends much of her time studying the men themselves, and finding out what their natural attributes are, what their previous education and training have been, and what they really want to do. In this work she is assisted by Miss Mary Burhoe.

"Some of the boys just come frankly to me and ask me to pick out a job for them," Mrs. Kohut said. "These I find are the easiest to handle and to place in the right sort of position. It is the man who thinks he knows what he can do, and has picked out the wrong vocation, that makes our real problem. That sort of man may not lack good judgment, but he does need some one to direct his judgment.

"This is what I mean," Mrs. Kohut went on to illustrate. "Some days ago a soldier boy of 20 told me he wanted to get into the export business. I asked him what he knew about exporting, what his previous experience had been in the work, and he told me he had sold shoes in a department store.

"And a man that can sell shoes can sell anything," he asserted.

"I liked his confidence and courage, but I certainly did doubt his judgment. He was just 20, and a little more questioning brought out the fact that he had also just married. The girl had waited for him till he came back from France, and then they had got married at once. He could get his old job back at the shoe counter, but he did not want it.

"I want something bigger than that," he said. "I think my experiences in the war have fitted me for bigger work. Besides, I have had nearly two years to grow up in since I sold shoes. The missis

is willing to wait until I can get into better work."

"It was hard to talk against such determination and ambition, but I could see nothing else for it. The boy was wholly untrained for any kind of work but selling shoes, and he could get his shoe job any minute he went back to the store. I told him about my own son who was just his age, and how necessary it was for him to know what he was doing before he tried to do it. Finally he agreed to go back and take his old job, and use his evenings to fit himself for bigger work.

"I have since had the satisfaction of seeing him at his work, cheerful and seemingly happy. He is studying hard, and his wife says she is willing to go without all sorts of things to help him pull through until he has prepared himself for the work of his choice."

This is only one instance out of many that have come to Mrs. Kohut's attention of men who want to do work too big for them until they've had training.

"They don't know this until somebody points it out to them. This morning twin brothers came to me, or, rather, I went to them, and I think I was just in time. Those boys, like many others coming home from overseas, had landed in New York full of the feeling that 'there was a whole world waiting for them.' They got their first damper when there was nobody at the dock to meet them. From that time on their spirits dropped lower and lower, until, at the time I met them, they were just about ready to turn Bolshevik.

"They told us on the transport that we could have our pick of the fat jobs that were to be had in New York. We come back here and we can't get anything. If we ask for work we are told that all the old men who used to have jobs before the war have been taken back, and everybody has more men than he needs. We didn't have any pre-war jobs. We just went to school, but we have to work now and there's no work for us to do."

"Clearly, these were men for 'vestibule' schools. A prolonged quiz helped them to decide on the kind of work they wanted to do—they had exactly the same sort of tastes and inclinations—and I have sent them to a concern where they can begin on the ground floor with the kind of work they will like, and where they will be paid while they are learning enough for them to live comfortably."



Babylonian Scene from "The Wayfarer," the Pageant of Christianity Produced at the Methodist Centenary Exposition in Columbus, Ohio, with a Cast of 2,509 Persons and a Chorus of 1,000 Voices.