

UPON THE OFFICERING OF TROOPS. U. S. SERVICE.

(From General Hazen's work, "The School and the Army.")

Our plan of officering from a military school is excellent as far as it goes. The additional officers who are required should be selected from the whole body of educated young men, with reference to a picked standard of excellence. At West Point there is very little or no selection at first, as cadets are usually appointed by the caprice of individuals, and the subsequent winnowing is made by applying the single test of plodding labor.

Our present plan for supplying the remainder is perhaps even worse than the French—none could be worse than ours. We actually appoint men at the mere wish of influential persons, without any evidence of a single qualification; and it is not surprising that they sometimes possess none. There seems to be a prevalent idea, that to be a good soldier requires some miraculous gift, differing from what ordinary men possess, and not susceptible of the same tests. My observation has been, that a man in the military profession, as in every other, is worthy in proportion as he is sensible, cultivated, industrious, and moral. The French promote men for bravery, although they may possess no other qualification. To be brave is essential, but not sufficient to make an officer. We did the same; and during the last years of the war, when men had been tried and estimated, one could look down a whole column of the names of brigadier-generals in the register without finding many holding commands in the front.

Our selections of men were made by neglecting all the usual tests and checks which are usually resorted to by other armies and civil corporations to secure efficiency. Governors of States had not the facilities for applying these tests, and some of our commanders were destitute of the capacity to appreciate their value. This was happily not the case with those generals who led our armies through the final glorious close. Upon the intelligent exercise of this discriminating faculty, and upon the resolute determination that promotion be given to those that earned it, greatly depend their success.

In the German army it is made nearly impossible for an unworthy and inefficient man to become an officer. Bravery and patriotism are esteemed at their true worth, but they alone are thought to constitute no valid claim to a commission. Duties and responsibilities of such a character are imposed upon all officers, that no incompetent man can remain in service, while the poorest shirk with us may hold his commission all his life if he does no flagrant act and signs his pay accounts regularly.

Justice as impartial as human fallibility can administer, regulates the appointments and defines the duties of Prussian officers, and neither woman, statesman, nor king ever interferes with the exact operations of the law.

The Prussians have also a just system of rewards for service. With us duty goes for little, compared with personal favor. An officer may shirk for years, and then claim by virtue of his rank, and gain the best post of his grade in the service, to the exclusion of those who have all the while labored faithfully. The effect of any system that rewards alike those servants who do their duty and those who do not, can be readily imagined, and in the end, will as it should, destroy itself. In the Prussian army service

is certain of due recognition and reward, this is the strongest stimulus to its proper performance. With us, those who do honest rough duty uncomplainingly are very likely to do it all their lives.

Our legislation discriminates against the regular Army. At the close of our late war a law was passed reorganizing the Army, and providing that half the field officers should be volunteers. There were twenty-seven officers of the regular Army commanding military divisions, departments, armies in the field, and army Corps, while there were but three others who held commands of like grade. The result of the law is, that some colonels of volunteer regiments in the war are now colonels of regular regiments, while their former Army corps commanders are their lieutenant colonels.

In 1870 a statute was passed requiring that all officers of the regular Army should be officially addressed by their full rank, leaving in force the law requiring volunteer officers who are not in the regular Army to be addressed by their highest brevet rank. Some volunteer officers are accordingly addressed as generals, while we of like brevet rank who are attached to the service, and have elected to give our lives to it, are known officially as colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors.

These evils will in time correct themselves by the inevitable working of the spirit of reform and progress. When this rectification begins, public opinion will be satisfied with nothing short of rigid and strict economy in all branches of the public service. But nowhere will this be so difficult to execute as in the administration of the army, for the evil to be dealt with is not "corruption," but want of business capacity. Numbers of our staff possess a high order of talent for they are among the best graduates of the Military Academy. They are rigidly upright, have superior qualities, are in every way personally most worthy. It is the system, and its effects upon them and the army of which I speak. The greatest fault in the system is that these men, by being so widely separated from the Army, lose the true character and spirit of soldiers, and gain no experience in business. At the breaking out of war, the nation finds that these departments, instead of being vigorous auxiliaries, are legal impediments to the administration of affairs. Before the evil can be removed, much time is lost, and vicious systems are inaugurated which are corrected afterwards with difficulty.

This want of business experience leads to great extravagance. The waste, from want of care of property, needless transportation of troops on public conveyances, the unlimited purchase and use of stores not strictly necessary, and the entire failure to hold officers to a cash responsibility for their carelessness or stupidity, are some of the evils that will at last certainly work their own cure. If these matters are reported, as they sometimes are, no especial notice is taken of them, and no one is held responsible. A board of officers is called to investigate and report, and if its action is not satisfactory to the party charged, he calls for another board, and so on till at last a report is obtained in which the board relieves him by its recommendations. There is a disposition among staff officers to stand by each other, which is apt to be stronger than the wish to serve the Government.

The cost of the army may be divided into two parts: the specific, such as the pay and allowances, fixed in amount by law, and the general costs, such as arms, equipments, quarters, transports, and general incidental wants not specified by law, but left to dis-

cretion. It is in the latter division that restriction is necessary. At present the storehouse of any Army quartermaster will be found to contain almost every known article of merchandise, the connection of much of which with an army would puzzle the best soldier living to find out. These general supplies are issued on a requisition which requires only the approval of the commanding officer. There is no definite check or limit to the purchasing power, and no necessity for care, as new articles are readily procured to replace the old. Thus it is common to see an officer living under five times his number of his allowance of tent or going on a scout with more than his allowance of waggons.

It is a popular thing to advocate retrenchment in the army, and to effect this, the Army register is scanned, and the Line of our Army plucked here and there of a regiment and there of a major, an adjutant, or quartermaster, or the pay of the soldier is reduced. The administration, which is the real source of expense, is never touched. The present Secretary of War ruled that but five thousand civil employes be kept in service, but nothing was said as to grade or amount of pay. The poorly-paid clerks were discharged but the clerks, agents, store-keepers, and masters of all kinds who rank in pay with lieutenants of the Army, were scarcely disturbed. There are thus in the quartermaster's commissary, and pay departments, some seven or eight hundred—nearly as many as there are lieutenants in the army. These men form a sort of staff for these officers, often remaining with them for years, and finally carrying on all the business of their chiefs.

There are also a large number of forage masters and warrant officers appointed by the quartermasters-general, of nearly the same pay—a relic of the war—who seem to have been overlooked. Some of these men are necessary, but they should be enlisted as sergeants, at about one fourth the pay now given, and rated as accountants, calculators, and store-keepers. These places should not be given to old soldiers as rewards, but like the position of sergeants in the signal service, to the bright and educated young men of the country.

The grand fault of our army administration is, that it is too much centralized, everything being directed from our central office in Washington. Such a plan cannot be practically efficient, where the work is so far from the authority directing it, I feel certain that all this will be corrected. The country will not remain content with anything short of the best systems, even for our little army. Unless these reforms can be brought about, and the country satisfied that our Army is earnest, capable, and above all economical, it will turn out that the staff has been and is now digging its grave in which the whole service must soon be buried.

It is common to hear that our systems are good enough, and there is no need of their being better—that they carried us through the war—and many like sayings. This position is not tenable so long as our system is not the best.

If our system required a million men on the rolls of the army, under the pay of the nation, which was losing their industries to get two hundred and fifty thousand men in the front line with muskets in their hands when we might have had the same number of muskets there with but a half a million on its rolls, then our system was not the best. If we had seventy five thousand officers under commission and pay, when we only required fifteen thousand, then our system was not the best. If we paid for