

Cavalry In Defense

Course In Organization and Tactics.

Lecture No. 4,

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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY ART.

While volumes have been written for the government of cavalry in attack, a few pages would suffice to record all that has been prescribed for the conduct of cavalry in defense. This arises from natural causes. Since their introduction as a component part of armies the armament, training, and employment of cavalry have been only such as to fit them for action of on offensive character.

The many brilliant victories credited to this arm of the service have invariably been won by assuming the initiative. On the other hand the cavalry which has waited to be attacked has been defeated. We have consequently grown up with the idea that success for this arm means offensive action. This is not altogether an erroneous conclusion, whatever arm of the service we may be considering. The army acting solely on the defensive may prevent defeat but it will not win a decisive victory.

The most important duties required of cavalry in the wars of the past have been to furnish the commanding general with information as to the wherea-

bouts, strength, action, composition, and disposition of the enemy's forces. The importance of this work is becoming greater each day. No army can hope to be successful if it is not kept informed of the doings of the enemy. The greatest obstacle to the accomplishment of this very important duty, is the enemy's cavalry. When they have been disposed of, a proper display of energy, courage and tact has generally been rewarded with success. The armament and training has consequently been, primarily, such as to enable the cavalry to combat, with equal chances of success, the opponent's cavalry. While the cavalry has been used many times, and often with entire success, against the other arms of the service, this has heretofore been considered of secondary importance. Whenever employed against infantry or artillery they have used, with few exceptions, the same weapons and the same methods of action as when operating against cavalry. The arm on which the greatest reliance has been placed has been the saber or lance and the method of action, motion to the front. As the use of the saber or lance depended upon actual contact with the enemy the most important consideration was consequently that of motion. Therefore, whenever the condition of terrain or other causes made it impossible or impracticable for one or both of the opposing forces to advance over the intervening territory, combat was out of the question.

Such was the training and armament of the cavalry up to the opening of the Civil War. It is true that the cavalry of various nations have from time to time during the last four centuries been provided with fire-arms, but they have generally been of an inferior character and short range, and intended for and used principally in mounted action. Few instances are recorded prior to the Civil War where the cavalry used dismounted fire action, and then gener-

ally for offensive purposes to dislodge a small force of the enemy from some position which could not be reached by mounted troops.

Nor is it believed that the tactics and methods of fighting demanded of all good cavalry of to-day would have been suited to the conditions existing at that time. The battle formations, the range of the various arms and the slow rate of fire all tended to make the charge the most effective method of cavalry fighting.

This has naturally led us to consider cavalry available only for work pertaining to the service of security and information and of occasional use on the field of battle, on the tactical offensive.

Before proceeding further in the consideration of this subject let us inquire into the cause of this conclusion. It cannot be that the class of men that enlist in the cavalry are less capable than those that enter the other branches of the service. There is no reason why the soldier that is accustomed to riding cannot fight as well as the one that usually walks. The horses cannot be responsible, for it has never been claimed that the infantry lost any of their fighting powers when they were mounted for the purpose of increasing their mobility. Is it not in reality the arming, training, and traditions of the cavalry arm that have deprived it of the defensive powers possessed by the infantry? This being admitted we must effect such improvement in the armament, such change in training and equipment, and such advancement in our method of fighting as will enable us to keep abreast with modern conditions; and while prizing most highly the arms and actions of the past, we must not permit sentiment to stand in the way of effectiveness.

The improvement in all weapons of war has been very marked during the last two or three decades. This has caused many changes in the tactical hand-

ling of troops on the field of battle. The introduction of modern armament affected the tactics of cavalry more than any other arm. Modern weapons have tended to limit the use of shock action against good infantry to a few occasions, but the importance of being able to take advantage of the opportunities when offered is so great, that, if for no other reason, the power to deliver an effective charge must be retained. In addition, new requirements and responsibilities have accrued which promise to give this arm a place of greater importance in future wars than has ever been predicted for it by its most enthusiastic supporters.

Considering the fact that as the power of the rifle has increased, that of the shock has decreased, it is evident that we have but to become proficient in the use of the former to compensate for the loss of the latter. Therefore, the cavalry must be provided with the best rifle that modern genius can devise, taught how to use it, and trained in the effective use of dismounted fire action. In addition they must be given a good pistol and taught its use, both mounted and dismounted. The occasions for the use of this arm will be many. It is indispensable to the mounted scout, whether he be a member of a patrol, the point of an advance or rear guard, or one of a flanking party. It will often be most useful for dismounted action at short range, and is best adapted to, and is the most effective weapon for mounted fire action.

