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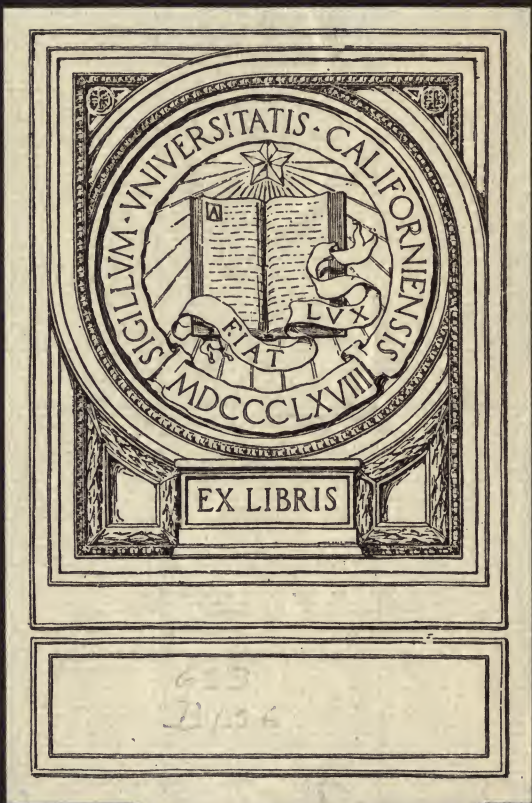
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THE GERMAN ARMY

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Press of The Army Service Schools
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

1916

THE GERMAN ARMY

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Bjornstad, A.W.



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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
ATTENTION

The German Army

Lecture by Captain A. W. Bjornstad, 16th Infantry.

THERE are many ways of describing an army, or an automobile, or any other thing that is too complicated to be grasped at a glance. To list the component parts is the easiest way, and the poorest. That clock, I may say, is a box enclosing a mechanism consisting of fifteen wheels, two hands, one pendulum—and you will want to interrupt me to say: “We can’t remember catalogues. Try to explain what makes it tick.”

This, I hope, will be a lecture without statistics or diagrams. Something makes the German army tick in a way that is more or less disconcerting to people who do not sleep well. You are probably more interested in knowing what makes it tick so noticeably and reliably than you are in numbers or sub-divisions. Organization, equipment and like subjects have become familiar enough to you, or will become familiar to you while you are here, by reason of the number of German problems and texts that form a part of the course, and through general reading of literature relating to the present war. Your familiarity with this side of the topic compels me to depart from the accepted rule which governs these lectures on foreign armies and present the German army from a different angle.

The German army is well organized in most respects. It is defectively organized in other respects. Most of its equipment is excellent, but some of it is only fair, and some of it is poor. Most of its regiments are splendid. Some are not so

splendid. These are of course matters of interest, but the final judgment must now await the teachings of this war. There are deficiencies, to be sure, but the power of the whole has never been equalled. The German army is one of the greatest weapons, if not the greatest weapon, ever made by man. A near approach to it is the British navy. But that navy has not been put to the test against equal or superior numbers, whereas the German army has been so tested. The British navy is great because of its preponderance rather than by reason of proved superior quality. The German army is great because of proved superior quality rather than by reason of superior numbers. The coalition made it inferior in numbers. Any numerical superiority that Germany has had from time to time locally is due to leadership, and leadership comes from quality and not from preponderance.

It is not necessary to pass judgment on the moral question of the present use of the German weapon—its army. Our only interest is the weapon itself. A pistol may be used in a cause that is morally right or morally wrong. The quality of the pistol is the same in either case.

Lock one average German in a room with two average Englishmen and presently the two Englishmen probably will be carrying the German out on a stretcher. But assume a German army of one million men and a British army of two million men, each trained up to the standards of their respective countries as matters stood in July, 1914, and place these armies face to face in a large country where it is possible to maneuver, to extend and over-extend, to envelop and outflank, and to exercise in full the power, skill and finesse of military art—and presently the British probably would be the victims of

the greatest cataclysm in their military history. Such is the power of an organized mass when every one in it has been trained for his part and *inspired*.

