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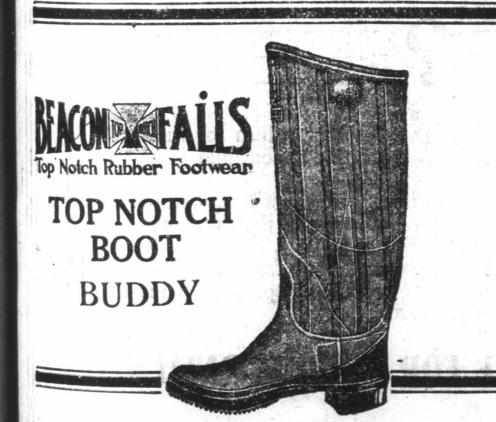
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THE ROUND TABLE scheme has, however, brought about a change in the attitude of employers, w ho are now receiving authoritative advice as to the re-

THE WAR AND ENGLISH LIFE.

A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire--Republished Under the Above Heading

meet it and bear its trials. They their object is frankly not simply lusionment.

Kitchener's Army is the outest, are as essentially English today as when Shakespeare, immorchener's Army, the largest volun- such grave distrust. tary force ever raised in history,

udices he may adopt and again luctant to lose -workmen, and discard, from politicians or from munition firms had eventually to topics: but what may be called his from "pilfering" labour from fixtures." the fixed ideas which their competitors by the offer of lie beyond the reach of argument, higher wages. Lord Derby's are few and immovable. One of these is a dislike of the intervention of the military in domestic. affairs. In the eyes of Englishmen, as Montesquiex remarked in the chapter already quoted, "miltary men are regarded as belonging to a profession which may be useful but is often dangerous.' The English are an incurably civilian people. Our island position and our traditions have made us so. Military law may be necessary, but we do not regard it as law, as the deep impression made by the death of Miss Cavell has shown. The mere suggestion that the methods of compulsory service might be applied in the workshop as in the Army has reawakened suspicions which were first roused by the use of the military in the English and French railway strikes a few years ago. Compulsory enlistment in order to secure enough men to keep our fighting forces at full strength is an expedient which Labour would be readily open to consider; so many men have already gone that the demand for equality of sacrifice is one which finds an echo in thousands of working-class homes; but military law in the workshop is something which workpeople re gard as in quite a different cate-gory. Unfortunately, the two are associated, not only in the minds of their proposers, but in the actu-al facts of the case; and herein lies the real crux of the contro-

lies the real crux of the controversy which has arisen.

The advocates of compulsory service are, many of them, sincere and patriotic men. They are pleading their cause not with any sinister ulterior object, such as the reduction of soldiers' pay, or the creation of a weapon wherewith to break strikes after the war, but with the sole desire of saving the

know by hard experience that life to secure more men but to secure is a severe and difficult pilgrim- men in what they consider a more Munitions Act. As passed, that way, and that every bit of for- by arming the Executive with gen- ment arrived at in conference bebe thankful for. Not hoping for men according to their status and Trade Union representatives, and sensational victories from the occupation. Such a programme it was arranged that Labour first, they have not been disil- would automatically and of neces- should have fair representation lusioned by their absence. The sity carry the element of compul- both on the Local Committees fact of war itself was their disil-sion into the workshop, for it which were to be responsible for frender strikes as impossible as the Act and on the special tribunward and visible testimony of this they are under a similar system on als which were to penalize its working-class outlook at its best. the Continent. Moreover, service- breaches. In practice the Act has Its quiet endurance, its obstinate able men in exempted occupations worked out very differently from but unassuming determination, its would only be exempted so long what was expected either by its free-spokenness and good fellow- as they were needed. In other author or by the Trade Union ship, its unfailing and unforced words, it would be the employer, leaders. The Local Committees, cheerfulness, rising to boisterous or rather, in actual practice, the having finished their preliminary humour when thigs look black- foreman, who would stand be- organizing work, have fallen into tween them and the Army. Such abeyance, while the Munition Tria situation would put into the bunals have suffered in workingtalized then in his English plays. hands of private employers a class estimation from the fact that "In ancient days," as the King's power which they have never the so-called Labour representaproclamation reminds us, "the claimed, and which public opinion tive is nominated by Whitehall indarkest moment has ever pro- in this country is democratic stead of being representative of duced in men of our race the enough to allow them to exercise local labour opinion. Partly as a sternest resolve." "The customs without control. It is because result of this, and of the comparof a free people are part of its lib- workmen can foresee these results erty," wrote a great French poli- of the introduction of military tical thinker in a famous chapter law, and feel that the advocates of on this country, which has shown compulsory service (whose motself at least twice to be pro- tives they undoubtedly misunderphetic.* (*Montesquiex. Esprit des stand) do not understand the Lois, Book xix, Chapter 27. Its working-class point of view or bearing on the part played by sufficiently respect the traditional Britain in the Napoleonic wars has British sentiment underlying it often been remarked upon.) Kit- that they view their proposals with Working people have already

