

# CONQUEST of the AMERICAN ARMY



## How an English Tailor is to give Uncle Sam's Soldiers "fits"



Infantry Private U.S.A

Showing the Pill Box of the British Army

Line Officer U.S.A

Color Sergeant of the Royal Irish Guards



Sergeant British Army



Color Guard British Army



West Point Cadet



Color Guard West Point

In Field Uniform U.S.A

Private, British Army

**A**N invasion of America by British troops would be no greater surprise to many than the conquest of our army by English tailors. The English forces, armed with scissors and yardsticks, have been in the field for several days, and certain outposts have already surrendered. Just how far the army is to be Anglicized seems to be in dispute, but the opposition is determined. An official announcement was sent out recently from Washington that G. V. Winter, an English military tailor, had been engaged at a salary of \$1250 a week to work certain reforms in the making of uniforms of our soldiers. An immense force of American tailors has already been mobilized to meet the attack.

The engagement of an English tailor by the government for such a purpose opens a very large question. Apart from any purely sentimental reasons, it is argued by American tailors that our clothes are superior to English clothes as a general thing, in cut, fit and general workmanship. The exceedingly liberal salary paid the English tailor does not serve to lessen the indignation. Our tailors believe that such a contract should be awarded on the merits of the work; at least they should have the opportunity to bid in open competition. And, quite apart from any pecuniary advantage, they resent the reflection upon the skill of American workmen. The tailors' side of the question has been set forth in a very spirited correspondence between the Merchant Tailors' National Protective Association of America and the quartermaster's department.

Meanwhile there seems to be some difference of opinion as to the work the tailor is expected to do. The defenders of the quartermaster's department have hastened to announce that Winter will only have to do with the uniforms of the enlisted men, and not with the officers. It is denied that any changes will be made in the design of the uniforms themselves, but that the English tailor's efforts will merely be directed to cutting the uniforms more skillfully than they are at present. It is pointed out that Winter has a great reputation in his line and is the inventor of many valuable details of equipment. On the other hand, Winter seems to have his own ideas as to his work and announces that it is his mission to make American soldiers look "smart," and he has promised to make an enlisted man in the American army look like an officer and a subordinate officer look like a general.

Under the present system the officers of the army select their own tailors, while the enlisted men have their uniforms issued to them by the Government. The designs of the uniforms in both cases are, of course, determined by the proper authorities; the tailors merely copy them. The uniforms of the enlisted men are made by contract,

the cutting and sewing being let out like any other piece of work. These uniforms are made in twelve sizes, and are "issued" to each man according to his waist measure and the length of his legs. They are, in other words, ready made clothes, and probably fit the average soldier rather better than the ordinary ready made suit fits a civilian, because the average soldier has a better figure than the ordinary man.

But the work does not stop here. The suit is next handed over to the company tailor, who proceeds to recut and refit the uniform to suit the individual figure before him. The company's tailor receives \$17.50 a month. It is hardly likely that a first-class tailor will seek employment in this particular branch of his profession. Nevertheless, many of these men from long experience come to be excellent tailors, and there is many a regiment in the army in which the average fit of the uniforms is even better than among many of the officers. The officers' uniforms are quite a different matter. They commonly patronize the very best tailors in various cities. A considerable majority of the officers are in the habit of paying \$100 for merely the coat and trousers of a main uniform.

At West Point, which has a worldwide reputation for its "smart" soldiers, the system is exactly the same. The cadets have their uniforms issued like rations and have their clothes made over and refitted. In this case the tailoring is obviously of a higher grade than in the army. It is difficult to conceive what Winter or any other English tailor could do to improve the appearance of these same cadets. The general opinion at West Point was found to be anything but sympathetic as to Winter and his English tailoring.

"I have my own ideas about the fit of English clothes," said one of the officers. "We hear a great deal about English military tailors. There are tailors here in America who have just as good reason for calling themselves military tailors. The English tailors, perhaps, use better cloth in their uniforms—for the enlisted men, I mean—but there the superiority ends. Of course, the fit of the uniforms of our enlisted men might be improved, but the root of the evil is not in the cutting department. Much depends upon the sewing and fitting and the Government hires cheap men to do this work. This could be improved by spending more money. Take, for example, the tailor who dresses the West Point ca-

They are well dressed because the Government has skilled tailors to do the work."

One of the officers declared that the situation had been greatly exaggerated. "My understanding of it is," said he, "that the quartermaster merely wants to obtain better patterns for the cutters and Winter is very skillful in such work. There will be no changes in the uniforms of the officers or the enlisted men. As for West Point, the cadets have worn practically the same uniform for a century and they will continue to do so."

As to the superior cut and fit of American clothes as compared with the best English work, there was found to be a surprising unanimity of opinion among both the soldiers and the tailors. An inquiry along this line brought out some surprising informa-

tion. When the first protest against Winter's selection was cabled to London a few days ago the London tailors were quick to reply. They said that while American tailors were constantly searching for information in London no English tailor cared at all for similar news from New York. It was asserted that just as Paris fixed fashions for women for the world London dominated the styles in men's clothes. And there was considerable comment upon the inferiority of American clothes. It was alleged that we padded our clothes, that they fit too close and were uncomfortable and did not take the easy flowing lines of the body, as English clothes do.

