

Article

No 30

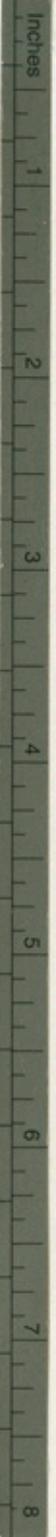
Subject
Sea Coast Defences

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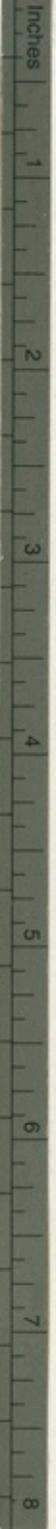
No 30

Am. West. Office
Chicago

Sea Coast Defense
Dear Sir: As requested you are welcome
to a few of my thoughts on Coast Defense.
Of course there is very little
prospect of war with Italy just
now; yet the rumors of war, and
the firm stand that our Statesman
take when any new complication
arises, show us plainly that we
ought to have our lines of
defense well arranged & in
place. The fishing embargo;
the Behring Sea controversy;
the strikes made by the Slavs;
other foreign people who have
been bred to fight against
all organized authority, the
dominance of anarchists, that
dominate all good govern-
ment, coupled with recent
unreasonable attacks aimed
against our Army & Navy, - which



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-ing that ~~the~~ ^{the Army & Navy} be abolished, - these
 must make all thoughtful men
 ask what are our means of
 defense. * In village ^{or} city has its
~~own~~ police; the State its Militia;
 the court-districts their marshals,
 their sheriffs and their posse-
 comitatus; but what ^{Defense} has the
 Nation which is called upon
 to meet & deal with other
 Nations on equal terms of
 dignity & sovereignty? What
 are the practical means of
 defense on which the
 President and his ^{in a ~~single~~ emergency} cabinet can
 rely?

The situation

Certainly this is no time to reveal
 to a Nation ^{to opportunity} disposed to provoke a
 quarrel our strength or our
 weakness; but it is a time for being

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reasonably prepared, at least for a
defensive attitude. # In a report
made to the War Dept five years ago

Give defense not enough.
Modern armament.

I saw:

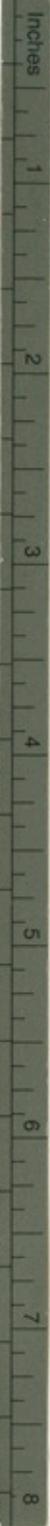
The prevalent statement that under all circumstances numbers of brave, true men are a sufficient defense to any country, is a palpable mistake. It is certainly inviting attack to present a rich and beautiful city to the greed of nations that assuredly are not yet wholly governed by benevolent considerations.

And we now see that other nations
than ^{the} greed of other nations may
tempt ^{somebody} to attack, endanger and
seaboard-towns and ^{impair} commerce.
Switzerland ^{an article} in a letter to me five
~~years ago~~ years ago presented some
facts that ^{may quote to} ~~will~~ give you the
information you were seeking
today. He says:

(The 200 lbs Parrott #)

