

To Have An Adequate Defense Our Army Must Be Reformed

One of Europe's Most Important Battle Front Lessons for America

And It Must Be a Standardized Army, With One Kind Of Troops, And Not Four Kinds, As Is Now Proposed Through The Establishment Of The Continental Army.

The Lessons The War Has Taught In The Making Of A Good Infantryman; The Absolute Necessity Of An Army Having A Reserve; And Of Every Trained Fighting Man Knowing The Place He Is To Take In The Firing Line And How To Co-operate For The Highest Efficiency With The Other Units Of Defense.

By FREDERICK PALMER

Numbers count in modern warfare—numbers that are ready. That commander "who gets there first with the most men" wins, as the moderate general, Forrest, said. Germany had her numbers ready. All that prevented her from conquering Europe was that her opponents also had numbers ready; but not so many and not quite so ready, as the result of the war proves to date.

In Europe every able bodied man is a soldier. The numbers are had in expensive, foot the bill. The United States and Britain are the only countries that "hire" their soldiers, the only countries that have regular armies. Therefore, we pay an extravagant price for a handful of soldiers.

We have a military appropriation of \$100,000,000 a year and get 105,000 soldiers, without reserves, and without adequate guns, motor transport, or air craft. Before the war Germany spent \$260,000,000 a year and had a standing army of 769,000, with ample modern equipment and a reserve, making a total of 3,500,000 ready for the field. France spent \$200,000,000 and had a standing army of 763,000 and a total of about 2,500,000. But all her reserves were not equipped. That made the difference. It gave Germany the start.

How long would any European army that set out without reserves have lasted in this war? With reserves you fill the gaps made by death, wounds and sickness. England had reserves. Otherwise, soon after the retreat from Mons, her expeditionary force would have been finished. By filling up the gaps with reserves, she was fighting with full battalions a month after. Sir John French had fallen back on Paris. If the United States army had suffered a similar disaster, our 100,000 would have all been gone in three months.

Must Have a New Army System.

Before we can have an adequate defense we must reform the army itself. We must have a new system. The European system is the result of 100 years' experience. It has stood the test of time and of this war. Hardly an Englishman who has been in battle but is for universal service. He has learned from his warfare the error of a system that sends a man who is "down on his luck" to the recruiting sergeant, standing in a public square, or to climb the stairs in a side street under the placard: "Men Wanted for the United States Army."

If times are good, we get few recruits. When we have prosperity to defend, our army is short of men. Our preparedness and our patriotism, as far as it is represented by preparedness, fluctuate with the itinerant labor market. Bad times means that more men enlist to fight for the flag as a last resort. In Europe, the flow of recruits is the same year in and year out. The system is definite and dependable.

There is a deep moral idea back of universal service which every European realizes, but no American and few Englishmen realized it until this war. What your country demands of you is your life. The man's life is worth just as much to him as another's, whether he is a day laborer, or a millionaire, it is the only capital he has to give. In universal service, you have everybody of all classes, shoulder to shoulder. The result has been practically no desertions in Europe, while the percentage of desertions in our regular army is colossal.

The United States has never fought a first class power single handed on land. In the Revolution France helped us. In 1812, the British were fighting France at the same time as us. Yet our raw levies were whipped in practically every engagement in 1812. At Lunenburg we had regulars, at New Orleans, trained frontiersmen and sharpshooters. A superior number of untrained troops retreated before inferior numbers of British who took and burned Washington. The school books do not tell it that way, but it is the truth. We need not be ashamed of the truth, considering the skill of our armies north and south once they were prepared in the Civil war, where they fought with unsurpassed heroism and efficiency. If in the north we had had 500,000 trained troops at the start of the Civil war, we would have ended it in six months; if the southern states had had 500,000 against the unprepared north, they would have taken Washington, Philadelphia and New York.

I think that no professional officer will dispute this. Soldiering being the business of soldiers, they ought to know what they are talking about.

"We Have Everything In Our Army Except Soldiers and Guns."