There is another point that should be explained at this time. Part of Austria and practically all of Germany are German racially. Austria, of course, has its own army and war department and German-speaking Austrians dominate both. Saxony is a kingdom and is pure German. It has its own army and war department, though the kingdom is one of the 26 states, or entities, large and small, that make up the German Empire. This is an anomaly which, for political reasons, could not be avoided when the Empire was formed. Bavaria, also a kingdom and state in the Empire, is likewise more or less independent of Berlin in army matters. Prussia has a population practically twice that of all the other states of the Empire combined. The army contingents of all states except Saxony and Bavaria are under the Berlin military authorities; that is, the Emperor and his War Department and his General Staff. Thus the army contingents of twenty-odd small states have been Prussianized. They have been consolidated with and made subject to the methods and policies of the Hohenzollerns. This is the real simon-pure Hohenzollern army. This is the army which, in my opinion, has demonstrated that it possesses the high qualities I have mentioned and shall refer to more in detail later. The Bavarian contingent is apparently doing excellent work. On the other hand, the accounts of the operations of von Hausen's Saxon army in August and September, 1914, give a less favorable impression of those troops. Things did not go altogether well with Austria either, in the beginning of the war at least.

The efficiency of the German army is of course

due to many causes. It is in part due to national or race characteristics; but it is in far greater part due to the policies of the Hohenzollern and his War Department and his General Staff. It has not been the work of a day, or a year, or of the reign of a single monarch. The characteristics and policies to which I refer have created certain moral and psychological influences; influences which, in turn, have made the German army great, entirely apart from the greatness that is due to numbers alone.

Aside from good physique and intelligence, of which Germany has her fair share and probably little more, most of the effective points that are noticeable in the army, in the last analysis may fairly be attributed to one of four things: Industry, individual pride, hope of reward and fear of retirement. It seems academic to pick a vast machine to pieces in search of its secret and then assert that it functions well because of four very primitive and simple human virtues and weaknesses. We must not lose sight of the power, or persons, who had the foresight and strength to put the machine together and set these forces to the task of making it function well. However, in the short time allotted I have chosen to limit myself to a brief reference to these forces which make the great German clock tick with greater regularity and precision than some of the other clocks that are now competing in the same market.

First as to industry, which combines patience with thoroughness. The army in time of peace is a school. A university has its professors and instructors forming a continuing personnel which educates an ever-changing student body. So the army in Germany, as in all countries that have universal and compulsory service, has its officers and non-commissioned officers forming a continuing person-

nel which trains recruits who come into the army, serve one, two or three years, depending upon conditions that are not important to us just now, and then pass into the reserve and back to civil life as trained men available for future mobilization. There is no misapprehension as to peace time duty. That duty is so obviously to teach that the continuing personnel, the officers and non-commissioned officers, frankly consider themselves to be in the nature of glorified schoolmasters. They receive their classes in the Fall. They have no distractions short of war itself. They have a definite result to achieve with the men entrusted to them for training and they are quite strictly judged by their success in their work. They possess the patience and industry common to Germans. In training they follow thorough and well-tried methods. Time does not permit a review of these methods. They involve much detail and much repetition and, above all, patience and industry on the part of the instructors. The training of officers and staffs receives due attention, as you may well suppose, and this also requires industry on the part of officers to a degree that is not found uniformly in the British or American service. The result of the whole is an evenness and thoroughness that gives smoothness and power to the operation of their huge masses.

I do not wish to give you the impression that these Germans have ideal patience, patience of the quiet sort. This is certainly not true. Officers and non-commissioned officers are frequently irascible, illtempered and explosive; much more so than with us. Some of their outbursts would probably discredit them with our recruits. But when, in spite of these weaknesses, I say they are patient, I mean they are both able and willing to see a thing through

regardless of time or effort. It would also be wrong to say that patience is necessary to compensate for the dullness and inaptitude of the raw material. Someone is responsible for the general belief that German recruits are dull-witted clods. It may have been true in the time of Frederick the Great. Old Marshall Dessau, who was Prussia's great drill-master and who first put cadenced movements in the drill regulations on the theory that recruits were awkward and in need of great physical and mental awakening, is probably responsible for the current belief which I have mentioned and which today amounts to a libel. But Dessau was notoriously illtempered and exacting. At any rate, if statistics are trustworthy, there is less illiteracy and ignorance of the dense sort in modern Germany than in any other country, perhaps, and it seemed to me that the men in the regiment which I knew best compared very favorably with our own men in mental alertness and physical agility. These men were drawn principally from Nassau and Hesse-Darmstadt, two provinces whose people are not noticeably superior to Germans elsewhere.

