

MILITARISM AND ANTI-MILITARISM

“WHAT has a teacher of Greek to do with National Defence, the Strathcona Trust, and universal military training, and what will this dreamer say?” That is the unspoken comment I catch with my mind’s ear, which is not so deaf as my ear physical. Well, but that is exactly why I am interested in this question, because I am a teacher of Greek.

We have all been surprised, I have been surprised, at the recent success of the Greek army. We can all remember the last war of the Greeks and Turks, and the ignominious collapse of the Greeks. It is also my business to remember historically the wars of the ancient Greeks no less, and with them, in spite of Marathon and Salamis, Thermopylæ and Plataea, a great deal of ignominious collapse; first before Macedon, which was scarcely Greek, and then before Rome which was wholly unlike Greece.

Two thousand years and more have passed since a state not unlike in many ways the Great Britain of to-day, full of commerce, science, and literature, of art, logic, and poetry, of theatres and even of athletes, went down in final and fatal ruin before an army of rude and simple soldiers, soldiers who were their inferiors in everything except in self-control, self-denial, and self-reliance, and in the knowledge of the use of arms. Athens fell before the common soldiers of Philip of Macedon, the Bismarck of ancient Greece; before the wood-rangers, lumbermen, and charcoal burners of Macedonia. Athens perished because she would not leave her theatres and her parliament; her statues and her statutes; her paintings and her plebiscites; her poets and her philosophers, to face the drudgery of military service. She would not fight her own battles. Thessalians and Arcadians, the adventurers of the plains and the adventurers of the mountains,