While it is not within the province of this article to discuss the relative merits of sabre and pistol for use in conjunction with shock action, suffice it to say that the latter is more in accord with recent developments, by which it has been demonstrated that with the troops of most military nations something more than moral effect is necessary to win a victory. The sabre, of course, must be retained. But all metal parts must be of bronze, or other neutral color, and a leather scabbard, or similar device, must be used, in

order that the advantages of its possession may not be overcome by the disadvantages of the glistening and rattling.

The men must be thoroughly instructed and drilled in all formations for attack and defense on foot. In addition they should be trained to quickly change from mounted to dismounted action, and vice versa, without hesitation or confusion. The horses must be drilled to lead at all gaits when linked together in fours led by one trooper mounted. That it will require much work to make a trooper thoroughly at home at all mounted work and at the same time able to quickly dismount and become as effective on the firing line as his brother in the infantry, cannot be doubted. But that it can be accomplished by hard work is proven by the high degree of proficiency attained by many of the regiments of cavalry in the United States Army.

While doing this we must in no way neglect the training for mounted action. The necessity for screening and reconnaissance work is, if possible, more important than at any time in the past, as is also the necessity of being prepared to make a charge and carry it home. While the opportunity for the latter will seldom occur it is certain that when it does the results obtained will be proportionately increased.

A weakness, which is claimed by some would be fatal to cavalry fighting a defensive battle dismounted, is that but three-fourths of the total strength can use their rifles on the firing line, the others being required to hold the led horses. Consequently, when a force of cavalry is defending itself by dismounted action against an equal force of infantry the latter would have thirty-three percent more men on the firing line and should win, if for no other reason, solely by superiority of fire. While it is true that a percentage of from one-twelfth to one-fourth must be

detailed to take care of the led horses, it is also true that men who are mounted can repair to the position to be occupied and conduct reconnaissances with much less fatigue than can foot troops which must, besides walking, carry a load of from fifty to sixty pounds of pack and ammunition. Much more effective work will be done by a rifle in the hands of a man who is comparatively fresh than in the hands of one tired and worn out.

That the power of the modern rifle accrues more to the advantage of the defense than the attack is admitted by all. This enables an inferior force, numerically, to successfully hold their position against very superior numbers. The Boer war gives many examples of a very superior British force, numerically, morally, and in training and equipment, being dashed to pieces against the small, undisciplined, poorly equipped forces of the Boers.

"The magazine rifle, firing smokeless powder, is the main cause of this tactical development. A mere handful of men, lying down under shelter, can bring such a hail of bullets to bear upon the ground extending for a considerable distance to their front that hostile troops attempting to cross this will suffer appalling losses in doing so, even if they succeed in the venture."*

Furthermore, as frontal attacks have become more difficult, and much less likely to succeed, the probabilities of the attacking forces attempting to turn the flanks of the defenders have very greatly increased. In fact here-in lies the greatest chance of success. The general making the attack can leave a small part of his force in front of the main position to hold the defenders while he moves the greater part around one or both flanks. That this can be done without much danger of the attacking force having their center pierced is due solely to the fact that the advantage of

*"Tactics of To-day."

the defense is transferred to the containing force.

In counteracting this a body of cavalry on the defense has a great advantage over a force of infantry in a similar position in that they can much more quickly transfer troops from any point of the line to the flanks. In meeting a flank attack, troops could be mounted and moved four or five miles in thirty minutes and after arriving at the threatened point would be much less blown and exhausted than would infantry in covering the same distance in an hour.

Finally, if compelled to retire, their ability to do so owing to their superior mobility, very much lessens the chances of a complete rout.

In the further consideration of this subject it will be assumed that the cavalry will not only be able to successfully perform all the purely mounted work heretofore performed by the best cavalry of any nation, but will also be equipped with an efficient rifle and capable of using it whenever required.

DEFENSE OF CAVALRY AGAINST INFANTRY.

Preliminary Disposition: The principal advantage possessed by the defense is that they can generally select a position possessing a clear field of fire, construct intrenchments, and obtain the distance to all points over which the enemy must advance.

After the selection and occupation of the position there are two important points to be considered. First, the concealment of the position from the enemy until he has arrived within effective range of the defenders, and second, the assailant's probable point of attack. Both objects can be accomplished at once.

