

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.—II.

Some Lessons to be Learnt from it.

By John Buchan.

THE North drew by far the greater part of its armies from men who had been engaged in civil life. Let us see how it shaped them.

Neither of the belligerents had a professional army. Their forces were amateurs with a small sprinkling of trained officers. Numbers will always win in the long run, but they must be disciplined numbers. Hordes, however great, will generally be beaten. The Persians were beaten at Marathon because the Greeks were better trained; the Romans were stronger than Hannibal at Cannae, but they could not stand up against his discipline; at Pharsalus Cæsar's small force routed the large ill-compacted army of Pompey. Both sides in the American Civil War began by having the worst possible discipline. The South learned the lesson first, with the result that its 7,000,000 inhabitants were able for four years to hold up the 20,000,000 of the North. When the North learned the lesson it won the war.

A Democratic Army.

The North began the campaign with a theory, which is very common in popularly governed nations who have had no military experience. It was against all hard and fast discipline. The men should serve willingly, because the orders appealed to their intelligence, and not because they were given by a commanding officer. The argument ran something like this: "An order understood and willingly obeyed is far better than an order blindly complied with. Officers must therefore carry their men with them, persuade them, humour them, so that all ranks may have the enthusiasm of willing service. Only thus can you have a democratic army."

On this one may remark that the result might be democratic, but it could not possibly be an army. And I do not think it was democratic either, if we understand democracy aright. Democracy, as the most living and organic form of government, should be also the most elastic. It should be able to adapt itself to the unforeseen contingencies of the case. This does not mean that you are to establish a cut and dried military hierarchy, such as you have in Germany, and to govern only by fear and brutality. Those who have marched in peace time with French infantry must have been amazed at what seemed the lack of discipline. The men chaffed their officers and addressed them by nicknames, and at night you could see an officer and a private playing chess together outside the café door. Yes, but in time of war that is all changed. The men and officers are still the best of friends, but there is a rigid discipline, the more rigid inasmuch as it comes largely from below. It is the will of the men themselves who recognise wherein lie victory and security. The army of France is a democratic army. The British army of to-day is a democratic army. But the forces of the North during the first stages of the Civil War were neither democratic nor an army.

It took a long time to root out of men's minds the idea that an order was only to be obeyed when it commended itself to the private soldier's intelligence. At first officers were elected by the votes of the rank and file, and an unsatisfactory lot they were. For one good man produced in this way there were twenty plausible incompetents. The bonds of discipline were slack, and though the world has never seen more patriotic and intelligent troops, patriotism and intelligence alone were not enough to secure the victory. Let me quote a passage from one of the greatest of English military writers, the biographer of Stonewall Jackson, the late Colonel Frank Henderson.

No army, however high the standard of education, has become really efficient until obedience has become an instinct, and the presence in the ranks of men accustomed to think for themselves and to reason before acting, however weighty the authority which bids them act, renders the acquirement of such instinct a long process. When

soldiers become once imbued with the habit of obedience, then doubtless the more intelligent will be the more useful; but enthusiasm and intelligence will not stand the stress of battle and the hardships of campaigning, unless their possessors have learned to subordinate their reason and inclinations to their duty. It is open to those in whose ears the very name of discipline smacks of slavery to assert that a powerful instinct of obedience dwarfs the intellect, turns a man into a machine, and rusts his powers of reasoning; and in this there is a shadow of truth, but it is only a shadow. If a soldier is never permitted to use his intelligence, never placed in a position of responsibility, allowed neither to act nor move except at the word of command, sooner or later he loses all power of initiative, and there are many occasions in the field where a man must be left to his own unaided judgment. But if the soldier's training is what it should be, his education for individual action will go hand in hand with his acquirement of the habit of self-effacement.

The skirmishers of the Light Division, when they had learned, on the outpost line of Wellington's army, to use their intelligence, and to act without a corporal at their elbow, proved themselves as skilful and as enterprising as the famous voltigeurs of France, and this without losing their capacity for moving like a wall under heavy fire.