present ships running past the heavy shore batteries; to hold them, in fact, long enough under land fire to insure their destruction. It is true that a harbor, heavily planted with submarine mines would be safer from attacks than if it had no obstructions in it; but if that harbor becomes of importance to the enemy, his ships would soon blast a channel through the mines and take possession of it. The few forts there are in San Francisco harbor were built to withstand what is now obsolete ordnance. The 200-pounder Parrott gun and the old 10 and 15-inch smooth-bore guns were the heaviest pieces brought against such works. When we think that these guns were carried by vessels totally unarmored, or so nearly so that they could not remain long enough under the fire of land batteries to make their own fire destructive, we see why granite forts with eight foot walls were considered strong enough to protect our harbors. Now, when the iron armor of war ships has increased from four to thirty inches, and their armament consists of guns ranging up to 17 1/2-inch calibre, weighing more than 100 tons, and throwing projectiles weighing 2,000 pounds, fired with 700 pounds of powder, having a muzzle energy of forty and fifty thousand foot tons, and capable of penetrating twenty-five to thirty inches of wrought iron nearly a mile away;—of course the old forts cannot stand against the new engines of war. Since 1872 heavy ordnance has increased wonderfully in power and size, and equally great improvements have been made in powder and projectiles. Foreign nations have spent millions in developing and perfecting heavy guns and vessels to carry them. Now, guns are afloat which send a ton of metal some nine miles with accuracy enough to hit a city, and carrying some seventy-five pounds of nitro-gelatin. In August, 1881, a steel projectile, weighing 403 pounds, was fired from the 24-ton Whitworth steel gun through eighteen inches of wrought iron, thirty-seven inches well packed sand, one and a quarter inches of steel, some heavy balks of timber, and then sixteen feet more of sand; the projectile was recovered practically uninjured. The 30-ton gun will penetrate twenty-five feet of granite and concrete masonry, or thirty-two feet of best Portland cement concrete. At Spezia, in May, 1880, the Armstrong 100-ton breech-loading rifle, 17.7-inch calibre, fired a projectile through forty odd feet of sand into the rock behind, and the Italian 100-ton gun sent its projectile, weighing 2,205 pounds, forty-six feet into the sand. In 1863 armored vessels cost about two hundred thousand dollars apiece, now they cost seventeen times as much as the ships our forts were built to fight against, and with this increased cost comes, of course, proportional increase in offensive and defensive capabilities. England has a navy of fifty-seven ships, all heavily armored sea-going vessels, carrying the most powerful armaments. In case of war with this nation the greater part of this navy could be sent against any one of our sea-coast cities. To defend our coast with a navy alone, as some people suggest, is impracticable, as it would require a navy equal in power to that of Great Britain in the harbor of each of our large cities; this would be necessary, as we could not foresee against what point the attack would be directed. Our only safety is by building forts capable of mounting heavier and better guns than those afloat, and having iron or steel armor for these forts sufficiently thick to protect the guns and gunners from naval fire.

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sever than rules of comity, easily broken by nations not expecting retaliation. Recent wars have shown us cities bombarded, and if the non-combatants are given a reasonable time to leave the city it is all that humanity can expect. We will suppose that the naval commanders across the waters are humane enough to give the women and children time to leave the city. The two ships are lying outside the harbor, south of Point Lobos, within seven miles of the City Hall. Suddenly a roar is heard, followed by another and another; soon the screech of the shells is followed by the crash of falling buildings. Shells fall in every part of the city, buildings are shattered, and fire is breaking out in a hundred different places. The fire department and citizens are helpless against this dual danger. The socialist and anarchist revel in the wholesale destruction, and lend their energies to strip and burn the buildings which have escaped the enemy; the Chinaman, long suffering and patient, sees a speedier way than is his wont to accumulate wealth and return rich to China, and he takes to burning and pillage. The whole city is on fire, men are now looking for means to save themselves, trusting to Providence to take care of the few things

we owe to

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I wish to emphasize that last sentence - viz: build "forts" capable of mounting heavier and better guns than those afloat and having iron or steel armor for these forts sufficiently thick to protect the guns & gunners from naval fire!"

Experiments have been going on since and this are guns carrying projectiles that exceed in penetrating power those which Lieur Greble has sighted.

Articulation not yet prevailing.
#

It is not wise to reargue the proposition that the United States will for many years be always liable to war. Destruction may come & be universal among civilized & Christian peoples. God hasten that time! Europe, ^{however} does not present that attitude today. As in the the Turko-Russian conflict and in the Franco-Prussian war comes in certain times like a

[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper]

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Thunderstorm. The cloud begins
in a comparatively clear sky,
swells to enormous proportions,
sudden expands its bulk &
quickly subsides. The death rate
is terrible, the expenses frightful.
The ~~United~~ nation
is made to stagger ^{for years} under a
heavy burden of debt to
defray the war charges -
and year & year it must
swallow its chagrin while
it pays up its debt & recuperates
its energies.

Suppose the war cloud to
dart up from any point
of our horizon - what could
we do to hold our own & avert
calamity & loss?

