


1898

Our National Police

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OUR NATIONAL POLICE.

As each town has its police force, each state its militia, the whole country has its national police. This in reality consists of some 25,000 men who form the regular army in time of peace. On certain specified occasions; such as repelling foreign invasion, or quelling internal riot, the militias of the several states, or the National Guard so called, numbering some 115,000 men, may be commanded by the President to respond for duty outside their respective states, but not, however, outside of the United States. This, then, omitting our naval forces, is our total apparent police force on which we rely for protection in case of war. But as there are some 14,000,000 men in this country capable of bearing arms, if time permitted, we might raise a force of far greater size, rendering us, it is believed, well nigh invincible. It is with the organizing of such a reserve force that this paper has mainly to deal.

It has been a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons that they have always been opposed to large standing armies, and to-day Great Britain and the United States are the only nations which do not resort to conscription in time of peace in order to insure an enormous fighting force in time of war. There is not a country in all Europe of res-

pectable size that has not a larger standing army than our own. Even little Belgium has an army of some 60,000 men, over twice our force. Germany has over 3,000,000 soldiers perfectly trained, and so well organized that they can be assembled ready for active service in two weeks from the outbreak of hostilities. France is nearly as well prepared, while the Russian army in time of peace numbers 868,000 which is increased in war to 2,500,000. Our happy situation with an ocean on either flank, and the insignificance of any nation on this hemisphere when compared with us has led us to be supremely indifferent to our military defences. Indeed so good an authority as Ex-Secretary Herbert of the Naval Department, has said that there is no other country which having so much war material finds itself so little prepared to use it. But the progress of Science and Invention has slowly overcome these once important barriers, the oceans; the voyage once occupying months is now a matter of days. We are no longer separated from Europe and Asia, but find ourselves closely surrounded by powerful neighbors. It is estimated by military experts that an army of 60,000 is about as large a force as could well be moved across the ocean at one time. It is farther believed that a month would suffice to embark and transport such a

force to our coasts. Suppose, and it is by no means an impossible case, that such an army has been landed on our shores a month or even two from the opening of hostilities. What force could we bring against it? There are several nations that might soon land far greater armies; but even with the minimum, it is easily perceived that we should have to rely as in our former wars largely upon volunteers. If we examine the history of our past wars and observe how our volunteers were raised and how they fought, we can form some just conception of what they may be able to do in the future and how much dependence we may place upon them.

During the Colonial Wars volunteers were easily obtained and quickly organized; a simple task, when nearly every man was a crack shot and fighting necessarily was an important part of the Colonist's education. Through these wars the Colonists were well fitted to enter the Revolution which broke out shortly after.

At the beginning of this struggle for independence, the militias of the several Colonies were employed; but later, the volunteers were raised and enlisted under the newly formed government. Washington placed no confidence in the militia and urged that all the troops raised should be regular volunteers. Under an intensely patriotic spirit

and loyally devoted to their cause, they overcame every obstacle and won a well earned victory.

Our next war, that of 1812, found us with a regular army of some 8,000 men. Congress at once called for 50,000 volunteers and authorized the President to order out the militias numbering 100,000. It was also proposed to recruit the regular army to 50,000 as well. The war was so unpopular among the people, however, that the regular army could not be increased by enlistment even though large bounties were offered by the Government. The militia were therefore called upon, each state being asked to furnish a certain quota; but some of the Governors declared that the President had no right to order the militia out of their respective states, a point unsettled at the present day. Trouble was also experienced from the appointment of officers almost wholly unfit for their positions. Before the war was over our Capitol had been burned and our armies had suffered some disastrous defeats, several of which can be traced directly to the militia. Had it not been for the memorable victories of our navy, which was under national control and therefore free from squabbles and inefficient commanders, our final successes would never have been obtained.

At the time of the Mexican War our troops numbered

about 5,000 men. A call was issued for 50,000 volunteers, which were easily raised. These troops drilled throughout the summer with the regulars and by autumn were well prepared for active service. The war was most skillfully and gallantly fought on our side by both regulars and volunteers, the latter being more quickly transformed into soldiers by the presence of the former, of whom there was a large percentage in our armies.

But of far greater importance than any preceding war was the Rebellion, which found us as usual almost wholly unprepared for war. The North was strong in numbers, having a population of over 21,000,000 whites, while the South had less than 6,000,000. The North had also far better material resources. Yet with all these important advantages we suffered many defeats during the first two years of the war, a fact too often forgotten in the final outcome. At no time did the regular army number over 25,000 men. The war, then, was fought by volunteers. Many of the officers of the regular army went over to the Confederates at the beginning of the struggle; these added to those who had served in the Mexican War, and who had come largely from the Southern states, helped greatly to win their early victories. At the commencement of hostilities Lincoln called for 75,000 militia and many times that number were

at once offered. It must not be supposed, however, that these men who so quickly responded were trained and efficient. On the contrary, some three months from the call for volunteers we were able to muster a force of only some 35,000 men for an offensive movement. These marched to Richmond and the battle of Bull Run was fought, which finally ended in a stampede of our army. Had these troops been well officered and disciplined, instead of raw militia forces, the result would probably have been a victory and the war have been brought to a much earlier termination. It was indeed nearly a year before our army was well organized and capable of further offensive operations. There was no lack of men, but the crying need was for capable officers. The first year of the war was really a school of instruction for our soldiers; after that, there was no difficulty in obtaining excellent commanders. It was proved conclusively that at least six months were necessary to discipline a raw volunteer force, unless such a force were officered by men of some previous military experience. It showed, too that given good officers and proper preparation there is no better soldier than the American.