One of the most important advantages possessed by the attacking force, and consequently one of the greatest difficulties with which the defenders have to contend, is that the assailants can make feigned attacks against many parts while massing a preponderating force against a single point, while the defense must disseminate his force so as to be comparatively strong

at every point. To counteract this the cavalry commander on the defense must at once push contact patrols, supported by larger bodies, far to the front to gain contact with the enemy, which, when once made must never be lost. These patrols can with the greatest audacity conduct their reconnaissances wherever they like, with the assurance that they are perfectly safe so long as they avoid falling into an ambush. They can, as it were, accompany the enemy on his advance, obtaining all information as to the roads by which he is advancing, his rate of march and his strength.

That cavalry patrols can act with this boldness when not prevented by cavalry was demonstrated by the Prussian cavalry in 1870. Although in this war the French had a large number of cavalry their reconnaissance work was so poor and their aggressiveness so inferior to the Prussians that they rarely interfered with the scouting of the latter. Bonie says, "By their system of having a continuous line of communication kept up by their cavalry their main body always received the best information regarding our positions—when we marched and where we halted—and as they carried on their observations from some distance, and kept continually appearing and disappearing, only to return, they kept us in a constant state of anxiety."

The contact troops supporting the advance patrols should take advantage of every opportunity to harass and delay the advance of the enemy. This can be done with comparative ease and safety owing to the cavalry being familiar with the ground. Demonstrations should be made against the flanks as well as the front of the hostile force. A troop of cavalry by occupying a good defensive position, dismounted, will not only make it necessary for a much superior force to deploy in order to dislodge them but will cause considerable delay to the advance. If, after taking up

the position in front of the advancing enemy, a troop can make a demonstration on their flank, much confusion and delay will ensue. The results of such action are not limited to the actual delay caused or the actual casualties inflicted, but in addition have a very demoralizing effect. A force marching to attack, knowing that their every movement is known to the enemy and in addition to this continually meeting with checks, have their confidence, which is very essential to a vigorous attack, very much shaken.

"Mounted troops" says Major R. E. Callwell, in his book "Tactics of To-day" have, of course, a very important duty to perform in watching the hostile approach from suitable ground in advance of the position. Opportunities may indeed sometimes present themselves for a relatively insignificant body under skillful guidance to considerably delay the deployment of the attacking army for action. A very few magazine rifles or carbines can, in the present day, make an imposing display, and may deceive the enemy as to the strength of the detachments which obstructs the way."

"Frequently" says Baden Powell, "our columns in South Africa were delayed for hours by a few sniping Boers, occupying good positions whence they were not easily dislodged, because of the uncertainty as to whether a much larger body was not in position awaiting our advance."

Their patrols would in a similar manner keep their commander informed of all dispositions of the hostile infantry for attack. The strength of the body sent by the assailant to any part of the defensive line could be ascertained before they arrived within striking distance. In this manner the commander of the cavalry would know at all times the position and strength of the hostile forces and could consequently make with comparative deliberation the necessary preparations to meet them.

At the fall maneuvers in Virginia in 1904 the commander of the Brown forces, when acting on the defensive, sent all his available cavalry to the front and flank to cover and screen the front of his position, with instructions to gain contact with the enemy as quickly as possible, and to ascertain the distribution of his forces and the probable point of his attack. These duties were successfully performed, although 300 troopers were covering a front of ten miles opposed by an equal force of cavalry and four brigades of infantry.

While the contact troops are thus delaying the advance and gaining information of the assailants, the position selected by the defenders can be occupied and the troops distributed to defend it.

The selection and preparation of a defensive position is of the greatest importance, and must be given as much thought and attention as the time and circumstances will permit. It is presumed, however, that those who have command of a body of troops will be familiar with this subject, so it will not be discussed here. In this connection it is thought well to recommend to the attention of those desiring to study the latest phases of this subject as demonstrated by the Boer war to the chapter *on the selection of ground and position* in Baden Powell's "War in Practice"

Supposing the position to be the best that can be selected and that it has been prepared so far as time and facilities will permit, the next consideration is the division and the distribution of the force. The number of men per yard of front necessary to defend a position has been somewhat decreased by modern fire-arms. Considering that the position possesses some of the requirements of a good defense, one man to every two yards of front will be sufficient. These men may not, and in most cases should not, be equally distributed along the line to be held, but should be

placed in groups on ground affording the best field of fire and at the same time affording protection from the view and shots of the enemy.

