

OUR NATIONAL MILITARY SYSTEM.

I.—WHAT THE UNITED STATES ARMY SHOULD BE.



BEFORE submitting the following suggestions in regard to the possibilities of the future army of the United States, I will state some facts that pertain to the army as it exists to-day.

The law fixing the peace establishment of the army, passed in 1869, limited the strength to thirty thousand. The annual appropriation bill has of late years contained a proviso that no money thus appropriated shall be used for recruiting more than twenty-five thousand men. The cost of keeping up this force has always exceeded \$30,000,000 and has often amounted to \$40,000,000. The men enlisted for this force are mostly recruited in the large cities, and consist of a class who in the main have selected to enlist from other than patriotic motives or love of the military profession. A large proportion are foreigners who are not sufficiently acquainted with the country to find other employment. Many have found out their incapacity to make headway in civil life, the causes being as different as the characters and circumstances of the individuals. Too many belong to that large and unfortunate class known under the generic name of "tramps," who are wanderers by nature and who become the deserters from the army. Many are illiterate, few are educated and capable, and the great majority lack the necessary talents and capacity to take care of themselves and to advance in life. The smart and apparently capable man, when found in the ranks, is generally suspected of some moral taint or intemperate habit not tolerated among his friends, and the number who attain distinction in the army, or after leaving it, are few indeed. There is no opportunity afforded the enlisted man to become qualified to command in case of war, and the number who rise to a commission is remarkably small.

The law permits original enlistments from sixteen to thirty-five years of age. Reënlistments are not restricted by age, and can take place so long as the examining surgeon finds no objection. The duration of each enlistment is five years. The number of posts garrisoned by the regular army is about 125. They are scattered throughout the territory of the United States, and the duties of the troops occupying them are mainly confined to the simplest rou-

tine of garrison life, such as guard duty, target practice, and company and battalion drills. Their time is taken up in rehearsing these elementary lessons over and over, doing them as well, if not better, after the first few weeks of instruction as they ever do afterwards. This is the experience and attainment of the larger portion of the enlisted men. On the frontier there are occasional outbreaks of the Indians in the vicinity, but they are yearly becoming less frequent. When an outbreak does occur the troops have an opportunity to learn a little field service. This humdrum condition is less true of the cavalry than of the other two arms of the service, because the care and instruction of the horse adds a material task to the duties of the trooper. But his duties are also confined to a narrow sphere, and the training of the enlisted men of the army is limited to taking care of themselves and performing the elementary duties stated above. There is no provision for elevating the rank and file, no means held out to the soldier to enable him to rise in the profession of arms, and the longer he remains in service the more incapable he becomes of taking care of himself out of it. The great majority go through their first enlistment of five years making little or no progress after the first year, and when they are discharged, if they do not reënlist, they settle down on a homestead or in some frontier village, and are lost to the country, so far as any further military service to be derived from them is concerned. The most valuable service they have rendered is the opportunity they have afforded the commissioned officers to practice the administration of army affairs and to acquire the care and command of troops. Those who reënlist simply repeat this experience, and make no material progress. They may be good enough soldiers in case there is any actual service in the field to do, but all that they have acquired is limited to the individual.

While military knowledge is fairly maintained and practiced in the army, there is no provision for disseminating it, in order that we may have as many men as possible throughout the country who are themselves instructed and who are capable of giving instruction to others in the event of a war. If proper men were selected at the proper time of life, and the proper training furnished them, with such an end in view, they would at the end of five years' service be able to take a company

into the field and instruct others to do the same.

The annual cost per man of maintaining our military establishment is about \$1200. Surely at such a cost a much better result could and should be obtained. It is evident that, by the methods which are in use in the army at present, we get only a minimum return for this sum. According to the foregoing calculation, it costs more to maintain a private in the United States army than it does to make an officer at West Point. Can there be any doubt about the relative value of the two to the country? No enlisted man, be his abilities what they may, can hope to compete with a graduate of the Military Academy, through such opportunities as are furnished at the present time in a five-years' enlistment. This is due to the fact that the material in the ranks is incapable of acquiring the necessary knowledge, even if it were furnished, which it is not. Besides, a large percentage of the rank and file are morally disqualified for higher and responsible positions, as may be shown by the number of desertions from the service. A large percentage are professional deserters, as was shown by the number of men in the ranks who claimed the benefit of the President's proclamation in 1873. At that time nearly one-third of the enlisted men confessed themselves deserters. There is no means at present by which this class of criminals, or any other, can be kept out of the ranks. With the history of the Academy before us, can it be doubted that we can, and should, get much more for the money expended than we do? Since 1870, when the army was reduced to its present strength, the cost of maintaining it has been, on an average, about forty millions a year. For this sum 100 West Point Academies could be maintained, educating 30,000 students, and graduating annually from 5000 to 7000. Would not the substitution of the method of making officers for the one of maintaining enlisted men, since it can be done cheaper, give the country a much greater military strength, in the event of a war, than any result that we get out of the army as it is now constituted?

