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THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

MARCHES—HALTS—UNSADDLING AT NOON.

WARs are made up of campaigns and sieges. Campaigns are made up of marches and battles. Cavalry takes part in both, and excels in marches. Good cavalry can execute stupendous feats in marching if its horses are in good condition, but horses fall away from fatigue and privation faster than men. Weight and time tell on horses. With a light weight and at a brisk pace, they will execute far greater distances than if heavily loaded and travelling slowly. Every moment a load remains on their backs, standing or moving, it is penance to them. The removal of weight rests them very quickly. A spare horse that has been led the same distance as a loaded one, will seem to be perfectly fresh when mounted for a change. Good food, plenty of it, dry quarters, and room to lie down, will carry the horses of a regiment triumphantly through the hardest marches, if they are not loaded too heavily.

Keeping these landmarks in sight, the principles of managing cavalry on the march are not difficult to acquire.

In the first place, with green cavalry and experienced officers, these last should see that the saddling be careful.

If the light McClellan tree without flaps or saddle-bags, is used, and if the soldiers are restricted rigorously to a blanket and shelter tent, with one suit of linen underclothes, the weight of the packed saddle exclusive of rations, ought not to exceed ten pounds. Three days' grain in the grain bag makes thirty pounds more, and five days' rations ten more. Thus it will be seen that the weight of a saddle with three days' forage and rations can be reduced to fifty pounds, the ordinary weight of a dragoon saddle in Europe without a single pound of food. Counting an armed man at one hundred and fifty pounds, it will thus be quite easy to bring the total weight on the horse to two hundred pounds, a little over fourteen stone, at the commencement of the march, when the horse ought to be at his best condition. As the march progresses, the weight decreases, so that in three days

nearly forty pounds have been taken from the load. The average weight of our future volunteer cavalry ought to be brought to this standard, and the maximum of efficiency will be reached. There will be room for medium sized men of stout and active frame, and neither will the horses be overloaded, nor will the men be weakling pigmies, the extreme that some cavalry theorists would lead us to. A man under one hundred and twenty pounds is not much use in a sabre charge, unless he is remarkably muscular for his weight. But from one hundred and thirty to one hundred and forty pounds weight has often turned out some of the most formidable athletes and activity and skill with the sabre will counterbalance the rest. For dismounted work, the lighter and more active a man the better.

The weight being reduced to the minimum and the saddling attended to, the men should be kept on foot to the last minute. The practice of assembling mounted, and sitting on horseback, watching the rest of the column defile past, till it is the turn of the regiment to move, is bad. Brigade and division commanders should always keep a staff officer whose special duty it is to indicate to each regiment its place in the column. In this matter it is for the best to keep the same officer constantly detailed for this duty, and to attend to marches and camps in general. Such a practice is better than the rotation by different officers. I have seen both plans tried, and the first at ways worked the best.

Regimental commanders should, when waiting for the route, mass in columns of squadrons, dismounted, and not move out till the leading regiment has fully passed. It is not of near the same importance in cavalry to keep a column closed up as in infantry. If fighting begins, it is quite easy to trot up to save distance, and the advantages of close intervals are neutralized by the dust at other times.

The first hour of a day's march should be taken at a brisk walk, when a halt of five minutes should be called. At such times the men should dismount in their sets of fours. This halt is very beneficial to the horses, as it gives them time to stale, and horses checked in the operation receive much injury therefrom.

At all halts throughout the day care should be taken that regiments halt together. Many colonels, from an over-eagerness to keep "closed up" waste their halting time in closing intervals. Every halt ought to be fully enjoyed by every horse in the command. Colonels of regiments should

be warned to dismount their men as soon as brigade headquarters dismount, and each regiment is to follow without waiting for orders, as it sees its leaders dismounting. The only persons allowed to remain on horseback at halts are the staff officers on duty. All others, officers and privates, should dismount. After the first halt a trot should be taken for the next half hour. During this trot regiments may be closed up, and, after the horses begin to sweat, they should be pulled up and walked. Cavalry generals should not judge of the severity of the pace by its effects on their own horses alone. Costly and well-bred animals, with very little weight on them, and relieved from duty alternately, they are no fit criterion for the horses in the column. A good general keeps his eye constantly on his troops, and concerns himself with them during the march.

A second halt should be called at midday for half an hour, when officers will be charged to see that all saddles in their troops are readjusted if any necessity exists for it. The grain bag and ration wallets should be taken off at the midday halt, as also the sabre, which is fastened to the saddle by a snap hook at other times of dismounting, particularly to fight on foot. The loosening of the girths, even taking off the saddles, is advisable at the midday halt, if the enemy are not too near, and in dusty weather a good brushing will refresh the horses wonderfully.

Half an hour's halt at noon employed in unsaddling will reanimate the horses to such an extent, that when the advance is once more soured they will seem as fresh as in the morning. The operation is quite easy with a saddle having no flaps and properly picked. A horse can be saddled in perfect order in two minutes, the packing having been done in the morning; and, if the men are accustomed to saddling and unsaddling rapidly, the gain to the horses will be great. Many cavalry officers will stare aghast at the notion of saddling and unsaddling twice a day, but I have seen the experiment tried, and it always paid. Officers can detect by this means the first beginnings of sore backs better than at night, when every one is tired, and they can prevent the evil from spreading by making him lead his horse till it is cured. If colonels and company officers are strict on this point, it will prevent a great deal of suffering to the poor animals. At the midday halts brigades are massed by regiments, in columns of squadrons, in some convenient field. Shorter halts are more conveniently made in the road in the morning. Afternoon halts are better when made in mass to avoid tedious length of columns in coming into camp in the evening.