

WILMINGTON DEL. FRIDAY, JAN. 13, 1892.

UNITED BY FEELING, KINDRED, AND COUNTRY,—NOT BY OATHS OF SECRECY.

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J. V. GIBBONS, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

TERMS.

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
November 21, 1891.

Sir: In obedience to your instructions, I have the honor to submit here with a general view of the operations of this Department, and of the various branches of its administration, together with the accompanying reports of the officers in charge of the different bureaus for the past year.

The plan of organization by which the great objects of public concern, committed to the War Departments, are divided into different classes, and placed under the more immediate control of respectable and responsible officers is well calculated to promote fidelity, promptitude, and economy in the management of these important interests. By assigning to each office a particular branch of the service, experience in the general administration is acquired at the Department, and in the practical details at the places of execution. On this subject I have only to remark, that the importance of our Indian relations, both present and prospective, demands a similar arrangement for this portion of the public affairs. The existing organization rests upon executive authority, but the efficiency and responsibility of that department would be greatly promoted, if its duties were regulated by a legislative act.—This measure has more than once been recommended in the reports of my predecessors, and I beg leave to add my conviction to theirs of its necessity.

The condition of the army is satisfactory in its material, and so far in its morals as depends upon the exertions of the officers. Its appropriate functions are performed honorably for itself, and usefully for the country. Although some of the details of the service are susceptible of improvement in their administration, and some in their legislation, still, in the general result, whether viewed as an arm of national defence, or as a depository of military knowledge and experience, it has attained the great objects for which it was raised and is maintained. It is efficient without being expensive, and adequate to the exigencies of our service without being dangerous. I refer to the report of the Major General commanding, for the detailed operations of the year.

The annual reports of this Department have already brought before the government the subject of desertion; and I regret to state, that this serious evil not only continues but increases. Inquires have been instituted into the causes of this offence, and the most efficient remedy, and much valuable information is contained in a Report from the War Department of February 17, 1890. But no measures have been adopted to check a practice, which, from its extent and impunity, not only materially injures the service by the loss of the men and the consequent expense, but threatens in its progress, and by its example, to destroy that principle of fidelity which is the only safe bond of connexion between the soldier and his country. In the present state of our martial law, and of its necessary punishment for the crime of desertion, confinement and employment at hard labor are the only efficient sentences, which military tribunals can inflict; and where a soldier is confined in a guard-house, and his companions stationed without to secure him, and with all the facilities of constant communication, we may well doubt whether his situation is so much more unpleasant than theirs, as to give to this mode of punishment any salutary effect upon the discipline of the army; and at all our posts, and particularly those upon the inland border, the soldiers are generally employed either in the line of their duty or upon fatigue, and a sentence to hard labor subjects them to little more than the ordinary demands of the service.

Whether any system of moderate rewards will prevent this practice, may be doubted, but certainly the abolition of all efficient punishment, without providing any substitute to operate upon the pride and hopes of the soldier, is in fact to invite him to abandon his colors, whenever the restraints of discipline cause temporary dissatisfaction.

To retain a part of the bounty and the pay, and thereby to provide a fund for the use of the soldier when discharged, to reduce the period of service, and to increase the pay of the rank and file of the army, and particularly of the non-commissioned officers, are among the

most prominent suggestions, which have been offered upon this subject.

The number of desertions in	
1826 were	636
1827	848
1828	890
1829	1,115
1830	1,251
And in 1831 they will probably amount to	1,450

An estimate has been prepared at the Adjutant General's office, founded upon a minute examination and comparison of the various expenses incident to the maintenance of a soldier, and exhibiting the actual pecuniary loss of the Government arising from this case.