The result of the Northern system was that a great many vices developed which made them an easy prey to their opponents. An undisciplined army lacks mobility, and so Jackson could make circles round Pope and Hooker. Again, lack of discipline means straggling, and no Northern general could be certain how much of his force would turn up at a given place at a given time. Moreover, outpost duties were scamped, and the result was a series of constant and most costly surprises. In the battle itself fire discipline was very bad and half the strength was expended in the air. This indiscipline ran through all the ranks of the army. If a Brigadier thought himself slighted he posted off to Washington to intrigue in Congress, and, instead of being tried by court martial and shot as a deserter, he was more often than not promoted.

The Right General.

But the North learned the lesson, though the learning was bitter. The time came when Lincoln at last found the right general and gave him his undivided trust. Grant was not the man to stand any insubordination, and he produced the kind of instrument that was needed. Never has a human instrument been more highly tried. The desperate losses in the Wilderness would have broken the hearts of most armies; they would have utterly destroyed the original armies of the first months of war. But the weapon had been forged and tempered and it did not break. The North had grasped the nature of its problem. It had not only assembled its man-power, but it had trained it, and both numbers and training were essential to victory.

Happily we in England have not the American difficulties. We had a mechanism already existing which we could adapt to train our new levies. But since the levies are of the American type, that is, men from civilian life of all classes and conditions, many of them with a standard of education beyond that of the old regular soldier, it is instructive to study the experiences of the North. We have to remember the insistent need of discipline, and the highest discipline, and we have to remember too, that this can be won without impairing individual enthusiasm or crushing individual intelligence. The study of that admirable compilation, "The Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," will show how the best American officers faced their task. They won not only the obedience but the affection and confidence of their men. They were not mere drill sergeants. In the trench fighting of to-day a great deal rests with the

continue to lose less and less as it went on.

The second series of diagrams will make the meaning of the first clearer. In this series I show what may be called the stages of a race in which A, B and D engage. The 5-inch, the 12-inch and the 15-inch shells are seen starting level. At 1,000 yards the 5-inch has already fallen behind the 12-inch but it leads the 15-inch. At 6,000 yards the 5-inch shell has fallen greatly behind, though the 12-inch still leads the 15-inch. At 9,000, the 5-inch has long been out of the race, and the 15-inch leads the 12-inch by a short head. At 20,000 the 15-inch has beaten the 12-inch by four and one-tenth seconds; the 12-inch has beaten the 5-inch by nearly half a minute. Nothing can better illustrate the staying power of the heavier shell, for in this case remember, the starting speed of the 12-inch was something like 750 feet per second the greater.

Now mark with regard to these diagrams of the race that the advantage which the 15-inch shell has over the 12-inch is enormously less than that which the 12-inch has over the 5-inch. The advantage of the 17-inch over the 15-inch would be correspondingly reduced. In fact, for practical purposes, it may be said to have no advantage at all. And consequently, we are reduced to points 3 and 4, namely, the greater visibility of the splash and the greater the smashing effect of the bigger shell. ;

