

MOUNTED RIFLES OUR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST INVASION*

There is a strange romance and a charm about cavalry that attracts all ages and ranks,—the school-boy and the philosopher, the civilian as well as the soldier. The thunder of artillery may impress us with dread, and the long thin line of fire may be a formidable wall to face; but man needs the help of his companion, the horse, to become the embodiment of the warrior. Nowhere do the rider and his steed seem more adapted by nature for each other than on the battle-field, whether it be the Bedouin charging on his Arab against the terror-stricken caravan, or the wild Sioux of the Prairies of the West swooping on the emigrant, and evading the rifle of the pale face by clinging to the flank of his horse and exhibiting only his foot and his grim-painted face for a target. The horse enters into the wild excitement of battle as fiercely as his rider. Most of our readers must be familiar with that strange incident which, it is asserted, occurred near the beginning of the century, when we were embarking our troops on leaving Sicily. All the horses were left behind and were turned loose, when a strange scene greeted their masters as they sailed away from the shore. The horses, without rider, bit or bridle, as if by instinct, formed themselves into troops, as they had been trained, each in his place, and commenced charging each other. There was a veritable battle-field,—the dead and the dying, and the wild "light of battle" in the eye. Nothing was wanting to complete the picture but the master spirit of destruction. Now what a subject would that be for the brush of a Horace Vernet

or a Landseer! Surely the old patriarch, whoever he was, who wrote that marvel of literature, the book of Job, must have had the eye of a painter, as well as the imagination of a poet when he penned his picture of the war-horse and inspired it with life! "Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible! He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him; the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets ha! ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

For thousands of years since the patriarchal poet wrote this wonderful picture of the charger, the war-horse and his rider have been the admiration and the terror of the battle-field,—now sweeping down like a hurricane upon the serried ranks of the spearmen,—now hovering round the flanks of the retreating foe, or burning and destroying everything on their way, leaving only hunger, desolation and despair behind for the weary enemy.

Is it any wonder that men learned to look up to the mounted warrior, and the horsemen to look down upon the plodding foot-soldier; or that the horse ennobled his rider and made a horseman (*equus*) synonymous with a knight?

The feudal ages did much to lower the foot-soldier and to elevate the cavalry. The knights in their heavy armor were helpless unwieldy prisoners when compelled to fight on foot; but they were formidable foes in the saddle. But the progress of liberty, and, above all, the invention of

* Modern Cavalry; its organization, armament, and employment in war; with an appendix containing letters from Generals Fitzhugh Lee, Stephen D. Lee, and T. L. Rosser, of the Confederate States; Cavalry; and Col. Jenyns' system of non-pivot drill in use in the 13th Hussars. By Lieut.-Col. George T. Denison, junior, commanding the Governor-General's Body Guard, Upper Canada, author of "A Manual of Outpost Duties," &c.