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### VOLUNTEER CAVALRY.—No. XIII.

#### THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

#### OFFICERS AND BREVETS—HORSE ARTILLERY—MITRAILLEUSES.

A colonel, a major, a staff of adjutant, quartermaster, commissary, ordnance officer, surgeon, and veterinary surgeon, with a captain for each company, is the best complement of officers a volunteer cavalry regiment can have. In such a regiment the non-commissioned officers would be trusted with many responsibilities. I venture to say that they would prove worthy of them. Good sergeants and corporals are the life-blood of an army. Their promotions for merit should be by brevet, so that they could enjoy the opportunity of association with their superior officers before exercising actual command. By the system of brevets you place a man on probation in each new rank, and are not saddled with a drunken officer, who may have been an excellent sergeant, but turns out to be unfit for elevation. I have seen too many instances of this not to feel anxious for a check on the practice in future. By the brevet system, a colonel can always remit a man to sergeant's duty. He draws the pay of his brevet rank only while doing the duty of that rank. Still, in such cases, the opinion of resignation should be given. A degraded officer will never make a good sergeant again, unless he does his duty willingly.

But one branch of the strength of a cavalry corps remains to be noticed on the march, after which the question of outpost and advance duty and the purely strategic part of cavalry service will terminate the disquisition. This branch is horse artillery; and its proper management ought to be part of every cavalry officer's education.

During the war of the Rebellion nearly all the batteries of horse artillery serving with our volunteer cavalry belonged to the regular service. They were splendid batteries, well horsed and equipped, and officered mostly with West Pointers. The guns were either three-inch rifles or "light twelve-pounders" of brass (a cross between the howitzer and long twelve or Napoleon gun). But in the matter of horse artillery, a great economy of men and horses might be practiced, and that with advantage to the whole

corps, if the system of lasso draught, before mentioned, were more generally applied.

Contrary to the general opinion, the use of artillery in the field is by no means the mystery that many artillery officers love to call it, to enhance their own importance. That there is much abstruse science required for the full making up of an accomplished artillery officer, we do not pretend to deny. But a great deal of this abstruse science is thrown away in the field. A table of ranges at different degrees of elevation, to be committed to memory, and a faculty of judging distance correctly, are the great essentials for a chief of piece. I have often and often seen old artillery sergeants beat their eloquently educated West Point officers all to nothing at a difficult shot.

The theoretical knowledge necessary to the posting a battery properly, and the management of the guns in action, do not require, after all said, the expensive array of officers and the amount of luxury now accorded to a battery of horse artillery. A single captain and a dozen sergeants from the old Regular Army, with the guns and caissons, ought to be enough for a cavalry battery. The men of the regiments can be taught to work a gun in three days. The service is perfectly simple. Artillery officers drill at it for a long time in order to get the men to do certain things in a certain way, but the root of all this is found in the little phrase "fuss and feathers." Our cavalry of the future ought to be drilled for work, not for show. A battery of six guns, four being rifles, two "light twelves," ought to accompany every brigade. The regiments should take turns to drag it with their lassos, the advance regiment of the day having that honor. Any force of horses necessary could be put on at once, in muddy roads and over soft fields, and the guns would never be an incumbrance.

The advantages of horsing a battery from the regiments, and of drilling all the men of every regiment to the "school of the piece," are manifold. The men soon get very proud of their pieces, and will stick to them through thick and thin. The artillery sergeants would command the pieces and caissons, and the artillery captain the battery. Equal precision of fire would be attained, with greater economy of men and horses. One hundred and twenty of the latter will be saved in each brigade, with the pay of gunners and drivers. Under the lasso draught system, gunners, drivers, and supports are all one. The covering squadron of cavalry furnishes all three. The saving in baggage is also immense. As for the travelling forge and repairs, etc., this is easily provided for. The sergeants of cais-

sons should be artificers as well as gunners.

It may be objected that there is no provision in this plan for the replacement of the chiefs of pieces who act as pointers, if killed. I have only to say that the casualties in a battery of flying artillery are so rare, that long before a chief of piece gets disabled he will have had time to train a dozen successors in every regiment, among the sergeants. In the course of three years' active campaigning in Virginia, I cannot recall an instance of a man being killed in our brigade battery under fire, and I only remember one instance in which a limber was smashed by a round shot. Batteries serving with infantry have hard times in action. Their service is very frequently the most dangerous on a field of battle, and their losses are out of all proportion to that of the other arms. But flying artillery batteries have the earliest time of any body of men in the army, apart from the quartermaster's department people.

Under the lasso draught system, not only do the men become fond and proud of their pieces, but in case of capturing an adverse battery their practice becomes excessively valuable. Dropping the nooses of their lassos over the pintle-bolts of the trails, they can whisk off the captured guns in a moment, before the supports have time to retake them, even if the limbers have been galloped off by the enemy.

The use of the lasso is easily learned by men who know how to ride. The perfection of skill attained by gauchos and Mexican vaqueros need not be hoped for. But any man can learn how to throw a lasso if he is properly taught, and the art may often prove very valuable, especially in capturing prisoners, stopping escaping artillery teams, forming bridges, etc. (In the brief system of tactics annexed to this treatise will be found instructions for lasso casting.)

The use of the lasso, in conjunction with the oxhide surcingle as a harness, if introduced in full in our cavalry, will add vastly to its future value. Even green cavalry can learn its use, and very soon become exceedingly expert. It is a peculiarly American invention, and as such is well suited to our cavalry of the future. In performing the service of artillery drivers and gunners, it will enable cavalry to act as well as artillery men. It will prove an immense economy in expense, saving the cost of all the horses and four-fifths of the men of all the flying batteries in the service, without reducing their precision of fire one iota. If it is a waste of labor for men to do horses' work, it is equally waste to maintain a corps of men to do nothing but sponge and ram and carry cartridges. Cavalrymen can learn the