

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 4, 1852.

Sir: I beg leave to submit a brief account of the operations of this department during the year.

The efforts of the department have been principally directed to the defence of our frontiers and those of Mexico from the Indian tribes within our borders. For this purpose, out of about 11,000 officers and men borne on the rolls of the army, about 8,000 are employed in the defence of Texas, New Mexico, California, and Oregon, or of emigrants destined to the two last.

It affords me great pleasure to say that the efforts of the department for this purpose have been attended with more than usual success.

The benefits that were anticipated from the judicious arrangements made by the commanders of the 8th and 9th military departments (Texas and New Mexico) have been fully realized. With the exception of a portion of the Rio Grande country, the former has been comparatively exempt from Indian depredations. A number of persons of desperate character and fortunes were attracted to that frontier by the lawless attempts of Carvajal; and, after his defeat, they dispersed through the country, and resorted to plunder for subsistence. On the other hand, many of the inhabitants of Mexico either sought to avenge themselves for the wrongs inflicted on them by that adventurer and his followers, or found in his lawless proceedings a justification for their own, and retaliated on the peaceable inhabitants.

The Indians in that vicinity availed themselves of the confusion and alarm consequent upon this state of things to renew their depredations. Thefts, robberies, and even assassinations were the consequence.

Although the prevention or punishment of disorders like these when committed by others than Indians belongs rather to the civil authorities of the State than to the military force of the United States, the commanding officer used every exertion to put a stop to them; and, for that purpose, ordered several additional companies of troops to the part of the State where they had occurred. It is believed that these measures have been at least partially successful. So long, however, as the species of border warfare which has lately been carried on in that region between the inhabitants of the two countries continues, it will be difficult, if not impossible, with any number of troops, and with the strictest vigilance on the part of their officers, to prevent, on so extensive a frontier, a repetition of these disorders.

In New Mexico the depredations of the Indians have been entirely arrested. The Navajos and the Apaches, the two most formidable tribes in all that region, have been completely overawed, and manifest every desire to be at peace with the whites.

In consequence of frequent collisions between the Indians and the white inhabitants of California and Oregon, it was deemed advisable to send the 4th regiment of infantry to the Pacific to replace the mounted riflemen that had been ordered thence to Texas.

Intelligence has been recently received that the Yuma Indians, a bold and hostile tribe occupying a portion of country on the Gila and Colorado rivers, whose inroads and depredations have been the source of frequent annoyance and alarm to the inhabitants both of our own territory and of the Mexican State of Sonora, have agreed to a peace.

The troops stationed on the frontier may justly be considered as in active service—a service, too, in which they are exposed to all the hardships and dangers of war without its excitement to stimulate, or its hopes of honorable distinction to sustain them.

Owing to the many officers who, from disability or other causes, are excused from duty, the cares and responsibilities of command frequently devolve on a small number, and the establishment, during the last season, of a number of new posts has added very much to the labors both of the officers and men; nevertheless it affords me great pleasure to bear testimony to the cheerfulness and alacrity with which all have discharged their duty. To Brevet Major General Smith and Brevet Colonel Sumner, in particular, much praise is due. The former, although in feeble health, has been unremitting in his exertions; and to his energy and judicious arrangements his department is greatly indebted for the comparative tranquillity it enjoys. The latter has not only succeeded in arresting the incursions of the Indians within his command, but has greatly reduced its expenditures.

Brevet Brigadier General Hitchcock has also displayed great energy and prudence, and done all that it was possible to do with a very inadequate force, and amid many difficulties and embarrassments, to protect his extensive command,

I regret to say that the attempt to cultivate farms by the troops has, but in few instances, during the past season, been attended with beneficial results. This failure is owing in part to the constant activity in which it has been found necessary to keep the troops, and to the necessity of employing them in the construction of barracks and in other works at the many new posts that have recently been established. Hopes are entertained, however, that when a fair trial of the experiment can be made, it will, at least at such of the posts as are favorably situated for the purpose, be more successful.