“It will usually be best to spread the force out; both so as to form a bad target, and prevent as far as possible, outflanking movements, or to enclose a large area of ground. But mutual support must never be lost track of.

“For many reasons, too, it is necessary to keep men, to a certain extent, together. They must be under the control of one head; the proximity of comrades gives mutual confidence; and the supply of ammunition and provisions is easier worked. A number of very small posts would usually be better than a few large ones.

“A section of from twenty to thirty men has been found to be the largest suitable unit for command in action. More than this forms an extended line too great for one commander to properly control in action. A group of sub-sections of eight to twelve men is preferable. Such detached parties may well be thirty to forty yards apart if necessary.

“The greatest strength necessary to defend a position must depend on the greatest strength that can be brought against it.” Now, as indicated by recent developments “the attacking force will seldom be in closer formation than that of a front line with intervals of about four paces between men, backed by two or three other such lines. So that it is unlikely that the attacking force would exceed at one time one man per yard of front, or, say, 2000 to the mile.

“The question of the relative strength of the defending force to ward off attack is difficult to decide, considering how greatly it will vary with circumstances; but practical experience seems to show that troops well entrenched can certainly keep off a force of eight to ten times their number.

“This would imply that 200 to 250 men per mile

should be usually sufficient to hold, at all events temporarily, a good intrenched position. ”*

Generally speaking, about one half of the entire force should be prepared to fight on foot. This would allow out of a regiment of 1200 men, at least 450 rifles to be brought into use. Where the position or circumstances were such as to make the engagement a long one extending over several hours or days, a much greater percentage can be used, as one man can take care of from 12 to 25 horses. Four hundred and fifty men could cover a position from a half mile to a mile in length. This would allow one man to about every two yards in the first case and one to four yards in the second. This number would be able, if occupying a position affording a free field of fire, and concealment from the enemy, to repulse an attack of many times their number.

Baden Powell says on this subject: “Given three conditions; (1) A position with clear field of fire for at least 500 yards all round; (2) plentiful supplies of ammunition, water, and food; (3) trenches or walls with head cover and, so long as the outposts are alert to give warning, it seems impossible for an attack to succeed. Be the number ever so predominating it matters not, for the more opponents there are, the thicker they must be, consequently more vulnerable to the hail of fire pouring from the trenches.”

The led horses should be kept under cover some distance to the rear, where they would be protected from the fire of the enemy. About one third of the entire strength should be held in reserve. They should remain near their horses so as to be able to mount and proceed quickly to any point of the line. Herein lies one of the most important advantages of cavalry over foot troops. As previously stated the attacking force will either endeavor to mass a pre-

*“ War in Practice,”

ponderating force to pierce the main line at some point or will leave a containing force to hold the defenders while a strong attack is made on the flank. It is sometimes difficult to discover either of these movements until the attack is well under way. Reinforcements must be available immediately. Cavalry reserves can in much less time move to the menaced point or flank than can foot troops. The greater the distance to be covered the greater the advantage.

The position of the reserve with regard to the main line depends upon so many conditions that it is difficult to attempt to prescribe one that would answer in any case. However, until the direction or point of the attack has been determined, somewhere in rear of the center would seem advisable as they could then move to either flank, or any part of the line, in the minimum length of time.

The distance in rear would depend largely upon the formation of the ground. They should be as far as possible protected from the enemy's fire but at the same time must be close enough to give prompt support. It should be remembered, however, that a difference of a few hundred yards would make no appreciable difference in time in reaching any particular point, for, once mounted, eight to twelve miles an hour for from one to two hours can be made.

Generally speaking it would seem that about one sixth of the force should remain mounted and be assigned to the flanks. They should push such a distance to the front as to be able to give timely warning of attempts on the part of the opponent to turn a flank of the position. While the difficulties of making a successful turning movement have increased owing to the greater length of a defensive line that a given number of troops can now successfully defend, it frequently offers the only means by which the

defenders can be driven out. Consequently the flanks must be watched with the greatest caution.

The mounted force on the flanks should be able to detect the movement early enough to permit troops to be moved into position to check it. In addition to the duty of observation required of the troops on the flanks they could greatly delay any body attempting a turning movement. As the success of a turning movement depends so largely upon it being a complete surprise infantry operating against cavalry should rarely be able to succeed.

The troops on the flank may often find an opportunity of charging the flank of the attacking force, especially if the latter be repulsed in a local attack and are falling back in confusion. Also when a severe repulse has occurred, these flank troops, assisted by the reserve if necessary, can quickly take advantage of the enemy's discomfiture to assume the offensive.