The loss was for	
1826	\$54,393
1827	61,344
1828	63,187
1829	98,345
1830	102,087
1831 probably	118,312

The tabular statement accompanying the report of the commanding general shows, that the pay of the non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates, may be increased so as materially to improve their condition, and not exceed the aggregate amount of \$85,920. The non-commissioned officers particularly are in our service, inadequately paid. Every military man is sensible of their importance to the character and efficiency of the army; and such inducements should be offered, as would engage the engagement of competent men, qualified by their principles, habits, and intelligence, to acquire the confidence and command the respect of the soldiers. That this additional compensation would have a tendency to diminish the mischief of desertion, there is no doubt—whether in so great a degree as to save the whole sum proposed to be given, experience only can determine.

A very large proportion of all the crimes committed in the army may be traced to habits of intemperance. The vice is in fact the prevalent one to our soldiery. I am satisfied that ardent spirits should not form a component part or the ration. By issuing it, we furnish to those already accustomed to its use the means of vicious indulgence, and we invite those, who are yet temperate, to acquire this destructive habit. It is certainly sufficient for all useful purposes if, there be in truth any utility in the consumption of ardent spirits, that the officers be authorized to grant permission for its purchase, in proper quantities to those whose situation may require it, without the direct agency of the Government in allowing and providing it.

There was issued to the army, in 1830, 752 gallons of whiskey, at the cost of \$22,133. If this sum was applied to the purchase of tea, coffee, and sugar, for the use of the soldiers, their habits and morals would be greatly improved, and the discipline and respectability of the army promoted. The regulation of this Department, by which an offer is made to the soldier of commutating the whiskey ration by the payment of one cent, is productive of little advantage. In this estimate of the value of this part of the ration, reference has been had only to the actual cost of the article, delivered in large quantities at the various posts. But this is unjust to the soldier. He estimates it very naturally at the retail price, averaging probably five cents, and the present offer of commutation is in fact to ask him to sell his whiskey at one fifth of its value.—It is far better to leave the troops no choice, but to allow them a liberal compensation, and in such articles as will be most useful. The American soldier is well paid, fed, and clothed; and, in the event of sickness or disability, ample provision is made for his support. But his moral culture is wholly neglected. There is no arrangement in our service for his mental or religious improvement. And there is perhaps no similar service, in which such a measure is more necessary. Many of the positions occupied by our troops are upon the verge of civilization, or beyond it. There, they are retained for years, and under circumstances, which, if not counteracted, almost necessarily lead to great demoralization. None of the ordinary means of instruction are within their reach, and neither their habits nor principles can be improved or fortified by those institutions, which are elsewhere so generally established, and so useful. Independently of any obligation which may be supposed to exist on the part of the Government, to provide for the moral as well as the physical wants of a class of men, who in devoting themselves to the service of the country, become unable to provide for their own wants, it is certain, that, as a question of expediency, this measure is recommended by powerful considerations. Where moral and religious principles are practically acknowledged, their sanctions will add validity to the obligations voluntarily assumed by the soldier, and his duties will be performed with more fidelity and alacrity. As he becomes a better soldier, he will become a better citizen. Discipline and subordination will be promoted, punishments diminished, and all the details of the

service will feel the spirit of improvement. I am satisfied, that the appointment of chaplains and their employment at such of our military posts, as from their position and the strength of the garrisons may seem to call for such a measure, would be productive of great advantages to the service; and to the soldiers individually the measure would be equally beneficial. Reproofs and exhortations in life, and the consolations of religion in death, would be freely offered to them. The experiment, I think, is worthy of trial; and the expense can scarcely be placed in fair competition with an object, which promises such useful results for the present improvement and future happiness of the soldiers.

The various departments of the staff of the army have performed with fidelity their respective routine of duties. In the three great divisions of economy, and accountability, the present mode of administration seems well adapted to the nature of service. The several tabular statements accompanying this report exhibit the satisfactory manner in which the public funds have been expended and accounted for. Nor is there any reason to believe, that the slightest cost will occur from the fiscal operations of the year. A system whose effects are thus beneficial, need not only safe in itself, but safely administered. And for this administration we are indebted to the superintending care of the several bureaus and to the various officers employed under them, throughout the army and in great numbers. The discipline has been provided, which cannot fail to be useful in any future exigency. Armies may be suddenly raised, and discipline in some measure introduced, by great exertions, and great experience. The disasters and prodigious expenditures in the beginning of the late war furnished a memorable lesson upon the subject, which it is hoped will not be forgotten, as we recede from the period of their occurrence. Our present organization is small enough for the wants of the service, and yet such is its nature, that it may be indefinitely extended, as the pressure of circumstances may require, ensuring in every branch of the service a judicious system of administration, and experienced officers to direct and apply it.