In Europe they run their army plants to full capacity. They economize. Their armies are businesslike institutions. A trained German soldier costs Germany \$200 a year, or counting the reserves, \$70 a year! In France it is a little higher. Our soldiers cost us \$5,000 a year apiece.

We have pointed the finger of scorn at the British laboring classes who held up the British government for higher wages, while our whole army system is based on that idea. We are paying \$100,000,000 a year for peace time for volunteers of the civil war, the cost to later generations of unredeemed. Add that to the \$100,000,000 and our outlay is \$200,000,000 a year for 105,000 soldiers against Germany's 2,500,000 for \$20,000,000. As long as we can make patriotism a matter of dollars we shall

not have an adequate army, and we shall pay so extravagantly for each soldier that we can never hope to afford to have one.

Our army has been the plaything of parties. It has been an enforced burden on the tax payers. With an army administration absolutely honest, the amount spent for the return received is enough to raise the price of sugar to 50 cents a pound, if applied to the sugar business, and of flour to \$50 a barrel, if applied to the flour business. As one army officer said: "We have everything in our army except soldiers and guns." Our magnificent plants are the homes of hundreds of men. They are like a knitting factory, which ought to have a thousand looms, running with a dozen. Meanwhile, the United States pays the rent and upkeep.

Take, for example, Governor's island, across from New York, where you almost have to hunt to find a soldier. The value of it as a piece of real estate may be judged by that of the enormous skyscrapers just across the river from it in lower Broadway. A French or German brigade, if not division, could be maintained at Governor's island. Waste of material and of property is the result of our system of garrisoning this and other posts.

The army officers are not to blame. They are simply discouraged. Nobody is to blame except the American people. They get what congress arranges for them, and they make congresses. And congress is not so wickedly to blame, as we might think. Congress is human. It has been careless. It has not concentrated patriotically on the problem.

Perhaps if we apply the present public emotion for preparedness as in the past, every congressional district may have its own army post. At present they are distributed all over the country. The middle west, the Pacific coast, the southwest and the east have their share. The idea has not been that the army should be an efficient institution, but that it stood for a certain expenditure of money that should be fairly distributed among the constituencies. It is less a practical army than a system of largesse for communities.

In Europe the army posts are distributed according to tactical plans for quick concentration in case of war. Hence the prompt concentration of 1914. Germany had 1,500,000 men on the western front before we could mobilize 100,000.

Team Play in Europe's Armies.

When an army goes to war all the parts of it must fight together. It is the most complex and most delicately adjusted of all organizations because the final test of its efficiency is the resolutely facing of death. While lack of team play in a business organization may mean business disaster, lack of team play in an army means national disaster. Team play is the study of European staffs. They exist to develop it ready for war.

Any attempt of the United States army to develop team play is immediately stifled. Our army organization is of the watertight compartment kind. We shall bring the men from each compartment who have never met each other, and chuck artillery, cavalry and infantry together in a heterogeneous mass, and then we shall wonder what is the matter when there is confusion and failure if we ever have to go against a first class power which will have an army whose parts have worked together with all the thoroughness of a college football or professional baseball team.

At West Point, where we train young men to be officers, they live together, drill together, they become a homogeneous force for four years. But after their education is finished we separate them and keep them in isolated posts.

Such was the misfortune of the British army, policing many colonies—but we have not many colonies. Our officers have no chance to really work together in the organization of their troops as an integral force.

The Hard Working European Officer;

The Idle American Officer.

In Europe the officers live away from the men when they are not on duty with them.

Taking 65 men as an average to a company, we have almost three times the ratio of officers of any European army. That ratio is one commissioned officer to 50 men, which is generally accepted in all services as the right proportion.

system is wrong, out of date, and wholly stultified by the experience of this great war.

When our officers who have been with the French or German army return home, they always say: "You have no idea how hard those fellows work on the other side."