Some of the defects of our military system, or rather want of system, have here been pointed out, not with the view to finding fault, but to aid in suggesting where improvement is needed. The defects cited will not be questioned by any officer of sufficient experience, for they are easily deduced from the official reports made from time to time. The Lieutenant-General of the army, in his last annual report, states, in reference to desertion, that there is a slight increase over the previous year, and that it is likely to continue. The

army, notwithstanding its defects, due to mismanagement and unwise legislation, has done good service whenever it has been called upon, and has amply repaid its cost, in proof of which the history of the growth and settlement of the great West in the past half-century will fully testify.

But the nature of its duties are destined soon to change, and we must change our methods to meet the new conditions. The Indian question is fast being settled so far as requiring a military force, and will be soon so insignificant as to be disregarded in military legislation. Soon the sole duty of the army will be the preparation, conservation, and dissemination of military knowledge, and keeping pace with the progress of military science, in order that the country may not invite war by being unprepared for it. Our geographical position relieves us of the great expense of maintaining a very large standing army, for we have no large standing armies on our borders. But we cannot afford to neglect to provide ourselves with the means and material for war, for the reason that being prepared is the surest means of preventing war; not to be prepared is simply to invite it. So long as the great nations of the earth maintain immense armies and foster the art of war, we must do the same. China, the most populous nation on earth, is at the mercy of any third-rate power, simply because in her civilization she has paid little attention to the art of war. If China had given the same attention to the subject that the Western nations have, she could with her population control the world.

The ideal army that we have in view is an educational institution, the fundamental principle being to recruit its material from the youth of the land, who will be able to learn the duties of the service and to impart them to others. To furnish the necessary field for the extension of their knowledge, and to give the entire country the benefit of it, the recruits should be selected *pro rata* from the congressional districts, to which they would be returned when they had completed their education.

Every military post should be a military school. A liberal construction of section 1231 of the Revised Statutes would enable this to be done without further legislation. The authorities, however, have been unfavorable to this idea in so far that they have ruled that a soldier cannot be compelled to go to school. It is difficult to understand the position of General Sherman on this question, in view of the support he has given to the schools established at Fort Monroe and Fort Leavenworth. The Adjutant-General and the Inspector-General have also advocated this view, and maintained that further legislation is necessary in order

that soldiers can be compelled to go to school. Unquestionably further legislation is necessary, if the general of the army and his staff so maintain. The law of obedience seems sufficient to exact nearly everything else from the soldier, and it is not easily understood why he cannot be required to learn everything that will make him more useful to the service. There would be no difficulty in the way if the Commander-in-Chief or the War Department should make a rule requiring soldiers to attend school. General Sherman has declared in his annual reports, while in command of the army, that the above-mentioned schools have added nothing to the current expenses of the army. If this is so, then every post could be converted into a military school, without increasing the annual appropriation. The schools referred to are for officers, and not for enlisted men, but whether the attendance of officers is voluntary or compulsory has not yet been made apparent. Neither is it self-evident that they are more necessary for the officer than for the enlisted man. An officer's commission is given him on the theory that he has received his commission because he is already familiar with the subjects that are taught at these schools, and illustrates another serious defect of the service; viz., the tendency to repeat and revive over and over again what has once been thoroughly learned. It would not be deemed advisable for a graduate of the Military Academy to be permitted to return to West Point to go over the same course again even once, to say nothing of continuing the repetition. Yet a large percentage of the duties of the service is nothing more than repetition. Take the matter of target practice and drill, which is carried to such an extent that it often becomes detrimental instead of beneficial. Why compel men to do a thing that has once been learned until the monotony of the repetition destroys interest and makes it truly distasteful. Every graduate of the Academy will concede that the repetition of the whole course of infantry tactics three times annually is one of the greatest trials of the course. Target practice has been conducted to such an excess that officers and men have been outspoken in their condemnation of it, and have brought about a reduction to a reasonable limit. After a man has once learned to shoot, it is expensive, besides being detrimental, to require him to shoot for weeks and weeks. The principle of taking up some other subject useful in the profession would be more conducive to the interests of the service, and less irksome. It is not maintained that practice should be dispensed with entirely after a subject is once acquired, but that it should not form the sole occupation of troops, to the ex-

