

## Modern Tactics.

[By Capt. H. R. Gall—From Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine.]

### Chapter I.—Part I.

#### THE CAVALRY WHICH PRECEDES AN ARMY IN THE FIELD.

THE general arrangements of the cavalry divisions or brigades preceding an army marching must be determined by their commander, who is entrusted with a three-fold mission:—

I. To screen from observation the different columns of the army marching behind on parallel roads.

II. To break through the enemy's cavalry to try and discover the positions, numbers, and movements of his troops in rear of it.

III. To ascertain the resources of the country, and the nature and amount of supplies and accommodation procurable.

In an open country—for instance, the plains of India—the formation best adapted to meet these three requirements would be that of outposts moving; an unbroken line of videttes in communication with each other, furnished by picquets, with supports and reserves following in rear. In an open country the security against surprise afforded to the army it is covering by such a screen is absolute so long as the fan-shaped formation is not broken through.

It is obvious that a concentrated force of the enemy's cavalry might attempt to break through such a formation, and to meet this danger the picquets, supports and reserves must be in direct communication to enable them to reinforce each other rapidly, or gather strength as they fall back; each section of the screen (*i.e.* each brigade or regiment) falling back in conformity with the portion assailed, until the opportunity occurs of making a simultaneous counter-attack from two or more points on the advancing squadrons of the assailants.

On the first appearance of the enemy's troops advancing in force, information should be sent back to the commander of the column immediately in rear, to warn him that that portion of the screen in front of his advanced guard is attacked and is manœuvring against the assailants. The other generals commanding columns on the right or left should also be warned to be on the alert to meet any emergency, and will understand that until they hear further they are wholly dependent on their own immediate advanced guards when marching, or outposts if halted, for protection against surprise.

The above example shows how vulnerable a cavalry screen must always be, especially in an open country, and how necessary it is, at all times, for troops on the march to be protected, in addition to the cavalry reconnoitring in front of them, by their own immediate advanced guards or outposts.

The first mission of a cavalry screen is to prevent the enemy's cavalry getting near enough to reconnoitre and discover the movements of the columns it is covering. Its second mission is to endeavour, if strong enough, to break through the enemy's light troops and discover what is taking place behind them. How this may be accomplished has been shown; also what resistance may be expected.

The front of a single command in cavalry-screening work should never exceed twenty miles. The reason for this is similar to that which limits the front of an infantry picquet to 800 yards.

If a commander has a front of twenty miles to superintend, supposing him to be in rear of its centre, an orderly would have to ride twenty miles to carry a message to the flank and return with an answer.

If an infantry picquet, no matter how open the country may be, has a front of more than 800 yards in foggy weather, and at night, the visiting patrols going round every hour, and including the nearest sentry of the next picquet on the left, would march about twenty-five miles.

The commanders in each case have to guard against breaking down their troops, and rendering them unfit to take their place on the field of battle—the issue to which all military operations tend, a fact which must never be lost sight of.

All through the study of tactics a few simple principles will be found to regulate each movement, and what makes the subject especially interesting is that there is a distinct reason for every minor detail bearing on one or other of these simple principles.

The maximum extent of front of a single cavalry command is twenty miles, but as ten or more picquets are combined to furnish a continuous cordon of sentries on outpost duty in front of an army halted, so two or more cavalry commands may be combined to form one large screen when reconnoitring a country in front of an army marching.

When the country is enclosed—such, for instance, as most parts of England—the cavalry screen is less effective in one way, though more so in another. In an enclosed country cavalry could not guard against small bodies of infantry creeping through between the roads and gaining information. On the other hand, if their movements, owing to the nature of the country, are restricted to the roads, so must those of the enemy be, and by guarding the main avenues of approach the columns in rear are fully protected from surprise, though not to the same extent from espionage.

Here, again, the similarity between cavalry-screening duties and outpost is apparent. At night the cordon system of outposts is replaced by the patrol system, which does not guard against individuals creeping through, but, by guarding the main avenues of approach by which alone the enemy in any force can advance in the dark, protects the army from surprise.

In an enclosed country the screening fan-shaped formation of cavalry still holds good, but it is a skeleton fan.

In such a country lateral communication between the different screening squadrons

must be established whenever the cross roads admit of it; and localities where the roads are more or less favourable for establishing connection should be indicated to the troops engaged, with orders not to advance beyond named places until lateral communication has been established between certain points, if not throughout the entire line.