The Military Academy has existed sufficiently long, under its present mode of instruction, to enable the Government and the country to form a correct estimate of its value, both with relation to the cadets themselves, and the character of the army. Of 360 officers, having rank in the line, and now in service, 404 were educated at the institution. These young men have been prepared by a rigid and judicious course of instruction and discipline of the various duties of their profession. 660 have entered the army, of whom but thirteen have been court-martialed, and during the present year only two have been brought before courts martial, and they upon charges not affecting their moral character.

These facts are honorable and decisive proofs of general good conduct, when the high state of discipline and the course of vigilant inspection in our service are taken into view. In the annual reports of the visitors at West Point, is exhibited the result of the most careful observations, made by persons competent to estimate, and prepared to scrutinize the claims and condition of the institution. For some years these reports have borne unequivocal evidence to the fidelity of the officers, the superintendents, and the academy staff generally, and to the proficiency and correct deportment of the pupils. The record which is kept of their progress and conduct, the spirit of emulation necessarily excited, and the judicious plan of rewards, which are conferred by the publication of the names of the most distinguished individuals, and by their admission into the army in the order of merit, are powerful incentives to exertion, and, when combined with the strictness of the military establishments, to which all must submit, can scarcely fail to secure for the service of their country such and such only, as are qualified to be useful.

The science of war is an advancing one. In Europe, where peace is seldom long maintained, a large portion of the talent and intelligence of the community is devoted to this study, and to the consideration and suggestion of changes and improvements in all the details which relate to the operations in the field, to the various supplies, and to the necessary course of administration.—We must look to those nations for the benefit of their experience, and the progress in the elements of military knowledge will depend, in a great measure, upon the careful preparation and education of the young men, who are annually appointed in our service. Our local position, as well as our free institutions, may delay, but we have no right to expect they will prevent the occurrence of war. As this event may happen, it is the part of true wisdom to be prepared for it, as far as preparation can be made without too great a sacrifice. Our army is barely sufficient to furnish small garrisons for the fortifications upon the seaboard, and to hold in check the numerous and restless Indian tribes upon our inland frontier. Under these circumstances, the practical duties of the profession are acquired; and as long as the officers enter the service, with a well grounded knowledge of its principles, we may look to the army as the depository of a fund of information upon the most important subject, which will enable the Government to diffuse it among the community upon the approach of danger. By assigning a portion of the officers, previously in service, to new regiments and corps, we shall secure the comparative efficiency of their military duties, both in subordination and discipline. The great objects of present economy and future security can in no other mode be so certainly attained. When we avow to the comparative efficiency of training young men for the course of life, before them, or of selecting them indiscriminately for the army, without reference to previous pursuits, it will be manifest, that the present system alone can assure the most knowledge of the important objects connected with our military establishment.

It has been stated, that the number of cadets allowed at the Military Academy is 260. There are in the line of the army 12,000 officers. On the 1st day of November, there were present for duty 303, of whom 19 were field and 284 company officers. There were 66 sick and on furlough. And 143 were detached upon various staff duties, including the regular observatories of the army, objects of internal improvement, and the emigration of the Indians. The number of companies being 100, there were three officers to each company. Only 100 were not the casualties of the service, though not to

be less than that number at all times with their companies. The law provides, that there shall be three to each company of infantry, and five to each company of artillery. In addition to these, the act of April 29th, 1832, allows one supernumerary brevet 2d lieutenant to be attached to each company. Of these, there are in service 93, leaving 23 vacancies to be filled from the graduates of the Military Academy for 1832. The number of the annual average vacancies in the army for 3 years has been twenty-three, and of the graduates to fill through 40. There may, therefore, at the next examination, be 40 cadets candidates, for appointment, and but 36 vacancies to be filled. I would suggest the expediency of adding 34 to the number of brevet 2d lieutenants, and leaving them unattached to duty whenever required. Every company may thus have three officers at all times present, to the greater advantage of the service.

