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MILITARY DUTY EXEMPTIONS IN BRITAIN

OUR London Office writes: "We are trying to get our regular office helpers and the Elders of the I.B.S.A. meetings exempted from military service. The War Office is agreeable to having the case stated before the Civil Courts soon. At present, about 60 brethren are in prison for refusing military orders; about 60 have been exempted so long as they do work considered of national importance; about 20 have joined the non-combatant corps arranged for by the Government. You will see by these figures that the majority of the brethren involved declined to accept military authority. The above figures refer only to single men. The married men's compulsion is only beginning to come into operation. These also will appeal for exemption; but it remains to be seen whether they will refuse to accept the non-combatant corps and, by so doing, forfeit the allowance provided for the wives and children of soldiers. The situation is certainly trying. Some of our brethren, eight at least, were taken to France, and afterwards sentenced to be shot for disobedience. The sentence was reduced to ten years [R5942 : page 246] penal servitude, and we have just learned that they are now in civil prisons in England. The military powers seem to care little for the civil authorities. These experiences are doing good to the Church as a whole, by sending it to prayer and causing an increased exercise of love and sympathy. No doubt, too, all this is a stiffening process in preparation for harder and darker days to come."

We wish our dear Brethren of the warring nations to know of the loving sympathy of their dear Brethren of the neutral countries. Surely, many prayers are ascending from Brethren of the I.B.S.A. everywhere! Examples of loyalty to the King of kings are everywhere having a strengthening and stimulating effect.

We quite agree with the proposal to gain exemption for Class Elders as ministers under the laws. This does not mean that we recognize a "clergy" class as distinct from a "laity" class in Christ's Church. "All ye are brethren – all are ministers (servants) of Christ. But if one law excuses some Brethren, and another law or arrangement excuses other Brethren, and if no law excuses still others, it is for us to obtain for each other *all* that the laws permit us to have.