In answer, ^{< Practical measures.}
1. What I once said in a paper ^{Ships & Batteries.}
published by the American Magazine
concerning San Francisco will
apply to New York or any other
of our large cities on either
coast:

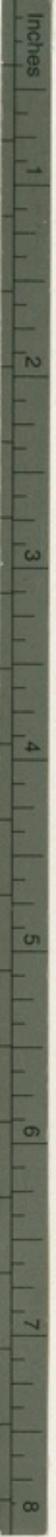
Considering the importance of our good navy in performing its true and appropriate work, no one will begrudge the money expended in the construction of naval vessels and armament; and, of course, it is wise to have them equal or superior to anything they may encounter.

It is, perhaps, after all that has been said, well to plan wherever practicable, for substantially three lines of defense for a harbor like that of San Francisco: an outer one of war ships, a second of torpedo boats, and a third of fortifications, including, when necessary, floating batteries.

To resist an enemy approaching the Golden Gate or its vicinage from the sea, it would afford great satisfaction to the defenders, and probably more to the defended, to have, as we did in our great battles, a good observing force and abundant reserves; yet with our present naval strength, San Francisco should not depend on the outward line; but rather upon the proposed torpedo boats well equipped and manned, the essential floating batteries, and most of all upon the several permanent fortifications, to be well located and well constructed, and kept in good working order. Upon these San Francisco may rely, as she does upon her good police, her superb fire department, and upon her arrangements for water, sewerage and light.

Our Navy has been much increased and much improved since the above statement was made.

The Torpedo boats & the whole Torpedo System have been slowly & surely developing. The experimental mortar



[Faint, illegible handwriting, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is mirrored and difficult to decipher.]

- firing so as to land shells within
forts or upon the decks of
approaching vessels had been
constantly advancing and
many good guns of long range
are in existence. Our outer
forts can be put in order upon
both approaches to New York
Harbor; so that I ~~do not believe~~ ^{do not believe}
Italy with her best iron
clads - could get past our
Hawai Squadron - our torpedo
arrangements and our shore
batteries, into any opening
that would enable her to
practise upon the Brooklyn
bridge or the World building.

7 A recent demonstration
in favor of coast defense.
This item of news from Chile
is ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ ~~propus~~ - and indeed a
demonstration of the present
value of defensive works
properly located & manned.

A LIVELY CHILIAN NAVAL FIGHT.

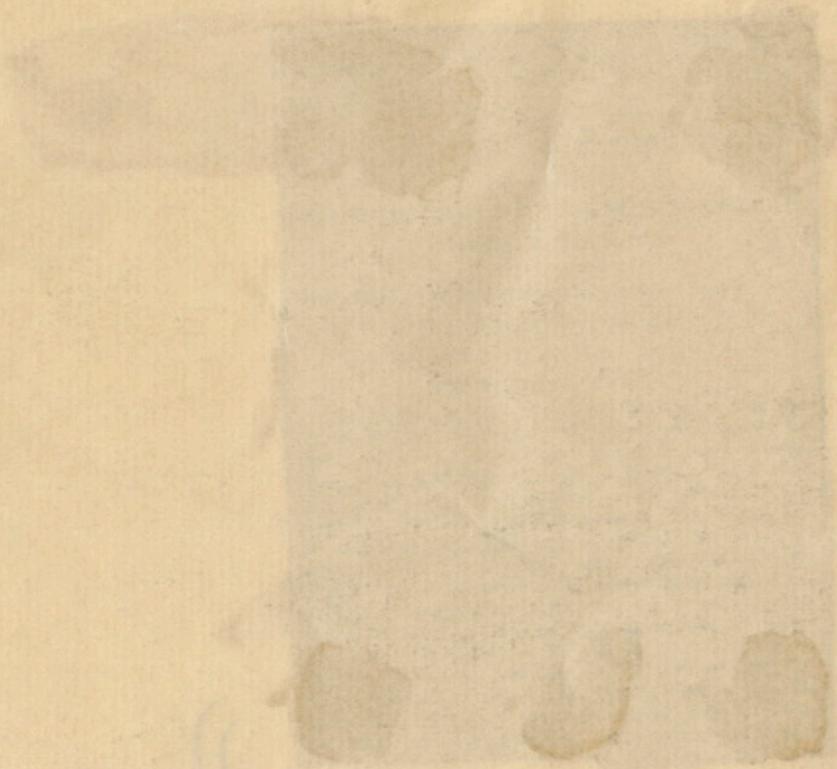
SEVERAL VESSELS KNOCKED TO PIECES AND
A NUMBER OF MEN KILLED - THE
REBEL FLEET SHORT OF COAL.

