Walter Camp Urges Plan of Moderate Physical Training, on the Plea That Americans Over 45 Years Old May Yet Be Needed

By Vyn Tassell Sutphen

HY the Senior Service Corps?

Who are eligible to its membership?

In these days of national crisis there are people who are trying to do their duty by the inestimably interesting question: What is the thing that we need most of all?

Now it is obvious that circumstances must have a great deal to do with finding an answer to this query. The man who really wants to "come over" with the boys or of the National Guard, or who is an aviator, or expert, or is rich enough to convert his yacht into a vessel and offer it, together with his own services; to the Government—all these are easy answers to the great ques-
tion.

Secondly, there is the everyday young man, who is not going to do his ser-
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pendent upon him; it is in his business to begin, to carry on the operation of his machinery, and then, if called to arms, to give his best toward the common task of making the world safe for democracy. Here again there is no ingenious argument and no excuse for hesitation.

But how about the many thousands who have responsibilities, and no inde-
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who are generally accepted age limit of forty-five years—what—what are they going to do? What answer can they give to the big question?

Undoubtedly a man ought to be willing to serve in any way he can. As President Wilson said in his address, "The fact is that it is not a matter of the

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of fresh air (oxygen) for the increased lung capacity. It also operates for the further toning up of the cardiac (heart) function, and for giving relief to the overworked kidneys by inducing moderate skin elimination, (perspiration.) As the time is limited it is not possible to increase very materially the distance covered in a walk or march. But it is possible to add to the amount of physical work by means of a modicum of hill climbing and through the carrying of weights. The latter may be accomplished by giving each man an iron bar, three feet long and one inch in diameter, to carry. Such a bar weighs eight pounds, or a trifle less than a service rifle. A man may not be able to carry his bar for the whole distance, and in that case he may be allowed to transfer the burden to his fellow of the same physical grade; later on, when he is rounding into condition, he will be able to pack one or even two bars for the whole distance.

There are two tremendously interesting corollaries of the camp idea. In the first place, the force of the example of mature men determinedly following such a course of training should be of incalculable value in developing self-sacrifice and the spirit of service throughout the entire community; the young men will not dare to be slackers if they see the oldsters leading the way.

Secondly, the physical resources of the nation are not only being conserved but are actually being extended. And it may be pointed out that the plan could nowhere be placed in operation more advantageously than in the administrative departments at Washington. In these days of stress and strain there is an unnoticed, almost unconscious tendency, to speed up the mental machinery without regard to the physical bearings upon which it runs. This is the way Mr. Camp puts it:

"If, in these days of preparation, you had an ordinance officer who fired a gun 500 times that was tested for about 200 rounds without heating, and thus cracked it, what would you say to him?"

"If you had a superintendent in a factory who doubled the number of hours he was running his automatic machinery and instead of doubling the amount of oil actually cut it in half and thus ruined the machines, what would you say of him?"

"Are men like the executives and heads of departments in the Government, and the leaders in manufacturing, transport, and commercial interests, now acting as advisers, less valuable to us in this emergency than machines and guns, that we should burn them out for lack of lubricant and rest or physical conservation?"

"Three hours a week of absolute conformity to a scientifically tested schedule of combined outdoor and indoor exercise will insure these men. Is it too high a price to pay?"

And again, in a letter to Congressman Tilson of Connecticut, Mr. Camp writes:

"It may seem to go beyond the unique and trespass upon the extraordinary when I presume to make the following suggestion, but it would take but a single hour of the time of these gentlemen and would convince them how they themselves may better stand the strain of the trying days that are coming upon them. The suggestion is as follows:

"Permit me to come to Washington and let me have as my football squad for one hour of a prearranged day—from 8 to 9 o'clock A. M.—President Wilson, Secretary Laning, Secretary McAdoo, Secretary Baker, Attorney General Gregory, Postmaster General Burleson, Secretary Daniels, Secretary Lane, Secretary Houston, Secretary Redfield, and Secretary Wilson.

"I will promise not to "scrimmage" them, but to take them through the hour's work. They will not make "touchdowns," but will shoulder again the burdens of state with renewed vigor. What they do they can then ask any man of 45 and over to do. It is as hazardous as testing a submarine or an airplane, but it might prove as great a gain for our country in the long run.