Now, the same general rules apply both as to uniforms and ordinary clothes. The question involved in the Winter episode reduces itself simply as to whether American tailors are not more competent than English tailors or, at the worst, are they not equally competent, in military uniform making as well as in ordinary clothing? Most Americans have their own ideas as to the relative values of English and American clothes. One of the best known San Francisco tailors, who may be accepted as an expert, went even further than the ordinary layman in his claims.

"American tailors," he said, "have solved the problem of making clothes comfortable and making them fit. We grant that the foreign cloth is superior at present to our own, but that is the only point of superiority. An English tailor—the best of them, I mean—pays a man \$1 to sew a coat. An American tailor pays at least three times as much for the same work. And there you are. The English tailor for the price he gets cannot afford to put on his clothes the same grade of workmanship you will find in first-class

American goods. Briefly, the American clothes are superior in the beauty and naturalness of their lines. This applies to uniforms as well.

"The American tailors are the only tailors who know how to mold the shoulders of a coat, and it is this detail which dominates the appearance of the entire garment. Your English tailor pads the shoulders and joins the sleeve with a sharp, abrupt angle. The American tailor, on the contrary, molds the shoulder to fit the figure beneath it. The effect is at once more natural, and to borrow the Englishman's word, 'smarter.' There are no angles in the human body such as the English clothes would indicate. The lines should be flowing and natural. Pick up any English garment and you will find it stiff with canvas and even horsehair. An American coat, on the other hand—a good one—will be made of nothing but the ordinary material, and it will be sewn inside and out with the same care and finish.

"It is unfair to American tailors that the Government should go to England for such work. As a class we do our share to support the Government. We are obliged, for instance, to pay as much as 100 per cent duty on the cloth we use. See what a discussion has been aroused over the question of building the Panama canal with American material, even at a greatly increased cost. This decision of the quartermaster's department does not make a dollar's worth of difference to us, but as a question of pride, if nothing more, we should have been recognized in an open competition."

The superiority of American tailoring is susceptible of proof in many ways, not the least of which is the recognition it is gaining in London despite the protests of London tailors. One of the most expensive tailors in New York, who numbers among his patrons many of the best-known club members in that city, says:

"I know positively that American fashion plates have a considerable sale in London, and that among the so-called military tailors. They are, besides, in many cases watching us very closely and copying many details of our clothes. What other proof could you ask? The time has passed when it was considered fashionable to go to London for one's clothes.

"There are only a few Anglomaniacs who still do so. Then again there are at least two tailors in New York who make a specialty of working over English clothes and trying to make them fit. They are kept busy. Every tailor has annoying requests to try to do something with English clothes, and many refuse to be bothered with them. It may be that London tailors make better uniforms than ordinary clothes. They have a great opportunity for gaining experience. But they overdo it. The American would never tolerate the pillbox caps and short jackets you see everywhere in London. It is said, I believe, that tailor Winter will not design new uniforms for us, but merely comes over to cut them so that we may have 'smarter' clothes. An English tailor to cut our uniforms? Well, that is the unkindest cut of all."

The manager for a well-known uniform maker of this city took a somewhat different view of the situation. "Winter is a specialist in this line," said he, "and will doubtless do the work expected of him in a competent manner. England has a great standing army, it should not be forgotten, which is famous among other things for its uniforms—tailor over there has much greater opportunity for studying the demands of soldiers. It is not a question of the superiority of English or American tailors, but of the military tailors of the two countries, and England has had the opportunity, while as yet we have been somewhat limited."

"In England the work is still done largely by workmen who are skilled in every detail of tailoring. Over there a man will take a piece of cloth and make a coat of it, and a good one, without any assistance. He will be paid, say a pound for a coat, and he will do two coats a week and be satisfied with the income. How different it is in America. Here we run to specializing in tailoring as in many other things. One man will do the cutting or a part of it, another will assemble the parts, still others do the sewing of certain seams, and so on. I don't care to go into a discussion of the relative merits of the two systems, but I know of many tailors in America who look forward with concern to the time when they will have an all round training and experience shall have died out. We have excellent tailors, no doubt, many of them, but as yet we have no general group of military tailors in the sense that England has."

Another tailor believed that the quartermaster's department was unfortunately in his choice of Winter. He said: "G. V. Winter, I am credibly informed, is not a regular military tailor and is not so recognized in London. During the Boer war he was an orderly, I understand, on Lord Roberts' staff and at that time and later invented several details of equipment, some of which have become well known and have brought him a great deal of money. In trying to patent these he has, however, received adverse decisions. The point is he is not a well known tailor, even if he be a good one. A man should be at the head of his profession to be selected for such work, and the names do not inspire confidence. I venture to say there are several men in Washington and New York, to go no further, who are quite as competent as Winter, doubtless far more so, for the work."

"The Government is throwing money away in the experiment. Winter is to receive a trifle of \$1250 a week for his services, and that in the summer months, when work is likely to be somewhat slack at home. I have no personal interest in the matter, but I venture to say there are a number of tailors of the first class who would have been proud to give their services for considerably less and have done the work very much better."