

Story of an Army Christmas

By Col. J. A. WATROUS, U.S.A.

HAT was my most memorable Christmas?

"The one which always comes back to me when thinking over Christmas festivities—comes rushing in at the head of the line—is that of 1862, but in telling of it it will be necessary to bring in the army, and I suppose you do not want anything that reminds of war in a Christmas talk."

From a number of voices, childish and otherwise, came: "Yes, yes; that is just what we want, a story about Christmas in the army."

"The motion prevails, and you shall have what you vote for—a story of an army Christmas," said the veteran of three wars—the civil, Spanish-American and the Philippine insurrection.

"There were many troops in and about Manila in December, 1899. My temporary home was with an American family that had rented the large, beautiful mansion on San Sebastian street occupied by a Spanish admiral before Commodore Dewey sailed up Manila bay and said: 'You may fire, Gridley, when ready.'"

"This patriotic man and his wife, a former Wisconsin teacher, planned a Christmas dinner and party. They invited a dozen or more officers and their ladies. The dinner did not differ materially from most Christmas dinners, yet it reminded the diners of holiday events in far off America, and the conversation soon turned in that direction.

"One little army lady began to tell about a home Christmas, its tree and the good cheer, when she was a small girl. 'No other Christmas had seemed quite so heavenly. I can see how lovely that tree looked; I can hear daddy's voice as he called off the presents; can see mamma's smile as we children danced and chattered; I can see the happy gathering about the table Christmas-evening; I can hear daddy's request for a blessing and—ah, well it was all so sweet and beautiful. Before another Christmas came I hadn't any daddy.'"

"The little lady's handkerchief was not the only one that brushed away a tear.

"'Captain, this dinner reminds me of one our fathers have told us about.'"

"The captain was the son of a Wisconsin soldier of the civil war, and the speaker a lieutenant, the son of another civil war veteran.

"'Tell us about it,' said the wife of another captain.

"'Yes, we want that story,' said an old major of regulars, who had come down from the civil war.

"'It was after the battle of Fredericksburg, Va., in 1862. Four tent-men, one of whom was my father, and another the father of the lieutenant here, were remembered by their sweethearts. The four sweethearts got up the nicest kind of a Christmas dinner—did all of the cooking themselves—and sent it to their soldier boys. Accompanying it was a good, fat letter from each of the girls to her particular soldier boy. They told us of the table they set in their small tent, of the coffee they drank, the comments as they ate the good things, of the four sweet girls, and how it was all enjoyed. Before the war was over all of the boys won commissions and were wounded, two of them twice, yet all returned home and married the four girls. One of these girls was the best woman ever here, and the lieutenant here will say the same about another of the four.'"

"'And I will bear the same testimony as to another of those blessed sweethearts of 1862,' said the wife of the other captain. 'She was my mother.'"

"'It is my turn to speak,' said the old major. 'I was one of the four to enjoy that Christmas dinner back at Stafford Heights, in 1862. The mother of my batons was second to none of the four sweethearts.'"

"'Then the four—the captain, the lieutenant, the other captain's wife, and the old major—left the table. They shook hands, laughed, congratulated, and had such a reunion as seldom occurs.

"'Well, well, well, what a little bit of a world it is, anyway,' said the old major contentedly."

Under the Mistletoe.

Young Jones was coming down the stairs one night not long ago.

And saw a figure in the hall beneath the mistletoe.

He checked softly to himself.

And said: "Who's over a bark? Who's it? It's 'Till cross behind And kiss her in the dark!"

He did—but on her face the light Did suddenly gleam.

Oh! how, and to his horror saw 'T was his mother's face!

Making It Easy.

Daughter—Ma, I think you'd better let me make it in the house.

Mother—I should like to know why?

Daughter—Every Christmas we have trouble trying to find a present for him—everything is so expensive, you know; but we can always get very pretty ash-trays at 25 cents!

Be Merry.

Make your own Christmas merry by getting a merry Christmas for others



PEYSER SAYS:

Make Your Holiday Shopping Easy!

Many women, as well as many men, are unnecessarily over-fatigued every Christmas by looking for something to give "him." Why do all this worrying when you can go to PEYSER'S, the "Man's Store", and find the very thing that will please him most?

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2715 Washington Ave., Newport News, Va.

MILLIONS ARE WASTED

Only Small Per Cent of Valuable Water Supply Utilized.

STREAMS SHOULD BE CONTROLLED

Interesting Facts and Recommendations Given in the Report of the Inland Waterways Commission, After Six Months of Investigating.

The statistics which have been gathered during the last six months on the use of water for all purposes in the United States under the direction of Representative Theodore E. Burton, of Ohio, chairman of the Inland Waterways Commission which forms the Section of Waters of the National Conservation Commission, show possibilities of immense savings by a more economical utilization of the available supply of water. Some of the more interesting parts of this report follow:

What We Have.

The sole source of our fresh water is rainfall (including snow). From this source our running, standing, and ground waters are derived. The habitability of the country depends on these waters. The quantity of rainfall, including the rainfall on water areas, is 215,000,000,000 cubic feet. Of the total rainfall, over half is evaporated, about a third flows into the sea, the remaining sixth is either consumed or absorbed.

What We Use and Waste.

Of the 70,000,000,000 cubic feet an-

nually flowing into the sea, less than 1 per cent. is restrained and utilized for municipal and community supply and related purposes, less than 2 per cent. (or some 10 per cent. of that) in the arid and semi-arid regions) is used for irrigation; perhaps 5 per cent. is utilized for power. It is estimated that 85 per cent. to 95 per cent. of the volume is wasted in freshets or destructive floods.