In spite of this failure, of the unusual activity of the troops during the past season, and of the fact that so large a portion of them are stationed on the remote frontier, I have the satisfaction to announce that the expenditures have been considerably reduced, and this, too, in the quartermaster's department—that branch of the service of which the expenditures are most affected by these circumstances. The expenses of that department, ascertained and estimated, (exclusive of clothing, the amount of which is fixed by permanent regulations,) continue to exhibit an annual decrease, viz: for the current year, as compared with the last year, a reduction of \$501,252; and for the next year, as compared with the current year, a further reduction of \$500,000.

In spite, however, of every effort to reduce the expenses of the army, they must continue to be very great in proportion to its numbers, so long as it is necessary to maintain so large a force in countries which supply so little of what is necessary to its support as those in which the greater part of it is now stationed. I beg leave, therefore, to repeat the suggestion contained in my last annual report—that sound policy, no less than humanity, requires that some other means than force should be tried to restrain the Indians, and to prevent the frequent collisions that occur between them and the white inhabitants in their neighborhood. The whole history of our country shows that, whenever the two races are brought frequently into contact, collisions (generally produced by aggressions of the stronger on the weaker party) are inevitable. I know of no other means by which those collisions can be prevented than a rigid adherence to the policy which has heretofore been successfully pursued—of setting apart a portion of territory for the exclusive occupancy of the Indians.

A difficulty occurs in the application of this policy to Texas. By the terms of the compact admitting that State into the Union, she reserved to herself all the vacant territory within her limits. It is understood that she acknowledges no right of occupancy in the Indians within her border, but proceeds to lay off her territory into counties, and, as fast as it is needed, to sell it, without assigning any portion of it to them, or providing in any other mode for their support. Nothing could be more calculated to alarm and irritate the Indians, and to produce collisions between them and the whites, than the adoption of this policy. It, in fact, drives the Indians to desperation, by leaving them no alternative but to steal or to starve. It also deprives the government of the United States of that control over them and of the territory they occupy which is necessary for their own preservation as well as for the safety of the white settlements in their vicinity. If the United States are bound to protect Texas against the Indians, it is manifest that the government of that State should do nothing to thwart, but, on the contrary, all in its power to promote, the fulfilment of this duty. I therefore respectfully suggest the expediency of endeavoring to make some arrangement with that State, whereby a portion of her vast unoccupied domain may be temporarily allotted to the exclusive occupancy of the Indians within her borders.

What policy, however, it may be deemed proper to adopt in reference to the Indian tribes of Texas, California, and Oregon, is a question only of humanity, or of temporary policy, as the period cannot be very remote when they will be swept before the resistless tide of emigration which continually flows towards these countries.

The case is different with regard to New Mexico. That territory is so remote and inaccessible, and holds out such little inducement to emigration, that the struggle between the two races is destined, in all probability, to continue there long after it shall have ceased in every other portion of the continent.

By the last census, the total population of New Mexico, exclusive of wild Indians, is (in round numbers) 61,000 souls, and its whole real estate is estimated at (in round numbers) \$2,700,000.

To protect this small population, we are compelled to maintain a

large military force at an annual expense nearly equal to half the value of the whole real estate of the territory. Would it not be better to induce the inhabitants to abandon a country which seems hardly fit for the habitation of civilized man, by renumeration for their property in money or in lands situated in more favored regions? Even if the government paid for the property quintuple its value, it would still, merely on the score of economy, be largely the gainer by the transaction, and the troops now stationed in New Mexico would be available for the protection of other portions of our own and of the Mexican territory. Unless the means I have indicated, or some others, be adopted to relieve the Indians from the necessity of plundering to procure the means of subsistence, their depredations must not only continue, but increase. This would require a corresponding increase in the means of protection. In that view I concur in the recommendation of the General-in-chief—that an additional regiment of mounted men be authorized.

Allow me to call your attention to the state of our defences on the sea-coast.

Shortly after the termination of the last war with Great Britain, a Board of Engineers was organized to prepare a system of coast defence.

