

A FEW SUGGESTIONS.

BY THE EDITOR.

EVERY new experience teaches a lesson, and so does the present war, which has been forced upon us against our inclinations.

When the war began we were scarcely ready for it. Our regular army is numerically very insignificant, and our navy, although stronger than that of Spain, is by no means proportionate to the commercial and political interests of the United States. Our navy would be by no means too large if it were twice or three times as large as it is now. If the Spaniards had been equal to our people in quality of men, in boldness of attack and in circumspection, we should have had to pay dearly for our almost criminal neglect of national defences. When a war breaks out, it is too late for building battleships and fortifying harbors. Hence the first lesson of the present war is, *We must in the future be better prepared for eventualities of war.*

As to our diplomacy, we cannot say that we have been able to convince the world (perhaps with the sole exception of England) of the righteousness of our cause; and the obvious reason is that we are children in diplomacy. Our principle of not meddling with the cabals of European politics, which for certain reasons and within certain spheres is quite commendable, simplified matters for us; but it rendered diplomatic services almost unnecessary. Thus it happens that diplomacy is an unknown art among us, while every other country possesses men of ability who have had a special training in the methods of dealing with foreign powers. Monarchical governments enjoy the advantage of steadiness. The continuity is never broken even though the policy may change; and continuity is of importance for the sake of preserving traditions and gathering diplomatic experience. Our party politics make matters

worse still, for it destroys even that continuity which would naturally develop if the affairs of the Government were handed over from one president to another in a business-like way. According to the notion of our party politicians, a new president, if there is a change of party, enters the White House like a victorious conqueror to undo all that has been done by his predecessor and to begin the world over again. Why cannot the two presidents and their cabinets leave alone for awhile all their partisan preferences and familiarise themselves with the routine of government affairs. A king on his death bed, has as a rule, many important communications to make to his successor, and has an outgoing president to give no information to the incoming president? The latter need not take the advice of the former, but it would be wise to listen to him for half an hour and learn from his experiences. It would be difficult to establish anything that would resemble the continuity of monarchical governments in this country, but it ought to be possible to let the men of the new administration be initiated into the current affairs of the government by those who have just had the opportunity to learn something about its difficulties. To accomplish this without implication and to render, according to circumstances, a more or less intimate exchange of thought possible, some president should establish the precedent of cultivating a social intercourse both with his predecessor and with his successor. It would be a good thing if the custom could be established of holding a meeting of the two cabinets, the incoming and the outgoing, at the White House. And this meeting should be as little ceremonious as possible; it should bear the character of a purely social occasion, but should in this way offer at least an opportunity to the men entrusted with the welfare of the nation to discuss the situation, to profit by the experiences of others, and to gather information about the needs of the day.

There is an old Latin proverb, *Si vis pacem para bellum*, i. e., If you desire peace, be ready for war. If we had borne this rule in mind, the war would probably never have become necessary, for Spain knew very well that our navy and army were small. She only forgot two things, (1) that quality counts for more than quantity, and (2) that the people of the United States are possessed of an unparalleled energy. They can do things more quickly here than the people of Europe. Within a short time their industrial enterprises, formerly devoted to peaceful manufacture, may become subservient to the demands of warfare, and our engineers and workingmen will exhibit the same good judgment, boldness, and efficiency in war-

fare as they show in peaceful enterprises. This is the strength of our nation, which will insure our victory in the present emergency with Spain. But we ought to consider that we might become implicated in graver difficulties. We are by no means sure that through some unfortunate turn of diplomacy a combination of several European nations may be brought about, and while we are engaged in fighting one power the navy of another power will be at liberty to harass our coasts. Our enemies might even take one of our ports and land an invading army. For this reason, we must not only procure more good battleships, but should also be in condition to be able to fight at home. It would neither be necessary nor advisable to become a military nation such as is Germany, but it might be a good thing if our young men received a military training of some kind—perhaps in such a fashion as prevails in Switzerland. No harm would be done if all the young men of the same townships between eighteen and twenty-one years would come together in the autumn for military practices. Our militia system, which is at present restricted, might perhaps be extended so as to embrace this scheme and extend it even to thinly populated townships. The boys should not be mustered in as regular soldiers, nor receive soldier's wages, but should convene for common camping, healthy exercises, and a good outing. Officers and a number of corporals of the regular army should be detached to give them the necessary instructions, and while our young men would have a good time practising sham battles and strategic marches, they would at the same time acquire a good deal of knowledge that would be valuable in case of war, and would render this country proof against any enemy. On the seashore and in harbor cities, a certain number of boys should be taken on board a man-of-war and drilled in naval warfare and coast defence. The cost of these military outings would not be great, and the obligation of schooling our young men might, without any additional expense, become a regular duty of our standing army. The advantages would be many, for these exercises would make our boys more patriotic, would strengthen their health and qualify them better for all kinds of bodily exertion; but above all they would create new bonds of brotherhood between all of them and make rich as well as poor feel more as members of one and the same large family.