They must. The nation demands it of them. They must in order to keep up with modern requirements. They cannot escape working. It is the custom, the requirement. Before this war the German officer and the French officer worked eight hours a day. There is not more than three hours' work a day for the average infantry officer in an American post. Any additional industry is due to his individual initiative. The amazing thing is that he can retain any at all, not his fault, let it be said again, but that of the system which, in a nation of 100,000,000 people, flies in the face of all the experience of Europe; for Europe does know how to make war. She may learn industrial efficiency from us, but we can learn war efficiency from her. Our officers would be the most industrious in the world—if they had anything to be industrious with.

They get about double the pay of British officers, about three times the pay of French and German officers. A boy of 16 can go penniless to West Point and from the day he enters it does not cost his parents a cent. If he went to Harvard or Yale they would be paying \$5,000 or \$6,000 dollars for him before he was equipped for any profession. Yet there has been no great rush of young men to West Point. The army has not been popular with our youth.

From the day a young man is graduated from West Point, he is secure so far as a livelihood is concerned. He has only to escape court martial in order to retire at 63 on sufficient pay to keep him comfortably to the end of his days. The nation gives him a sinecure. All it requires of him is to lead a quiet life and never express an opinion in any army post which is isolated because congressional representation in that part of the country wants its share of the upkeep of the army. If Jones is graduated ahead of Smith, then Jones will be the first to become a captain, major, or brigadier general. It doesn't matter if Jones goes to sea, if he becomes idle minded—he is nailed to a moving platform which will bring him to the top in regular order. Fancy applying that system to civil life and expecting efficiency! Fancy a young engineer entering one of our corporations and being assured that he would rise to become a general manager without regard to his individual efficiency! But that is the method of our army.

In the German army, if you fail, you get a note from the kaiser, thanking you for your services and stating that they are no longer required. In six months after the beginning of this war, about 70 French generals lost their places because they failed. If we went to war, the same thing must happen. The Germans do not wait on war for elimination. They clean away dead tissue before it commences.

Disheartening to American Officer.

In Europe universal service each year brings its big draft of new recruits, who must be trained. The authorities require that the plant be kept running at full capacity and the officers kept busy. But when a young American officer goes to a post, he finds that out of those 65 men in the company of which he is a second lieutenant, many are re-enlisted men who know their drill already. There is nothing to be gained in drilling them further. The officer's work becomes necessarily more or less perfunctory.

An American officer rarely has any chance to take that company out in maneuvers with thousands of other men and learn actual war conditions—which gives the European officer continual practice and keeps up his ambition. The American has to treat his soldiers very gingerly. He has to make life very comfortable for them. He must not work them hard. Why? Because they are hired. They are in the army more or less because existence is easy, without long hours or hard work. They get their \$17.50 a month and a good home. If he wants to put them out on a long march or digging trenches, he finds he has made the army unpopular. Desertions will follow. Congressional complaints will pour in on the staff. What is the use? The directing force of the most efficient industrial plant in the United States would soon lose spirit under such conditions.

gust, 1914, in Europe instead of vast legions moving with orderly precision to the different fronts.

Our officers have the brains, the finest possible rudimentary training; but they are never allowed to grow up. Congress keeps them in leading strings. It pays them well and refuses to allow them to make an adequate return to their employer.

Why? Because for generations, busy brains have been weaving webs of red tape, making more jobs for clerks. What is the use of the red tape? Mostly it is to prevent peculation. We go on the principle that an officer of the United States army can be prevented from the grafting only by keeping him under espionage. If he spend 5 cents, he must account for it on different forms which cost five times 5 cents. These are checked off by clerks, whose labor costs 10 times 5 cents. But the honesty of the United States army survives in spite of such distrust. It survives in the sense of honor taught at West Point—the honor of the service.

European armies hold officers responsible for the efficiency of their commands, and allow them some latitude of authority in time of peace as well as war. This is true no less in democratic France than in Germany, and no one considers France as a militarist nation. We apply the same system in business life. If an employer sends a man out west to sell goods, he doesn't expect him to spend so much time making reports that he has no time to see any customers. The test of a salesman is the amount of goods he sells; the test of an army, however large or small, is its readiness for war.