clusion of every other duty, as drill is sometimes made to do. Too much importance is attached to drill tactics. When the sword and pike and the bow and arrow were the essential weapons of war, the formation of ranks had its origin, and developed into masses and an elaborate and complicated manual. With the introduction of fire-arms the thinning of the ranks began, and has continued with the improvement in arms until it is simply disastrous for any force to be surprised in solid formation, where formerly the reverse was the case. The complicated drill, which is having a tendency to simplicity of late, was devised by the sovereigns of large armies to furnish occupation for the troops in time of peace, who if not kept busy would soon engender trouble.

We are disposed to adopt the customs of European nations without taking into consideration why they exist there, and the possibility that they are not necessary in our country. So long as the French nation was considered the first military power in the world, we used French tactics and wore French uniforms. When the Germans conquered the French, we donned the helmet. We adhere to rigid lines in ranks and drills, and to unnecessarily complicated systems, when every officer of experience knows that they have no value and are not used in actual warfare. A member of the National Guard is liable to think that he knows the whole art of war if he can take the prize at a competitive drill or a target practice, on an armory floor and with an unobstructed range. In actual war he would not be able to accomplish the facings in a plowed field any better than the volunteer of a few weeks, and the accuracy of his fire would be materially affected by the unfamiliar ground and the knowledge that there was an enemy who might fire first. Modern warfare is influenced in a greatly diminished degree by what remains to us of the tactics of Frederick the Great and his time. All that is ever used of the endless drilling, when in actual campaign, is the passing from column into line and from line into column by the simplest methods, and no other movements, no matter how favorable the ground or how perfect the drill. The precision required in drill takes away from the soldier what is of the first importance in modern warfare— independence of movement, freedom of action, and that individuality which belongs to every man whether in or out of the ranks. We must progress with the changes that attend military science, and the improvement in weapons to which the old formations are no longer applicable.

During times of peace the instruction of the army in most of its duties should be confined

to learning *how* to do them, and to *do* many of them only for the purpose of learning *how*. In the conduct of war there is ample time for practice of all its requirements if the knowledge exists as to how it should be conducted. Constant and unremitting exercises for the purpose of being ready for war that comes so seldom is really a waste of time and strength. The great precision in firing that is attained by so much hard work is lost as soon as the practice ceases.

With each post organized as a school and graded for each arm of the service, and the recruits classed at depots according to capacity and progress already made, they can be assigned to their proper place to begin the contest for the prizes that should be held out for all. There should be something for each and every man to work for. The young man who has nothing to work for is without a very essential qualification for a soldier; and the service that holds out no adequate reward to the industrious and efficient worker in time of peace, nor to the gallant and successful man in time of war, cannot hope to have an efficient and trustworthy army. The system of service should be so arranged that the sifting and promotion will, in the course of the enlistment, place each man in his proper place according to his merits, both as to services and to acquirements. For the inferior and refractory material that would undoubtedly find its way into the service under the most rigid scrutiny one or two companies could be assigned in each regiment, to which these men could be transferred and made to do the rougher and more disagreeable work, to the relief of the better men.

While holding that the army should be an educational institution, it is not intended to limit it to book knowledge. The instruction should also be technical to a certain extent. There will be many who will not take to books who can be of great service as carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, masons, painters, etc.; — these are all trades which can be taught, for they are all carried on at every post. All these pursuits are essential in war; in fact, there is no pursuit in civil life that may not be of service in war. The ax and the spade were as valuable as the musket in the last days of the rebellion.

Many officers of the army will be averse to the introduction of mechanical and industrial work into the military service, as improper and unnecessary. There has been much written and said against the working of the soldiers, it being claimed that it is one of the objectionable features of the service that so much manual labor is required of the men, and that it is incompatible with military duty. This will readily

be met by changing the status of manual labor in the army and making it a military duty as well. The management of working parties can be utilized as a means of discipline as well as drill, and with much greater utility to the service and the soldier. There will be no difficulty in doing this, for the importance of skilled labor under military control, applied to military affairs, can readily be shown; and whether war comes or not, its utility remains, especially as we are supposing the army to be composed of a younger and superior material.

