

# The Preparedness of the Navy

The progress made by the United States navy during the past two years is reviewed by Secretary of the Navy Daniels in a letter to President Harry A. Garfield, of Williams College. President Garfield a few days ago addressed the following inquiry to Secretary Daniels:

"I shall be obliged if you will have sent to me an authoritative statement concerning the present status of the navy equipment of the United States. I wish to be in a position to meet the statements made by Representative Gardner of Massachusetts alleging that the United States is at present unprepared for military emergencies."

In reply to President Garfield, the following letter was sent:

Washington, D. C., April 24, 1915.

My dear President Garfield:

I am in receipt of your recent favor asking for "an authoritative statement concerning the present status of the navy equipment of the United States," and take pleasure in complying with your request as far as is compatible.

There are now in active service, fully commissioned, 225 vessels of all characters, which is 36 more than were fully commissioned when I became secretary. There are also 101 vessels of various types, in reserve and in ordinary and uncommissioned, capable of rendering service in war. We have under construction and authorized 77 vessels (9 dreadnaughts, 23 destroyers, 38 submarines and 7 auxiliaries) as compared with 54 vessels (5 dreadnaughts, 14 destroyers, 23 submarines, 3 gunboats and 9 auxiliaries) which were under construction on March 1, 1913.

All the vessels enumerated, those in active service and those in reserve, are supplied with munitions of war. No navy makes public the quantity of ammunition and torpedoes, mines and other implements of naval warfare which it keeps ready. It may be said, however, that within the last two years the quantity of all has been steadily and greatly increased. For example, we have increased the number of mines, on hand and in process of manufacture, by 244 per cent. With reference to torpedoes, the increase in two years has been 90 per cent. By the enlargement of the naval powder factory, we shall soon be able almost to double its former capacity, and like enlargement of the torpedo works and the equipment of a plant to construct mines, will still further increase, at decreased cost, the quantity of such stock, and the possession of these plants in times of emergency will enable the department to be in a better state of preparedness as regards the supply of ammunition, than ever before.

## PERSONNEL OF THE NAVY

The personnel of the navy is at present composed of 4,355 line, staff and warrant officers, and 53,171 enlisted men. Increases in the number of officers is dependent almost entirely upon the output of the naval academy, admission to which is restricted by statute. The number of enlisted men also is restricted, and the navy is today recruited to the maximum strength allowed. There are now with the colors 5,824 more men—an increase of 12 per cent—than there were on March 1, 1914.

My professional training as a journalist has always inclined me to the conviction that any officer, within the prescribed limits recognized in the navy, should feel free to express his opinion in regard to matters in the service; and there is not an officer who commands a ship today who could or would say that his ship, without or within, was not as good as it was two years ago, or that the officers who command it and the crews who man it, are not as thoroughly disciplined, sober, loyal and efficient as they were two years ago, or as they ever had been.

The Atlantic fleet has just returned from Guantanamo where it has for many years held its annual winter practices. This year more battleships and destroyers have participated in the maneuvers, and for a longer period, than ever before.

Under the direction of Admiral Fletcher, upon plans evolved at the naval war college and approved by the department, the fleet has been busy in tactics to try out its efficiency and readiness. All reports tell of the enthusiasm of officers and men in this practice and the splendid record made by the ships. The fleet is now in Tangier Sound and on the southern drill grounds, where it will be busy in target practice until May when it moves to New York for a

week's well-earned leave. Then will come the review at New York, followed by maneuvers in Narragansett bay region, and finally the review in Hampton Roads prior to sailing through the Panama canal to the Pacific enroute to the exposition at San Francisco.

## SPRING PRACTICE

These spring practices followed close upon the heels of valuable maneuvers and tactics in October, November and December last. This was indeed strenuous practice, but it is the way the navy is kept fit and ready, and the new admiral in command of the fleet, and the department planned such extensive evolutions because the only way that the navy can always be prepared is by practice and then more practice. This simple statement of the operations of the fleet since October is one of the best answers I can give to your question as to the navy's preparedness. The necessity of keeping ships in Mexico last year denied Admiral Badger the opportunity for as long practice as he had wisely planned, but the sudden call for the expedition to Vera Cruz demanded and exacted unusual service to which the fleet responded with an alacrity and readiness which amply justify the faith of the country that there exists today no more efficient institution than the United States navy. Some critics have said the efficiency of the fleet was reduced by reason of going to Vera Cruz. To our regret, certain maneuvers and target practice of value were necessarily omitted. The emergency experience, however, of a year of stress and strain was of far greater value in one important respect than the well-planned routine, because it gave a demonstration of the readiness of the navy in every department, afloat and ashore, to meet an urgent call. Its flexibility was shown in adjusting itself to entirely new and unexpected situations, as well as its remarkable adaptability in handling every problem presented to it.

It must be conceded by all that the best school and preparation for war is war itself, and it was almost under this condition that our fleet acted in proceeding almost in a day to Mexican waters. The stay at Vera Cruz, however, did not prevent practice, for the ships individually or in divisions, during a great part of the time held tactical maneuvers, torpedo-proving practice and subcaliber drills in preparation for target practice.