This board recommended that fortifications be constructed at a number of points on the sea-coast, and on the northern lakes. Their recommendation was adopted, and its execution was commenced—first, by repairing and enlarging such of the old works as were deemed worthy of preservation; secondly, by the construction of new works, beginning, of course, with those that were considered the most important.

Although doubts have been occasionally expressed whether some of the works proposed by the board might not be dispensed with, and whether others were not on a scale unnecessarily large, the works recommended by it slowly but steadily advanced; and, until the year 1850, Congress never failed, except in a single instance, to provide the necessary means for prosecuting them. In the last-mentioned year no appropriations for fortifications were made, but the House of Representatives adopted a resolution directing the Secretary of War to submit, at their next session, a report on this subject. That report was submitted, but no action was taken on it, and no appropriation was made.

It is believed that this omission was caused by an opinion which seems to prevail, that the system adopted by the board in 1816, if not originally too extensive, has become so in consequence of events that have since occurred, and ought to be revised and restricted.

In that opinion I concur, and in the report above mentioned I expressed the opinion that many of the works embraced in the original plan might and ought to be dispensed with.

The subject is undoubtedly worthy of all the consideration that Congress can bestow upon it; and it is to be hoped that they will, at an early period, adopt some mode of revising the plan, and making any changes in it which the present circumstances of the country may seem to them to require.

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In the mean time, however, there are a number of works which have been commenced, and are in various stages of advancement, but the prosecution of which is suspended for the want of the necessary appropriations. Most of these works are highly important, being intended for the protection of our principal seaports and naval stations, viz: Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans, or other points of scarcely less importance.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the extent to which the system of fortifications should be carried, all must admit that no expense should be spared to render points like those above mentioned absolutely impregnable by any force that may reasonably be expected to be brought against them.

I hereto append a statement of these unfinished works, showing the amounts required to complete them, respectively, and the sums that could be advantageously expended on each of them during the next fiscal year, and earnestly recommend that Congress be urged to make the necessary appropriations with a view to the completion, if not of all, at least of the most important among them, at as early a period as practicable. If this be not done, the large sums already expended on them will, in many cases, be lost.

Among the works recommended by the board, which have not yet been commenced, there are several which appear to me of obvious necessity. I refer, particularly, to those designed for the protection of New Bedford and of San Francisco, both of which are now entirely defenceless.

It is also the opinion of the engineers that a work at Sandy Hook, for the protection of the outer harbor of New York, is necessary to complete the defences of that city.

Congress also omitted, the two last sessions, to make the usual appropriations for the purchase of the heavy ordnance used in coast defence. As this description of ordnance is generally intended for fortifications, it has been the practice to estimate for it under the head of "Armament of fortifications." It is hardly necessary to observe, however, that it is an indispensable part of any system of defence that may be adopted, and that the fewer the fortifications, the greater the quantity that will be required.

On this subject, I beg leave to subjoin a few remarks contained in the report on fortifications above referred to:

"Whatever policy may be adopted with reference to fortifications, it will still be necessary to provide a much larger supply of ordnance than we now have on hand. By reference to the report from the head of the Ordnance Bureau, hereto annexed, (marked C,) it will be seen that the whole number of guns, of all calibres, now on hand, whether in the forts or in the arsenals, amounts only to 3,535, and that of gun-carriages is still smaller. The entire number of guns that can be mounted in the forts already completed, (classes A and B,) amounts to 4,572 guns; and if the works now in progress of construction should be completed, the total number of guns that would then be required for all the forts would be 6,093. It appears, therefore, that the supply of ordnance now on hand is very inadequate, even to the present wants of the ser-

vice. I will observe, too, that even if Congress should determine to restrict the system of fortifications, this would not obviate the necessity for a large increase in the supply of heavy ordnance. Some means of defence must be employed, and cannon is an indispensable part of any system that may be adopted.

