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### VOLUNTEER CAVALRY.—No. II.

#### THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

#### THE REVOLVER.

WITHOUT any doubt the introduction of the revolver into cavalry service has doubled the destructive power of the latter; and of all revolvers introduced the old "Colt's" is by far the best. It shoots straight. No other revolver that I am acquainted with is sighted with the precision of Colt's. Many others shoot as strong, some stronger. Many are loaded with much more facility and more easily cleaned. But the fact remains that, for active service, Colt's revolver will be adjudged the best pistol extant by any and every officer and man who has to stake his life on his weapons. The reason is this: Screw a Colt's revolver into a vice, with the two sights in line with an object, and when you pull the trigger the ball will go exactly where it is aimed. All six bullets can be put into the same hole. With no revolver that we have ever seen; other than Colt's, can this be done. Smith and Wesson, Dean and Adams', etc., all are nice looking revolvers, easy to clean, easy to load, shooting strong—in all respects but one better than Colt's. But the one excellence of delicate and correct sighting has overbalanced all these other claims and renders Colt's *primus inter pares*.

It is a strange thing that gunsmiths and inventors appear to entirely overlook this fact of precision. Revolvers and pistols are advertised daily, whose simplicity, ease of loading, and penetration are duly vaunted to the public. Civilians buy them to keep them from possible burglars. It's all their good for. Their sighting is simply nil.

What good is a strong-shooting, quick-loading pistol to a man who does not know where his bullet will fetch up when he points it at a mark? The inexorable logic of experience teaches soldiers, sailors, hunters, and desperadoes, North and South, that they can rely on a Colt's pistol, when a Smith & Wesson's, etc., will "shoot all over."

You must keep cool in loading a Colt's revolver. The weapon is a valuable one and requires as much care as a watch. Neglected, it becomes as useless as a blunt sabre,

refuses to resolve, misses fire, and misbehaves itself generally. Arm a lot of green-horns with it, and they will render it useless in six weeks. Give it to men who know its value and they will do wonders with it.

In the hands of the Southern cavalry the revolver became their pet and pride. The terrible use it was put to in broken ground, at close quarters, by Mosby's troopers, doubled its real efficiency by its moral strength. Our future cavalry will do well to accept the lesson taught by this fact.

The true use of the revolver lies in irregular warfare, where single combats and sudden encounters of small parties take place, on horseback, in narrow lanes, among woods and fences, where the sabre cannot be used. In such places, and wherever regular order is broken up, the revolver is invaluable. In pursuits, patrols, and surprises it is superior to the sabre. In line charges in the field the latter is always conqueror if it is sharp.

The use of the revolver should be as carefully taught as that of the sabre. Ammunition, to practice with, is not thrown away here. The weapon should be inspected every day by company officers, as none gets out of order so soon if neglected.

But one thing should be impressed on every man—never try long shots when on horseback. This is the way ammunition is wasted. Target shooting may be made very instructive and useful, as men soon grow proud of proficiency in pistol shooting and improve from emulation.

For loading Colt's revolvers a powder-flask and bullets are much better than compressed cartridges. The latter have hardly any strength. I have seen pistols burst in firing a second shot from their use. The first bullet stuck in the barrel midway, the powder not being strong enough to expel it fully. The second burst the pistol.

Copper cartridges, with fulminating powder inserted, is better than either. The Remington pistol uses these; but I have not seen any of Colt's pattern arranged for the same purpose. If they ever are, the pistol will be nearly perfect, as copper cartridges are waterproof, and stronger shooting than loose powder.\*

The revolver on the right hip should have a cord fastened to it a yard long. The men should be practised in firing at a target when passing at speed, and then dropping the pistol on the opposite side, to use the cord while they handle the sabre.

Thus employed at the very instant before

\*The latest pattern of Remington revolvers are well sighted, and shoot well; as, using copper cartridges, they are preferable even to Colt's.

closing, the pistol is a terrible adjunct of the sabre. In the second part of this book the necessary drill will be given to practice this charge, the sabre in the left hand or held between the teeth.

Put in this matter the men must be taught never to fire before the word. The moral effect of a reserved volley is tremendous. Irregular file firing during an advance is both useless and demoralizing. Patience under fire makes veterans so formidable. Their reserved volley sweeps everything before it. Thirty or forty feet from the enemy's line is the time to fire, altogether and aiming low. Then the reserve of cold steel will come with double the efficiency, real and moral, and no cavalry, be they heavy or light, cuirassiers or lancers, that does not follow this system, can stand against your own line.

#### CARBINES.

With regard to the best weapon for dismounted men it is hard to decide. I have seen several different carbines, all good in their way. The Spencer carbine was latterly in very general use, superseding Sharp's. There was but little to choose between them. I have fired as many rounds in the course of twenty minutes out of Sharp's as out of Spencer's. The latter fires seven rounds pretty rapidly but it takes some time to reload. The Henry rifle, or sixteen shooter, is a magnificent weapon, quickly loaded, and firing as quick as a Colt's revolver. It is also very accurate. Colt's rifle, although very expensive, is, I am inclined to think, as good or better than any, in the hands of men who are cool and know how to use it. The six shots are fired more rapidly and far more accurately than by any other piece extant, but the loading must be done without flurrying. It is a poor weapon to give green troops on this account. A simple breech-loader that requires no capping, is probably the best weapon for volunteer cavalry troops. We have seen one called Howard's rifle, or the "thunder-bolt," that exceeds in simplicity and lightness any carbine hitherto used in war. The cavalry carbine of this pattern weighs only six pounds, and loads and primes with only three motions; the two ordinary lever motions of Sharp's and Spencer's and dropping in the cartridge. It cocks itself in loading, and has no external hammer to catch in dresses and let off the piece.

But, the weapon being selected, the men to use it are the real point of importance. The whole difference in action between green troops and veterans lies only in coolness, not courage. The difference in campaigning lies in the art of making yourself comfortable under any and all circumstances;