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THE LESSONS OF THE DECADE.

BY A VOLUNTEER CAVALRYMAN.

(From the United States Army and Navy Journal.)

ORGANIZATION.

We have taken our lesson from the late war as to the arms of the cavalry of the future. Let us take our profit from it in regard to organization.

In the United States any war that comes upon us, is sure to find us unprepared. It is the nature of our people that it should be so. They are impatient of all standing armies beyond a police force for the Indians. Our cavalry of the future will have to be hastily raised and put in service like our cavalry of the past, without many weeks for drill. Let us, in that possible future, follow the example of the South in the war, and organize our cavalry from men owning their own horses, whether in town or country.

The advantages of this system were remarkably illustrated during War of the Rebellion. At its inception the Southern cavalry were far superior to that of the North. Born in a country where roads were bad, and wheeled vehicles, except heavy waggons and old lumbering stage-coaches, almost unknown, the Southerners as a rule made all their excursions for business or pleasure on horseback. As a consequence the poor riders were the exception, good riders the rule, among high and low.

In the North this was reversed. Buggies are the rule, riders the exception. Thus it will be seen that a nation of good riders started with a great advantage over those who, as a nation, considered the horse as a driving machine, to be hauled at with both hands. The consequence was as might be expected. In the first year of the war the Southern cavalry displayed a marked superiority. On horseback they felt at home, while the green levies from the North were in a strange and uncomfortable position.

The Northern cavalry were well armed at that period, as far as revolvers went; the Southerners, many of them, carried only double-barrelled fowling pieces loaded with buckshot.

And yet that first year was fruitful of instances where whole squadrons of the Northern cavalry were taken prisoners. The second year of the war passed away, with the Northern cavalry still in the slough of despond, but slowly improving. In the third year they suddenly came out and beat their old masters. The Southerners had taught

them how to fight on horses, and they had learned to ride in the best of all schools, the rough and ready school of active service.

In the last two years of the war the superiority of the Northern horse over that of the Confederates became almost as marked as that of the Confederates had been in the beginning. It is true that no batches of prisoners were taken without resistance, but that was because we had old soldiers to deal with, not green recruits. But in the years 1863 and 1864 the Confederate cavalry slowly waned as ours rose in lustre. Morgan was taken; so was Gilmore. Stewart was killed, the flower of Southern chivalry. To the old Southern leaders none were found to succeed worthy to emulate their deeds. Even Moseby's ubiquitous band became less and less formidable daily. Our cavalry saw the day when it was able to outmarch and outfight that terrible horse, before whose far-reaching raids the whole army had once trembled.

One cause of this change was the falling off of horses in the South, by which their cavalry became weaker in numbers. But, more than the weakness in numbers, it compelled the Southern cavalry leaders to be cautious and husband horses that could not be replaced. A cautious cavalry soon becomes over-cautious, timid for the safety of its horses; and timidity of action is the bane of success.

But all the good in the United States cavalry at the close of the war was originally owing to the teaching of their adversaries. Men inspired by sectional vanity and *esprit de corps*, may feel disposed to deny this. The impartial observer of future times will confess it, and also admit that the pupils finally beat their masters.

Good cavalry is the most valuable species of troops. Take two generals of equal capacity, with fifty thousand men each. Let one have nothing but infantry and artillery, the other nothing but cavalry and its proportion of batteries. The cavalry general in one week's campaign shall do what he pleases with the other, cutting his communications, harassing his pickets, starving him out, and keeping the field with impunity, when his antagonist is forced to retreat to his fortifications and ships. Even a due proportion of cavalry will do wonders toward the success of a campaign. The war of the Rebellion is full of such instances. Stuart's cavalry at the commencement of the war, Sheridan's at the close of it, each in its way was the instrument with which the respective commanders-in-chief won their most important strategic victories.

In fact, the whole of the disasters of McClellan and Pope in 1862 might have been

averted had we possessed cavalry, but practically, we had none. What there was was scattered among corps and division in fantry commanders, who knew nothing of its use, and who heartily disliked it. The infantry men sneered at it, and the universal opinion was that cavalry was useless except for outposts and orderly duty—in fact, to look at the enemy and run away. But in that, as in many other things, the enemy taught us a valuable lesson. By experimental proof it was knocked into the heads of our wise leaders that cavalry was good for something. Stuart's raids and charges, Morgan's rapid successes in the West, showed that the enemy knew how to use cavalry.

And so at last our cavalry was gathered together from its places of contempt, and banded together in one corps as it should be. Its progress from that moment was positively marvelous. Not a disaster befell the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac from the day that it was first drawn into the cavalry corps. It went on from victory to victory.

The progress of the North and South during the war affords material for many valuable lessons for our American cavalry of the future. Our early disasters, the South's early successes, arose from opposite modes of recruitment. Their cavalry owned their own horses from the first. Ours did not.

A man who owns his own horse generally knows something about riding him. If he's a poor countryman he's quite certain to. So that you start with such a man with a great advantage. You don't have to teach him how to take care of a horse. All he has to learn is military riding, the combination of hand and leg. He soon learns this. The sabre he is only too eager to learn. If there is a good instructor, who can convince the most skeptical of the value of swordsmanship, by a few smart raps with the single stick, your men will be practising in season and out of season. It is surprising in how short a time intelligent able-bodied men will become fair swordsmen. Countrymen, too, who own a horse, have generally a gun somewhere, and are pretty fair shots—a second requisite for a modern cavalryman.

The South started with these advantages in their cavalry service.

Our troopers, on the other hand, came from anywhere and everywhere, and so did the horses. Some knew how to ride, others did not. Many were townsmen, and had never a gun in their hands.

Prudence would have dictated drilling these men carefully before sending them into the field, and especially teaching them to ride.

The practice was to let them lie in bar-