"Mounted troops, watching their opportunity, may not only issue to attack by shock action, but they may often advance far away to the flank of the attacking line, and take up position from which they can bring a telling enfilade fire upon the attackers."*

A position once taken up should be held until its surrender is compulsory. As frontal attacks, against only a fairly good position, however thin the defender's line may be, can rarely succeed until such position is turned or the enemy has brought into action many times superior forces, a small body can often delay the advance of four to eight times their number for days.

Upon being compelled to retire all should not be withdrawn at once. A few men posted on commanding positions can hold the enemy until the majority have mounted and are moving off.

*"War in Practice."

No fear of being unable to mount in safety should ever cause the dismounted troopers to retire earlier than they otherwise would. If so crowded as not to have time to mount and retire before the enemy can bring his fire to bear, the mounts should be conducted to the rear and the dismounted line retire on foot until out of range or otherwise protected from the enemy's fire. In some cases it might be advisable for the led horses to be conducted several hundred yards or even a mile or two to the rear before attempting to mount.

No particular anxiety need be felt concerning the led horses when opposed by infantry. The mounted reserve or flankers will give timely warning of any attempt to fire on or capture them. But in case of surprise of the led horses, or, if the dismounted body is compelled to make a hasty retreat, the mounts can with little difficulty be conducted by the horse-holders to a place of safety at a very rapid rate.

DEFENSE OF CAVALRY AGAINST CAVALRY.

General consideration: Many predict that the next great war will open with the greatest cavalry battle of modern times if not in the history of the world. There is no doubt but that in such an engagement charges will be made and will be met by counter-charges. In fact herein lies the necessity for being prepared at all times to make the charge boot-to-boot and at a very rapid gait. The cavalry that neglects to prepare for such an emergency will meet defeat at the hands of the cavalry that can conduct the charge with all the vigor, dash, and skill displayed at Vionville or Brandy Station. But to be successful in the future cavalry battles the trooper must not only be able to meet his opponent in shock but must be able to use his rifle when fire action will give better results. The cavalry that neglects either of these requirements will probably be worsted in a combat between these arms.

The indications are that the next large cavalry battle will show a great variety of methods of fighting, such as shock against shock, the saber being used in the melee; shock action in conjunction with mounted fire action; shock action in conjunction with the saber or pistol against dismounted action; dismounted action against dismounted action; and finally shock action supported by dismounted fire action.

All the requirements prescribed for fighting a defensive battle against infantry are applicable, some of them intensified, when fighting cavalry. The best defensive position possible should be selected and occupied. The necessity for the flanks resting on an impassable obstacle or being strongly posted or defended is more essential in this case. The front of the position need not, and generally should not, be held as strongly as when opposed by infantry, for the reason that cavalry, being more mobile, will in nearly every case attempt a turning movement in preference to trying to force the center. But a very small percentage of the strength, if any, should be held in reserve as a support to the firing line. With the modern rifle the dismounted firing line has but little to fear from charges from the front, and as previously explained a very thin line, judiciously posted, can check four to eight times their number, in a frontal attack by dismounted troops. Consequently the flanks are the vulnerable points in a cavalry battle.

The object should be to check the enemy's advance by dismounted fire action and so post the flanks as to make them impossible of being turned by mounted troops. Then the attacking cavalry will either have to give up the advance or resort to dismounted action. If they assume the latter the engagement will of course be similar to that described for infantry, but still much more alertness will have to be ex-

exercised. The commander on the defense must at all times have his command in readiness for instant action, for it must not be forgotten that the cavalry opponent is much more mobile than a like force of infantry, and therefore there is much more danger of his making feigned attacks at various parts, then quickly concentrating a preponderating force against one point. In such a case there will not be as much time to reinforce the threatened point, as when opposing foot troops.

It will often occur that cavalry on the defensive will not have the time to select and occupy a position when fighting cavalry. They will often meet, and an immediate engagement will follow, without any time for preparation of the ground on which to conduct the defense. The cavalry on the defensive should generally dismount a portion of the command to occupy positions from which fire can be brought to bear on the enemy when charging. The fire of the dismounted men, if not stopping the charge entirely, will at least have the effect of breaking up the cohesion of the charge. In a similar manner they can support the charge of their own troops by firing on the enemy until their fire is masked. This dismounted firing line will have the effect of keeping the enemy's mounted troops out of range or under cover. No body of mounted troops can live long exposed to the fire of dismounted troopers.

