

RIDING DRILL IN THE PRUSSIAN CAVALRY.

[From the *Revue Militaire de L'Etranger.*]

In Prussia the regulation for riding drill is divided into three parts, which may be distinguished by the following names—Elementary instruction, secondary instruction, and advanced instruction. The first part of this regulation is intended for the instruction of those men who are only enlisted for three years, i. e. those of the first class.

The second part includes, in addition to the first part, supplementary lessons, whose object is to develop the instruction of those non-commissioned officers and men who are intended to drill the recruits and train the young horses. Those non-commissioned officers and men constitute the second class.

The third part, or instruction of the third class, includes the lessons which are given in the schools of equitation. This third part of the regulation, which comprises all the difficulties of the *menage*, &c., is only taught to the officers who are going through a regular course of instruction in the riding schools, and to those non-commissioned officers who have been sent to those schools, and who are intended to go through a year's supplementary course. Owing to the difficulties attending the lessons of this third part, they are never to form part of the regimental instruction.

The instructions contained in this regulation are thoroughly in accordance with the military organization of Germany, and at the same time fulfil the necessary conditions for insuring uniformity of instruction in every cavalry regiment. The cavalry, in reality, has not only to superintend the instruction of its men, but it has also to train its horses.

Now, amongst the men, some only remain three years with the colours, whilst others engage to remain after three years of service are finished; these are "the capitularies."

From this latter category, a great part of the instructors, and of the men intended to train the young horses, is furnished. The instruction must, therefore, be carried to a certain degree of perfection, whilst that of those men who only remain their three years is limited to all that is absolutely necessary to form soldiers, who are skilled in the management of their horses and in the use of their arms, either in peace or in war.

The former are taught by the officers, the latter by the non-commissioned officers of the squadron under the direction of their officers. It may not be amiss to mention here, that in Germany there is no such thing as a riding master in a cavalry regiment; the absence of this officer in the composition of the cadres of the German Army is the evident result of this principle, that each rank should be thoroughly able to perform those duties which are incumbent upon his position; and it appears difficult that we should refuse to admit this fact; for in an army powerfully constituted, is there any doubt but that the duty which it is most imperious that every rank, no matter what his position in the military hierarchy may be, should carry out, consists in instructing and moulding the instrument which he must know that he will have to turn to account in every phase of military life? The experience of the results which have been obtained, not only in Prussia but also in Austria, in all that concerns the instruction of the cavalry soldier and the training of the horses by the individual squadron officers, with a length of service reduced to a minimum, proves in the most

evident manner that the application of the principle which we have set forth succeeds perfectly when put in practice. We will add, that without speaking of the influence which it exerts upon the powerful constitution of the squadrons, it contributes to form an homogeneous corps of officers i. e. all thoroughly instructed, vigorous, and active, the first condition essential for every good mounted corps.

As has been already remarked, by the Prussian cavalry it is the non-commissioned officers who, under the direction of the officers, instruct the men of the first class. We are also aware that these instructors, who constitute the second class receive themselves from their officers the theoretical and practical instruction necessary for teaching the recruits and training the horses. Generally this second class works under the orders of the officers who are best instructed; this work includes, besides the lessons of the first part, all of those which are comprised in the second part of the regulation, and which concern more particularly the training of the horses. The object of this work, which is carried on by means of the old horses, is not only to prepare all the men who form part of the second class to train the young horses, which have to commence their education in the month of October each year, methodically, but it is intended, besides, as we shall see further on, to freshen up the old horses who, at the end of the general manoeuvres, require supplementary instruction.

Instruction of the First Class—According to the instructions for riding drill, in order that a trooper of the first class may be considered as an effective unit in the working together of the squadron, it is not sufficient that he should have gone through all the movements comprised in the first part of the regulations, but he must be able as well to execute them correctly, and with confidence and ease. The consequence is that the individual instruction which the recruit receives on horseback is not limited to those exercises which he has to go through from his arrival in the corps up to that moment when he takes his place for the first time in the squadron, i. e. from the month of October up to the end of March of the year following. The regulation considering this first period, which lasts about six months, as insufficient to form a completely trained soldier it follows that the man goes on with his individual instruction as soon as the spring manoeuvres, which lasts about a month, are finished. In these manoeuvres the men are taught to work by troops and squadrons—consequently, during the six months which precede these manoeuvres he is only to receive that elementary instruction which is actually necessary to enable him to take his place in the ranks of the squadron. In this first period of their instruction the recruits are taught to dress correctly, to change the direction, changing to either hand at all three paces, they are made to bend to the right or to the left, to execute turns or half turns to the right or left at the walk, and at the trot, and on their own ground. For this, a squad never consists of more than six men. When they are being taught to march on the same alignment, they must equally preserve the six metres of interval between them. To oblige them to make a constant use of the different aids, they are often made to close up, and then open out again to their six metres, to stop, to trot out, to stop short, especial attention is paid that in all these movements the horses are kept well together, and on that hand on which they are

working. This first instruction commences on the rug or blanket with double bridoon, then with the saddle, with or without stirrups and double bridoon, and finally with saddle and bridle.

During this first period, the man are taught to clear obstacles, by ones and twos, approaching the ditch or barrier by a hand gallop, and finally they are taught to use their arms on horseback.

With regard to the use of their weapons, the regulation concerning riding drill contains only a few observations, confined to pointing out to the trooper the simplest way of applying his horseback what he has learnt in this respect on foot.

The principles of riding which are taught, are based on that method, the object of which is to maintain the equilibrium of the horse, a method which may be indeed difficult to apply in a regiment, but which is undoubtedly the most rational, for the horse in equilibrium not only works with suppleness and lightness, but he is much less easily exhausted, owing to the fact that the work done by all his organs of locomotion is regular and equally distributed. We know, in fact, that with the horse as with all animals formed for rapid movement, the centre of gravity will be found nearer to the fore than to the hind quarters; consequently, when there is no one on the horse's back, the front limbs support almost the whole weight, whilst the hind limbs are only used to a great extent to propel the body; in this case, the horse himself assumes those attributes which he finds most convenient when wishing to set himself in motion; but when the animal is mounted, the conditions of equilibrium necessarily change; the weight which the front limbs support is liable to be much greater; it is the man then, who by his position on the horse, and by the judicious use of means, has to make the horse assume the necessary attitudes for re-establishing the equilibrium which has been destroyed, and for preparing his movements. It is upon this latter object that all the principles contained in the Prussian regulations on military equitation are brought to bear, and which may be summed up as follows. Every part of the horse must be supplied in order that the forehead may be strengthened, and that the movement of the front limbs may be freer, every endeavour must be made to bring the hindquarters well under the body in order that the hind limbs may be made to support a part of the weight which, when the horse is left to himself, would be thrown too much on the front limbs.

Anyone who has seen or who has ridden German cavalry horses has been able to satisfy himself as to the degree of suppleness which has been imparted to those horses, whose docility is so great, that it has been sometimes considered, though wrongly so in our opinion, as belonging particularly to the tractability inherent to the race of German horses.

We believe that if the Germans succeed in making their cavalry soldiers sufficiently skilful to bring the training of their troop horses to such a high degree of perfection, this result must be attributed to the theoretical instruction, and to the equestrian skill which the great mass of their cavalry officers possess. It is also due to the minute pains that each one takes to accomplish his particular task, to the constant work, inferrible but at the same time well managed, to which men and horses, recruits and old soldiers, young and old horses are subjected. It is due above all things to the responsibility which lies on the direct chief of a corps, and to the freedom which is allowed