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**EDITORIAL.**

**A NATIONAL PROBLEM.**

The nation is at present enthusiastic, and rightly, over the valour of the British Army. Sick or well nothing is considered too good for the soldier. But what of the time when, after the declaration of peace, other interests crowd out those now in the foreground, when the picturesque blue uniform of the hospital patient, the khaki clad figure with sling or crutch, are no longer seen in our streets, only a number of cripples in civilian clothes, may be more or less shabby? When, like slumming, the care of the disabled soldier has gone out of fashion, who will then "take thought for the men to whom we now doff our hats, and profess our gratitude, whom we praise and pet, and assure they will never be forgotten? Not such lip-service and promises but a proper refitting in body and spirit before they go forth again into civil life is their right."

So says Mr. John Galsworthy who, in an article in *The Times*, pleads very earnestly for the thousands of sick and wounded who come flowing back to us to be re-made or—marred.

"Does the nation," he asks, "realize that this great problem is still not being tackled as a whole, is still hung up between diverse opinions? And does the nation understand that on what is decided within the next few weeks hangs the future civic usefulness and contentment of thousands on thousands of lives? Has it realized that under the system at present adopted the future civic utility of very many has already been jeopardized or lost? For the present system seems to be this:—Refit the man for the Army as quickly and as well as you can. If he can't be refitted for the Army, pension and discharge him at once.

But this is a national not merely an Army problem. If it remains simply an Army problem, our towns and countrysides when the war is over will be plastered for the next twenty and thirty years with well-nigh useless men, a burden to themselves, and to us all—men to whom we ought in gratitude to have given every chance and shall have given next to none. 'No good for a soldier any more; then dismiss him with so many shillings a week!' Is it what the country wants?"

Mr. Galsworthy continues, "I take it the country wants two things. To rescue for each of these brave fellows as decent, self-respecting, happy a life as ever it can; and to secure for itself the civic and industrial usefulness of every possible citizen. To discharge disabled soldiers before all that is possible has been done for them, rescues nothing, either for man or State. On the contrary, it fills a hero's cup, perhaps for ever, with incapacity, dejection, and insecurity; it fills the cup of the State to overflowing with useless citizens. This waste of national material is a tragedy of the future, and in our country the future has frequently had to take care of itself."

Surely every one of us would feel eternally shamed if we allowed soldiers maimed for life, that we may go whole, to suffer any unnecessary handicap in the battle of life.

To assist disabled soldiers after their discharge is not enough—"To retain control of the patient, so that his treatment may be coherent and sustained, seems to be of the very essence of what can be done for the future of most of these men. Such control, limited already by the simple fact that the State would never want to undertake unnecessary trouble and expense, will require, of course, careful safeguarding and delimitation; but without it the battle of rescue is as good as lost."

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