As previously stated, a cavalry battle will probably assume many phases and will introduce every known method of fighting.

The number of troops to dismount or to leave mounted will depend upon so many conditions that it is impossible to give any rule that would likely be adopted in its entirety in any fight. It is safe to say, however, that a portion of the command will invariably be required to dismount to either support a charge or to fire upon the charging enemy. One thing is certain,

a dismounted firing line well posted, supported by a mounted reserve, can compel the enemy to either make a turning movement around the defender's flank out of range of their fire, or to dismount a very great preponderating force and throw it against the line in order to compel a retreat of the defenders.

There is, however, nothing particularly new in this method of fighting so far as the American cavalry is concerned. Dismounted fire action in connection with mounted action was often used in the cavalry battles of the Civil War.

The improvement in the fire-arms of to-day over those with which cavalry was armed forty years ago has greatly increased the importance of being able to make use of dismounted action in cavalry battles. The increased range enables the dismounted troopers to make their fire effective where it would have formerly been useless. A body of dismounted troopers on the flank can deliver an effective enfilading fire across a front of 1000 to 1500 yards. If troops are posted on both flanks they can by cross fire enfilade from 2000 to 3000 yards—a front equal to that traversed by the opposing forces at Mars-la-Tour or Fleetwood Hill. If fire can be brought to bear on the charging bodies, the rapidity with which it can be delivered will make it next to impossible for any body of cavalry to live in sufficient force or formation to deliver an effective shock.

During the years of 1863-64 dismounted fire was used in almost every cavalry engagement of any importance, becoming more frequent toward the close of the war.

At the battle of Brandy Station, or Fleetwood Hill, June 9th, 1863, which was the first great cavalry battle of the war, both of the contending forces made use of dismounted fire. The next year it was used at Yellow Tavern, May 11th, where Stuart by

dismounting all but one regiment of Lee's two weak brigades compelled Sheridan not only to employ his corps of cavalry to dislodge him, but also to dismount several regiments to assist in turning a flank. Again at Trevillian, June 11th, the fighting was mainly confined to dismounted action.

"This engagement," says General Sheridan, in speaking of the battle of Trevillian, "like that of the day before was mostly fought dismounted by both sides, as had been the earlier fights of the cavalry during the summer in the Wilderness, Todd's Tavern, Hawe's Shop, and Matadequin Creek. Indeed they could hardly have been fought otherwise than on foot, as there was little chance for mounted fighting in eastern Virginia, the dense woods, *the armament of both parties, and the practice of both parties barricading making it impracticable to use the sabre with anything like a large force; so with the exception of Yellow Tavern the dismounted method prevailed in almost every engagement.*"

In operating against cavalry greater precaution must be taken to guard against the capture of the led horses by the enemy coming up from the rear. It may in some cases be necessary to leave a guard of a few men to hold in check the advance of the enemy until the mounts can be taken out of danger. Generally speaking the guard for the mounts should be dismounted for they would then, by taking up a good position, be able to check a mounted charge unless the enemy is much superior in numbers. If attacked by dismounted men, unless entirely surrounded, which would rarely occur if proper diligence is exercised, the horses should have no trouble in making their escape. But the matter of protecting the led horses should not cause the detail of any large number of men from the firing line when they are needed there, nor should it cause a position to be vacated

earlier than it otherwise would. If the mounted troops in reserve or on the flank exercise the proper amount of diligence it would be rare indeed when the led horses could be captured. A stampede with trained cavalry horses is very unlikely to occur.

In engagements where different bodies are dismounting and mounting every few minutes great precaution should be exercised by the horse-holders to see that the column of led horses is held in the same way and in the same formation as when the troop was dismounted. When the dismounted men run to the column of led horses each man should know the position of his horse. Any change of formation, such as a reversal of the head of the column, would cause confusion and delay which might result disastrously.

In case the led horses change their position while the troop is dismounted the troop commander should be at once notified. The danger in not following this rule was made manifest at the 1903 maneuvers at West Point, Kentucky. A troop was dismounted and the led horses left under cover, while the troop took up a position several hundred yards to the front to delay the advance of a regiment of infantry. The troop held its position until the enemy was on both flanks and only a few hundred yards from its front. Upon retiring somewhat hastily to where the horses were left it was discovered that they were not there.