For many years, officers have written and talked about the formation of advance base material and the practice of exercising landing parties of seamen and marines in the use of this important adjunct to naval warfare. Congress appropriated money for this important plan of campaign, but never until January of last year was the navy thus exercised. There had been plenty of talk, but not until January of last year was it undertaken. Then, under instructions from the department, Admiral Badger carried out a comprehensive exercise in which the professional advantages gained by officers and men were inestimable. Three months after this extensive practice had been given for the first time in our navy, the same fleet, and the same men were called upon to land at Vera Cruz, and in the taking of that city the navy carried out under fire what had been learned at Culebra.

These details are given because every man knows that the efficiency of the navy depends upon constant practice, but nobody in the navy thinks anything like perfection has been reached, and constant study and work are pursued with the aim of continued improvement. If the fleet was efficient in any degree before Admirals Badger and Fletcher carried out the drills thus detailed, it is much more efficient today, and it will be made more ready every year. All that capable and trained officers and men can do to accomplish this steady improvement is being done. Only the uninformed or the partisan deny the steady improvement of the past two years, thanks chiefly to Rear Admiral Badger and Admiral Fletcher.

## EXPENDITURES IN NAVY

But, you say, how about equipment and preparation for military emergencies? What has been done since Wilson's inauguration to make the navy stronger in ships, in ammunition, in mines, in torpedoes? These questions are of the utmost importance. Let me answer them briefly:

First, as to ships: During the last two years of the Taft administration, congress authorized

the construction of two dreadnaughts to cost about \$13,000,000 each. During the first two years of the Wilson administration, upon my recommendation, congress authorized the construction of five dreadnaughts to cost about \$14,000,000 each. Stated in dollars, the Wilson administration, in its first two years, authorized seventy million dollars to be spent on the chief fighting force of the navy, as against twenty-six million authorized during the last two years of Taft's; stated in numbers, it authorized 5 dreadnaughts instead of two; and stated in effectiveness, the five dreadnaughts authorized under Wilson will mount 36 more 14-inch guns than the two authorized under Mr. Taft.

## SUBMARINES

Second, as to submarines: These wonderful agencies of war have astonished the world in the present European conflict. The Sixty-third congress, elected with Wilson, adopted my recommendation to give us all the money it could for submarines. It ordered the construction of three sea-going submarines, the largest ever authorized by any country, and twenty-three submarines of the same size and type which have done such fearful execution in the present war. These submarines will cost \$16,260,000. Now what was done during the last two years under Taft? Twelve submarines, to cost \$7,958,936, were authorized. Some of our submarines are not as perfect as they should be, nor are the submarines of any other nation. Under this administration, however, the board of inspections has adopted stricter tests before accepting submarines from contractors. Nobody has, as yet, perfected a satisfactory engine or satisfactory battery for submarines. Upon my invitation, Mr. Edison, last year, at the New York navy yard, went down into a submarine and closely studied its every feature. He thinks he has a battery that will meet the need. Our tests at the Brooklyn navy yard cause us to believe Mr. Edison has the right principle. Without waiting for the completion of his battery, he has been given an order for two, one to be put into an old submarine, accepted before March 4, 1913, whose battery does not give satisfaction, and one for a new submarine which I have ordered built in the Portsmouth (N. H.) navy yard. Private firms building submarines have not given entire satisfaction. We have equipped the Portsmouth navy yard to build submarines, and by competition between private and government construction it is hoped that every obstacle may be overcome.

## TORPEDOES

Third, as to torpedoes: A statement has been put in circulation that the navy is not making adequate provision to supply itself with torpedoes. The only answer I can make is to state the fact that we either have on hand or have placed orders for all the torpedoes the general board prescribes. Is this administration going backward in this respect? It would not be proper to make public the number of torpedoes we have on hand, but this much may be said: For every 100 torpedoes which the department had on hand in March, 1913, ninety-six more are completed or in course of manufacture. Therefore within a few months, the supply of torpedoes will be almost doubled. Upon my recommendation, congress has enlarged the torpedo plant at Newport, R. I., more than trebling its capacity, and the cost of manufacturing torpedoes has been reduced from \$4,202.11 to \$3,245.72 each. The reduction has already effected a saving of \$326,700.00.

## AS TO MINES AND MINING

During the last two years unprecedented progress has been made in the expansion of our mining equipment. This was begun and was well under way before the last congress met. The navy is not, as many suppose, charged with the mining of our harbors. That is a function of the army. The extent of the mining operations of the navy is confined to the immediate vicinity of the fleets and such mining as may be necessary on the high seas. For the execution of this work and a further study and development of mines and mining the navy now has three ships. The San Francisco and Baltimore, mine layers and mine depot ships, and the Dubuque, mine training ship. The general board as early as 1908 recognized the need of mine depot vessels and recommended the conversion of two old cruisers for this purpose. The same year, congress authorized the conversion of the San Francisco and Baltimore. Work was started on the San Francisco June 12, 1908, but was not completed until December 2, 1911. Work on the Baltimore