

them. I quote further: "The object of this law is to confer on the commander of troops, whatever liberty of action the case demands. He has the power even to go beyond the regulations in circumstances of urgency and pressing necessity. The extraordinary measures he may take on these occasions may require their execution without delay. The staff officer has but one duty before obeying, and that is to submit his observations to the general and to ask his orders in writing. With this formality his responsibility ceases, and the responsibility for the extraordinary acts falls solely on the general who gives the order. The officers and agents charged with supplies are placed under the orders of the general in command of the troops, that is, they are obliged both in war and peace to obey, with the single qualification above named, of first making their observations and securing their written order of the general."

With us to-day, the law and regulations are, that no matter what may be the emergency, the commanding general in Texas, New Mexico, and the remote frontiers, can not draw from the arsenals a pistol cartridge, or any sort of ordnance stores, without first procuring an order of the Secretary of War in Washington. The commanding general—though entrusted with the lives of his soldiers and with the safety of a frontier in a condition of chronic war—cannot touch or be trusted with ordnance stores or property, and that is declared to be the law! Every officer of the old Army remembers how in 1861 we were hampered with the old blue Army regulations, which tied our hands, and that to do anything positive and necessary we had to tear it all to pieces—cut the red tape as it was called—a dangerous thing for an army to do, and was calculated to bring the law and authority into contempt; but war was upon us, and overwhelming necessity overrides all law.

The French report is well worthy the study of our Army officers of all grades and classes, and I will only refer again, casually, to another part wherein it discusses the subject of military correspondence; whether the staff officers should correspond directly with his chief in Paris, submitting to his general copies? or whether he should be required to carry on his correspondence through his general, so that the latter could promptly forward the communication endorsed with his own remarks and opinions? The letter is declared by the board to be the only safe rule, because "the general should never be ignorant of anything that is transpiring that concerns his command."

In this country, as in France, Congress controls the great questions of war and peace, making all laws for the creation and government of armies, and votes the necessary supplies, leaving to the President to execute and apply these laws, and especially the harder task of limiting the expenditure of public money to the amount of the annual appropriations. The Executive power is further subdivided into the seven great departments, and to the Secretary of War is confided the general care of the military establishment, and his powers are further subdivided into ten distinct and separate bureaux.

The chiefs of these bureaux are under the immediate orders of the Secretary of War, who through them, in fact, commands the Army from "his office," but cannot do so "in the field," an absurdity in military, if not civil law.

The subordinates of these staff corps and departments are selected and chosen from the Army itself or fresh from West Point,

and too commonly construe themselves into the "elite," as made of better clay than the common soldier. Thus they separate themselves more and more from their comrades of the line, and in process of time realize the condition of that old officer of artillery who thought the Army would be a delightful place for a gentleman, if it were not for the d—d soldier; or better still, the conclusion of the young lord in Henry IV., who told Harry Percy (Hotspur) "that but for these vile guns he himself would have been a soldier." This is all wrong; utterly at variance with our democratic form of government and of universal experience; and now that the French—from whom we had copied the system—have utterly "proscribed" it, I hope that our Congress will follow suit. I admit in its feeblest force the strength of the maxim that the civil law should be at all times subject to the direct control of Congress, and I assert that from the formation of our Government to the present day, the Regular Army has set the highest example of obedience to law and authority; but for the very reason that our Army is comparatively so very small, I hold that it should be the best possible, organized and governed on true military principles, and that in time of peace we should preserve the "habits and usages of war," so that when war does come, we may not be compelled to suffer the disgrace, confusion and disorder of 1861.

The commanding officer of divisions, departments and posts should have the amplest powers not only to command their troops but all the stores designed for their use, and the officers of the staff necessary to administer them within the area of their command; and then with fairness they could be held to the most perfect responsibility. The President and Secretary of War can command the Army quite as well through these generals, as through the subordinate staff officers. Of course the Secretary would, as now, distribute the funds according to the appropriation bids, and reserve to himself the absolute control and supervision of the larger arsenals and depots of supply. The error lies in the law, or in the judicial interpretation thereof, and no code of Army regulations can be made that meets the case, until Congress—like the French Corps Legislatif—utterly annihilates and "proscribes" the old law and the system which has grown up under it.

It is related of Napoleon that his last words were "Fete d'Armée." Doubtless as the shadow of death obscured his memory, the last thought that remained for speech was of some event, when he was directing an important "head of column." I believe that every general who has handled armies in battle must recall from his own experience the intensity of thought on some similar occasion, when by a single command he had given the finishing stroke to some complicated action; but to see recurs another thought that is worthy of record, and may encourage others who are to follow us in our profession. I never saw the rear of an army engaged in battle, but I feared that some calamity had happened at the front. The apparent confusion, broken wagons, dead horses, men lying about dead and maimed, parties hastening to and fro in seeming disorder, and a general apprehension of something dreadful about to ensue—all these signs, however, lessened as I neared the front, and there the contrast was perfect; perfect order, men and horses full of confidence, and it was not unusual for general hilarity, laughing and cheering. Although cannon might be firing, the musketry clattering, and the enemy's

shot hitting close, there reigned a general feeling of strength and security that bore a marked contrast to the bloody signs that had drifted rapidly to the rear; therefore for comfort and safety I surely would rather be at the front line than the rear line of battle. So also on the march, the head of a column moves on steadily, whilst the rear is alternately halting and then rushing forward to close up the gap; and all sorts of rumors, especially the worst, float back to the rear. Old troops invariably deem it a special privilege to be in the front, to be at the "head of column," because experience has taught them that it is the easiest and most comfortable place, and danger only adds zest and stimulus to this fact.

The hardest task in war is to be in support of some position or battery under fire without the privilege of returning it; or to guard some train left in the rear without hearing, but out of reach of danger; or to care for the wounded and dead of some corps which is too busy ahead to care for their own.

To be at the head of a strong column of troops, in the execution of some task that requires brain, is the highest pleasure of war, a grim one and terrible, but which leaves on the mind and memory the strongest mark; to detect the weak point of an enemy's line, to break through with vehemence and thus lead to victory; or to discover some key point and hold it with tenacity, or to do some other distinct act that is afterwards recognized as the real cause of success. These all become matters that are never forgotten. Other great difficulties experienced by every general, are to measure truly the thousand and one reports that come to him in the midst of conflict; to preserve a clear and well defined purpose at every instant of time, and to cause all efforts to converge to that end.

To do these things he must know perfectly the strength and quality of each part of his own army, as well as of his opponent, and must be where he can personally see and observe with his own eyes, and judge with his own mind.

No man can properly command an army from the rear, he must be "at its front," and when a detachment is made, the commander thereof should be informed of the object to be accomplished, and left as free as possible to execute it in his own way, and when an army is divided up into several parts the superior should always attend that one which he regards as most important. Some men think that modern armies may be so regulated that a general can sit in an office and ply on his several columns like on the keys of a piano; this is a fearful mistake. The directing mind must be at the very head of the army—must be seen there, and the effect of his mind and personal energy must be felt by every officer and man present with it, to secure the best results. Every attempt to make war easy and safe will result in humiliation and disaster.

Lastly, mail facilities should be kept up with an army if possible, that officers and men may receive and send letters to their friends, thus maintaining the home influence of infinite assistance in discipline. Newspaper correspondents with an army, as a rule, are mischievous. They are the world's gossips, pick up and retail the camp scandala, and they gradually drift to the headquarters of some general who finds it easier to make reputation at home than with his own corps or division.

They are also tempted to prophesy events and state facts, which, to an enemy, reveal