Some two or three hours elapsed before they were found; meanwhile the troop commander was under the impression that they had been captured. It later developed that a senior officer, not knowing the troop was in front of the horses, and thinking they were in danger of being captured ordered them to another position.

The results accomplished by the American cavalry with dismounted action in the battle of San Juan Hill and in the Santiago campaign, as well as later in the

Philippines, have proven conclusively that they can make efficient use of the carbine.

The Boers, which were in reality an army of mounted men, and invariably fighting on the defensive, not only puzzled the best tacticians of the British Army for more than two years but caused that nation to effect radical changes in the organization, formation, and tactics of its army. In most of the engagements during this war the British far outnumbered the Boers. The former were drilled, well equipped, organized, and commanded by the best material the British nation could turn out, while the latter lacked both organization and proper command. But with all of this we see what they accomplished by mounting their ponies and repairing to good defensive positions where they lay in wait for the enemy. They would hold their position, inflicting enormous losses upon their adversary, until nearly surrounded, when they would, mount and rapidly retire a few miles to another good position where they would repeat the operation.

Baden Powell says, "at Paardeberg we know that 4200 indifferent, half starved boers, intrenched, but without much cover, in good position, with six guns, repulsed about 16000 good, disciplined, fresh British troops, backed by over four batteries of artillery; this would give a proportion of just about four to one. At Modder River the Boers were said to number about 3500 against our 8000."

British defeats were not limited to the above mentioned battles. The Boers with very inferior numbers held the British in check for some time and inflicted enormous losses at Stromberg, Magersfontien, and many other places.

The fact that the Boers lacked everything so essential to good cavalry, excepting the ability to ride and shoot, is no argument that this war teaches

nothing new. Considering their success by their method of fighting we can readily see what could have been accomplished by a body of men possessing perfect training and organization, armed and equipped in the most modern manner.

The necessity for a large force of mounted troops was soon manifest to the British in South Africa. Just before the battle of Stromberg Major A. W. A. Pollock, who was with General Gatacre, wrote as follows: "I have to-day heard a whisper that the general (Gatacre) may be moved against his will to take early action. That much pressure is being brought to bear upon him by certain ignorant civilians is, I know, the case. But I trust he will stand firm and postpone his advance until his mounted troops are really fit for service, even if he does not await further reinforcements to his infantry. There is but little use in striking until he is in a position to strike hard and drive the blow well home."

At a later period this writer tells, in his book, "With Seven Generals in the Boer War," of receiving a telegram which stated, among other things, that "lots more mounted troops were to be sent to South Africa," which caused him to write as follows:

"Apparently the authorities have at last realized that mounted infantry are more than a match for infantry, unless the latter be an overwhelming force, and prepared to sustain immense losses disproportionate to the results achieved. Whilst our slow moving infantry are laboriously prosecuting a wide detour, the mounted Boer will jump on his horse and reinforce the threatened flank, or not seldom form a false flank beyond it. What we need is to have mobile troops of some sort, regular or irregular matters not, so long as they are expert riflemen and reasonably well mounted. To beat the Boers we must adopt Boer methods, *more especially as these and all*

of them are strictly in accordance with the common sense dictates of modern tactical science. The Boer carries out his tactical and other maneuvers on horse back and we must do the same. Mobility superior to that of the enemy enables the force to deliver or to decline battle at will, or in the event of a combat to frustrate by counter maneuvers all attempts of the assailant to work around the flanks. It is idle for an army composed for the most part of infantry to attempt maneuvering against an enemy whose chief strength is in mounted infantry, since the latter can always concentrate with such speed upon a threatened point that superiority attained against him can seldom be more than temporary."

While the British used principally mounted infantry it can safely be said that they did nothing in the way of dismounted work that could not have been equally as well done by cavalry armed with a good rifle and trained in its use.

In 'Tactics of To-day,' the author, who has undoubtedly given this matter a great deal of consideration says "mounted infantry is a special feature of British military organization. The difference between this class of mounted troops and cavalry proper does not arise merely from the fact that its personnel is drawn from infantry regiments, and that its units have merely an ephemeral existence. While cavalry is supposed to fight on horseback, mounted infantry only fights on foot. In the one case the horse is a combatant member in the membership between the rider and his mount; in the other, the horse merely forms a means of transport for the soldier on the march and when in presence of the enemy. But the fact is, that neither the one form or the other fulfills the conditions which the present state of tactics emphatically demands. The cavalry trooper attaches an altogether exaggerated importance to

the charge and clash of steel. The mounted infantry does not fight on horseback at all, and is not equipped for such encounters. The progress in armament which has taken place in recent years has rendered the lancer or hussar who regards his carbine as little better than an incumbrance, an anachronism. Mounted troops, who, for want of some suitable weapon, are incapable of inflicting injury upon their foe unless they get off their horses, will from time to time miss opportunities of performing very effective service. The peculiar condition which the military forces of the British Empire have to deal with, have called the mounted infantry into existence, and given him a prominent place in warfare of an irregular kind.

