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An excerpt from CHAPTER XXXVII. FOURTH REPORT:

Mr. Davis's fourth annual report was presented to Congress December 1, 1856.

The actual strength of the army was 15,562. During the year an expedition had been sent to the Indian districts of Minnesota; the Indian difficulties on the Plains had ended, except with the Cheyennes; in Texas and New Mexico Indian outbreaks had been unfrequent, but in Florida the efforts of the Department had been unavailing to effect the removal of the Seminole Indians. General Harney had been sent with a force to protect the citizens of Florida from their ravages.

The Secretary recommended a revision of the policy of locating small military posts in advance of settlement, now that civilization had passed the line of general fertility.

"Assuming," he wrote, "that the limits of the fertile regions have been sufficiently well ascertained, and that future operations should be made to conform to the character of the country, the true interests of the public service would seem to suggest that instead of dispersing the troops, to form small garrisons at numerous posts where they exhibit weakness to a savage foe. Within the fertile regions a few points accessible by steam-boats or by railways should be maintained, from which strong detachments should annually be sent out into the Indian country during the season when the grass will suffice for the support of the cavalry horses and beasts of draught and burden. These detachments would be available both to hunt and chastise those tribes who had committed depredations, or by passing along the main routes to California, and Oregon and Washington Territories, give the needful protection to emigrants during the season of their transit. Experience has shown that small posts are nearly powerless beyond their own limits. Some of the most flagrant depredations on parties in the vicinity of such military posts, and their inability to pursue and punish the offenders, has tended to bring into disrepute the power and energy of the United States, whose citizens were the victims of predatory attacks. Indeed it is quite supposable that these posts, being fixed points in the routes of the emigrants, afford the Indians the opportunity of observing each train which passes, and thus enable them to determine upon future operations." Again, with increased and impressive emphasis, the Secretary renewed his plea for increased pay of the army.

"More than the usual number of resignations within the past year give evidence of a defective organization, of a policy injurious to professional pride, and of the necessity of increased compensation. While the hard service and frontier stations of the officers of the army require of them sacrifices which no other officers of the Government are called upon to make, the expense of living has been greatly augmented, and their pay is nearly the same as that which was fixed more than fifty years ago. There is surely no economy in a practice which must in the end drive the more active and intellectual from a service which they adorn and in which their country specially requires them, to seek a competent support in some other pursuits. As little does it accord with the spirit of generosity or justice to ask at their hands the sacrifice which so many of them make to professional pride and habitual love for their country's service and their country's flag.

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