Our Army Must Be Standardized, Like Europe's, to Be Efficient.

If we keep an army of only 10,000 men, we want the best possible results for the smallest expense. These we may not have with three different kinds of troops: regulars, national guard and volunteers. Now it is proposed to add the continental army, making four. Some trained, some half trained, some worse than untrained, they would be herded together in time of war to be called an army—but not an army in the French or German sense. No staff on earth is clever enough to organize the herd into a homogeneous force on short notice. Such a medley is a violation of the first principle of organization. The staff would be marked for public clamor; the soldiers for slaughter by modern military machinery.

In Europe, they have learned by hard experience, as have the men in our industrial organizations, to stick to simple principles. In France and in Germany there is only one kind of troops; so many regiments of infantry, and so many cavalry and artillery, and the standing army, trained to an even quality of efficiency. Thus a commander knows what to depend on; the staff knows how to organize the campaign. Briefly, the parts of an European army are standardized. When war comes, the forms are set and ready, and the reserves move up to their places. The simple expanding the standardized organization. This cannot be put too emphatically. It is the keystone of the arch of preparedness. Without it, no army can ever be ready.

Again, while Europe trains every able bodied man two or three years and insists on only one kind of soldiers in one army, we would start in with four kinds—and probably somebody would insist on the fifth to help save the nation at the last moment. In any of the great battles of the western front, if any considerable section of infantry had failed from inexperience, the line would have been broken, and the whole army forced into a tactical position where it would have had to retreat with the loss of prisoners and material. What enabled the French to hold against all attacks was that the links of the chain were alike of dependable strength—not some of wood, some of steel, some of rope. In defense where you must stand repeated shocks of concentrated surprise attacks of superior numbers against chosen points, this is overwhelmingly essential; and our military policy, like that of France, must be defensive.

To another point. There has been a good deal of loose talk to the effect that the rifle is becoming obsolete, the machine gun has taken its place. No one ever hears that on the actual front. In defense, the machine gun is invaluable. Until it is put out of action by artillery, it mows down an infantry charge. But if anyone thinks that the day of the rifle is past let him expose himself 1,000 yards in front of the enemy's trench—first making his will. In five minutes at least they will get him—the rifles of the sharpshooters will. At 500 yards they will get him in half a minute. It is the rifle bullets which are cracking all day long over the parapets of the trenches, which pick off any soldier who carelessly puts up his head. We must have machine guns, but that does not mean you can do without infantry. It is the infantryman who takes and holds a position. One man cannot charge a trench single handed dragging a machine gun. He will immediately be killed by a sniper. Thousands must charge. Those who survive and reach the position must hold it.

The War's Lesson As to the Time It Takes to Make a Good Infantryman.

One result of this war has been a change of opinion as to the time it takes to make a good infantryman. Some of the German volunteers who had received no previous training were in action three months after they had enlisted. Perhaps they were not as good as the first line German troops at the outbreak of the war, but they certainly won encomiums from the German commanders. In England the new army recruits made excellent soldiers in three months; they were so good in six that some officers spoke of them as over drilled and "stale." It was the want of rifles and guns to support them which kept them back—contrary to general opinion in America. The new army men represented the intelligence in the application of civil life. They were used to working eight hours a day—and modern war is business and work, work, work—which is from two to three times that of our regular army soldier, who would not enlist if he had to work eight. They "put their backs

into it," for they had come out to fight for patriotism.

If we compare them with our national guard, what do we find? That the national guardsmen being Americans and, therefore, quicker and more adaptable, ought to learn faster. So they would. But in one year, the national guard gets less drill than the new army got in 10 days. The new army drill was continuous. It was carried out in the fields under something like war conditions with the very latest teachings of the experience of the trenches at the call of the instructors.

Our national guard drills on armory floors. It gets almost no chance to go out in the open except in its summer camps.

