

his back; and his grain-bag had better be left at the post, if it is full and heavy, as also the ration wallet, till the last relief goes on in the morning.

As for keeping the picket post mounted and standing still, they are ten times as useful on foot in most cases. Standing to horse is infinitely preferable to mounting, on occasion of relieving vedettes. A horse is too valuable an animal to be used as a bench to put weights on. Every moment he is not in motion he should be rested, and standing still with a man on his back is as bad as marching for a horse.

The vedettes in the fields, etc., should have his horse near him, hobbled or hitched as the ground warrants, but capable in either case of being mounted instantly. He should patrol slowly and cautiously to his next neighbor, avoiding noise. The dull monotonous tread of an infantry sentinel is as far from the step of a dismounted cavalry vedette as can be. He should rather imitate the Indian, wary and noiseless, seeing and unseen.

The vedettes in the roads, behind their barriers, should be perfectly still. They can see a long distance ahead, and the instant anything comes in sight they should mount. Forces coming on roads are apt to be strong, and our vedettes must be prepared to fight or fly. The doubling of road vedettes, but of no others, is very advisable. Two men behind a good barricade can keep a number at bay in the dark. In case anything doubtful appears, one of them can either steal forward on foot to examine, or go back for a patrol.

In the case of field and wood vedettes, patrolling on foot answers most of the purposes of doubled vedettes, with half the number of men.

In the choice of vedette posts a wooden routine is not advisable. Straight lines, ignoring the conformation of the country, when woods and fences dictate a wavy line, are very poor policy. If the country is diversified with open fields and little patches of wood, vedettes should always leave their horses on the inside of the wood patches, while they themselves push through to the outer edge from whence they command a view of the fields. If a fence occurs, or a stone wall, vedettes steal along behind it, keeping a barrier between them and the enemy. Impassable obstacles, such as deep rivers, must be watched. If carelessly picketed, they are liable to be crossed in boats.

The picket posts should never unsaddle. One relief should also keep on the grain bags and ration wallets. The one that has last come off may remove these, except during the morning watch.

Surprises in force are always made in the morning watch; all pickets at that time should be fully saddled and packed and ready for duty. In the first watches, and up to three in the morning, the relief on duty and the one just come off can take off their grain and rations, which can be replaced in fifty seconds if they are laid in order behind the horses. In case of a night attack, the relief next on duty should mount at once, and be ready to succor the vedettes, to enable them to get their forage and rations; but as night attacks on cavalry pickets properly posted are impossibilities in point of success, the vedettes need not hurry back too soon. Night alarms generally arise from guerilla incursions, or excitable imaginations of vedettes. If the latter are posted so as to have a good view, their imaginations will not mislead them; but if you put a cavalry vedette out in the middle of a field with a wood in his front, as I have

seen scores of times, you offer a premium to such a man's imagination to play him tricks and excite false alarms.

The officer in charge of a picket post must be a man of experience. To put a young one in charge is to invite a surprise. Young officers should be put on as supernumeraries for some time before trusting them with a pickets post under their orders.

All patrols should be sent from the picket reserve. The sergeant or corporal of the relief will do the patrolling from the picket posts, without needing a man with him. But strong patrols, consisting of an officer, a sergeant, and four or six men, will be sent out every hour from the picket reserve down the roads. The patrols should go out at least a quarter of a mile beyond the vedettes, unless they run into the enemy. After three o'clock they should be particularly watchful; and at that time the whole picket reserve should pack their saddles. The early part of the night they only keep saddled, patrols and all leaving grain and rations in the bivouac.

The picket reserve should be strongly posted, and command the probable avenue of approach for the enemy. A barricade or hasty breastwork should be thrown up in its front, by which a stubborn defence can be maintained.

In the matter of driving in pickets, these rules may with advantage be repeated. Small forces come by the fields, large ones by the roads. Night attacks are mere annoyances. Severe attacks come on about daybreak. These rules will hold good in almost every case, and especially in that of well-extended pickets. Rapid dashes can only be made down roads. Advances of large forces over broken ground are necessarily slow. To drive in a picket, rapidity is absolutely necessary. By barricading the roads much time will be gained, and a second line of defence on the level of the picket posts can be fallen back on.