“But for campaigning between great modern armies *mounted troops must consist of genuine horsemen, who can wield the sword or lance with confidence from the saddle, but who regard the use of fire arms on foot as their principal means of offense and defense under the circumstances with which they will usually have to deal in war.*”

In considering the above it should be remembered that most European cavalry is not, even though provided with a carbine, trained or adapted to really efficient dismounted work. The requirements which he states in the last sentence as necessary for mounted troops “for campaigns between great modern armies” is nothing more, considering the arming, training, and equipment, that can be expected of the American cavalry.

In conclusion it may be said that until comparatively recent times cavalry has not been considered adapted to defensive operations. Whether this was due to the arming and training of this branch of the service or the condition then existing is not pertinent. The fact remains that with the present armament and tactics, cavalry, to properly perform its duties,

must be provided with a good rifle and taught how to use it. At the same time they must be able to perform all the purely mounted work that has ever at any time been required of this arm of the service. That when so armed and trained they will become a factor in modern war between great armies never before realized can scarcely be doubted. Moreover, while mobility has always given the army possessing it a great advantage over its slower opponent, it is becoming of more importance each day. Consequently, where shock action, the highest development of mobility, and defensive powers can be combined in one body a most formidable combination results.

We believe that in this triple capacity cavalry will have attained its true role. The nation that fails to appreciate this will in the next war in which they are engaged, other things being equal, probably meet with a defeat more humiliating and results more disastrous, than that experienced by the French in 1870.

QUESTION SHEET

Lecture No. 4.

1. What has caused the occasion for shock action against good infantry to be more limited than formerly? (4)

3. Considering the fact that as the power of the rifle has increased that of shock action has decreased, how can the partial loss of the power of shock be overcome? (4)

3. Under modern conditions what must be the armament of cavalry? (4)

4. Under what conditions is the pistol preferable to either the rifle or sabre? (4)

5. State briefly the training necessary to make good cavalry? (5)

6. When using dismounted action against infantry, how is the loss on the firing line of the proportion necessary as horse-holders partially compensated for? (5-6)

7. In counteracting a flank attack, what advantage does cavalry on the defensive have over a force of infantry, in a similar position? (7)

8. After the selection and occupation of a defensive position, what two important points are to be considered, and how are they attained? (8)

9. What should the contact troops, in front of a position, endeavor to do, and how is this object accomplished? (S-9)

10. Considering that the position possesses some of the requirements of a good defense, state the strength and general distribution of the troop on the firing line. (10-11)

11. Generally speaking, about what proportion of the entire strength of a cavalry command, acting on the defensive against infantry, should be dismounted and placed on the firing line? (12)

12. About what proportion of the entire strength should be held in reserve? (12)

13. State the particular advantages of a cavalry reserve, (12—13)

14. **What** conditions regulate the position and distance of the reserve from the firing line, and why **will** a difference of a few hundred yards in distance make no appreciable difference in time necessary to reach a particular point? (13)

15. About what proportion of the entire strength should remain mounted and be assigned to the flanks? (13)

16. How may the troops on the flanks often find an **opportunity** of assuming the tactical offensive? (14)

17. If on retiring from a position, there is not time to mount in safety what may be done with regard to the **led** horses? (15)

DEFENSE OF CAVALRY AGAINST CAVALRY.

18. What requirements as regard methods of fighting must cavalry fulfill to be successful in future cavalry battles? (15)

19. State the various methods of fighting that will likely be resorted to in battles of cavalry against cavalry. (16)

20. In fighting a defensive battle against cavalry, when there is not the time to select and occupy a defensive position, how may a portion of the strength be used **dismounted**; where should the dismounted men be posted; how **may** they assist the charge of their own forces, and what effect will the dismounted fire have upon the enemy's mounted troops? (17)

21. Where the troops are dismounting and mounting every few minutes what precautions should be exercised with regard to the led horses? (20)

22. Mobility superior to that of the enemy enables a force to do what? (23)