But no greater proof could be required as to the time necessary to mobilize our volunteer forces than is at pre-

sent afforded by our war with Spain. A review of the past few months indicates that those in authority commenced active preparations for the conflict some ten weeks before it actually occurred. War material was purchased at home and abroad and the most strenuous efforts were put forth to repair the almost utter helplessness which our lack of proper precaution had caused. No call for troops was made, however, until the actual outbreak of hostilities. The President then called for 125,000, while at the same time it was proposed to enlarge the regular army to some 66,000 men. The war may fairly be said to be popular, and no difficulty has been encountered in filling the volunteer regiments, many of the militia organizations being mustered in as a body; but the regular army increase is still unfilled and even the mustering in of the volunteer forces occupied over a month. The militia of which so much was expected has been shown with but few exceptions to be a quantity upon which no dependence can be placed. Its inefficiency varies in the different states; here good, there bad, or indifferent. Even a war of so small proportions as this, the number of experienced officers is far below the demand. As in the Civil War, though to a much less extent, men utterly untrained in the art of war are being appointed to high military stations.

From the foregoing it has been shown that in any considerable war in which we may be engaged, we should have to rely on volunteers and furthermore that these troops cannot be made effective inside of six months. Inasmuch as the more recent wars have been generally terminated within such a period, the danger of our present condition may be conceived. Military authorities consider that to properly defend our frontiers in a conflict with any Great Power we should require at least 400,000 men. The problem of how this great army is to be quickly raised, organized and disciplined is one to which many answers have been given, each of more or less worth; but none have yet been accepted by the government.

All the plans thus far suggested may be divided into two classes. First, those which simply propose to increase the standing army. Second, those which urge some form of volunteering or conscription. The first plan would doubtless answer all purposes, but it is so extremely unpopular that it may be entirely dismissed for that reason. At present, however, it would seem probable that the regular army would be slightly increased at the close of the present conflict. The second class includes a number of plans, each of which has its champions. As to conscription, the people have always been opposed to the draft, and it is likely

that it will be enforced only as a last resort. Many believe that the National Guard should be increased to some three or four hundred thousand men, and be made national in reality as well as in name, so that it might be under the direct call of the government for any duty at all times; but as this would deprive the states of any forces of their own, it would seem very undesirable. By far the best scheme of all is one proposed by Lieut. Foote of the Regular Army which, while it provides ample forces, does so at the least expense. His idea is to form skeleton regiments in time of peace which can be quickly recruited at the outbreak of hostilities. These regiments would be apportioned to each state and commanded by an officer of the Regular Army selected for his especial fitness for the position and of rank not greater than major in the regular service. It is thought that officers on duty at colleges and those assigned to the militias would in many cases be able to attend to such organizations outside of their other duties. Such an officer would by examinations select all his under officers, drill them, and promote them according to their ability until all the officers of the regiment were complete. Then in case of war these officers would recruit the regiment each in his respective locality and report at headquarters, when the Colonel and his previously selected

officers would assume command. The officers should have had some military experience previous to their appointment either in the Regular Army, militia or some military school, and after careful tutelage by their Colonel should prove efficient. Should there be a lack of volunteers, these same officers could serve in case of a draft being necessary. This is but the gist of the plan, but the whole has been carefully worked out and is certainly a reasonable system, possessing many virtues.

Whatever plan may be adopted, " it would seem that the era has at last arrived when the vital interests demand that the question receive the deliberate, fair, and intelligent consideration which is necessary to determine the extent to which a safe and judicious government must rest on efficient military organization." That the question has not received deliberate, fair, and intelligent consideration," is sadly apparent when we consider that the only militia law on the statute books was passed over a century ago and provides for a dragoon armed with a pistol and pistol holster covered with a bearskin and a rifleman armed with a flintlock musket carrying a bullet pouch and powder horn. Imagine our armies fighting with such weapons. As well give them the bow and arrow of the savage!

As the weapons or warfare are improved the periods of

wars decrease, but not so the time necessary to create an army; for while in national emergencies ploughshares may be quickly turned into bayonets and defences hurriedly completed, not all the millions in the treasury can change the uninstructed citizen into a soldier. France, China, and Greece are all recent examples of nations unprepared for war. Should we not profit by their unreadiness, and, trusting no longer chiefly to the bravery and patriotism of our people, take the advice of the "Father of our Country" and "In time of peace prepare for war"?

W. B. Clarke, Jr.