"It appears, too, from the reports hereto appended, that the great naval powers of Europe have, within a few years past, greatly increased the calibre of the guns mounted on their vessels of war. This renders it obviously necessary that the power of the batteries intended to resist them should also be proportionably increased. I believe it is the opinion of all officers, both of the army and navy, who have devoted much attention to this subject, that many of the guns now in our most important forts ought to be removed, and others of longer range substituted. A glance at the report of the Ordnance Bureau will show how very deficient we are in the heavy descriptions of ordnance, particularly in eight and ten-inch columbiads, the most effective weapons against vessels of war.

"To manufacture cannon of good quality is a work that demands considerable time; and as they are imperishable when properly taken care of, there is no good reason why the government should not at once provide the requisite supply.

"In connexion with this subject, I would venture to suggest that provision be made for a distribution of artillery among the militia of the States and Territories. Our people are more deficient in the knowledge of this arm than of any other, and yet it is the one that would be most required in a war with any European power. If a standing appropriation were made applicable to the distribution of artillery, and of the book on artillery practice among the States and Territories, it would tend very much to promote the knowledge of this essential branch of the military art among the citizens of the country."

One of the most important and responsible duties which have devolved on the department during the present year, is the execution of the works known as the river and harbor improvements.

The number of works for which appropriations were made by the act recently passed is about one hundred, and the sum appropriated about two millions and a quarter. The appropriations, however, will only, in a few instances, be sufficient to complete the works for which they were made. By far the greater number will require additional, and some of them very large additional, appropriations to complete them. It is to be presumed that, even if Congress should not see fit to continue the system, and to provide for other works of a similar character not included in the present act, they will, at least, finish the works that have been begun.

I deemed it, therefore, of the utmost importance to make, at the outset, such permanent arrangements for the execution of these works as would, as far as practicable, insure the faithful, judicious, and economical application of the large sums of money that have been and may be appropriated for these works to the important purpose for which they were intended.

Experience has shown that, for works of this description, in which large sums are disbursed, and which require for their execution a com-

bination of science and practical skill, it is, as a general rule, safer to rely on officers of the army (aided, when necessary, by civil assistants) than on civil agents, of whose character and qualifications the department must often be ignorant. I determined, therefore, to avail myself of all the aid which the army could afford, and to confide the superintendence of the works to the two corps, of engineers and topographical engineers, both of which are eminently qualified for this duty.

This arrangement not only enabled me to dispense with a number of civil agents whose assistance would otherwise have been necessary, but (a consideration of hardly less importance) to secure the invaluable aid of the distinguished head of the corps of engineers.

I at first intended to establish a joint board, composed of the heads and another officer of each of the corps, aided, when circumstances would require it, by an officer of the navy, to superintend the execution of all the works; but some difficulties having arisen in arranging the details of this plan, I finally determined to divide the works between the two corps, and to establish two boards—one for each corps—composed of its own officers, to aid its head in preparing, supervising, and correcting plans and estimates, &c., the members to act separately as inspectors of the works when in process of construction.

This plan has been carried into effect; and, in pursuance of it, the works on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico have been assigned to the corps of engineers, and those on the northern lakes and western rivers to the corps of topographical engineers.

It is believed that this arrangement will eminently conduce to the speedy and economical execution of the works.

Owing, principally, to the advanced season when the appropriations were made, little has been done in regard to many of the works beyond making the necessary arrangements to commence them as early as practicable in the spring.

For more detailed information on this subject, and on others connected with their duties, I respectfully refer to the reports of the colonels of engineers and of the topographical engineers, appended to this report.

The estimates for such of the works as require additional appropriations will be submitted as soon as they can be prepared.

The expedition which I mentioned in my last annual report as having been sent, under the command of Brevet Captain Lorenzo Sitgreaves, to explore the Zuni and Colorado rivers from the source of the former to the Pacific, has completed the exploration, and returned; but the report has not yet been submitted.

Early last spring, Captain Marcy was sent with a party to explore the head-waters of the Red river. He accomplished the object, and has returned; but the report of the expedition has not yet been prepared.

