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LESSONS OF THE DECADE APPLIED.

No. III.

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PISTOL DRILL—FIRING PRACTICE.

The squad being in line with pistols and sabres on, the instructor commands (always explaining and showing), ATTENTION TO SABRE EXERCISE! FOURS RIGHT! RIGHT AND LEFT FILE! HALT! FRONT! which will be executed as in sabre exercise.

The instructor then commands, Draw—PISTOL! At the word "pistol," unbutton the holster on the thigh, draw out the pistol and hold it up, muzzle perpendicular, in front of the right shoulder, the thumb on the hammer ready to cock it, the forefinger on the guard, the rest of the fingers round the stock of the pistol.

He next commands, Inspection—PISTOL. 1. At the word "pistol," make a semicircular sweep directly down and in front of the body, using the thumb to half-cock the pistol during the sweep. 2. Resume the position of draw pistol, and revolve cylinder as the inspecting officer passes, with the forefinger of the left hand. 3. When he has passed, lower the pistol, muzzle down, by the right thigh. As soon as the instructor has duly inspected the pistols, he returns to his place and commands, Raise—PISTOLS.

The position of draw is assumed, and each man carries his right foot two feet from the left, bringing up the bridle hand opposite the belt plate, thus supposing the squad to be mounted. The instructor next commands, READY.

At this command strike the pistol downwards sharply in a semicircular sweep, cock it with the thumb, and come back to raise pistol. AIM. Point the pistol at the object with the arm nearly straight, and bring both sights to bear in a line. (N. B. The instructor will always prefix "at infantry" or "cavalry," "on the right" or "left," to this command, and will specially caution the men to mind their sights.)

FIRE. Pull the trigger. If the lock is at all stiff, use two fingers. (The disturbance of aim in pulling the trigger is the great cause of much inaccurate shooting with the pistol. When the men have had plenty of practice with the weapon to remove the

danger of accidents, the armorer should turn their locks into hair triggers or nearly so by a little filing at the notches in the tumbler.) Ready, aim, and fire should be repeated six times in succession to correspond to the charges in a loaded pistol.

The instructor then commands, LOAD BY THE MOTIONS. (Colt's.) Motions: 1. LOAD. At this word carry the hand to the lever, the pistol at a raise, and half-cock with the right thumb. 2. Take two or three cartridges from the pouch, insert one in the chamber with the fingers, revolve the cylinder till the load comes under the lever. 3. Ram it down and catch up the lever. 4. Put in a second cartridge. 5. Ram it down, and 6, 8, 10 and 12, insert cartridges; 7, 9, 12, and 13, ram them. 14. Cap the cones, after which come to a ready.

The instructor commands next, Return—PISTOL. At the word "pistol," replace it in the holster, and button the same.

In firing practice with the loaded pistol, the men should be mounted. At first they should ride up in file to within ten feet of a row of large targets, the size of a man on horseback, six in number, halting about the centre of the row, which will be semicircular in form. With a slow deliberate aim they should try to put one ball in each target as near the bull's eye as possible. Each man after firing rides off to reload, and the next takes his place. The instructor attends, to correct wild firing, and to caution the men as to attention to sights and disturbances of aim in pulling the trigger.

The men who have fired form line on his left, and watch the others, paying attention to the instructor's corrections.

Six targets so arranged form a mimic representation of the melee in a battle, where the aim must be frequently changed from object to object. The second firing day the same distance—ten feet—is to be observed, but the firing is to be more rapid. Four seconds only will be allowed to each shot on this day, but the same order of halting will be observed. The third firing day the targets will be removed to a radius of twenty feet, and ten seconds per shot allowed from a halt. The fourth day the targets will be placed in a semi-circle of a hundred feet radius. The men will successively canter round this circle at ten feet from the targets, which are lowered to the height of an infantry soldier, and endeavor to put a bullet in each while at speed.

The fifth and last day the instructor orders, PREPARE TO CHARGE. At this order sabres will be drawn and placed in the left hand, which holds them by the blade close to the hilt. The pistol will be drawn, being

secured to the right side of the belt by a cord a yard long.

At the next command, *By files*—CHARGE, the men will start individually and successively from the right. The squad will be formed in line in the centre of the semicircle as before. Each man will gallop round the targets close enough to touch them with the point of the sabre. He will fire at the first, and then drop the pistol over his left arm to use up the cord. Catching his sabre, he will cut at the second, striving to lop off one of the thin sticks put on the top in rows like comb-teeth. He will fire at the third, returning his sabre and catching up his pistol, and so on alternately to the sixth, when he forms upon the left of the squad.

Each man will have two trials, being guided by the experience of his predecessors, and the drill will take a whole morning. In all firing practice shots will be counted and registered on lists to each man's name by the quartermaster sergeant, who attends the captain for the purpose. At the end of the fifth firing day a silver arrow one inch long, will be given, to be worn as a pin on the left breast when on parades or inspections by the best shot in each troop. The best shot in the regiment will receive the same decoration in gold.

Every year there will be five firing days, and similar prizes will be bestowed afresh. Accurate pistol shooting is of the utmost importance to a cavalry soldier. It demands far more practice than that with the carbine, being more difficult on account of the motion of the horse, and the rapid aim requisite. In a melee always wait till the last moment before firing at an enemy. A shot inside of six feet is worth a dozen shots outside of that distance. The men having learned the full use of their weapons, on foot and on horseback, are now fit to be put to troop and regimental movements at once, as both sabre and pistol drill are taken up simultaneously with horsemanship, and all three worked together.

THE PRUSSIAN FIELD-GUN.

The Prussian steel breech-loading field-gun which lately arrived in this country in exchange for a bronze nine-pounder muzzle-loader, which was recently sent by our War Office to Berlin, has, after being duly inspected in London, and criticised at Woolwich, found its way to Shoeburyness, where trials were made with it in the course of this week. The gun, which is called a 4-pounder, according to the foreign system of artillery nomenclature, throws an elongated projectile of about 9 lbs., with a charge of about 1 lb. 2 oz. It was to be pitted against