Our own army is slowly moving in the direction of a school for the development of reservists. It must therefore assume the character of an institution having a continuing instruction personnel and those who constitute that personnel will spend most of their years as peace-time instructors, schoolmasters. Much of the instruction, particularly the instruction of officers and staffs, must of necessity be theoretical, or only semi-practical. But it is necessary to see clearly that every officer must be an instructor *for his own command*, whatever may be its size, in theoretical as well as practical work. That is the German system and the logical one. The time

will soon come when we must discontinue the practice of throwing the work of instruction, particularly in theoretical work, on the shoulders of a few. We must charge each man with making his own unit or staff. In other words if we have a class of officers who consider themselves too practical to fool with theory, that class must disappear. One of our greatest instructors in theoretical work, a man whose memory is inseparably linked with these schools, was reputed to be a failure in the field, and one of our greatest practical soldiers, Grant, was probably no great shakes as an instructor, though, of course, he had no opportunity to demonstrate a weakness in that respect. This proves nothing that cannot be disproved by citing the case of Stonewall Jackson, or better still, in the modern view, Moltke and Hindenburg. In any case, it is absurd to cite a few great soldiers as examples. The great mass of officers are simply company and regimental officers. Their functions and responsibilities are of a different kind. If in time of peace, every officer and non-commissioned officer is a competent teacher of theory and practice in his own unit we can leave it to the war to find the leader.

The Germans have the gift of teaching. They have the necessary perseverance and the ability to master details. Furthermore, they assume that a good teacher is a good all-round man until the contrary is proven. Their army is great largely because the officers and non-commissioned officers are great teachers. I did not discover any evidence of a rough division of the officers into two classes, one assigned to the task of playing with theory in peacetime and the other merely awaiting the great opportunity to save the nation by its untutored common sense. I doubt that the Emperor of Germany be-

lieves that his army is improved much by retaining an officer who chooses not to be an instructor in the full sense, and merely because his intimates suspect that he is going to be a bearcat in battle.

It would be difficult to say how much of German military efficiency is due to pride. There is something that moves German troops to unusual exertions, even in time of peace, and to the painstaking performance of duty on all occasions; but France is not appreciably less noteworthy in this respect. You may prefer to call it military spirit, but I have seen many things which prompt me to attribute it largely to pride in individual performance. It moves officers and men to do well and willingly many tedious and laborious things that enter into the training and field service of troops. In the first place, there is the pride that the Germans have in merely belonging to the army. They feel that the army is their own. It is not an obscure, misunderstood thing that stands apart. It is not a government police force. Whether rightly or wrongly, they believe that not only the safety, but the future greatness of their country depends upon the efficiency of the nation in arms. Even the Social-Democrats, except the extreme wing, share this view. What they oppose is the exclusive authority of the Emperor, the alleged overbearing conduct and perspective of the officer caste, and the government estimate of what constitutes an appropriate peace footing.

The very fact that every citizen must serve, unless disqualified, makes the uniform and its wearer respected and honored. In searching about for an explanation of the low regard in which soldiering is held by many, if not most, Americans, we should not overlook the circumstance that our soldiers

choose this occupation, instead of giving their service as a debt due the government, and it is an occupation which apparently pays poorly and subordinates them to a corps of officers. Poor pay and this form of subordination, which is outwardly social, strike many Americans as evidence of inferiority. It is of course a species of snobbery to take this view, for the subordination is based on military necessity and not on personal considerations. Then, also, much of our early history deals with mercenary armies of the type that preceded the modern conscription system of Europe. Our own army is a survival of the old order *in its legal relation to the government and to the people*. It is an army for the maintenance of which the people are taxed in money instead of personal service and the difference is as marked as the difference between day and night.

