

## Modern Tactics.

[By Capt. H. R. Gall—From Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine.]

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### CHAPTER VIII.—MARCHES.

**M**ARCHES may be conveniently divided under the following seven headings:

1. Timed Marches.
2. The Order of March on Each Road.
3. Rules as to Halts.
4. The use of several Parallel Roads.
5. Night Marches.
6. Flank Marches.
7. Forced Marches.

#### *Timed Marches.*

The object of "Timed Marches," is to get troops to the right place, at the right time, in the most efficient condition. To insure this the roads must be examined, and the country carefully reconnoitred; calculations of time depending on fixed rules are misleading. The effect on a country generally, and especially on roads, rivers, streams, and mountain paths resulting from severe storms, heavy rain, continued drought, frost, or snow, must always be taken into consideration; but, above all, the probabilities of obstruction and resistance likely to be met with must be carefully weighed, and an ample margin of safety provided for.

In 1877 the principal roads in Bulgaria were in good condition at the beginning of the campaign, but later on they were much cut up by the passage of heavy artillery and transport trains, and the failure to repair the damage caused by them. The country roads connecting villages were passable during the summer, but when the autumn rains came on in September, they soon became quite impassable.

General Gourko, in his famous reconnoissance, July 12th to 19th, 1877, notwithstanding his carefully planned and skilfully executed march over the Balkans, underrated the resistance he was likely to meet with from the Turks on the southern side, and arrived too late by one day to take part in the combined attack on the Shipka Pass, which he had planned to take place on the 17th July, in conjunction with a force attacking from the north side. An example of over-confidence, which resulted in two completely isolated and unsuccessful attempts to capture the pass, one from the north and the other from the south side of the Shipka ridge, within thirty-six hours of each other. Although Gourko was able to push forward with his cavalry, his infantry, after encountering and overcoming severe resistance on the road, and was cut and completely exhausted.

General Gourko took with him only pack-animals, and carried five days' rations, and three days' forage, but managed to live almost entirely on the country as soon as he got over the mountains.

The first day's march was 18 miles, the next day Gourko marched 27 miles, and after a march of 9 miles he secured the southern outlet of the Hainkioi Pass by 10 o'clock on the morning of the third day, surprising and overpowering the Turkish garrison at Hainkioi. When the difficulties of the road are considered, this was one of the most daring and surprisingly rapid marches on record. Where Gourko crossed, the summit of the Balkans is 3,700 feet, of which 1,900 feet has to be ascended in the last eight miles, while on the southern slope the path descended in twelve miles, 2,300 feet, over the greater part of which twenty miles the guns had to be dragged by the infantry. Two guns with their teams rolled down the ravine. The path, which was nothing but a mountain trail, was opened out in two days sufficiently to let the guns pass, by a squadron of mounted pioneers (Cossacks) superintended by Major-General Rauch, an Engineer officer.

In the Kyber Pass, 1878-79, the transport consisted chiefly of camels, ponies, and mules, supplemented as the road was opened out by bullock-carts, and a few elephants. The difficulties of making a road in places were very great, and necessitated a large amount of blasting. During the return march after the first campaign, the thermometer frequently registered 120 degrees at eight o'clock in the evening. The mortality amongst the transport animals was appalling, and in the vicinity of the camps there was a veritable Golgotha, the stench from which was awful, and produced cholera and other malignant diseases, which the troops carried with them on their homeward march. In places the pass was knee-deep in dust, and covered with large loose stone worked up by the constant traffic, and for weeks dust storms prevailed without much intermission, day and night.

The removal of the dead camels even to a few hundred yards outside the camps was a work of incessant labour and toil. In spite of these difficulties, from twelve to fourteen miles a day was performed. The convoys were continually more or less harassed, though never seriously delayed by the hostile trailmen along the route.

Keeping up the long and difficult line of communications between Kabul and Peshawur, a distance of 190 miles, was not the least arduous work of the second campaign; when all duties were provided for the men got very little rest. During the campaigns 1878-79 80 some regiments employed on the line of communications were under canvas without intermission for twenty-two months.

"Plevna fell on the 10th of December, 1877, and the Russian reinforcements for General Gourko commenced their march to Orkhanie, a distance of 75 miles, on the 14th, and arrived there between the 20th and 23rd of December.

"From the 18th to the 22nd snow fell with little intermission, and on the night of the 19th-20th the temperature fell to 3° Fahr. The roads then became an alternation of smooth ice and frozen masses of mud ten inches in diameter, and hard

enough to resist even artillery wheels. None of the horses were rough shod, the little Steppe horses of the intence waggons were not shod at all. The result was that at every hill the waggons had to be hauled and pushed up by hand."

