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## ARMY TRANSPORT SERVICE.

Adjutant General Corbin invites attention, in his annual report, to the

enormous expense of the army transport service and recommends, on the grounds of economy, that it be discontinued, and the supplies for our armies in our insular possessions and the troops to and from them be transported by contract, and on the farther grounds of lending encouragement to commerce between these possessions and the States, by giving business to shipping companies.

This economical part sounds well in the public ear, for the people are ever ready to listen to any proposition to cut down public expenses and taxation, and particularly so to any suggestion that will reduce the enormous expense of the second-hand war we took off the hands of Spain in the Philippines, at stupendous cost and twenty millions dollars bonus in addition.

The Conservative does not question for one moment that our army transport service costs too much, but does not believe in its abolishment purely upon the grounds advanced by General Corbin. Nor upon any other grounds until after a cool, deliberate consideration of the entire subject.

First and foremost, it is generally believed that the original purchase prices of our army trans-

**Purchase Prices.** ports were two or three times larger than they should have been, and that their conversion into transports, alteration and repairs have been too great in the same ratio, and that their running expenses could and should have been much less, and may be materially cut down with much saving to the government and no detriment to the service. These

are matters that can be definitely determined by a thoroughly competent and honest investigation.

It is claimed that the transports lie idle much of the time, or unnecessarily are overhauled,

**Indolent Boats.** painted, etc., about every time they get

into port, at fabulous cost, and more in the interests of those who get the contracts for the work and supply the material than in the interests of the service. In fact, the captain of one chartered transport avowed that his ship was kept waiting over in Manila Bay fifty-three days, with steam up all the time, at government expense, besides the contract price of \$750.00 per diem paid the steamship company.

But what was worse, he avowed that there was a whole fleet of transports, public and chartered, lying idle near him the whole

**Monumental Waste.** time. There is another report that a ship was chartered at fabulous rates for a horse transport in which there was an agreement that if the government retained the ship a certain number of days, it would revert to the government and become public property; that it was then overhauled, fixed up with stalls and other conveniences for transporting horses and mules, at thousands of dollars expense; that a few days before the ship would have reverted to the government, according to the contract, it was released to the owners, restored to its former condition by the government at a cost that would have more than continued the lease until it would have become public property; but after all this the same ship was soon so chartered for a horse transport and again fitted up at enormous cost to the government.

It is no secret that General Corbin, himself, with his party, monopolized a large part of a

**Personal Extravagance.** transport in a junketing trip to

the Philippines last summer, and that for weeks he had exclusive use of the transport Lawton, visiting the interesting points in the Archipelago and on the coast of China—and this while hundreds of officers and thousands of men, many of them sick, were waiting at Manila for transportation to the States—and this at a cost of thousands upon thousands of dollars to the transport service.

Shipping companies complain that

many people, not connected with the military service, nor even the public service in any way,

**Parasites.** are furnished transportation to and from Manila on the transports to the loss of their legitimate traffic. Indeed, it is said that some of this class of people have made trips around the world on the army transports. The legitimate cost of the transport service is necessarily large but there has been no doubt much abuse and unnecessary expense that can be eliminated.

We quote the following from the Army and Navy Journal, touching upon this subject:

"In a personal letter, an officer of the army says: 'I hope the Journal will fight tooth and nail against abolishing the army transport system. No doubt a big syndicate would like to get our transports at half, quarter, or one-tenth their worth, and then transport our troops and supplies at their own rates. The voyage to and from our insular possessions is a long, weary hardship to our troops, and no chartered vessels have yet been properly provided for half way decent care of our troops—air space, cooking convenience and hospital accommodations. Our troops go but little better off than horses or cattle on chartered boats, and no private enterprise can be relied upon for good service—at least any equal to that on our own transports. I consider them as necessary for our foreign service as guns for our artillery, as horses for our cavalry.'"

To which may be added that if the shipping company can get also big pay for carrying the mail, and then a large subsidy from the government to encourage our shipping interests, that part of our shipping interests ought to feel sufficiently encouraged to go ahead.

General Corbin gives as another reason for discontinuing the army transport service, its irregular delivery of the mail at Manila. As the transports are wholly under the control of the government, indeed the war department, and as their number is ample, the regularity of their departure depends solely upon the proper exercise of military authority in the management.

Before the army transport service is abolished because of reasons advanced by Gen. Corbin, a searching hunt should be made for "A nigger in the wood pile." Possibly there may be a colored corporation desirous of making a few low-priced contracts with our common