One national guardsman and an able soldier, too, told me he learned more in a month at Plattsburg last summer than he had learned in all his five years in the guard. Again, it is not the fault of the national guard, it is the fault of the system. We go around Robin Hood's barn to make a soldier. The most practical people in the world, we become theorists when we approach the subject of war. Our national guards also have magnificent plants, but their splendid armories are occupied only a few nights a week. More waste of material; more unnecessary cost in upkeep which the taxpayers must pay.

No Professional Soldiers in Europe

When people talk of a regular army of 250,000, they will please answer the question: Where are we to get the men? We have to advertise and plead to get 200,000, and take some pretty poor physical types. A regular has to serve for four years, and if he is a man of character, he is expected to keep his word to the nation. But it has become a custom not to—because we are not patriotic, but because the situation has become accepted through the indifference of the public. He becomes an excellent automatic soldier, an excellent shot—thanks to the excellent training of his officers and the use of vast quantities of service ammunition. He is trained by companies and battalions—not as an army. But, if you succeed in making a regular army of 250,000 men and half of them reenlist, and a fourth reenlist again, thus becoming professional soldiers for life, you have removed a large force of adult males from taking any part in civil occupations. This is undemocratic, un-American, bad sociology.

In Europe, there are no professional soldiers except the officers and the non-commissioned officers. Every man, after he has served his time, returns to civil employment. If there be advantage in the discipline and physical training he receives its application is universal. Thus the army is the nation—its blood, sinew, character.

The German army is renewed every two years; every year half of the privates return to their homes and half start in as raw recruits. Germany, with her hard-and-fast military ideas, requires only two years to make a soldier suitable to the ideals of Prussian militarism. We think four years are necessary. We, who are the most adaptable, energetic quick-learning of all peoples! If this country is ever invaded, it will be better to have 500,000 men in a composite force who have had a year's service, than only 200,000 who have had anywhere from two to 16 years' service, or 1,000,000 of a hybrid organization of four kinds of troops. For, you must have numbers. The day of the short battle front is over. Should an enemy ever land in the United States with 400,000 or 500,000 men, he will cover a battle front of anywhere from 100 to 200 miles. Any small band of regulars, however brave, must be surrounded and outflanked.

The Nation Must Have One Army.

And, why not have one army? Why not start it on the basis of what we already have—the regular army? If a Frenchman serves three years, and a German two, why should we serve four? The reason the French serve three is not that a Frenchman is unable to learn how to be a soldier in less than three years, but because the smaller population of France requires longer service in order to have a first line of adequate size.

Suppose that aside from the men who enlist in the regulars to get the pay, a little adventure and a comfortable life, we include men who enlist for patriotism, training and experience. Many a young man who had never thought of becoming a professional soldier would come in if he knew that at the end of a year or even six months he could receive his discharge with the recommendation of a board of officers as having filled the requirements. If you put 100,000 young men through the established regular school, an unexcelled school, with its forms set, then you would have a real reserve. Those who like the soldier's life and wish to remain regulars would form the trained nucleus and become the material for non-commissioned officers—drill sergeants and corporals. They could go on re-enlisting if they chose. They might form our garrisons in Panama and in the Philippines.

A young man, having served his year, might be promoted to another year's service as a commissioned officer. Thus you would have started reserve forces of officers. Then, once the telegraph instrument began clicking in Washington in case of danger, both reserves and officers and men would respond, each knowing where he was to go, as every French and German officer and man knew in August, 1914. A great army would form itself automatically—a single army under a single staff.

These articles are to apply the lessons of Europe, and this is the simplest possible application of them. Abolish the national guard and volunteers, give up the continental army dream. That is, unless we are ready for universal service—ready to say to a certain percentage of young men every year: "You are drawn. You go into the army!" as they say in Europe. At any rate, as the most businesslike people in the world, let us get down to business.

Investigation among the cannibals of New Guinea indicates that they eat human flesh because they like it