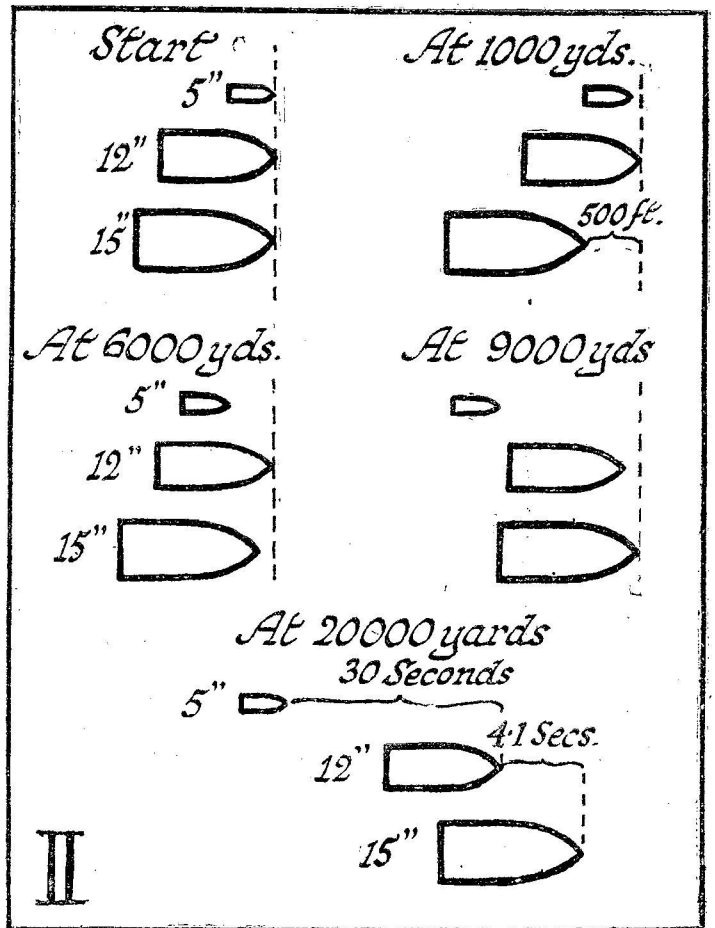
Weight and Numbers.

Now, when we get to these points we have a second matter to consider. And it is this: If you decide to adopt the bigger gun, it means that you can only carry a smaller number of them for any given displacement or expenditure. It is no answer to say that you can build bigger ships to carry the same number of bigger guns. For your total shipbuilding and gun-making effort you will still have a smaller number of guns. As a rough formula, the weight of guns with their mountings, ammunitions, etc., compare as do the cubes of the calibres. On this principle, a 17-inch gun double turret would represent 3.7 times the weight of an 11-inch turret; 2.8 times a 12-inch turret; twice the weight of a 13.5 turret, and be one and a half times as heavy again as a 15-inch turret. If Germany then has decided on the 17-inch gun for her new ships, her total shipbuilding and gun-making capacity can be expended upon half as many more 15-inch gunned ships as 17-inch gunned ships. It seems to me that she could only decide upon a smaller number of ships with the more powerful gun if she were perfectly certain first, that the 17-inch gun is more likely to hit at a great range than the 15-inch; secondly, that the decisive naval battle would be fought at a range at which this advantage of 17-inch guns would have full play. For not otherwise would a Power already so inferior in numbers sacrifice the very great and undoubted advantage which numbers confer.

Now as we have seen, it is improbable that the 17-inch gun would have any hitting superiority over the 15-inch. But it is quite undoubted that fifteen guns have a very great hitting advantage over ten guns. For at long range so many uncertainties must necessarily be present—uncertainties of range, of aim, etc., that the *probability of making hits* increases out of proportion to the increase of the number of guns. A broadside of eight guns would have a great deal more than double the chance of hitting than a broadside of four. Nor would the splashes of six 17-inch guns, be more visible than those of eight 15-inch. Those that choose the 17-inch gun therefore, would choose solely on the ground that a single shot would have a better hope of sinking or disabling, and would probably not so choose unless they were extraordinarily confident of bringing a greatly improved standard of marksmanship into use. A further consideration must be added. Off Heligoland we fought at 6,000 yards—we could see no further. Is it wise to build for long range only? At short range numbers are everything. So much for general theory.

As to the practical question as to whether as a fact the Germans have decided upon the 17-inch gun and are actually re-arming their old ships with it, and have done both as a result of war experience, I have to confess a considerable scepticism. War experience, as we have seen, would not have been available till April last. Is it conceivable that Germany would have decided upon a revolutionary naval policy at so late a date in the war?