San Francisco, April 1. - Private advices from Val-
paraiso state that the ironclad Blanco, belonging to
the insurgents, recently attempted to blow up the
armed Government tug Florence with a fish torpedo.
The torpedo missed the tug, but struck a big floating
dry dock in the harbor, blowing it to pieces. The
Blanco was thereupon treated to a hot fire of shot
and shell from every gun in the forts and steamed
out of the harbor.

The same night a torpedo boat and the tug Florence
stole out to attack the Blanco. The ironclad was in
company with the sloop-of-war O'Higgins. Both
ships compelled the Government vessels to return to
the harbor and followed in hot pursuit. A heavy
shell from the Blanco struck the Florence, blowing
her entirely out of the water, and every one of her
crew of seventeen men was either killed or wounded.
A broadside from the O'Higgins knocked the torpedo
boat all to pieces. The two insurgent vessels then
turned their attention to the forts and a lively battle
ensued. A shell from the forts struck the O'Higgins
and went clear through her. Another shell caused
a gun on her quarter deck to explode. When the
smoke cleared away the deck was found to have been
literally torn out of the vessel, and nine men out of
the gun crew of twelve were blown to atoms. The
sloop was at once taken out of the range of the guns
in the forts.

The forts first drove an iron-clad
out of the harbor - Again the next
day one ~~of the~~ vessel was disabled & the
other badly damaged & driven away

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range by the depending forts.
Here ~~has~~ been used

The three lines of defense that we
must employ against a foreign
enemy, ^{with} the ~~naval~~ men-of-war, the
torpedo boats & floating batteries, and
the permanent works properly
located & ^{well} equipped.

It rejoices my military heart that
one regiment of New York Artillery
is forming as part of the
National Guard. The
more skilled artillery men
you have the better
your defense.

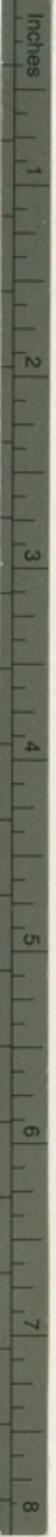
I may end my letter by saying
that Grant's & Sherman's method
of defense is the best: it was
to take the offensive as often

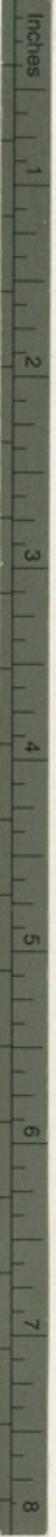
as possible.

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Our navy is not yet large - we cannot divide it up too much. It can take the offensive very readily - we remembering that the little monitor slew the giant Merrimac. The punch of our naval men is equal to any emergency that may come on the open sea. This is not ~~any~~ boasting; it is part of my faith. If we are attacked, the cause will not be that we mean to cover up crime - but to defend our Republican way of righting wrongs. They had defied the right ^{so far as to} & keep us from all war. Yours truly

Overman
 Wm. G. ...





The first thing I noticed when I stepped
 out of the plane was the fresh
 air. It felt like I had been in a
 cocoon for hours. The sun was
 shining brightly, and the birds
 were chirping. I took a deep
 breath and felt a sense of
 freedom. I had finally reached
 my destination. I looked out
 at the vast landscape and
 felt a sense of awe. The
 mountains were so high and
 the valleys were so green. I
 had never seen anything like
 this before. I had heard that
 the scenery was beautiful, but
 I didn't realize how beautiful
 it would be. I had come to
 the right place. I had found
 what I needed. I had found
 my home.