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ORGANIZATION OF THE PRUSSIAN ARMY

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The great success of the German armies is due not only to strategy and energy, but probably just as much to the perfect system of the national defences of Prussia, extended since 1866 to the North German Confederation, and to a certain degree to the South German States.

I. HISTORICAL REVIEW.

The principle that every citizen is bound to assist in the defence of his country is as old as it is natural. It was recognized in the Roman republic, and still more among the nations which overran the Roman Empire. The barbarous custom of enslaving conquered nations in the middle ages restricted the honor and the duty of defending the country to the conquerors. The property of the soil was given to the victorious warriors, under the condition that they were always to be ready to follow the banner of the chief in case of war—the origin of feudalism. Every freeman was brought up a warrior, the tilling of the soil to be left to the conquered for the benefit of their masters. The first change was brought about by the invention of gunpowder. Soldiering then to a certain degree ceased to be a common accomplishment; it became a profession which had to be acquired with some pains; and soldiers began to be hired for pay. Then the old principle, that every freeman had to be a soldier, fell into abeyance. Armies were hired for the war. They ceased to be national, and became a scourge to friend and foe alike. This system, which was developed to its most fearful extent in the times of the thirty years' war, led next to the establishment of standing armies. The desire to suppress the feudal barons, always inclined to oppose the increase of the power of their liege lords, induced the latter to keep soldiers in permanent pay and continual readiness. The increasing demand for such armies taught the princes to revive the old principle that every citizen should assist in the defence of the country, and the fulfilment of this duty was exacted; conscription was introduced. The first Prussian king who gave a kind of organization to this system was Frederick William I. The so-called "canton system" assigned a certain recruiting district to each regiment. The enlistment of foreigners became the exception. Frederick the Great, during his fear-

ful struggle against almost all Europe, could not do yet without foreign enlistments, because his small nation was unable to furnish for years all its able-bodied men, if the ruin of agricultural pursuits was not to stop utterly its natural resources.

The French revolutionists, when attacked by the standing armies of their neighbors, revived the old principle of a national defence to its fullest extent. Enthusiasm made up for the want of brains, especially as the opposing armies were commanded by superannuated martinets, bewildered by the new spectacle. Tactics were adapted to the raw but abundant material; and finally Napoleon organized those French armies which in their victorious campaigns conquered nearly all Europe. Prussia, where the reminiscence of the glory of Frederick the Great had imbued the army and its leaders with a vanity sufficient in itself to preclude success, was in 1806 ignominiously overthrown by Napoleon. No country in Europe suffered so fearfully from the relentless conqueror as Prussia. His exactions, in spite of all justice and all treaties, never ceased; and though the heroic struggles in 1813 and 1814 restored Prussia, Napoleon's oppression is still bitterly remembered.

One of the most disgraceful conditions of the treaty of Tilsit in 1807 stipulated that Prussia was not to keep more than 42,000 men under arms. But Prussia's patriots never despaired, and it was during this most unfortunate period of Prussia's national life that the foundation of the present system of national defence was laid. Not only the principle of everybody's liability to military duty was recognized, but it was made obligatory on every Prussian to serve a certain time in the army, for the purpose of receiving a soldier's training. General von Scharnhorst, Secretary of War, devised the means to increase the number of trained soldiers ready for an always expected emergency, in spite of the above peace stipulation. Each year a part of the 42,000 were dismissed on furlough and an equal number of recruits joined; and so Prussia was enabled in 1813 to increase at once its 42,000 to 120,000, all trained and disciplined men. The Landwehr, consisting of all able-bodied men up to the age of 35 years, furnished additional troops. The time, however, between 1809 and 1813 having been too short, the Landwehr of 1813 was not composed, like the Landwehr of to-day, of trained soldiers; and the inferiority of raw levies, compared with trained soldiers, would have been still more perceptible than it was had not the fearful losses of Napoleon in Russia forced him, too, to make his appearance in 1813 partially with young troops. Patriotism in this case

made up again for want of training, though at great expense of life and treasure.

After Napoleon's downfall the system was continued and improved. The peaceful times then following permitted, however, for the good of the finances, to reduce not only the actual time of service with the colors, but also the number of men called out, and about one-fifth to one-fourth of the number were usually excused altogether. The short campaigns of 1848 and '49 against Denmark, the mobilizations of 1850 and '59, without leading to actual war, shewed several weak points of the system as it then was; and in 1860 the present King, then regent still, adopted a plan of reorganization presented to him by General von Roon, which coincided with his own opinion about the matter, and the general entered upon the office of Secretary of War to bring his plans into execution. The two main points of improvement were: 1st, that the principle be carried out to its fullest extent, and that nobody should be excused; 2nd, that every organization, even of the administrative branches, such as subsistence, ambulance, ammunition trains, etc., should be represented in peace time, and their preparatory training be just as carefully attended to as that of the fighting men.

Both points involved an increase of the military expenses; and this gave occasion to difficulties between the King and his Parliament since 1860, which were adjusted by the great success of 1866, when the first effectual step toward the fulfilment of the historical mission of Prussia—to reunite and organize Germany—was taken; and the great value of the present organization of the national defences was acknowledged.

II. RECRUITING.

The name of every male citizen of Prussia is since 1809 entered upon the army lists actually at his birth. The civil authority, upon receiving the usual notice of the birth of a child, reports the names of the males to the commander of the "Landwehr Battalion." He represents the territorial military authority; and his district is coextensive with one or sometimes two "circles," as they call what we call "Counties." Every Prussian is bound by law, as long as he is not yet excused from all military duty, or as long as he has sons under the age of twenty, to report any change of residence, that is to say, any change of his home for good.

Emigrants have been very numerous from Germany, simply because the soil is no longer adequate to the wants of the steadily increasing population; but this movement excepted, the German is steady, and not