

"Military
Men
as
Writers."

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The idea of literary work of any kind is not usually associated with the popular conception of a military man, and probably with reason, for we find, upon investigation, that men in the army are not, as a rule, writers. As one authority expresses it, "The military pen is generally no more flexible than a sponge staff."

Why is it? Is it because they are uneducated? Is it true, as Sen. Cullum asserts, that "to find a scholar among military men is for the unexpected to happen"? Montaigne, too, says that the most warlike nations are the most ignorant, citing the Turks and Goths; that Rome was more valiant before she grew so learned, — but, does it necessarily follow that it was because of her increased knowledge that she became less valiant? Study the history of Rome, and you will find that her decline and downfall was not due to increased intelligence and learning, but to far different

caused. As to the Goths and Turks, they are not to be classed with civilized nations. They are barbarians, in war, as in peace. Finally, are military men so ignorant?

The only reply one needs here is to observe Germany's supremacy in both educational and military lines; remember, that illiterate men are not admitted into the army at all. — "our army is essentially an educational army" — that special educational qualifications are demanded of officers, and that it is only among the officers that writers ever appear — doubtless largely because of this superiority. War is their especial profession, and as Prof. Michie says, "It is almost a truism to say that education is as necessary in the military profession as in any other." Further, most of the officers are graduates of West Point or some other Military Academy, and are, consequently, not only educated, but well-educated, — physically, mentally, morally.

In the gymnasium, drill, and camp, perfect types of bodily vigor are produced, regular habits inculcated, self-control, self-confidence, and ready subjection to discipline developed. — all conducive to a greater application of intellectual

power.

Exact reasoning, self-reliance, and confidence; relations between time, motion, and force, result from the required steady application of the mind to Mathematics; culture and flexibility of expression are attained through a study of the modern languages (French, German, Spanish); correct and minute habits of observation, knowledge of the laws of Nature, and the valuable power of reproducing on paper what is seen, - come through the mastery of Physics, Geology, Chemistry, and Drawing. Besides these, there is the professional training in law, ordnance, etc., thoroughness, regular habits, attention, strict obedience and discipline.

The moral man is developed by requiring uprightness of conduct, by instilling the highest regard for truthfulness, the love and practice of truth, - by prayer-meetings. "The cadet is taught that honor is the soldier's priceless treasure," - a feature of his education of prime importance. Napoleon says, "Moral force is three-fourths in military affairs."

Certainly not on account of lack of education, then, is the scarcity of literary military men to be explained, nor can we say it is because the one disqualifies for the other, for "None make better soldiers than those who are transplanted from the region of letters to the fields of war; never scholar became soldier that was not a good and brave man," according to Cervantes.

Lack of time, constant activity, sense of uncertainty, and the unsettled life of the soldier, may each, in a measure, explain the lack of literary activity, but probably the discipline and training of this man of war, and the general principle that a mind is seldom

prominent in more than one line, go farther to explain it. Whatever the causes may be, the fact remains.

Further, it is a noticeable fact, that when the military man does write, it is a scientific treatise upon a military subject, or is historical. Seldom does he win laurels as either poet or novelist, tho, of course, once in an age, a David, a Lew Wallace, a Capt. Charles King, a Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a Lieut. Fuller, a Liver, may be produced. Lord Bacon and Edgar Allan Poe may, by stretching, also be placed in this class.

With the fineness of discrimination, observation, memory, the knowledge of human nature, each officer must have in order to be successful; with the great diversity of scenes, and many phases of life the soldier necessarily encounters, it would seem that he is eminently fitted to be a novelist. But, on the other hand, the constant discipline he is subjected to discourage the requisite development of the imagination. He is taught to be simplicity and truth, and to always use clear, concise, methodical statements. These attributes, however, with the drill he gets in alertness, perspicuity, discrimination,

exactness, quickness, and accuracy of decisions, — keen-sighted and quick-witted, viewing a thing from all sides, — with all these attributes, we would naturally expect of him scientific treatises, or historical narration of facts — in these lines, if in any, we would look for him to be eminent.