As cavalry are powerless to manœuvre on a road which they cannot leave, a single squadron (the tactical unit of cavalry) is as good as a regiment. In a village, for instance, a squadron might be handled with more or less effect, while a regiment or a brigade would be very unwieldy.

The distance at which the cavalry screen ought to precede the army it is covering depends on three things: 1st, the nature of the country; 2nd, the strength of the cavalry force available; 3rd, the resistance it is likely to meet with.

To fulfil its mission a cavalry screen should never be less than fifteen miles in front of the nearest advanced guard, but may, under favourable conditions, be as much as from 60 to 100 miles, *i.e.* from four to five days' march.

Cavalry screens are furnished from the cavalry divisions or brigades of an army in contradistinction to what is known as divisional cavalry. A division in the English army is composed as follows:—

Two brigades of infantry of three battalions each.

One battalion called the "divisional battalion."

One regiment of cavalry.

Three batteries of field artillery.

One company of engineers.

One infantry and artillery reserve ammunition column.

The tactical unit of infantry is a battalion of 1,000 strong divided into eight companies.

The tactical unit of cavalry is a squadron. Four squadrons of 96 sabres form a regiment, and there are two troops to each squadron.

The tactical unit of artillery is a battery, which consists of six guns and six waggons, sub-divided into half batteries, divisions and sub-divisions. A sub-division consists of one gun with its waggon.

The cavalry regiment attached to a division is part and parcel of that division, and its duties may be briefly indicated as follows: It furnishes the leading portion of the advanced guard on the march, and, when the division is halted in an open country the advanced outposts by day. It furnishes the reconnoitring parties for its own division when the country is of a nature to admit of cavalry being used. It furnishes escorts of all descriptions, and should be freely utilized to protect convoys, especially of prisoners of war. The squadrons not with the advance guard follow in rear of the main column on the march, and in the absence of mounted police a troop is told off to the rear-guard, which marches behind the baggage and authorized camp followers.

On the battle-field the divisional cavalry regiments may be taken from their respective divisions and formed into brigades; but if a division is acting alone its cavalry regiment would guard its exposed flank, furnish an escort for its guns, and be prepared in case of emergency to protect the infantry if repulsed, and give them an opportunity of rallying. The cavalry brigades or divisions are distinct bodies of cavalry under their own general, who is in direct communication with the commander-in-chief of the army.

These troops furnish the cavalry screen, and when, owing to the proximity of the enemy's advanced infantry, they are withdrawn, they become what are called the cavalry reserves. Their duties in this capacity will be described later on, when the employment of the three arms in conjunction is dealt with. In a mountainous, wooded, or much intersected country, cavalry cannot work, as they are at the mercy of a few of the enemy's riflemen if skilfully handled. When the country is of a nature to preclude the employment of cavalry, or in the absence of this arm, the screening duties must be performed by infantry in skirmishing order, sent out from advanced guards which must be strengthened to provide for these troops being detached.

(To be Continued.)

Col. Hope's gun, intended to revolutionize artillery construction, burst on being tested at the first round.

It is reported at Berlin that the recent mobilization experiment in France showed that the troops were unable to bear the strain of long marches.

A 20-pounder field gun has recently been designed at Woolwich, which will probably be the most powerful field piece yet constructed. The gun, which will only weigh 12 cwt., is designed to fire a 6 lb. charge of powder, giving an estimated velocity at the muzzle of 1,650 feet per second.

One of the smallest manuscripts in the world is for sale, says the London *Times*. It is a grain of rice, with the whole first chapter of the Koran written on it; given to an English officer in 1812 by an American gentleman, who received it from an Arab sheikh, whom he had cured of a dangerous fever in the desert.

Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, has more titles than any other European sovereign. He is King of seven countries or provinces, Grand Prince of one, Prince or Margrave of several others, and Archduke, Grand Duke, and Duke of half a dozen more. He is considered the richest monarch of Europe, with the possible exception of Queen Victoria.

The recent Austrian manœuvres were very successful. Over 100,000 men were assembled, just about the strength of the Austrian Army that would have to descend into Roumania in the event of the latter demanding protection against the Russians who would come from Bessarabia. The manœuvres are considered by military men as a sort of actual rehearsal of the first operations of the next Eastern war in Europe.