

## CONSCRIPTION—ITS BENEFITS.



MUCH may be said in favor of Conscription; only it needs to be considered in a proper light, free from clouds of prejudice. What is conscription, as we take it in this discussion? It is compulsory service in army and navy. Other matters, like the length and quality of military service, and the pay, are entirely beside the issue. Naturally, the question here rises, has the state a right to impose compulsory military service? Is it in a position of authority to do so? The solution is best reached by determining the purpose, the nature, and the origin of the state.

The state is a collection of individuals united for the defense, for the beneficial and mutual administration of their rights. For defense, the early classical village communities assembled on the fortified hills of the Greek Acropolis and of the Roman Capitol. The state is constituted to defend itself; it, moreover, is able and ought to provide for the general well-being and perfection of its members. This, precisely, we intend to show, namely, that conscription is necessary for the defense and general well-being of society. In view of the saying of Mills and Jevons, that the right administration of the state is largely an experimental science, it is very significant that most nations, ancient, medieval, and modern, have adopted a compulsory form of military service.

Sparta, for two centuries mistress of Peloponnesia, ayé, and even leader of Greek thought, was a vast brotherhood of martial citizens.

Athens, conqueror of the Persians, queen of the Aegean, home of Pericles and Demosthenes and Plato, beheld its young citizens of the upper classes clothed in armor for its defense.

In Rome, the sunshine of whose imperialism gradually extended to the whole civilized world, in Rome, the cradle of the most powerful oligarchy that ever wielded power, in Rome we beheld the entire nation constrained to compulsory military service, guiding from the Campus Martius the destinies of this country. Was it not the Romans' proud boast that they were children of Mars, god of war and agriculture? Later, the feudal system was compulsory military service in another form. Thereby civilized Europe solidified into a rock against the onslaughts of the fierce Danes and Wends from without, and of disintegrating anarchy from within. Now, feudalism was the system whereby each member of the state was vassal and