STAFFS OF VARIOUS ARMIES

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

This compilation was prepared with a view of giving to the Army and to others a short synopsis of the composition, duties, and numbers of officers on so-called staff service in various armies. There are numerous publications giving these details for certain countries, but usually they are not accessible and the matter is treated too much in detail. This publication aims to give a general résumé of the staffs of various armies in a shape to admit of ready comparison.

The first part of the book contains a reprint of the introduction to General Bronsart von Schellendorf's book, "The Duties of the General Staff," translated by Lieut. Col. W. A. H. Hare, Royal Engineers. It is added here as an introduction to show to those not acquainted with this important branch of an army, what are the duties of the general staff in peace.

The second part contains a short synopsis of the general and other staffs of all armies of importance. The strength of the army in infantry, artillery, cavalry, and auxiliary arms is given, and also the total number of staff officers, in order to show at a glance the proper proportion of staff to line.

The subject-matter of Part II has all been compiled in this office from latest available sources, which are given in each case. No book of recent date, giving this information in compact form, is available, and on that account it is thought that this publication will prove of some value.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., January, 1899.

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DUTIES OF THE GENERAL STAFF IN PEACE.

The general staff forms an essential part of modern army organization. The general commanding a large body of troops can not, at least in war, encumber himself with minor details, though their consideration and proper order may be often of the highest importance. Apart from the fact that the mental and physical powers of one man are not up to such a task, the general supervision of all the fighting forces under the general's command would be lost sight of. He should consequently have assistants. These assistants form his "staff." To a certain extent, an arbitrary rule decides what portion of the latter is designated as "general staff." In some armies all the staff belongs to the general staff. But a necessity has universally been felt of having a distinct portion of the staff intrusted with planning and carrying out the movements of armies in the field, and generally distinguished by some special name. This particular branch of the staff of a general holding an important command in the field, is known in the German army as the "general staff" (Generalstab).

The latter has grown in importance with the numerical increase of modern armies and the development of military training and efficiency.

As long as armies were small, and movements, encampments, and fighting formations were laid down by hard and fast regulations, the want of trained general staff officers was scarcely felt. The plan determined on by the general in command usually contained the details of execution. But few directions were therefore necessary to secure, in the way that was intended, the quartering, concentration, and general advance against the enemy, of an army in its fixed, or only slightly modified, fighting formation. A departure from the generally accepted forms—such as, for instance, the advance of the Prussian army before the battle of Leuthen—was quite an exceptional occurrence, designed and carried out by special instructions at the time. It was intended to take the enemy by surprise by its novelty, and was entirely due to the personal energy and initiative of the general (Frederick the Great).