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### VOLUNTEER CAVALRY.—No. III.

#### THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

#### SAVING AMMUNITION.

BUT there was one lesson which might have been learned in the war, which yet was not. Neither side seemed to give it a thought; and it was reserved for the sober, philosophic German to teach it to us in 1870. This lesson, the most valuable of all, is how to save your ammunition.

General von Moltke, to whose genius the brilliant results of the campaigns of Sedan and Sedan are owing, is the first man in high places who has had the wisdom to profit by experience in this matter.

The saving of ammunition, if ever fully carried out in modern warfare, will be found to be the greatest revolution since Leopold of Dessau introduced the iron ramrod.

The fault of wasting it is the crying sin of modern armies. It is the commonest thing in the world to see officers on the line of battle encouraging their men to waste ammunition. "Fire away, boys!" "Give 'em hell!" "That's it!" "Give it to 'em!" is the shout of almost every excited man on the skirmish line; and the officers, having no rifles, do nothing but yell to the men to fire faster.

What is the consequence? Ninety nine bullets out of a hundred fired in action are fired at random. A dismounted man goes on the line with twenty rounds in his box, and perhaps forty or sixty more crammed in his pockets. The line fights for an hour and a half; and at the end of that time the cry arises, "Fall back!" "We are out of ammunition!"

West Pointers, men who never have been in the ranks, may scout the idea I am about to advance; but I am convinced that, in nine cases out of ten, an officer of dismounted cavalry fighting on foot, would do well to borrow a carbine and sling from one of the horseholders, instead of taking a sabre with him. In every dismounted skirmish line I have seen the less company officers interfere with it the better it got on. The best officers on a skirmish line I remember always borrowed a carbine to use; and the men followed them. Sword-armed officers are too apt to get behind the line, and shout to the men to "go on," instead of being well

up with them. An officer taking a carbine, and carrying only a few rounds of ammunition, will better realize the necessity of saving it.

If a prize were offered to the man who should maintain his post on the skirmish line, and bring out by the end of the campaign the largest average number of cartridges in each battle, I am fully convinced that the regiment adopting such a system would kill more enemies and be twice as much dreaded as under the random system.

But, as in the case of sharp sabres, before mentioned, although everybody admits the truth, practically it is set at naught. It is well enough to deplore the waste, but no one seems to try to remedy it, or at least no one did till Von Moltke. What he has done by his reform the world knows.

If every general officer in our service would enjoin upon his brigadiers to enforce the saving of ammunition upon their different regiments, the gain in efficiency would be enormous. The moral effect of an army which reserves its fire till sure of its aim is something wonderful, whether in attack or defence; and the corresponding weakness of an enemy which begins to fire at long ranges is equally marked.

If regiments drawing the smallest quantity of ammunition, and still holding their position, were praised in general orders, the emulation would be, we are convinced, productive of unmixed good. Forty rounds of ammunition ought to be enough for any cavalry skirmisher, if he fights from daylight till dark; and a regiment announcing itself "out of ammunition" in the thick of a fight out to be severely censured in brigade, division, and corps orders, even while the ammunition was supplied.

I write from practical experience. I lay on the skirmish line at Cold Harbor, in June, 1864, when infantry and cavalry attacked us for several hours. I knew well that, during all that time, I could not get rid of more than twenty shots, aimed at anything certain. Bullets were flying about, but they were fired at random. A knot of cool hands lay on the ground near me, each by his little pile of rails; and a shot about once in a minute, with a long steady aim at the puffs of the enemy's smoke, was all that we could manage conscientiously. At the same time a terrible fighting was going on at our right, as if a corps of infantry were engaged; and then, the first we knew, men were falling back there "out of ammunition."

Again and again have I seen the same thing—men reserving their fire, coming to the rescue of the squanderers, to be reproached by those squanderers for having

"done nothing, while we were fighting superior numbers." A beaten man always has an excuse.

But these "out-of-ammunition" fellows have often got better men into grave peril, by falling back, and thus leaving a gap for the enemy to occupy. I have seen the whole of a brigade forced into a retreat, and the loss of many prisoners, from the failure of a single regiment in this manner. It was at Trevillyan Station, near Gordonsville, Virginia we were fighting on foot, and before we were aware of it, a force of the enemy was in our rear, and firing into the led horses. Only the approach of darkness saved many of us myself in the number, from capture, and I lost my horse and had to go on foot until I captured another.

(To be continued.)

A CORRESPONDENT of the London Standard at Versailles remarks: "I have been thrown a good deal amongst Prussian cavalry officers, who one and all agree that the cavalry should be, as formerly, be divided into three classes—heavy, medium, and light. The light cavalry should be armed, in addition to their sword, with the very best rifled carbine, and be trained to serve as well on foot as horse soldiers—to be modelled, in fact, on the dragon of former days. The lancers should form the medium class—that is to say, heavy, powerful men, lightly equipped and the heavy branch of the service should, as previously, remain cuirassiers. There is no doubt that of some the most important and effective charges made by the Germans during this war have been carried out by their cuirassiers. That the victory of the Germans at Vionville was decided by the charge of the Seventh cuirassiers is well known. They lost, it is true, 220 out of 280 sabres, who went into the action, and fifty of these were killed on the field; but an officer of the corps on whom devolved the painful duty of picking out and identifying the dead, told me that in no single instance had a cuirass been pierced by a rifle bullet. That a charge of cuirassiers has a certain demoralizing effect on infantry, foot soldiers allow. It sends a certain creeping coldness through the boldest, which does not tend to steady their aim."

In the Government measure before the British Parliament, introduced by Mr. Cardwell, a clause has been inserted to enable the State to acquire the railways in the same way that it used to have power to possess itself of the telegraphs, so that the whole communications of country might at once, in case of emergency, be made use of for military purposes.