

Remarks
at the
Annual Meeting of the
Military Service Institute
Governors Island N.Y.
July 9th / 1889

No 33.

Subject
Value of Study to Young Officers

Presented
at the
General Meeting of the
Military Service Club
London, England, N.Y.
Jan 4, 1881

1853

Chief
Chief of Police

Gen. Howard's Remarks at the 10th Annual Meeting of the
Military Service Institution, Governor's Island, N.Y.H., Jan. 9, '89.

Mr. President, Gentlemen Members of the Institution:-

The subject of Lieutenant Sharp receiving the Medal and the Life Membership of the Military Service Institute for the best Essay on Organization and Training of our National Reserves, is deserving of high commendation. It gives me great satisfaction to find that a Lieutenant stationed as far West as Fort Abraham Lincoln, on our frontier, if we may call it frontier, has been able to investigate such a theme and so thoroughly to furnish himself with information as to write successfully. He has been obliged to compete with officers of every grade and with those who have had the fullest access to public libraries. The papers were sent successively to Gov. Gordon, of Georgia, Gov. Hartrift, of Pennsylvania and General Slocum, of New York, and their separate judgment has awarded to him the honor and the prize.

An officer of high rank has recently called attention to the fact that the most successful generals in the War of the Rebellion were those who had commanded posts on the frontier where they had learned the different phases of administration and the best methods of supplying their garrisons. Life on the frontier, that is, at remote posts, is, however, of a character to depress the officers and surely it is a good sign that some of them are able to collate material and compete for prizes offered by this Institution whose fundamental object is to benefit the Army.

It has long been a favorite idea of mine that every officer whose time is not completely occupied in his professional duties proper, should take up some speciality, preferably one connected directly or indirectly with his calling; and when professional work is not practicable, to select some branch of literature or some systematic professional study and thoroughly furnish himself. By so

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doing he keeps his mind in good training, free from the dullness that is apt to grow upon a young man who follows strictly the routine of duty. The simple routine, though he may be devoted to it so as to escape censure, often becomes wearisome, and sometimes leads him to dissipation. Active intellectual work is, of course, an effective preventive of this.

In times past many of our seniors have hugged the idea that the best course for an officer to pursue was to avoid all outside work; for example, I know of two young men in the West who prepared a "hand-book" for the use of the Militia, or National Guard, and submitted it for approval at Washington. Their work was discouraged. They were answered that, should their publication prove to be a success, then it would be time for the Government to take it up. I do not like that method of dealing with honest effort; and I believe that any changes which can be made in your organization with a view to encourage more young men to study, to investigate, and to write, the better it will be for young men and for the service. And, as I said in the beginning, this case of Lieutenant Sharp, where he strives not for the compensation but simply for the honor, gives me special satisfaction. In fact anything that conduces to the improvement of the young men of our Army, to their honor and up building, and to the good of the service, will always meet a warm place in my heart.

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