

**CAVALRY; A POPULAR
EDITION OF "CAVALRY
IN WAR AND PEACE"**

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Cavalry; a popular edition of "Cavalry in war and peace" by Friedrich von Bernhardi & Sir J. D. P. French

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FRIEDRICH VON BERNHARDI & SIR J. D. P. FRENCH

**CAVALRY; A POPULAR
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CAVALRY

A POPULAR EDITION OF
"CAVALRY IN WAR AND PEACE"

BY
GENERAL FRIEDRICH VON BERNHARDI

Author of "How Germany Makes War"

WITH A PREFACE BY
FIELD-MARSHAL SIR J. D. P. FRENCH
G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G.

THIS EDITION EDITED BY A. HILLIARD
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EDITOR'S NOTE

GENERAL VON BERNHARDI is best known in England as a writer of the "Jingo" School which has done so much to produce the war, but this is only one side of his literary activity. He is also a writer of recognised ability on the theory and practice of modern war. Sir John French's introduction to the present work is sufficient testimony to the value which is set upon his purely professional writings.

General von Bernhardt is a distinguished cavalry officer, and he writes with remarkable independence on the special work of his own arm, never hesitating to criticise the regulations of the German Army, when he considers that they do not correspond to the actual conditions of war. The book, though written in the first instance for cavalry officers, will be found of interest to all who wish to understand what cavalry is called upon to do and how it does it in the war of to-day. It will be found to be full of useful instruction for not only officers of the regular cavalry and the yeomanry, but also for officers and non-commissioned officers of our cyclist battalions, whose work brings them into such close relation with our cavalry in war and manœuvres, and who have to perform much the same work as that of the cavalry in reconnaissance, screening, and outpost duties.

General von Bernhardt's work deals with cavalry in war and peace, but much of the second part, dealing with peace duties and training, is made up of a mass

of detail on parade and riding-school work, as carried out in the German Army. This has been omitted, but his remarks on cavalry training at manœuvres are included in an appendix. Sir John French's introduction gives us the views of the greatest of our own cavalry leaders, who is now commanding our Army in France.

PREFACE

ALL British soldiers will welcome this excellent translation by Major Bridges of a new work by General von Bernhardt, whose intimate knowledge of cavalry and brilliant writings have won for him such a great European reputation.

Some prominence has lately been given in England to erroneous views concerning the armament and tactics of cavalry. General von Bernhardt's book contains sound doctrine on this subject, and will show to every one who has an open mind and is capable of conviction by reasoned argument how great is the future rôle of cavalry, and how determined are the efforts of the great cavalry leaders of Europe to keep abreast with the times, and to absorb, for the profit of the arm, every lesson taught by experience, both in peace and war.

In all theories, whether expounded by so eminent an authority as General von Bernhardt or by others who have not his claims to our attention, there is, of course, a good deal that must remain a matter of opinion, and a question open for free and frank discussion. But I am convinced that some of the reactionary views recently aired in England concerning cavalry will, if accepted and adopted, lead first to the deterioration and then to the collapse of cavalry when next it is called upon to fulfil its mission in war. I therefore recommend not only cavalry officers, but officers of all arms and services, to read and ponder

this book, which provides a strengthening tonic for weak minds which may have allowed themselves to be impressed by the dangerous heresies to which I have alluded.

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Is there such a thing as the cavalry spirit, and should it be our object to develop this spirit, if it exists, to the utmost, or to suppress it? General von Bernhardt thinks that this spirit exists and should be encouraged, and I agree with him. It is not only possible but necessary to preach the Army spirit, or, in other words, the close comradeship of all arms in battle, and at the same time to develop the highest qualities and the special attributes of each branch. The particular spirit which we seek to encourage is different for each arm. Were we to seek to endow cavalry with the tenacity and stiffness of infantry, or to take from the mounted arm the mobility and the cult of the offensive which are the breath of its life, we should ruin not only the cavalry, but the Army besides. Those who scoff at the spirit, whether of cavalry, of artillery, or of infantry, are people who have had no practical experience of the actual training of troops in peace, or of the personal leadership in war. Such men are blind guides indeed.

Another reason why I welcome this book is because it supplies a timely answer to schoolmen who see in our South African experiences, some of which they distort and many of which they forget, the acme of all military wisdom. It is always a danger when any single campaign is picked out, at the fancy of some pedagogue, and its lessons recommended as a panacea. It is by study and meditation of the whole of the long history of war, and not by concentration upon single and special phases of it, that we obtain safe guidance

to the principles and practices of an art which is as old as the world.

It is not only the campaigns which we and others have fought which deserve reflection, but also the wars which may lie in front of us. General von Bernhardi does not neglect the lessons of past wars, but he gives the best of reasons for thinking that the wars in South Africa and Manchuria have little in common with the conditions of warfare in Europe. We notice, as we read his book, that he has constantly in his mind the enemies whom the German Army must be prepared to meet, their arms, their tactics, and their country, and that he urges his comrades to keep the conditions of probable wars constantly before their eyes.

It passes comprehension that some critics in England should gravely assure us that the war in South Africa should be our chief source of inspiration and guidance, and that it was not abnormal. All wars are abnormal, because there is no such thing as normal war. In applying the lessons of South Africa to the training of cavalry, we should be very foolish if we did not recognise at this late hour that very few of the conditions of South Africa are likely to recur. I will name only a few of them. The composition and tactics of the Boer forces were as dissimilar from those of European armies as possible. Boer commandos made no difficulty about dispersing to the four winds when pressed, and re-uniting again some days or weeks later hundreds of miles from the scene of their last encounter. Such tactics in Europe would lead to the disruption and disbandment of any army that attempted them.

Secondly, the war in South Africa was one for the conquest and annexation of immense districts, and no

settlement was open to us except the complete submission of our gallant enemy. A campaign with such a serious object in view is the most difficult that can be confided to an army if the enemy is brave, enterprising, well-armed, numerous, and animated with unconquerable resolve to fight to the bitter end. I am not sure that people in England have ever fully grasped this distinctive feature of our war with the Dutch Republics. Let me quote the opinion of the late Colonel Count Yorck von Wartenburg on this subject. In his remarkable book "Napoleon as a General," Count Yorck declares that if, in the campaign of 1870-71, the absolute conquest and annexation of France had been desired, German procedure would not have been either logical or successful, and that the Germans would have failed as completely as Napoleon failed in Spain. But Count Yorck shows that when plans have a definite and limited object in view—namely, to obtain peace on given conditions—the situation is altered. Count Yorck shows that the German plans in 1870-71 were perfectly appropriate to this limited aim, and that they were therefore successful. The very serious task which British policy imposed upon British strategy in South Africa must never be forgotten.

Thirdly, we did not possess any means for remounting our cavalry with trained horses, such as we are endeavouring to secure by our new system of cavalry depôts and reserve regiments. After the capture, in rear of the army, of the great convoy by De Wet, our horses were on short commons, and consequently lost condition and never completely recovered it.

Lastly, owing to the wholesale and repeated release of prisoners who had been captured and who subsequently appeared again in the field against us, we were called upon to fight, not, as is stated, 86,000 or 87,-