In spite of the marked difference between our men and the men of the old mercenary armies in intelligence and decency, our people, because they know nothing of history, associate with all armies more or less the idea of license and personal inferiority that one obtains from reading of armies of long ago. Undoubtedly the same attitude towards soldiers was common enough in Europe up to Napoleon's time, and probably with reason. But universal, compulsory service has raised the soldier's job in Europe to the dignity of a high and honorable duty of citizenship. The Germans take all dignities and duties seriously. To them the army is a necessary and beneficent institution. They are unreservedly proud of the fact that they are serving in it, or have served in it; proud even of the fact that they and all others must serve in it. And probably most important of all, in its bearing on efficiency, a German is proud of the fact that he has served well, if

it is a fact, and that his localized regiment is efficient and serves well. It seems to me that nothing that I have said, or can say, can give an adequate idea of the sincere pride that an average German takes in his own service and in his regiment and in the army. Only by personal contact can one see the effect and realize also how the sense of duty and this personal pride in one's own service lighten the task and promote the success of instructors and leaders.

The non-commissioned officers look forward to the civil service positions which are guaranteed them after twelve years' service. They will then have an assured position for life, and one which gives them good standing in the community—a suitable reward. They are pleased with their prospects and proud of their jobs. It goes without saying that such men, almost without exception, will handle their jobs with devotion and enthusiasm.

The officers constitute a caste; no other word describes it adequately. They feel, and indeed all Germans except Social Democrats feel, that the officers are the natural protectors of the country. They take the lead in many things. They have a unique and secure social position. An officer as a rule belongs either to the nobility, and the minor nobility is large in numbers, or to a prominent and wealthy family which subsidizes him in effect in order that he may have an attractive career and contribute to the social distinction of the family, or uphold it. He is inclined to hold himself aloof from the ordinary citizen. A similar condition could not exist in this country, and does not exist in France. Also, it is difficult for us to understand the importance that a German officer attaches to himself as a national institution. His view may be unsound and illogical, but it is a fact, and when a man would soon-

er be what he is than anything else in the world, and in addition is held in great awe by citizens in general, the chances are that he will strive to hold up his end properly. To hold it up, to keep his place, he must come up to a military standard and make his command efficient. He must be a real officer and, furthermore, he must look the part. The government gives him a trifle in the way of pay. Apparently it counts much on his pride of place and in my opinion it does not count in vain.

Of course, in a caste which the people love to make much of and spoil, there is much affectation and much foppishness; for example, much adherence to extreme military fashions rather than to the simple dictates of neatness and serviceability, but on the whole this pride and care in personal appearance fosters confidence and respect. Soldiers are not philosophers. They are ordinary human beings who believe what they see.

A slovenly officer, speaking of appearance only, ordinarily fails to obtain from his subordinate officers and men the loyalty and respect which are necessary to successful military relations. Officers clearly owe the duty of making these relations what they ought to be. There is another good military reason for exercising care in this respect, a reason that is not overlooked in Germany. In military operations in hostile country or during military occupation, success depends in large measure upon our relations with the inhabitants. Our contact with the inhabitants results from so many situations and necessities that it is useless to attempt an enumeration of them. Imagine a slovenly officer attempting to do important business, vital to the interests of our government and troops, with leading citizens, particularly in Latin-America. He could

exert no beneficial influence over the population, except by force. He would be a distinct liability, whereas for years the government has hoped or tried to make him an asset. Even in such apparently trivial matters pride is a distinct military virtue.

But it is pride in its broader sense that I have particularly in mind when I say that it is one of the traits that makes for military efficiency. The same feeling exists throughout most of continental Europe and it is due originally to the fact that the armies are truly national and of the people. It is stronger in Germany than elsewhere because of many military successes and the extraordinary political and industrial growth of the new Empire, and because the German is a self-satisfied and conceited being anyway. He has not the least doubt that he does anything and everything better than any one else. He is about 50% right in thinking so and he has the saving quality of industry.

When I use the term "hope of reward" I trust no one will confuse it with "waiting for payday." If the Pennsylvania Railroad should establish the policy that hereafter no official or employee would be fired except for crime; that none would have his pay reduced; and that all promotion in future would be by seniority, the road would be in the hands of a receiver within two years. This problem of promoting efficiency by giving suitable rewards for good work is simple of solution in the business world, but difficult in the military service. In the business world the ultimate authority is directly interested in the efficiency of the whole and promotes it by exercising the power to hire, fire and promote. In an army it is different, when the ultimate authority is hard to identify, not centralized, and not specially interested in the condition of the army. It is easier

where the ultimate and unrestrained authority is an Emperor and who feels that he is not much securer in his place, and his country is no safer, than his army is strong.

