



MILITARY NOTES 20

A letter from Brigadier General Lord, director of finance of the war department, explaining delay in paying wounded and sick soldiers, was received Friday by Chairman Sherley of the house appropriations committee and read as follows.

"With but few exceptions," said the letter, "the enlisted men who have been returned in this country without service records and without any other papers which contained a statement of their accounts, thereby making it impossible to determine what pay, if any, was due to them."

"There has been no lack of effort on the part of the war department to effect payment at least in part to the patients returning from overseas, but it is apparent that full payment can be made to these men only by accepting their own statements as to date to which they were last paid."

he said, adding that this had been done in some instances while in other partial payments are being made so the men will not be without funds.

General Lord said an officer has been sent to West Baden, Ind., to investigate the complaint that many soldiers are there without funds due to them. It was complained that led to criticism yesterday in the house.

A dispatch from Washington says that definite plans for the organization of the war department and the general staff, embodying the experience gained during the war, soon will be ready for presentation to congress.

The project will not include however, any proposal of a general military policy for the country, as that question will be held in abeyance until after the peace conference at Paris.

General staff officials are giving attention now to the preparation of a bill for the permanent reorganization of the staff itself. It is understood that strong inducements soon will be laid before Secretary Baker for the abolishing of the old bureau systems and for the centralizing of both authority and responsibility for the entire military establishment in the general staff.

Instructions for the preparation for such plans were issued by General March when the armistice with Germany was signed. During the war the emergency authority of the Overman bill had proved sufficient to enable General March to erect the staff machinery as it now stands.

Secretary Baker's approval of an effort to write into law a staff bill which will perfect and perpetuate the central control General March has

created is generally expected as officers recall his interpretation of a clause of the national defense act which might easily have been read as subordinating the staff to the statutory bureau of the department. Mr. Overman then elected to construe the law as leaving the option with him as to whether that construction was to be the chief of a staff supreme.

General March has indicated that the development of new technical arms in the service during the present war would necessitate provisions for the co-ordinated control and expansion of these thru the general staff organization. It is expected, therefore that the forthcoming bill will clearly define the status of such arms as the air service and the tank corps. The chief member of the general staff. Similarly, the present distribution of the functions formerly vested in the quartermaster general, chief of ordnance and adjutant general will be confirmed and centralized in the staff.

While the reorganization of the army itself will be deferred until the outcome of the Paris conference is known, many aspects of the subject are being studied by general staff officers. The staff already has asserted its virtually unanimous adherence to the universal training idea. Should the peace conference arrive at a decision which would sharply limit military establishments, however, officers say it might easily be that universal training machinery would be entirely too cumbersome for the size of the army the United States was to maintain.

Nothing stirs the blood more than the recital of the bravery of allied prisoners while in the hands of the brutal, cruel German officers. Here is one from a London daily paper:

"I will break your proud British hearts!" so vowed the brutal commandant of a German prison camp. He never succeeded. He broke the bodies of the British prisoners; he compelled them by torture and starvation to do his bidding; but he never succeeded in breaking their hearts or quelling the proud British spirit of his helpless captives.

From escaped and repatriated prisoners I have heard stories of the doings of some of these gallant lads, stories which make the blood race faster, bring a lump to the throat and sometimes tears to your eyes.

There was a little Cockney lad of the old army (even now it would not be wise to mention his regiment) or whom I have been told. He had the heart of a lion, and his perky defiance of his German gaolers heartened the whole camp. He was starved, beaten, and imprisoned but as soon as he had sufficient strength he came up smiling again. Once, when he was set to work planting potatoes to feed Germans, this lad secretly emptied his bag of seed potatoes, refilled it with stones, and went solemnly along the "rows" sowing stones!

His greatest achievement, however was when, with a gang of other prisoners, he was set to work on the rail way, one of his tasks being to clean out and refill the grease boxes on goods trains. Along came a train one day loaded with explosives, and the

little Londoner set to work. He cleaned out the grease boxes and refilled them—with sand! The result was that, after the train had journeyed a few miles nearer to the front the exles became heated, a fire broke out and the whole train blew up. The Germans never knew the cause of that "disaster."

At another camp, where sailors as well as soldiers were imprisoned, the authorities ordered a flagstaff to be erected outside the wire, and some of the sailor prisoners were set to work in the snow to rig this up. When it was finished a furlied flag was hoisted, to be "broken" by a full-blown German general on the kaisers birthday.

When this great day arrived troops formed a hollow square outside the barbed wire, while inside the British prisoners were lined up and ordered to stand to attention to salute the German flag. A band played "Deutsch land uber Alles" and "Die Wacht am Rhein," the German general advanced and broke the flag which fluttered free in the wind. An then the prisoners did spring to attention and a full-throated cheer burst from them—for the flag was the Union Jack!

A sailor engaged on the work of rigging the flagstaff had wound his ship's flag round his body before jumping overboard when his ship was torpedoed, and he had managed by some means to substitute the free flag of Britain for the German ensign.

It may seem strange to say so but it is true that the prisoners "have deserved well of their country."—London Daily Mail.

Our boys have done their part; now it is for you to do yours.

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