In 1880 General Roberts marched from Kabul to Kandahar (321 miles) in 23 days, averaging 14 miles a day; his force was composed of 7,500 infantry, 1,600 cavalry, 18 mountain guns (7 prs). Everything was carried on pack-animals, including the guns. He had with him about 8,000 camp-followers making a total of about 18,000 men and 9,000 animals. There was no opposition, and the crops were standing. The road had been previously traversed by General Donald Stewart's force.

This memorable march was carried out by a force "marching in the air," *i. e.*, it had no base and no assured line of retreat, and was entirely dependent on the country for its supplies. General Roberts not only relieved Kandahar, but defeated Ayub Khan.

Experience and a knowledge of tactics may enable a commander to meet unforeseen difficulties as they present themselves; but careful reconnaissances will aid him materially under all circumstances to form an approximate idea of the time his troops will need to overcome whatever obstacles nature or man's ingenuity may put in his path. The chief difficulty a general has to contend with when marching an army in the field is "Transport." Railroads may carry him to a certain point, and there leave him completely at the mercy of such transport as the country (perhaps an openly hostile one) affords—horse-waggons, bullock-carts, elephants, camels, ponies and mules, coolies, steamers, boats. All these different means of transport necessitate different calculations of time, and a knowledge of their special requirements.

Infantry must always regulate the pace of a column comprising the three arms. An army can march rapidly or slowly, according to the efficiency of its infantry and its transport. The infantry soldier in the field has to carry, in addition to his usual kit, extra ammunition, entrenching tools, rations. The even distribution of this extra weight has to be provided for.

To avoid unnecessary fatigue, the following points should be observed. No unnecessary parading either before starting, or at the end of a march. A steady long pace which never ought to exceed  $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles an hour. An average of 3 miles an hour is very good marching. Regular and satisfactory halts. Even distribution of duties, advance guard, outpost, baggage-guard, foraging, convoy and rear-guard. Regular duty rosters. Length of marches to be regulated by the nature of the country, and the state of the roads and means of transport. Weather and climate to be considered. Troops should never march without hot coffee and bread being served out to them if possible before starting; if not, they should take the coffee in their canteens cold, and be allowed to warm it up during a halt.

When troops are conveyed long distances by rail a certain number of non-smoking compartments should be marked per troop or company. This especially applies to volunteers, a considerable percentage of whom are either non-smokers or moderate smokers. The inconvenience suffered by non-smokers cooped up in an over-crowded third-class carriage reeking with tobacco smoke is unnecessary.

Mutton fat or grease of some sort should be regularly served out, and the men encouraged to grease their boots, inside and outside, frequently, especially in dry weather. Badly-fitting and badly-darned socks are too often the cause of discomfort and sore feet.

In hot climates the absence or presence of water, within reasonable distance of the road, will influence a commander, and often induce him to take a longer route to secure a sufficient supply. Water may be carried for men, but seldom in sufficient quantity for animals. The length of columns should be reduced as much as possible with a view to lessening fatigue. In an average country, with good roads, 12 miles is an ordinary day's march, 15 miles a good march, and 20 miles a forced march.

#### *Marching and Fighting Endurance of Troops.*

In his remarks on the winter campaign in Bulgaria, 1877-78, Lieutenant Greene, U. S. Army, after stating that it was the winter campaign of the Russians which destroyed the military strength of Turkey, and pointing out how much Russia owes to the generals who conducted it, writes as follows:

"The great and pre-eminent cause of their success lay in the almost boundless patience and endurance of the Russian soldier. From the time the movement was well under way (14th December, Plevna having fallen on the 10th), the men never saw their knapsacks, which remained north of the Balkans, till some time after the armistice.

"They marched and fought and slept in snow and ice, and forded the rivers with the thermometer at zero. They had no blankets, and the frozen ground precluded all idea of tents; the half worn-out shelter tents which the men had used during the summer were now cut up to tie round their boots, which were approaching dissolution; and although an effort was made to shelter the men in the huts in the villages, yet always at least half of them had to sleep out in the open air without shelter.

"Their clothing at night was the same as in the day, and it differed from that of summer only in the addition of overcoat, woollen jacket, and a 'bashlik,' or woollen muffler for the head. Their food was a pound of hard bread and a pound and a half of tough, stringy beef, driven along the road; they were forced to carry six and seven days' rations on their backs (in addition to an extra supply of cartridges in their pockets); there was more than one instance where the men fought, and fought well, not only without breakfast, but without having tasted food for twenty-four hours. Yet in the face of these unusual privations and hardships, there was not a single case of insubordination; the men were usually in good spirits, and the number of stragglers on the march was far less than during the heat of the preceding summer."

(To be continued.)