Germany offers a substantial peace-time reward which all officers have an opportunity to try for while they are still young. This feature of their promotion system has a most important bearing on the efficiency of the army, as I shall show presently. It has to do with the War College and the General Staff. The War College is more like our School of the Line and Staff College than like our own War College. The course covers three years. Lieutenants are eligible after three years' service, but not so late in their career that their promotion to captain is likely to occur within five years. As promotion stood at the beginning of the war, this meant that lieutenants were eligible from their fourth to their ninth or tenth year of service. There are 25 army corps. Within each corps there is an examination annually in which applicants compete. Griepenkerl wrote his problems for applicants to study in preparing for this competitive examination. As I remember it, each regiment may usually send only one officer to the annual examination, but the same officer may try a second or third time.

During the three years that each class is at the War College, some fail to make an adequate impression, and are relieved. These are not many. Of those who complete the course, a limited number of officers are selected and attached to the General Staff, but not appointed to it. Their suitability for the General Staff is determined during this probationary period which may last one, two or three years. Practically all vacancies in the General Staff are filled by selection during this probationary period. Some are

appointed while still on probation; others are appointed after having returned to their regiments from probationary service. There is no rule as to this. When a successful man finally reaches the General Staff he is very likely a junior in his own arm. But promotion is such that those who are appointed in the General Staff gain from three to six years, or in exceptional cases more, in promotion. He is permanently in the General Staff, but he is sent back from time to time for duty with troops, retaining the advanced rank.

With this exception promotion is by seniority up to and including lieutenant general; that is, division commander. But an officer who has made the General Staff jump reaches the higher grades at such an early age, comparatively, that most of the general officers, at least above brigade commander, are former General Staff officers.

Every officer, when he enters the army, is naturally ambitious to come out near the top at the end of his career. This, I think, is truer, or more generally true, in an army like that of Germany where no sane man would become an officer merely, or even partly, as a means of obtaining a livelihood, and where officers think that it is due their families to take the career seriously and make what they can of it. The biggest step is the General Staff, but for that very reason it is the most difficult. The competition is strong, and yet an obscure officer does not labor under any appreciable disadvantage. It is not necessary that he be known to some general officer. Every officer has an opportunity to make himself favorably known to his colonel, and the colonel, in the nature of the case, each year must confine his selection to 5 or 6 possible candidates at most. But having won the colonel's approval and designation, the candidate

must compete within the army corps. Here he is rated on the competitive test only. If successful in the corps examination, he competes during the next three years for a chance at a probationary tour with the General Staff. While on probation he is still competing for a permanent appointment.

To see how severe this competition and elimination is in practice, let us follow the class which entered the War College in any given year; say the class of 1910. In the preceding year from 2 to 8 officers in each regiment sought the colonels designation, or say 1,200 throughout Germany. Some of these may apply again, but their eligibility lasts a very short time. About 500 of the 1,200 were allowed to take the examination. Of these 500, 133 entered the War College for the three year course. Of those who failed in the corps examination, a few may turn up next year and try again. Of the 133 who enter the War College, perhaps 110 or 115 finished. Of these about 50 were attached to the General Staff for one, two or three years. And of these 50, about 20 or 25 were finally appointed in the General Staff. There are from 20 to 25 appointments annually. In short, if appointments were prorated among the regiments, a given regiment would get an appointment about every 8 or 9 years.

It looks like an unpromising gamble against tremendous odds, but in German eyes the prize is a rich one. It is undeniably a fact that nearly every officer begins his career with the determination to try for it when his time and opportunity come and a German does not throw off a determination very easily. There are, furthermore, a number of minor prizes which do not carry better promotion with them, but more varied and agreeable service. Corps, division and brigade adjutants, certain War Depart-

ment positions, and a number of other places, are details which are made almost exclusively from those who have tried for the General Staff and missed it. These details break the long monotony of duty with troops, assure better stations, and are very desirable. There is very little detached service and it is a distinct advantage to have done well at the War College and thus be in line for the limited details that are available. There is no detailed supply corps in our sense. There is nothing which corresponds to our college, or militia, or recruiting details.