country and winning the war. But

is the triumph of the customary had some foretaste of what com-English way of doing things. The pulsory enlistment would mean. working classes, from whom the In the early days of the war when great majority of its men are trade was bad and the Army seemdrawn, are proud of what has been ed the only alternative to destituthus characteristically achieved, tion, employers of labour freand hope to achieve more still and quently dismissed men, happily in sufficient measure. Whether few in number, where the staple their hopes will be fulfilled industry has suffered through the through Lord Derby's scheme for war, the practice has remained a canvassing everyone of military common one and has not unnaturage whose work is not of direct ally provoked considerable resentuse to the State still remains to ment and alienation of feeling. Men feel that it is unjust and in-But there are other reasons be- compatible with the whole spirit sides custom which determine the of English life and of the volunattitude still held by important tary system. After the first sections of workpeople on the months and even weeks of the question of compulsory service. war, however, employment im-They are frankly afraid of its re- proved so rapidly that the position action upon industrial conditions. was soon reversed. Men out of The mental furniture of the Eng- work had no difficulty whatever in lish workman is often not very finding employment, while emconsiderable; opinions and pre-ployers became more and more re-

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scheme has, however, brought lative importance of their business in the national economy. At the same time, voluntary enlistment has become more and more a matter of the deliberate choice of the individual citizen, and its unlooked-for success is likely to leave a permanent mark on English life in a new and deeper sense of the relationship between the State and pulsory service as the only thor- neither angry nor bitter, and, in

always been patriots, but they are defence, the two resolutions may void of racial hatred, is more unonly now learning, in the fullest not appear to hang together—lited and determined on the issues sense, what it means to be citizens. Another factor which has not illogical. To this the only answer gle in English history. tended to allay working-class apprehension is the working of the age, that trouble is certain by the advantageous and economical way, Act was the result of an agreetune or happiness is something to eral powers enabling it to call up tween Mr. Lloyd George and the would give the Executive power to the local organizing work under

ative ineffectiveness of the Labour representatives in handling the difficult and novel points that have arisen, there has been a good deal. of friction which better handling might have avoided. Trouble has arisen especially on the clause forbidding the employment of workmen within six weeks without a certificate from their last employer, which obviously leaves an open ing for vexatious treatment. Difficulties such as these were only to be expected and are not incapable of fair adjustment; it would indeed be deplorable if such precedent for the equal partnership of Capital and Labour as the Local Committees and the Munition Tribunals were allowed to

tend and develop the spirit which gave rise to them. These various considerations may serve to explain the course of proceedings at the most authoritative and representative of recent working-class deliberative gatherings-the Trades Union Congress held at Bristol in the second week of September. Three resolutions relating to the war were brought forward and carried with practical unanimity. One supported the action of the Labour Party in & co-operating with the other political parties in the national recruiting campaign. Of the other the newspapers, on a variety of be prohibited in the Munitions Act two one related to the prosecution of the war and the other to compulsory service; their wording is

pass away without an effort to ex-

giving in full: "That this Trades Union Congress, whilst expressing its opposition (in accordance with its previously expressed opinions) to all systems of militarism as a danger to human progress, considers the present action of Great Britain and her Allies as completely justified, and expresses its horror at the atrocities which have been committed by the German and Austrian military authorities, and the callous, brutal, and unnecessary sacrifice of the lives of noncombatants, including women and children, and hereby pledges itself to assist the Government as far as possible in the successful prose-

cution of the war." "That we, the delegates to this Congress, representing nearly three million organized workers, record our hearty appreciation of the magnificent response made to the call for volunteers to fight against the tranny of militarism.

"We emphatically protest against the sinister efforts of a section of the reactionary Press in formulating newspaper policies for party purposes and attempting to foist upon this country conscription, which always proves a burden to the workers, and will divide the nation at a time when absolute tion at a time when absolute

unanimity is essential.

"No reliable evidence has been produced to show that the voluntary system of enlistment is not adequate to meet all the Empire's requirements.

"We believe that all the that can be made is that the two men necessary can, and will, expressions of opinion do in fact be obtained through a volun- hang together in the minds of tary system properly organ-their authors. But he would have ized, and we heartily support a poor knowledge of the temper of and will give every aid to Englishmen—and especially of the Government in their pre- that Puritan layer in English life sent efforts to secure the from which these resolutions main men necessary to prosecute ly emanate—who could deduce the war to a successful is- from them any weaking in the national determination to carry the To the Continental mind, ac- war through to a successful end. customed to regard universal com- Working-class opinion, though the individual. Englishmen have ough way of organizing national spite of the gutter Press, quite demay even seem incompatible and of this conflict than over any strug

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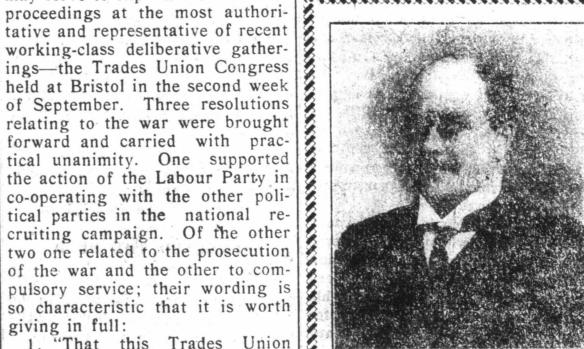


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