

For instance, the country on the Franco-German frontier has practically no fences, although if you get into Belgium it is different.

In any case it is doubtful to what extent cavalry in masses could negotiate fences at all: first, because on service the weight carried by a troop horse is 17 or 18 stone. Horses have to travel long distances day after day, and getting less food and less attention fall away in condition. It can, therefore, scarcely be anticipated that an enclosed area would be selected for shock tactics, but if this was the case, the cavalry employing fire action would have an undoubted advantage, always provided that protective patrols gave ample warning of the approach of the hostile cavalry.

Talking of the effect of shock action by cavalry, it is a curious fact that history records but few instances where any large bodies of opposing cavalry have met in a charge, because almost invariably one or other has turned to run before the encounter. Sir Evelyn Wood in selecting twelve historical instances of the achievements of cavalry, only includes one instance; that of Mars la Tour in 1870, where 3,000 cavalry on each side (French and German) met in a charge; every other instance was when cavalry have charged infantry or guns, in each case the cavalry having effected a surprise or being launched against broken troops. Under such circumstances the British are taught that shock tactics may be employed to advantage, the moral effect being the principle value gained, but the view is still maintained that fire, if opened unexpectedly at short range, upon an unprepared body of troops, may readily produce a state of demoralization which may be favourable for shock tactics.

When, however, we pass from Europe to Canada, we find the conditions so totally different that we are compelled to adapt our training to circumstances, for it is well at once to recognize that cavalry, unlike infantry or artillery, cannot be improvised within one year of the opening of any campaign. This fact is most intimately related to the peculiar characteristic of cavalry trained man, trained horse, the former to use his weapons while riding at top speed, the latter to carry a heavy load across country at a gallop.

After the disastrous campaign in Russia in 1812, when Napoleon lost 450,000 men and 190,000 horses, Napoleon never again was able to raise cavalry, and in his 1813 campaign