

# THE HOME SECTOR

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## The Soldier and his College

THE COLLEGES IN WAR TIME AND AFTER, by Parke Rexford Kolbe. Problems of War and Reconstruction Series. D. Appleton and Company.



*The Smith College Relief Unit*

The president of the Municipal University of Akron, Ohio, has here set forth the part played by the American college during the war and added a final chapter on college curricula after the war. Well written, clear, progressive in its attitude, President Kolbe's book is nevertheless somewhat groping when it leaves exposition and takes to criticism.

The expository portions of the book point out the generosity of our higher institutions of learning in giving over to the country the resources which were at their disposal. One obtains a very clear picture of our educational institutions during the war and a definite feeling of the difficulties encountered when agencies which were quite individualistic, quite self-dependent, suddenly found themselves mere sub-departments of the War Department submitting to command from higher authority as if they had been used to it all their lives, when in reality it was only the State universities of America which had not been able to mould their own destinies through their trustees.

One sees the cultural courses giving way to applied science, Wordsworth yielding to Major Moss, the dormitories turning into barracks, the baseball fields into drill grounds. Certain colleges have abandoned German, thinking apparently that ignorance of a nation's thought is the best means of combating it. More important than the attitude of the faculties is that of the students; a report from 210 universities shows that during the war the study of German decreased forty percent. whereas the study of French increased thirteen percent. But, lest anyone gather that this was due to pro-ally sympathies, it should be noted that during the same period the study of Spanish increased 452 percent.





*Naval Training Unit, Yale University*

Many dangerous tendencies were developed, such as that of regarding military service as the equivalent of university education. "Nearly all the colleges," says President Kolbe, "seem to be granting credit to seniors for fractional parts of a semester omitted on account of service in the Army or Navy." If this means that the universities are conscience-stricken and realize that the credits they give are worth no more than military service, well and good, but it is more probable that they have been acting through war hysteria, blinded for the moment to the true meaning of anything and fearful of being mistaken for pro-Germans.

One thing noticeable is the emphasis put on restraining university men from entering the Army. The plea is that wholesale enlistments mean a subsequent dearth of trained men. To be sure, trained men are needed, but it is a grave question whether enlisting would deprive a trained man of being used. Anyone acquainted with the personnel system in the Army knows that the only difference between the status of the trained man who enlisted and the trained man who waited was that the former performed his specialty at \$33 a month instead of \$166.66 or higher. There were very few specialists who hid their light under a helmet.

President Kolbe has adopted without criticism certain educational tenets which cannot certainly be justified. For instance, it is quite useless to divide the colleges and universities in this country into those endowed by private individuals and those which the State pretends to support. Such a distinction, of course, is valid, but the types of privately endowed universities differ amongst themselves as greatly as the privately endowed university differs from the State university. There is surely as wide a breach between Harvard and Columbia as there is between Columbia and the University of California. President Kolbe in another way rather spoils the appeal of his book for the soldier who had been a university man by his tendency to whitewash the negative and sometimes passive attitude taken by the university administrations in the face of our national crisis. One would like to see some sharp criticism, some attempt at rebuke. No man who has lost his job because he went to war and comes back to find it filled by some





*The University of Connecticut rifle range*

person who had felt himself too valuable to his country to fight for it is going to be consoled by the reflection that the universities have been brought closer to the people.

It is not enough for a book like President Kolbe's to say that a definite policy concerning the professor in service is difficult. It should have been framed, difficult or not; as a matter of fact all that was needed was to hire substitutes with the definite understanding that they would be released at the end of the war. Universities are able to do this for professors who are enjoying their sabbaticals; why was it any more difficult to do it for these who were called to the colors?

Again, no former instructor who has lost two years or more from his studies wants to see college boards of control as a class treated as patriots when he recalls the struggles he experienced in getting permission to make propaganda not merely for the Allies but for the welfare of his own country, a very legitimate activity. He is likely to remember such affairs as the refusal of Harvard to accept the Victor Chapman memorial though the Brunswick Lion stood growling behind the Germanic Museum, or the form letter sent to every member of the faculty of the University of California who was in the service telling him that his salary would cease and that his re-appointment was not assured. "The main thing after all," says President Kolbe, "is the apparent unanimity in willingness of college and instructor to make every sacrifice for the winning of the war." That is one way of putting it. But to those who did make every sacrifice there should have been some protection which even gratitude, sweet as it is, cannot replace.

*The Colleges in War Time and After* is bound, then, to be more valuable as a reference book of facts than as an expression of critical judgment or of educational policy. It will thoroughly repay study if one seeks definite information. But for the man who wishes an outlined policy of the relation of the university to the country at large, the book will prove disappointing.

G. B.