She would hardly delay making up the lost ground. No battleship has ever yet been built in a shorter time than two years from the completion of the design, The *Dreadnought* was actually constructed in eighteen months from the laying down of the first plate, but in this case, four of the five turrets were taken from ships previously ordered, so that the element which takes longest in the production of a battleship, viz., the guns and turrets, were already provided.



As for the re-arming of old ships, it is no doubt physically possible that Germany's five 11-inch gunned Dreadnoughts could be converted from carrying six turrets of these pieces into ships carrying two single 17-inch guns and two 11-inch turrets. But it would mean the virtual re-construction of the entire ship, and it would probably take longer to change over these five ships than to get ten 17-inch guns afloat in two new ships. The 12-inch Dreadnoughts could not be converted to 17-inch ships, without a similar reconstruction.

Finally, two reflections are in place. It is no use our making ourselves unhappy on the question of the surprises in naval construction that Germany has in store for us. Nothing we can do now in the way of determining on new ships can bear fruit in completed ships for at least twenty months. If Germany actually got ahead of us between last January and last May, as Mr. Hurd seems to think, it is too late for the present Board to remedy the mistakes of Mr. Churchill and his colleagues. We must trust—as it seems to me we *can* trust—with absolute confidence to the very great margin of strength which we possessed in August, 1914, and to the great additions to that strength which the purchase of foreign ships and the completion of those already in hand, have enabled us to make. Half-a-dozen ships carrying 17-inch guns could make no material difference to naval strength. We ought to have added between twelve and eighteen 15-inch gunned ships before a single German ship with the large guns is afloat.

ARTHUR POLLEN.

That virtue brings its own reward and evil its own punishment is the keynote of *Unrest*, Mr. Warrick Deering's new novel (Cassell and Co., 6s.). A temperamental fit of restlessness led Martin Frensham to run away from his wife with a bold, black-eyed American woman, of whom he soon tires. For his wife, in the meantime, there remains the problem of how to comport herself and gloss over his absence so as to deceive friends until he shall return to her, as she confidently expects he will. The book is a study in contrasts, in high lights and strong shadows—there are very few half-tones in it. But its interest is sustained.

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LAND AND WATER.

individual, and we must encourage that individual to use his brains and good sense and to learn self-reliance. These qualities come readily to volunteers. If discipline is never forgotten, you can produce out of the volunteer the finest soldier in the world. The present campaign has shown it. Look at the achievements of the London Territorials and the Lancashire Territorials. Or take divisions of the new volunteer army, such as the 9th and the 15th. If you unite a strict corporate training with individual initiative and reliance you evolve the perfect fighting man.

There is one other point in this connection on which we may get some instruction from American experience. It is the question of drafts. Whenever new levies are raised on a large scale there is a tendency to make them into new units, and to forget the importance of keeping up the strength of the old units, who have had some fighting experience. In the earlier part of the Civil War new recruits were formed into new regiments, and the old battalions were soon reduced to a couple of companies. It was a very bad system, and Sherman, in a famous passage in his *Memoirs*, recounts the trouble it led to. One State, Wisconsin, resolutely refused to create new regiments, but it kept all its original regiments

up to full strength, with the result that a Wisconsin regiment was worth an ordinary brigade.

We ourselves have not been free from this mistake. Our splendid Territorial battalions have been sorely tried. Their second line battalions, which should have been drafting battalions for the first line, were allowed to consider themselves independent units, and third line battalions were created for drafting purposes. Unfortunately these depleted battalions are nominally complete units. You will break the heart of the finest troops in the world if you over-strain them.

A large part of trench warfare consists in mechanical work, in constantly adjusting and improving the position. But to do this you must have enough men. If you have not got them the position inevitably gets neglected, the parapets and trenches are poor, and very gallant soldiers are condemned to needless discomfort and, if there is an attack, to needless danger. It is a subject upon which there can be no difference of opinion. To keep a number of weak units on the list and to treat these units as if they had their full strength, is simply to court disaster. It is unfair both to the battalions themselves and to the army at large. That is one practical point on which we might well learn from American experience.