The Military Academy would furnish the instructors for these post schools, and the various branches taught there could be carried on to a greater or less extent at all military posts, without additional increase of the current expenses of the army. In the course of a five-years' enlistment the progress which each man would make would be in proportion to his application and capacity and the opportunities afforded him. That education of the rank and file would be beneficial to the army will hardly be questioned. Yet many officers will be found who will oppose the plan of making the army an educational institution, on the ground that it would never be ready for immediate service. It is possible that if education should be made the important feature that its importance demands, the necessity of being ready to move at a moment's notice might be lost sight of in a measure, but there is nothing in the system here suggested that would prevent the most complete preparation for any emergency. It would, however, be quite sufficient to teach the army how to be ready. As has already been stated, it is a great waste of energy for the army to be maintained in constant readiness for what comes so seldom, and rarely comes so suddenly that preparation cannot be made if the means and knowledge exist to get ready. It is the supplying of the means and the knowledge that is here advocated.

In order that the proper material for the army may be provided, it will be necessary to change the methods of the recruiting service. It should be the duty of that branch of the War Department to procure the recruits from the youth of the land, from all parts *pro rata*, in order that all sections of the country shall be represented; when the enlistments expire, the young men, with the knowledge they have acquired while in the service, should be distributed as widely as possible. They should be young men, preferably eighteen and certainly not over twenty-five years of age. Selecting them from congressional districts, the present strength of the army could be maintained by obtaining fifteen recruits annually from each district.

The prevailing rule should be one enlistment, in order that the greatest number possible may get a military training. Five years is ample time in which to produce good results. The young man who could not in five years qualify himself for an officer under a system with that end in view, would not be likely to do it by longer service.

If an education, in addition to the pay, clothing, and subsistence, could be held out, there would be no difficulty in getting the necessary young men. There is little doubt that, when such a plan should become known and established, it would be necessary to make the selections by competitive examinations. The prospect would be very inviting to a large percentage of the young men of the United States, for the number of those whose ambition is greatly in excess of their opportunities is very large. The opportunity of getting an education while one is being clothed and fed, and receiving from fifty cents to one dollar per day, would be availed of gladly by any young man who had not been favored by fortune. It would be his chance to see something of the great world. After five years he could return to his home and relatives with a diploma and a discharge that would give him a claim to a commission as an officer in the event of a war, and he could have from one to two thousand dollars in his pocket; for he could save all his pay, as he would have little time to spend it if he applied himself closely to his duties. Many armies of young men, larger than the United States army to-day, are longing for such a start in life.

The expense of the army graduate would not be lost to the country even if a war did not occur during the available life of such graduate. He would be utilized in the local military organizations, and his savings would enable him to make a beginning in such civil pursuit as he might desire to follow, if he had not acquired a trade during his service. He would take a place and position among his friends and kindred corresponding to the standing his abilities and application won for him in the army. A very large percentage of the pay of the enlisted men of the army, which is now spent in saloons and gambling establishments, would be brought home by the discharged men, to be usefully spent among the people — an economic feature that would be of great value in time, for it would be a constant and continuous addition to the wealth of the congressional districts from year to year; not in money alone, but also in educated and well-trained defenders of the country. At the end of five years there would be in each district about seventy-five graduates from the army, from among whom a sufficient number of officers

could be obtained to instruct any number of volunteers that would probably be called for from the district in the event of a war. With such a body of competent instructors, the volunteer service could be placed in better condition for the field in thirty days than was attained during the first year of the war of the Rebellion.

This plan would provide from twenty to twenty-five thousand instructors every five years, and place them where they would be most needed. An army of half a million of men will require at least fifteen thousand officers. When war comes in this country, the first necessity is a sufficient quota of competent officers. By the foregoing plan there would be a permanent source of supply to select from, possessed of the most recent information on the subject of the care and management of troops.