It affords me pleasure to repeat my commendations of the good order and discipline which prevail at the Military Academy, and to express my conviction of the benefits which result to the service from that institution.

The reports of the Chief of the Ordnance Bureau, and of the Quartermaster's Department, will show the operations of these important

branches of the service. Several of the suggestions contained in them are deserving of attention.

The first of these two reports exhibits a very satisfactory view of the operations of the national armories at Springfield and Harper's Ferry; and I concur in the opinion that no benefit would be likely to result from a return to the former mode of governing these establishments.

In my last annual report, I called your attention to several points in regard to which legislation appeared to me to be necessary. I will simply renew these suggestions without repeating the reasons on which they were founded. They were:

1st. That the department be authorized to abolish such arsenals as are no longer needed, and are a source of useless expense.

2d. That an additional number of commissaries be authorized.

3d. That a retired list of the army be established, as a measure of justice both to the officers that are disabled and to those that are not.

4th. That the distribution of arms among the militia of the States and Territories under the act of 1808, be made hereafter on the basis of the free white male inhabitants of age to bear arms, as shown by the latest census, instead of the official returns of the militia, which are frequently not furnished, and, when furnished, are often inaccurate.

To these recommendations I beg leave to add a few more that further experience has suggested.

By the 5th section of the act of September 28, 1850, it is made the duty of the Secretary of War to discharge any soldier who at the time of his enlistment was under the age of twenty-one years, unless such enlistment had been made with the consent of the parent or guardian of the soldier.

Young men are frequently enlisted who represent themselves to be of age, but whose discharge is afterwards applied for on the ground of minority. The consequence is that they are frequently discharged, after they have been clothed and fed for months, without rendering any service, or after they have been sent, at great expense, to some remote station. There is reason to believe that in some instances parties have enlisted with a view to defraud the government.

I recommend that any person, being above the age of eighteen years, who shall practise such an imposition may be compelled to serve out his term of enlistment.

If further appropriations for fortifications, and for river and harbor improvements, should be made, the number of officers in the corps of engineers and topographical engineers will be insufficient to supply the necessary details for these works, and for the coast and lake surveys, added to the other duties they are called upon to perform. I recommend, therefore, that, in that event, the officers of these corps be increased by an annual addition to each, for six years, of not more than three second lieutenants, to be taken, as heretofore, from the graduates of the Military Academy.

In consequence of the great number of remote military posts at which troops are stationed, the number of medical officers has been, for some years past, entirely inadequate to the wants of the service; the

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consequence of which is that a number of private physicians are necessarily employed.

I am satisfied that it would be a measure of economy to authorize an increase of the medical corps.

Besides the above recommendations, there are several contained in the report of the General-in-chief, hereto appended, which appear to me to deserve attention. I will mention particularly his suggestions, that the 3d section of the act of June 17, 1850, entitled "An act to increase the rank and file of the army, and to encourage enlistments," be repealed; that measures be taken to distribute, for the use of the militia of the States and Territories, the books of tactical instruction used in the regular service; and that the pension laws be so amended as to place the widows and orphans of officers of the army on an equal footing with those of naval officers.

Respectfully submitted:

C. M. CONRAD,
Secretary of War.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

*Documents accompanying the Report of the Secretary of War of December
4, 1852.*

- I. *A table of fortifications which need further appropriation, (at-
tached to Secretary's report.)*
- II. *Reports from the Eighth Military Department—Texas.*
- III. *Reports from the Ninth Military Department—New Mexico.*
- IV. *Reports from the Pacific Division—California and Oregon.*
- V. *Report of the General-in-chief.*
- VI. *Report of the Quartermaster General.*
- VII. *Report of the Paymaster General.*
- VIII. *Report of the Commissary General.*
- IX. *Report of the Surgeon General.*
- X. *Report of the Colonel of Engineers.*
- XI. *Report of the Colonel of Topographical Engineers.*
- XII. *Report of the Colonel of Ordnance.*
- XIII. *Report of the Third Auditor.*