

Making Middle-Aged Men Fit to Help in War

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

By Van Tassel Sutphen.

WHY the Senior Service Corps?

Who are eligible to its membership?

What is it trying to accomplish?

In these days of national crisis there comes to every loyal American citizen the insistently recurring question: What can I do to serve the country?

Now it is obvious that circumstances must have a great deal to do with finding the answer to this question, always assuming that the man is honest in asking it, that he really wants to "come over" with the best that is in him. The young man who is fortunate in the possession of physical fitness and independent financial resources has his way plainly marked out for him; he can join one of the B. O. training camps, and be fitted for subordinate command in the great armies that are to go abroad within the next few months. If he is anxious for immediate active service, he can enlist in one of the engineer regiments or ambulance units; perhaps he is already a member of some branch of the National Guard, or he is an aviation expert, or he is rich enough to convert his yacht into a patrol vessel and offer it, together with his own services, to the Government—all these are easy answers to the great question.

Secondly, there is the everyday young chap who comes under the general conscription law and who has no one dependent upon him; it is his business to register, to await the operation of the drafting machinery, and then, if called to the colors, to give his best toward the common task of making the world safe for democracy. Here again there is no need for argument and no excuse for hesitation.

But how about the many thousands who have dependent families and no independent incomes, or who may be rejected for slight physical incapacity, or who are over the generally accepted age limit of forty-five years—what are they going to do? What answer can they give to the big question?

Undoubtedly a man ought to be willing to serve according to the best of his abilities. As President Wilson said in his memorable conscription proclamation, a man must not seek to please himself; the sharpshooter should be content to march with his regiment, and the machinist is expected to stand by his levers. Every one may serve along the line of his special aptitude and vocation; the banker is to keep going the multitudinous wheels of the world's credit, the manufacturer is to speed up his production, the farmer is to plant more acres. Even the twenty-dollar-a-week clerk can subscribe for a Liberty bond on the installment plan, the housewife can put in practice new and far-reaching economies, the child can save its pocket money for the benefit of the Red Cross, the old woman can knit sweaters for the soldiers in the frost-bound trenches. To each and all of us a task lies ready to hand if we are able to recognize it and are willing to take it up.

Now all this has been said a thousand times before; it is the absolute truth; we are confronted not by a theory but by an uncompromising necessity. And yet there is another side to the question and possibly another answer to it.

The United States is at war; and war, reduced to its ultimate terms, is the appeal to physical force; the one essential factor for success is effective man-power. More than a year ago the cable dispatches told of a German university professor, a sergeant in the army, who had celebrated his seventieth birthday at the front. Today in England recruits fifty years of age are taken gladly, and the situation in France is probably even more critical. Men long past the military age, as well as mere boys, are being called to the colors, and the physical tests have been made much less rigorous. A reasonable degree of fitness rather than an arbitrary age limit is coming to be the prime quali-

fication for military service in the European armies, and the day may dawn for us when it will be necessary to throw every pound of flesh into the scale.

This is not the prediction of an alarmist; it is merely looking possible contingencies in the face. We cannot afford to blind ourselves to what consequences may follow upon the Russian collapse. Undoubtedly the German morale has been tremendously strengthened by the virtual elimination of Russia as an offensive factor on the eastern front. And back of Russia waits Japan, eager to seize every opening for national aggrandizement. German intrigue is busy, and while it is hardly decent to impugn the good faith of an ally, it must still be remembered that East is East and West is West. Moreover, it was the unexpected

yes, even to the very last man. And you or I may be that man.

To get ready then—but how? Theoretically, each man should so order his own life as to put himself into proper physical condition; practically, he doesn't do it. It takes more grit and determination than most men possess to keep plodding ahead on one's own account toward an unseen goal. Some external stimulus is necessary, and this may be best supplied by means of concerted action. A task that is painful and onerous for the individual is quickly and easily performed by the group.

A month or more ago this problem of conserving the physical resources of the nation's older men presented itself, with constantly increasing insistence, to the mind of a man who has made physical

even good food for powder. Forty-five years of age is the climacteric for men as it is for women. After that period the degenerative processes begin to set in, and the man is no longer "fit" in the physical, or more properly the athletic sense. Easy living is the predisposing course of physical deterioration in the vast majority of cases. The man who is moderate in the satisfaction of his appetites and who keeps up his physical activities can retard this process of decay almost indefinitely; take care of yourself and you may be a better man at sixty-five than your son is at forty-five.

In the first burst of patriotic enthusiasm, attendant upon the entry of the United States into the war, the older men naturally wanted to keep step with the youngsters in seeing the thing through. And so, throughout the country, innumerable quasi-military organizations have sprung into existence, numbering on their roster rolls men of all ages. The training has been carried on with little or no attempt at discrimination; men of fifty and over would be sent out on wild hikes of ten miles or more over rough country and muddy Spring roads. As an inevitable consequence, most of the older men would have to drop out; some of them have been permanently injured by the ignorance and indiscretion of their commanding officers.