Our form of government being different from that of all other great nations, our military system must be modified to suit it. We raise our armies by calling for volunteers, and without the approval of the people no war could be got on foot by the Government in this country. For this reason our military methods should be popularized as much as possible, in order to have the sympathies of the people. We have no military system whatever. The militia laws looking to that end, which were devised in the early history of the United States, have failed of their object, and are a dead letter on the statute books. When war comes we shall be as unprepared for it as we were when the Rebellion came upon us. We shall be obliged to resort to the same expensive methods, and suffer the same humiliations in the beginning that the country has heretofore experienced. Great as were our resources, we could make no headway in the first year of the rebellion, because the great body of the people were ignorant of the means and methods of carrying on war, and there were not a sufficient number of instructors provided for such a contingency. In another decade there will not be left a military remnant of our last experience that could be utilized, for the improvement and changes that have been made in the means of warfare will require new and original adaptations of our resources. The object of this paper is to suggest the best possible preparation that the amount of money we annually appropriate could accomplish.

The limited force scattered throughout the United States that we ostentatiously designate as our standing army is smaller than that of any other country in proportion to its population, except China. While France has a soldier to every 60 inhabitants, we have one in 2400. By some extremists, who hold that a standing army is not consistent with a republican form of government, this insignifi-

cant force is sometimes accused of threatening the liberties of our people. It is a misnomer to call an establishment that bears such a proportion to the population a standing army. It is nothing more than the custodian of what military knowledge exists in the country. This is a heavy responsibility, which should be aided by making it also a producer and disseminator of military knowledge, in order that it may have the opportunity of rendering an adequate return for the immense cost it is to the country.

It is necessary that the people at large should see and appreciate the importance — if not the necessity, at least the economy — of utilizing the army as has been outlined in this paper. The army of the present day is conservative and not disposed to radical innovations. The War Department could do much to put the army in the way indicated; but, in view of the opposition of the high authorities

cited, it will be necessary for Congress to direct what should be done. That august body is also slow to act without being stimulated to action by the people.

Every friend of the army who has the interest of his country at heart, and sees the necessity for maintaining the greatest possible military strength at the smallest cost, must appreciate any plan that will provide for the production of military knowledge and its dissemination among the people, for it is the primary element of national defense. It is believed that the foregoing plan is in accord with our institutions, and that when fully understood by the people it will be accepted as the most practical and economical means of fostering and developing the greatest national strength, of engendering patriotism and the love of country, and will tend to the preservation and perpetuation of the Union.

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II.—MILITARY EDUCATION AND THE VOLUNTEER MILITIA.

A VERY important element in the national defense, when the nation's peace is threatened, must be the character of the troops which will compose her armies, and the means which must be relied upon to call them from their homes to the battle-fields and to change them as quickly as possible from an unorganized body of citizens into an efficient and victorious army. First in importance is the character of the material upon which we have to work. Grant said of a prominent Union general, "He perhaps did not distinguish sufficiently between the volunteer who enlisted for the war and the soldier who serves in time of peace." There are a great many officers who make the same mistake. The volunteer soldier, who in time of the nation's peril enlists for the war, is often a man in comfortable circumstances, of competence or even wealth, and his enlistment is a pecuniary sacrifice to him. He is often a man of social position, surrounded by friends who regard and esteem him, all of which he fully appreciates. Patriotism and the hope that by honorable and perhaps distinguished services he may still improve his social position and popularity are the motives of his enlistment. They infuse him with energy and prompt him to heroic deeds.

As a rule a member of the National Guard or State Militia is a man of good social standing. He has usually some military taste, inclination, and ability. All the time he gives to his military studies and training is at a sac-

rifice of his private interests; and consequently he desires to accomplish as much as possible in the shortest space of time. There is nothing mercenary in his motives, for the pay and allowances he receives are never equal to his outlay of money, taking no account of the time he gives.

The chief pleasure he derives from his service is in the gratification of his taste for military knowledge, the satisfaction he takes in his military exercises and the excellence of his attainments, the knowledge that he is in a position to defend his country and society promptly and well, and the increased regard and esteem he merits from his countrymen. He has independence of character and is self-reliant, strong, and intelligent, and frequently is a man of broad and liberal culture and the strongest sense of personal honor, dignity, and self-respect.

This is the kind of men who must constitute our volunteers in time of war, and we must rely especially upon such to rouse the people to patriotic action and to lead them forth in the defense of the country in time of peril.

The nation having secured the volunteer, the next step is to convert him into a soldier in the shortest possible space of time. To this end the most difficult and at the same time absolutely indispensable thing is to induce him at all times to submit his judgment, in matters requiring action, to that of his commanders, and certainly and surely to obey the