I wish now to invite your attention to the *effect* of this system, prefacing my remarks by observing that the rules of the game are adhered to and the policy is well understood and not deviated from except under very special circumstances. A newly appointed second lieutenant sees that he has about 6 or 8 years to serve and then he must try for the regimental designation. He has several things to accomplish during that time. He must have a care as to his personal conduct, of course. He must learn how things are done, and then how to do them, which is different and more practical. Also, he must convince the colonel that he knows. During these years he must so conduct and develop himself that his colonel can comply with regulations which require him to certify to the following:

The officer designated

1. Is thoroughly trained in practical work and possesses excellent military qualities.
2. He has seriousness of purpose, combined with aptitude.
3. His personality and character are consistent with future employment or use in high office.
4. He has a rugged constitution and has health which demands no coddling.
5. He is in suitable financial circumstances.

The competitive examination includes the following subjects: Formal tactics, applied tactics, weapons and munitions, fortification, map reading and aptitude in terrain, history, geography, mathematics and French or Russian. You have a fair index to the preparatory work that the young officer must accomplish when you consider that Griepenkerl's problems were prepared for his benefit to assist him in passing the examination in one of the eight subjects enumerated; that is, applied tactics.

No doubt many are sooner or later discouraged from making further effort to win the designation, but the point I wish to emphasize is this: Every officer has from the start an incentive to learn what he can and be as competent as he can and this has the effect which probably was intended. The effect, as I observed it, is a high average of capability among younger officers and these are the officers who handle the individual instruction of recruits. I believe in the system and it is not impossible to apply it to our service. Our army is non-competitive in a professional sense. Or rather, the competition is haphazard and indefinite. To put it epigrammatically, the palm is too likely to go to the man of tact rather than the man of tactics. It should go to the man who is both. Nothing will develop all, or nearly all, of our officers except competition, based on some fixed or tangible interest. A certain second lieutenant of my acquaintance is ambitious and capable. Last winter he asked me what he could specialize in in order to get forward. He was so serious in his request for information that he asked me to set aside an hour or so to talk it over. I do not know why he conceived it to be necessary to specialize. I could only tell him to specialize in tactics and society, that the two do not necessarily conflict, and one or the other,

or possibly both, might some day bring his worth to the attention of the proper authority. In all seriousness, I think the advice was good, better than I thought at the time, because an officer who knows people in the abstract, and tactics, is certainly useful.

This positive competition which I have described tends to make young German officers begin their careers with hard work along logical lines. Coupled with it is a form of negative competition which keeps the older officers up to form, or at least has a powerful tendency in that direction. Every year a number of officers are retired, either for failure to bring their units up to standard, or for failure to handle them well at maneuvers, or for physical incapacity, or sometimes for an avoidable physical condition, particularly obesity. The number to be retired is not fixed. They attempt simply to retire those who have ceased to be useful. The nearest approach to this in our service is the examination for promotion; but this examination is a failure as it now stands. The essential differences between the German system and ours are: First, the Germans put their system into practical effect, while we do not. Second, a victim of our system suffers a severe financial blow, if incompetency be the cause, while in Germany the victim is supposed to have, or at least generally has, outside income, and has not much pay to lose any way, and of that he loses only one-half. Third, the German is liable to retirement at any time, while our officers are safe except on those rare occasions when their promotion is due; and to be frank about it, they are as safe then as before or after.

Beginning with companies in May or June, and ending with army corps in the September maneuvers, each unit is quite thoroughly inspected and the lead-

ership of the unit commander is observed. In October most of the blue envelopes are given out, vacancies are filled, and the new school year begins throughout the army. The blue envelope contains a very gracious letter thanking the recipient for his valuable services, and informing him that he is retired, and His Majesty hopes that he will enjoy his well-earned rest. Yet retirement is taken quite philosophically and is a disappointment rather than a disgrace.

The companies and battalions of the regiment with which I am most familiar were inspected in May by the battalion and regimental commanders. About two days were devoted to each unit. During the company and battalion inspections, the brigade, division and corps commanders were frequently present. On one occasion all three were present together. These commanders in fact spend much of the summer going about in automobiles or otherwise from one inspection to another, and correspondingly less time at their headquarters. Our division commander had been a cavalryman until the preceding Fall, when he was promoted to division command. He informed me that he had spent the intervening 6 or 7 months in a thorough and detailed study of infantry drill regulations, in order to be able to inspect his command. It was rather interesting to see a corps commander follow a firing line and later jump the captain because in one of the rushes by a group of a dozen men the preparations were not exacting enough. As for the division commander who had been a cavalryman it may be said that if he displayed undue ignorance of drill regulations the fact would not have escaped notice. Instruction is a peace-time demand upon him as upon all others.