At the first sign of a morning attack, the whole of the picket posts should mount, and gallop up to the line of vedettes, deploying as skirmishers. The picket reserves should also mount, and gallop up to thicken the line further. If the ground is thickly wooded in patches, a better defence can be made by dismounting, and pushing through to the other skirt of the woods, on foot. If forced to retire, the next line of defence must be held as obstinately as possible; and as the successive reinforcements arrive and the distance to the main body decreases, the resistance will be more and more stubborn.

I do not believe it possible for pickets with a mile between them and the camp to be driven in with enough rapidity to cause a surprise. Under proper management, with dismounted vedettes patrolling to each each other in wary silence, patrols striking out on all the roads, and barricades erected with the same invariable prudence that made the Romans fortify their camps every night, a cordon of pickets would be practically unassailable except by heavy force. That the horses would be less broken down needs no demonstration. The weariness suffered by cavalry horses standing mounted for two hours at a stretch, still further aggravated by the practice of mounting the whole picket post every time a relief goes on, brings many of them to the condemned corral. Picket duty is known as "very severe on horses," especially in winter. It need not be so if the vedettes dismount whenever they are at rest.

The system of camp guards, dismounted, inside the line of picket reserves, is very important. The length of the line is so small, that one fifth of the number of men on

picket suffice to guard it; and if a scout of the enemy should succeed in running the picket line, he will fail to run the closer line of sentries. It was this inside line of guards that saved the Sixth New York Cavalry from a much worse surprise on the occasion before mentioned. The inside sentry gave the alarm and afforded the camp nearly three minutes to turn out from the time the first dash was made.

Patrols on the roads and frequent visits of the corporal of the relief are also very necessary, and to be insisted upon. They keep the vedettes up to their work, prevent them from being lonely, and encourages them generally. A vedette on post has much to discourage him, especially in bad weather, and needs all the support that can be given to him. The frequent visits induce a feeling of companionship in the minds of men very sensitive to moral influence. Sleepy heads are kept awake better, also, by frequent patrols.

The patrols which go outside the lines must have some signal arranged with the road vedettes to indicate their return, to avoid useless delay. Watchwords and countersigns are good in their way, but they are no real safe guard; a countersign has many a time been overheard by concealed enemies, who have availed themselves of its aegis to enter the lines.

In this matter, as in others, common sense must rule instead of precedent. The problem is, to enable a vedette to know friends from enemies. When a patrol passes out he should count it carefully, and notice the color of its horses. The officer of the patrol should speak to him to let him know his voice. Some inaudible signal, such as making peculiar signs with one or both arms, or sabre, or hat, is preferable to countersigns if the night is not too dark. As patrols should never return except by the roads, and as road vedettes are doubled, one of them can go forward to examine any party approaching if it claims to be a patrol. But if a vedette knows perfectly well who is coming, he should not be encouraged to a stolid rule of action, which embarrasses friends and does not keep out enemies. Such a thing as the commanding general getting out to the lines, and not permitted to pass in by a stupid sentry who know him perfectly well all the time, ought not to happen under the reign of common sense. Such instances have happened, and they savor of the martinet days of Frederick the Great, which ought now to be forgotten. If a vedette is really in doubt, he should fire off one barrel of his revolver, which will bring up the corporal. In these days of repeating arms the thing is easy enough. If he really suspects the stranger, he should detain him at all hazards, covering him with the carbine. The system of turning a man back has nothing to recommend it. Suspicious persons should be detained. Your own people, if you know them, ought to go through, countersign or no countersign.

A shot should always call out the corporal or sergeant of the relief. There is no necessity to turn out the whole post mounted. If the enemy is coming in force, he is sure to make the other vedettes fire, and as the corporal gallops off you will soon hear more noise. But if two or more shots are heard, the whole post should go to the front at once to support the line, for even a small squad of guerillas may do much damage. In the matter of rousing a picket post everything must be left to an officer's discretion, but he must be careful not to hesitate beyond two shots coming together.

Wanton vedettes, from a pure spirit of mischief, will sometimes fire to alarm a camp