The cardinal point, then, in the camp system is to separate the classes—those under military age and those above it. The ordinary setting-up exercises and the severe drilling and marching will not do for the older men until they have been brought back to condition. The work started with fifteen minutes of calisthenic drill at the Yale gymnasium, followed by a three-quarters of an hour hike. The time selected was from 8 to 9 o'clock every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning. The idea was to interfere as little as possible with a man's ordinary life and business interests. Each man signed up for ninety days, and agreed to make this engagement the premier one on his calendar. The term of service has not yet expired, but the members of the corps are so enthusiastic that they propose to carry it on indefinitely—whether war keeps on or not.

In the preliminary work some curious and significant phases presented themselves to the student of psychology. These elderly freshmen in the school of personal physical efficiency were nearly all men of large affairs; for the last quarter of a century or so they had been giving orders to their subordinates. At the same time, they had been unconsciously losing the power to obey; the function had atrophied through disuse. The order to stand on the left foot, holding the right foot extended stiffly to the front, stumped fully 75 per cent. of the class; some men couldn't seem to make up their minds as to which was the left foot and which the right; others found it impossible to maintain their equilibrium. There is nothing alarming about these symptoms; they merely indicate that co-ordination between the mental and physical functions has been temporarily impaired.

It will be noticed that three-fourths of the training is carried on in the open air. The setting-up exercises are designed to bring into play long unused muscles, resulting in an erect carriage, the increase of the resistive forces of the body, the opening up and deepening of the chest, the strengthening of the heart action, the overcoming of the dropping of the abdominal viscera, and the renewal of the response of the whole muscular system to will control. And these results have been actually attained in the case of the New Haven Corps; the men have reduced their girth at the waistline, and at the same time have added to their chest measurements. Moreover, they feel better than they have for years; they bring an increased energy and enthusiasm to their daily tasks; in a word, they are becoming "fit."

The outdoor work is designed to supplement the indoor exercises by giving plenty



Yale's Mentor of Athletics, Walter Camp, Who Tells How to Train Older Men Without Injury to Health.

that happened in Russia; what regard have the "Reds" for obligations contracted by their former taskmasters?

Supposing that the entrance of the United States can do little more than balance the possible Russian defection—what then? Is the war to be fought out to the point of physical exhaustion for one or both sides? That can mean but one thing—the employment of our own man-power up to the very last human unit.

The conclusion is inevitable that the man who today is asking: "What can I do to serve the country?" must take the possible future into account; he may be required to give himself. But he must be physically fit and ready or the sacrifice is worse than useless.

At the bottom of his heart every man who feels the urge of his manhood wants to have an actual part in the actual game. He may be doing his full share in a dozen different ways, his services may be infinitely more valuable along civilian lines than they could be on the tented field, and yet the supreme call may come and he wants to be ready to answer: Adsum. In the final clash, in the ultimate onslaught of the enemies of civilization, it is the reserves that will count,

training and the handling of men the study of a lifetime—Walter Camp of New Haven. For many years Mr. Camp has been Yale's most revered athletic mentor, especially in matters relating to the annual football campaigns, and Princeton and Harvard men know to their sorrow that it has not been an easy thing to catch an Eli team off edge. One must have a system, indeed one must have the best system; then the results follow as a matter of routine.

Mr. Camp concluded to organize an experimental body of New Haven business and professional men and try out his theory. He interested such well-known men as ex-President Taft, Colonel Ullman, President of the New Haven Chamber of Commerce; Professor Farnum and Dean Jones of the university; H. B. Sargent, of Sargent & Co.; ex-Mayor Farnsworth, and ex-Judge Cleaveland. The corps, as finally constituted, numbered about one hundred men taken from almost every walk of life. The ages varied from 46 to 73, the heights from 5 feet 4 inches to 6 feet 4 inches, and the weights from 116 pounds to 265 pounds. Observe carefully that these men were all over the military age, and that no drill Sergeant would have looked at them twice; they were not

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 an 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 ordnance 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, trans-

portation, 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 Lansing, 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 not 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, Scarsdale, 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 stimulus in itself. Revolver practice during the Summer vacation period will help the corps together, and many other means of gilding the pill will suggest themselves to the leader of an inventive turn of mind. But the time 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 definitely trained in the exercise of arms. As the National Guard step up to the firing line their places should be filled and their empty armories and vacant 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 resentfully conscious that only an arbitrary age limit prevents them from donning the uniform of their country. But these same 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 plaster over sea, sky, 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.