"The census of 1910 showed that there were 7,163,000 men in the United States between the ages of 45 and 65. According to the normal rate of increase, this class should now number at least 8,000,000. Even assuming that 75 per cent. of these men would be ineligible through incurable physical disability, there would still remain a usable force of 2,000,000, a reserve army well worth taking into consideration.

"The idea has attracted countrywide attention, and the plan is being put into actual operation in many widely separated localities, for example, Searsdale, N. Y.; Owensboro, Ky.; Towanda, N. Y.; Pennington, N. J.; Los Angeles, Cal.; Tulsa, Okla., and Seattle, Wash. Recently the General Electric sent on for 100 copies of the little manual prepared by Mr. Camp, and requests for information come with almost every mail delivery.

"The general scope and aim of the Senior Service Corps may be conveniently tabulated as follows:

First—The Membership
Men over military age who wish to be of service to the country and who are willing to act as a body and not merely as individuals.

Second—The Qualifications
Citizenship and the passing of a simple physical examination.

Third—The Organization
This should include, in addition to the usual officers, a surgeon or physician to watch the condition of the men, and a leader competent to direct the work and keep up the interest.

Fourth—The Work
Ten to fifteen minutes of simple calisthenics or setting-up exercises, and forty-five to fifty minutes outdoor drill, hike, or march. The men agree to give an hour a day for three days in the week, and the signing-up period is for ninety days.

In the general instructions prepared by Mr. Camp the men are urged to cut down on their smoking, to eliminate the cocktail altogether, and to go light on rich food and other indulgences of the flesh. But no attempt is made to impose any irksome regimen, or to interfere materially with one's ordinary habits of life.

The men are advised to keep up their sports, particularly golf. Requests for further particulars, and copies of the manual of physical training should be addressed to Joseph C. Johnson, Secretary of the Senior Service Corps, New Haven, Conn.

The future development and extension of the system presents some interesting possibilities. Manifestly, if the organization is to continue indefinitely, it must find new channels for activity or the interest may begin to wane; even the novelty of feeling hard and fit after years of softness and insidious degeneration will get to be an old story. Military drill provides an excellent mental interest, and the mere donning of a uniform makes a man unconsciously throw back his shoulders; khaki is a wonderful stimulant in itself. Revolver practice during the summer vacation period will help the corps together, and many other means of dividing the pill will suggest themselves to the leader of an inventive turn of mind. But the hope may come when the corps will require an actual and definite reason for its existence.

The National Guard of the several States is to be incorporated in the expeditionary armies. What is to take its place? Home Guards, Sheriff's Special Deputies, Defense Leagues—these hastily formed and loosely constituted organizations may and do serve a useful purpose in discouraging incipient lawlessness and in maintaining order and authority at local centres. But their true function is to supplement the work of the police and the constabulary, as distinct from the military order. Back of them should stand a body of closely organized citizens, able-bodied and distinctly trained in the exercise of arms. As the National Guard up to the firing line their places should be filled and their empty armories and vacent drill grounds remanned.

Why should not the Senior Service Corps be recognized by the States for this special duty and privilege? Vermont has already taken steps to replace its National Guard by providing that new enrollments may be made of men over military age, the limit for officers being raised to 65 years. It would be an even simpler plan to confer an official status upon the Senior Service Corps, the period of enlistment to be for the duration of the war. Or Washington might be asked to give it Federal sanction, subject to later action by the State Legislatures. Secretary Baker has already informally approved of the original Camp idea, and it is reasonable to assume that he would show an open mind upon the question of its development along these new lines. Finally, any one State might lead the way by formally recognizing the Senior Service Corps as part of its reserve military establishment.

There are thousands and thousands of men in the United States who are reasonably fully conscious that only an arbitrary age limit prevents them from donning the uniform of their country. But these men are not content to sit back and whine about their bad luck in happening to be born in the fifties, sixties, and seventies; on the contrary, they keep on looking for every chance to get into the game. If the Federal or the State authorities will give the Senior Service Corps an official standing, the oldsters will be glad to join on; they stand ready to give their time for the attainment of full physical fitness, their brains for the study of military science, and their money for the purchase of uniform, arms, and equipment. They want nothing for themselves but the proud consciousness that in joining the corps they are taking a possible first step on the glorious road to France.

As Secretary Lane said the other day, the Germans have endeavored to pester over sea, sly, and land that odious word Verboten. America has seen fit to challenge this insolent assumption, and the men of the Senior Service Corps want the privilege of backing up the challenge.