I refer to the report of the chief of the Engineer Department for the various details connected with this interesting branch of the public service.

The suggestions he has made, appear to me worthy of consideration; and I particularly recommend to your notice the proposition of a new organization of the corps of engineers. The views of this Department upon that subject, were expressed in a report of January 13th, 1831, in answer to a call of the House of Representatives, and in those views I fully concur. The measure is required by the public interest.

Unless provision is soon made for the repair and preservation of the road constructed by the United States from Cumberland to the Ohio river, that extensive and useful work will be ruined. Many parts of it are now so seriously injured, as to render travelling difficult, and sometimes dangerous. The destruction of this great connecting link between the Atlantic and the Western States, which, with a light transit and a proper system of administration, would last for ages, cannot be anticipated without great concern. The continuation of this road in the state of Ohio is within her jurisdiction, which is finished.

I consider it my duty to bring this matter before you in the hope that it will engage the attention of Congress, and that a similar system of administration, under the same conditions, as were annexed to the cessation of the road in Ohio, there is reason to believe, that the arrangement would receive the sanction of those States, and that a permanent system and adequate means would be provided for the preservation of this work, and in a manner not burthensome to the communication upon it. If this be not done, or some other expediency adopted, the road will soon fall into a state of entire dilapidation.

By an executive regulation of the 21st of June, 1831, the topographical corps was separated from the Engineer Department, and now constitutes a distinct bureau. The duties of this corps are important to the country, and if its organization is rendered commensurate, a mass of valuable materials, exhibiting a general and accurate view of the geographical outlines of the Union, will be collected, to be used for any of the great purposes of peace or war. In a report from this Department, of January, 1831, this subject was considered, and the necessity of the measure stated and enforced. To that report, containing valuable suggestions, I take the liberty of referring.

A minute knowledge of the features of a country is essential to any plan of military operations; and this knowledge should be gathered in a season of leisure, and deposited in our archives. In Europe it is considered one of the most important elements of military science and upon its contributions have often depended the efforts of a whole campaign. All the surveys made by the topographical corps are returned to the depot in this Department, where they can be detached or combined, as it may become necessary to exhibit views more or less general. These surveys, dissecting the country in all directions, and particularly along its streams and routes, where roads already are, or probably will be established, present those features, which are most important to the operations of armies. A general survey of our coasts, both Atlantic and interior, is demanded by considerations of national interest as well as of character. Arrangements for the former were made some years since, and expensive instruments procured, which are yet in the possession of the Government. The work was actually commenced, but abandoned before much progress had been made. If this operation were resumed, and committed to one of the scientific corps of the army, its constitution would prevent the recurrence of those circumstances, to which the abandonment of the objects may be attributed. Our own lakes are but imperfectly known to us, and the advance of the settlements and the extension require, that this defect should be supplied. Labours of this nature have engaged the attention of the most enlightened Governments, and the materials become a part of the general stock of public knowledge. The necessity of peculiar instruction to officers devoted to these duties, both in the scientific principles and practical details, is well illustrated in the report from the Topographical Office. Some of the operations require an intimate knowledge of the most abstruse investigations of the present day, in mathematical and physical science; and we shall in vain look for the accomplishment, unless Government make provision for the measure.

To the Ordnance Department is committed the duty of providing and preserving the necessary armament for the land service of the United States. The trust is a responsible one, requiring fidelity in the administration, and practical as well as scientific knowledge in the execution. The expenditures for these objects exceeds \$900,000 annually, and the value of the accumulated property, equals twelve and