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THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journals.)

STRATEGY—SCOUTS.

We have now passed in review the purely tactical and logistic elements of cavalry in campaign, its arms, horses, food, forage, clothing, marches, baggage, and artillery. It remains to treat of the strategical part of cavalry duty, the system of pickets and scouts, whereby it finds out the enemy's movements, while hiding its own. We will commence with scouts.

Perhaps there is no part of warfare so difficult to master, so important in results if mastered, so fruitful of disasters if uncomprehended, as the science of scouting. Able, faithful, and trustworthy scouts are very rare. The combination of qualities that go to make a good scout is not often met with. Nine out of ten of the headquarter scouts in our service during the war were simply reckless scoundrels, who brought in but little valuable information, and stole horses from the farmers to sell for a consideration. There were exceptions, but this was the rule. A more useless body of men, take them all in all, was seldom met with. The rebel scouts, on the other hand, especially at the commencement of the war, furnished the fullest information to their chiefs. One great cause of this was that the rebel cavalry scouts were very often officers of intelligence and address, who could take hints quickly, adapt themselves to circumstances with readiness, and who had their hearts in the business. In the last words lies the whole secret of the scouting system. Some men are natural detectives. Such men are fitted for the position of scout because they love the excitement of finding out. Other men have suffered deadly injury from the enemy, and long to avenge themselves. If such men have lived in the country to be scouted in and know it well, they are the men to employ, if intelligent. But one quick-witted, well-educated officer, well mounted, and lavishly supplied with fresh horses, if needed, will bring in more reliable intelligence than a whole swarm of detailed horse thieves out of the ranks. It is far from good policy to think any rascal a smart man. An honest man whose word can be

relied on will not furnish false information.

Scouts will do well to go in pairs. Two pairs of eyes are better than one, and two heads are proverbially better than a single brain. One can often take back intelligence while the other goes further at greater risk, so that even if the latter is captured, the general gets the news.

Scouts should be mounted in the best possible manner. They should be first-class pistol shots, and carry from two to four revolvers in belt and saddle holsters. They should carry no sabre on any account, as its jingle would betray them, and they ought to be light men themselves. Many a time they'll have to ride for their lives, and an extra pound or two may cause their loss. They should have all their grain and clothing carried in headquarter waggons to lighten them. Generally, they manage to live off the country without any difficulty, and supply themselves with horses in the same way, as before mentioned.

The system is an excellent one if none but reliable officers are appointed. The mistake lies in supposing every smart horse-thief to be a good scout. A perfectly brave man he must be, not afraid to hover round the enemy's flanks, and find out his position in full. Such a man is valuable. A dozen such are invaluable, and worth a horse every day if they need it, which they oftentimes will.

With the spy system a cavalry treatise has nothing to do. Spies are expensive luxuries, and belong more to the province of the chief of the whole army than to that of the cavalry corps general. But the system of headquarter scouts, under proper discipline, furnishes one of the best lessons of the decade for the future. Headquarter scouts form an extreme advance of bold, wary men, on swift horses, who should not fear to venture miles away in front of their own advance guard, to gain any information of the enemy's movements. Men detailed in rotation for this duty fail in skill and experience. They must be kept on the same duty constantly, to acquire the skill. Every day that passes, every lucky escape, adds to their boldness in finding out the numbers and position of the enemy, and boldness and swift riding are two valuable qualities in a scout. If they are reliable in their information, it will be found much more serviceable than that of spies, on account of its frequency, and the short time elapsing between seeing and reporting.

Scouts should not be dressed in the enemy's uniform. It tends to render the business treacherous and to degrade its character in the eyes of the men in the col-

umn, besides deterring many men from volunteering as scouts who would make the best. Our own headquarter scouts, when Sheridan commanded the cavalry corps, were very much disliked by the men on account of their assuming the rebel uniform. I have known them to be fired at deliberately by our own men, under pretence of mistaking them for enemies. Dressed in our own uniform, or something easily recognizable as such, they lose the sneaking spy character, and become twice as useful in reality. Their uniform should be something that resembles that of the enemy only at a little distance, and prevents the wearer being shot at by your own men.

Under the "enemy's uniform" system, the men in the column frequently fail to distinguish friend from foe, and I have known more than one instance of rebel officers coming inside of our lines and making due inspection without danger in full uniform. They were taken for headquarter scouts.

But, under proper discipline, as before noticed, a body of bold, quick witted men, with sharp eyes, accustomed to judge of the strength of bodies of men at a glance, are very valuable. They should be prepared to shoot at an instant's notice; to pick up the enemy's stragglers and question them; to ride all round his columns and wagon train; to make off across the country at a speed that defies pursuit, if detected, to turn and fight if not followed by more than four men. Quick decisive work can be made with revolvers, if a man is cool, determined, and a sure shot. Such a man has more than even chances with four ordinary cavalry soldiers pursuing him. If he should be a first class swordsman, it may be even advisable for him to wear a sabre. But in that case the scabbard must be of simple leather, or the jingling will betray him. For night work, and often for day work, scouts should be provided with some sort of pads to deaden the sound of their horses' feet if necessity requires it. Such pads are easily made, and can be adjusted on occasion. They must be frequently renewed, as they will quickly wear out, and to be of any good they must be very thick and soft. A scout should also be provided with a pair of hobbles, to enable him to leave his horse motionless if necessary, while he reconnoitres on foot. A single strap, with two loops near the end, is the best thing for this purpose. The loops, which slip up and down, are passed around the two front pasterns, the long end of the strap is tied over the hock of one hind leg. A horse thus secured will stand like a statue for hours, and is released in twenty seconds. The strap can be used as an ordinary halter