



# The Volunteer Review

## AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. V.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, MAY 1, 1871.

No. 18.

### VOLUNTEER CAVALRY.—No. VIII.

THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

DRESSES.

The United States cavalry uniform is quite comfortable, no doubt. But there is as little doubt that it is by all odds the most completely hideous under the sun.

Especially is this the case with the present regulation hat. Without its brasswork, in the simplicity of its native felt, it is a steeple-crowned reminiscence of Praise God Barebone and the Rump Parliament, anything but martial and heroic. Cocked up at one side, with its shabby-looking brass ornaments, and one little mangy feather, it reminds one of a broken-down brigand. Anything more hideous was never put on a soldier's head.

I remember well, that when my first old regiment was mounted and sent to the front, the road was strewn for miles with "that d—d old hat," as our men called it, thrown away as soon as our parade days were over. Afterwards for a couple of years, there was no sort of regularity in head coverings. A dress parade of one of our regiments reminded one of Donnybrook Fair, as regards hats. Every sort of battered old tile was used and the effect was ludicrous. But when Gen. Sheridan took command, by a general order he compelled the adoption of the forage cap, and after that there was no trouble. True, the regulation forage cap, as issued, was even more worthless than the hat, in point of make. But the sutlers sold very nice little caps of similar pattern, and nine-tenths of the men preferred paying two dollars for a decent and serviceable cap, to drawing one at sixty cents, literally worthless.

Army caps ought to be made of cloth alone. The visor of leather is only a nuisance. The red fez of the Zouave is the most comfortable and convenient of any. All the contractors of the world cannot make it stiff and ungainly. The kepi, on the other hand, as we use it, is a miserably poor cap, which the first shower puts out of shape, and ruins for good, on account of the leather and pasteboard.

For the cavalry of the future we should

decidedly recommend one of these patterns: the fez with its tassel, or a cap of the same kind as the ordinary Astrachan skating cap, something like the old turban or "pork-pie hat" ladies used to wear.

Both are comfortable. They can be used to sleep in. They are jaunty and soldier-like. If ornamented with lace, or in different colors, they are very handsome. And lastly, the rain will not spoil them, and the contractors cannot make them ugly. A disk of cloth, with a broad band at right angles to its edge, is the fundamental principle of both, and there need be no paste-board in them, to warp in rain and sunshine.

When we come to the rest of the cavalry uniform, we find but little modification necessary. The uniform jacket is hideous simply from the yellow lace. Strip that off, cut down the collar to one half the height, and you have a neat, simple uniform. The service uniform of the cavalry corps under Sheridan was all that could be desired for work. Under a general order the men wore only the flannel blouse instead of the dress jacket, and their looks were decidedly improved thereby. This was well enough. But by experience the men learned one thing, that trousers are not the things for cavalrymen, especially in winter. Almost without exception they purchased jack-boots, and found themselves vastly benefited by the change. In the cavalry of the future the lesson should not be lost.

After careful comparison of cavalry uniforms in all parts of the world, the one that strikes the eye as best adapted for work in all weathers is a modification of the Hungarian hussar dress.

The light breeches and Hessian boots are the very things for riding. They give the legs a grasp on the horse impossible in loose trousers. In muddy weather there is no bedragged cloth to hang about the feet and ankles. They are equally good for dismounted fighting in brushwood. The dolman need not of necessity be tight, and the hanging jacket is an excrescence. A Spencer cut into the form, neither tight nor loose, reaching to the saddle, and barred across the breast, is an equally common form of the dress, and the fur cap is not high or cumbersome.

We are decidedly of opinion that the spencer, with tight breeches, and boots and a light cap, is as good a uniform for real hard work as can be made. Everything is close, and nothing is left to fly away here and there. With regard to the color, I suppose we shall have to stick to the dark and light blue; but if there is a color not now in use which is good for active service, it is

gray. An unfortunate prejudice will no doubt exist against it for many years yet in the United States, on account of it having been the uniform of the rebellion; but since it has been adopted as the militia dress in many States of the Union, we hope that the prejudice will die away. Apart from the associations, it is an excellent color. It has the great advantage of being unlike any other national uniform. Our present dress is nothing but a copy of the Sardinian in colors, and the sooner it is changed the better. Gray possesses the quality of invisibility in action, a most valuable one. Our own men will often remember the ghostly gray lines of the rebel infantry in the battle-fields of the past, and how difficult it was to catch sight of them. And with regard to prejudice, if our enemy has a good thing in his possession, and we can use it, we are foolish to let prejudice interfere with our benefit.

The disadvantage of gray is that it gets dingy and shabby soon. But this objection is remedied by trimming it with black. Any uniform of a single color gets shabby when the color fades. It is the contrast of trimmings that makes an old uniform look respectable to the last. Gray or bluish gray barred with black makes a neat and very handsome uniform. Its effect, as seen in the New York Militia, in several of its regiments, is very soldierly, neat, and handsome. Any uniform barred across the breast has a very fine effect, and as such are generally double-breasted, another item is gained in comfort and warmth. A soldier's coat ought to be double-breasted. It lasts longer, looks better, and keeps the placo warra that most needs it, his chest.

As for material of clothes, there is but one article in a cavalryman's dress that needs special mention, i.e., his trousers or breeches whichever they be. Cloth very soon wears out under the incessant bumping of a cavalry soldier. A pair of ordinary trousers goes in three weeks, and the reinforce cloth will not save a pair over two months. The reinforce, to be of any good, must be of leather, as in European cavalry. A single pair of trousers will then last a year and look decent, where three are now insufficient.

The sooner the government discards trousers and adopts tight breeches for cavalry use, the better. Jockeys, hunters, and grooms, all those whose avocations lead them among horses and who desire a firm seat wear breeches and boots. The cavalry should do the same. The material ought to be buckskin, if possible; but as that is far too expensive for private soldiers' use, its common substitute, corduroy, or moleskin, is equally good in its way. A still cheaper