One must know whether things are right or wrong when one inspects.

Unquestionably mistakes are made. Some man who loses the General Staff plum may be better than another who wins it, but his superiority could not be measured by mortal mind. One thing is certain. The two hundred-odd officers in the General Staff at the outbreak of the war could not be matched by any two hundred that tried and failed, or any other two hundred in the army. And so in the case of retirements. Some of those who fall by the wayside may be better than some who remain. But take any hundred that have been retired and we shall find that they are far less useful than any hundred who remain. We, in the United States, consider first exact justice to the individual. Germany appears to consider first exact justice to the nation and approximate justice to the individual. But beyond the question of exact justice there lies the matter of creating *efficiency* by a system of rewards and retirements.

If the axe were in the habit of playing favorites, I think I would have heard the weakness of the system commented upon. The German officer is by no means taciturn, once you know him, and in his comments upon this or that feature of the army he is prone to criticise quite freely.

There is no fixed retirement age. Haeseler, a picturesque old field marshal, was in active service in 1913 at the age of 80-odd. This was an exception, however. Haeseler is a real hero of the Franco-Prussian War, a former instructor of the Emperor, I believe, and a national idol. He was not given a command in the present war, but turned up as an observer and free lance.

Theoretically an officer remains as long as he

is useful. He then becomes a reserve officer, if not too old, and is an asset in war. This fear of retirement is one of the great causes of German military efficiency which I mentioned in the beginning. Its practical effect is on officers above the grade of lieutenant. Not very long after the officer has reluctantly buried his ambition to make the War College, he finds that the other agency is beginning to destroy any dreams of repose that he may have entertained. The fear of retirement tends to keep the old fellows on the job. There is not much let-up in their efforts to keep themselves fit for the dual task of the officer in peace-time—teaching and leading. Still there appeared to me to be little hard driving of subordinates. Commanders are pretty much let alone. They enjoy a freedom that we hardly know. Of course, freedom without responsibility quickly degenerates into mere license in many instances. In our service, if we are free we are responsible practically only to our own consciences. Under the law our superiors have no recourse, in case we fall down, except to take away the freedom and thoroughly supervise us. It would not do to differentiate. It would probably demoralize a regiment if eight company commanders were free and four others supervised. The idea behind the German system seems to be this: Give an officer all the assistance he wants and needs, but trust him to train his command in his own way; it will develop him. But when it is clear that he is no longer useful and effective, put another man in his place. How to dispose of him with justice is a detail. The paramount thing is the efficiency of the army. The country can easily recover from the mistakes of postmasters and revenue officers, and even some of the mistakes of a legislature, but the mistakes of the army and navy

in war leave their scars for all time and are irretrievable.

Little more than a hundred years ago, Prussia was a wreck. Until then it had a paid army. Napoleon compelled her to reduce the army to 42,000. Furthermore, he stood by and saw to it that the limit was not exceeded. But Prussia threw the old army into the scrap heap and erected a military school with 40,000 students and 20,000 graduated reserves annually. Apparently Napoleon sat by and allowed himself to be circumvented. Seven years after Jena the Prussian army was larger than ever before and it delivered probably the first and certainly the second real blow against Napoleon. That was the beginning of Germany's modern army. Scharnhorst, Stein and Clausewitz erected it and put the breath of life into it when they surrounded the continuing instruction personnel with War College, General Staff, and above all, prestige and incentives to work.

Germany by no means enjoys exclusive possession of the military virtues. There is probably nothing that Germany has accomplished in the matter of making her fighting force efficient that cannot be accomplished by us; but it would require wise and unselfish legislation, coupled with wise and inflexible War Department policies. This legislation and these policies are such as the army, the militia and the public, in their present benighted state, probably would not listen to. In other words, we can have it if we want it, but there are other things, perhaps less creditable to us, individually and nationally, which we seem to want more.

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