Of scientific writers there are many, but few have more than a local reputation. In fact, each officer is required to write annually, a treatise upon some subject connected with his profession, and the best of these are published, but few attract any wide notice. Occasionally however, a literary genius is unearthed in this way, and such a one is Lieut. J. J. Sergeant, of the 2d U. S. Cavalry, whose recently published criticisms of Napoleon's campaigns, is receiving favorable comment on both sides of the water.

There are, however, men in all ages, who have shown us the mightiness of pen as well as sword. Among the Greeks, there was Xenophon, the historian and one of the generals, of the masterful retreat of the Ten Thousand from Persia; Aeschylus, the Greek tragedian, and fighter at both Marathon and Salamis; Thucydides, who, deprived of command in the Peloponnesian War because he was not victorious, went into exile for twenty,

years, and wrote a history of that war, that has been a model for historical writing ever since.

The representative Roman warrior and writer is, Caesar, whose "Commentaries on the Gallic Wars" fought between 58 and 50 B.C., is now a text-book in the colleges where Latin is a required study.

The great Napoleon, "like Caesar, has written his own immortal commentaries," but probably the best French writer and officer is Gen. Fournier, who wrote, in French, the "History of the Wars of the French Revolution and Empire."

The first Russo-Turkish War has as its historian Col. Delafield; the second, Lieut. F. V. Greene, of the U. S. Engineers, Military Attaché of the American Legation at St. Petersburg — "his work bids fair to become classic."

The eminent German warrior-writers are Clausewitz and Moltke, both strategists. Clausewitz's "Vom Kriege" will remain classical so long as there is any strategy.

In England, Sir Walter Raleigh with his "History of the World," and Sir Philip Sydney with his "Arcadia" and "Defense of Poesy," stand as early representatives of the type we seek. Col. Symes, Gen. Lloyd, Maj. Smith, Stanley,

Gen. Jones on the "Sieges in Spain," are later writers of some note, but greatest of all English military works, is Gen. Napier's "Peninsular War," a classic. Gibbon, the great English historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," tried camp-life awhile, too, but attained no great eminence as a warrior.

Histories written by military men are very apt to be prejudiced, especially if it be the history of a campaign or war the writer has taken part in. On the other hand, "no history of any military event can be written by any man who does not add great military knowledge, even personal experience, to all the

other qualities requisite for a historian." The civilian historian cannot, from the nature of the case, make a military event as plain and as easily understood, as can one who is thoroughly acquainted with the art and science of war, nor can he explain the why and wherefore of each movement made, as the latter can.

In our own country, the writings of our most eminent commanders are largely personal, yet for all that, some of them have become classical, such as "Grant's Memoirs," which rank with a novel for interest and fascination, and charm of style, and have the additional value of truth. The "Personal Memoirs of Sherman" is "a record of the views and deeds of a master, showing a rare power of expressing a masterful opinion upon the history and progress of human affairs. Here, in language strong, direct, and unmistakable, are written lessons of practical wisdom, touching upon both peace and war." "Sheridan's Memoirs" and "McClellan's Own Story" are further examples. From Gen. Logan's pen, we have "The Great Conspiracy," and "The Volunteer Soldier of America," among others. Gen. Schofield, Gen. Benj. F. Butler, and Jefferson Davis, with scores of lesser commanders, have written and published works, and the number who write is constantly increasing.

We have elsewhere mentioned Gen. Lew Wallace, with his "Ben-Hur," "The Fair God," "The Prince of India," etc.; Capt. Chas. King, with his many pretty love stories of war times, and his "Cadet Days at West Point"; Lieut. A. M. Fuller, whose novel, "A. D. 2000," written along the same line as Bellamy's "Looking Backward," recently attracted so much attention.

All the writers who have been named, together with all who were omitted but should have been named, would yet make but a very

small proportion of the total number of warriors who have lived and are living, and altho we are very proud of all these, we cannot but conclude that military men are, after all, not writers.