There are in mainland United States 202 streams navigated for an aggregate of 26,115 miles, and as much more navigable by improvement; there are also 45 canals with a mileage of 2,188,965, besides numerous abandoned canals. On lake and ground routes there is large traffic, but the navigation of rivers and canals is too small for definite record. The cost of water carriage averaging about one-fourth that of rail carriage, and our railway freightage during 1907 reaching 217,000,000,000 miles at an average rate of 0.77 cent, the shipping of one-fifth of our freight by water would have saved over \$250,000,000 to our producers and consumers.

The theoretical power of the streams is over 220,000,000 horsepower; the amount now in use is 5,230,000 horsepower, and the amount available at reasonable cost at 75,000,000 horsepower, and the amount available at a cost comparable with that of steam installation is estimated at 27,000,000 horsepower, and the amount available at reasonable cost at 75,000,000 to 150,000,000 horsepower. The 37,000,000 horsepower exceeds our entire mechanical power now in use, and would operate every mill, drive every spindle, propel every train and boat, and light every city, town and village in the country.

The direct yearly damage by floods since 1900 has increased steadily from \$42,000,000 to \$238,000,000; the indirect loss through depreciation of property is probably greater; while the largest loss is that arising in the impediment of navigation and terminal transfers.

The freshets are attended by destructive soil erosion. The soil-matter annually carried into lower rivers and harbors or into the sea reaches 783,000,000 tons. Its removal seriously reduces the productivity of upland farms and increases channel-cutting and bar-building in the rivers. It is estimated that soil erosion reduces farm production 10 per cent. to 20 per cent.; and that the annual loss to the farms alone is \$500,000,000; and that large losses follow the pollution of the waters and the diminution of navigability in the streams.

Through imperfect control of the running waters, lowlands are temporarily or permanently flooded. It is estimated that there are in mainland United States 75,000,000 to 80,000,000 acres of overflow and swamp lands requiring drainage; that by systematic operations these can be drained at moderate expense, and that they would then be worth two or three times the present value and cost of drainage, and would furnish homes for 10,000,000 people.

What We Need To Do.

In considering the uses and benefits to be derived from the 215,000,000,000 cubic feet of water annually received, the paramount use should be that of water-supply; next should follow navigation in humid regions, and irrigation in arid regions. The development of power on the navigable and source streams should be kept subordinate to the primary and secondary uses of the waters, though other things equal, the development of power should be encouraged, not only to reduce the drain on our resources, but because properly designed reservoirs and power plants retard the run-off and so aid in the control of the streams for navigation and other uses.

The broad plan already framed by statesmen and experts and approved by the Executive should be enacted into law; it provides for a system of waterway improvement, extending to all of the uses of the waters and benefits to be derived from their con-

rol, including the clarification of the water and the abatement of floods for the benefit of navigation, the extension of irrigation, the development and application of power, the prevention of soil-wash, the purification of streams for water-supply, and the drainage and utilization of the waters for swamp and overflow lands.

In the Atlantic interior system, there should be a deep waterway from Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes, and a deep and continuous Atlantic inner passage from New England to Florida; the present plan for improving the Ohio should be carried out promptly, and should be perfected by any forestation and reservoirs required to control the headwaters; the upper Mississippi and the Missouri should be improved and canalized; the lower Mississippi should be connected with the Rio Grande and with the waters of Florida by inner passages; the navigable rivers flowing into Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean should be adapted to vessels of standard draft, and should be connected with one another with the Great Lakes by canals of standard dimensions. In the Columbia-Puget system, the rivers should be improved and requisite connecting canals should be constructed; and in the California, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Feather Rivers should be so improved as to open the country to interstate and foreign commerce.

It has been roughly estimated that the inland waterways of the country could be improved in 10 years at a cost of \$50,000,000 annually in such manner as to promote interstate commerce and at the same time greatly reduce the waste and extend the use of the waters. If done at the cost of the people, the burden would be \$0.62 1/2 per capita per year, or \$6.25 in all.

It is roughly estimated that the direct benefits would comprise an annual saving in transportation of \$350,000,000; an annual saving in flood damage of \$150,000,000; an average annual saving in forest fires of a

least \$25,000,000; an annual benefit through cheapened power of fully \$75,000,000; and an annual saving in soil erosion (or corresponding benefit through increased farm production) of \$500,000,000—a total of \$1,000,000,000 or \$12.50 per capita annually, i. e., 2 times the cost. In addition, large benefits would result from extended irrigation, from the drainage and settlement of swamp and overflow lands, and from purified and cheapened water-supply with consequent diminution of disease and saving of human life.

Various indirect benefits would arise through the interrelations among the natural resources. The development of water traffic in lieu of rail carriages would reduce the constantly increasing consumption of ties and mine timbers, now a heavy drain on our forests; it would reduce the consumption of iron, since water vehicles require but a quarter to a third of the metal required by rail vehicles of like capacity; and it would correspondingly reduce the consumption of coal for both propulsion and smelting.

Reckoning the total cost of domestic traffic by rail and water and wagon, with freightage on imports, it is probable that the average American family pays for transportation of food and clothing more than 2 per cent. of their actual cost—i. e., our consumers pay too much and our producers get too little for the necessities of life. This condition would be relieved by the development of water transportation on an adequate scale.

It is estimated that the income derived from power developed by works for the improvement of navigation would alone, at current market rates utilized in cooperation with States and citizens, compensate the entire cost of maintenance and continued development after the initial expenditures of \$500,000,000 as a working capital.

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