

**MODERN CAVALRY, STUDIES
ON ITS RÔLE IN THE WARFARE
OF TO-DAY WITH NOTES ON
TRAINING FOR WAR SERVICE**

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Modern cavalry, studies on its rôle in the warfare of to-day with notes on training for war service by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson

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MODERN CAVALRY

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ING FOR WAR SERVICE

BY

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PREFACE

THE tumult and shouting of the world war has had a little time to die down. Throughout its course and for some time afterward it was impossible to clarify ideas and to deduce lessons. These require a certain amount of perspective for their better rendering.

This perspective has been a little furnished by the passage of time. Time is a cold analyst who makes tangible the real causes and effects and relegates the merely subsidiary to a nebulous background. Out of the haze and smoke of conflict we can begin to see dimly the simple primitive forces that were at war and to see the underlying causes that make for victory or defeat. In freeing the mind from the thralldom of the present, in deliberately comparing this war with all wars, the mind of the military student becomes amazed at the simplicity of the predominating factors in warfare.

This last war has complicated the issue by the use in battle of a larger variety of innovations in the way of auxiliaries and mechanical aids, than any war in history. The aeroplane and the tank and a host of like aids have a tendency to obsess the mind of the unthinking to the exclusion of the important factors in victory or defeat, to the real forces that battle for ascendancy.

Battle is decided by men. Mechanical aids and auxiliaries end by neutralizing each other. They do not decide a war. It is the actual physical contact of men

or the fear of physical contact that decides battles. In the final analysis it is the preponderance of man power that wins.

To secure this preponderance of man power at the right place and time is the aim of all military leaders. It is the aim of all strategy and the reason for all the cumbersome mechanics of war. The Great Captains, from Hannibal to Napoleon, have been great because they, above all others, realized the fundamental simplicity of war. The failures and mediocrities in military history have failed because they grasped at the shadow, were obsessed with forms, formulas, geometrical figures and thereby missed the substance. "Getting there firstest with the mostest men" has always been and will always be the principle of warfare. All else is accessory.

The "getting there firstest" part of this principle is the part upon which the argument for cavalry is based. In using the word cavalry it is first necessary to disabuse the mind of the untechnical civilian of any ideas of waving plumes, whipping pennons and flashing cuirasses. The horse has become more of a means of transportation whereby to transport a soldier, armed, equipped and trained in all respects as the footman, to the firing line. Our cavalrymen use the same rifle, and are trained in the same musketry course as are the infantrymen of our army. They expend the same amount of ammunition at target practice as do the infantrymen. Why the battle value of our cavalry should be lessened by the fact that they approach the field of battle on horse rather than on foot has yet to be proved.

Since the World War there are those who would supplant cavalry with infantry mounted in trucks and lorries. This, it is claimed, would make cavalry superfluous by rendering infantry equally mobile. This was done in the

war on the Western front, argue they. This argument takes for granted that there will be, in any terrain we will be called upon to march over, similar roads to those existing in Northern France. If one will take an atlas and estimate just how much of the earth's surface is covered by roads in any way similar to those of Northern France this argument is at once proved fallacious. To particularize, in Europe one finds good roads in France, Germany, and the British Isles. And by good roads is meant roads that will stand up in rain and shine against the fearful racketing and tearing of heavy motor traffic. From the standard set by these three countries the roads of the remainder of Europe grade down to the cattle tracks on the immense steppes of Russia. The great highlands of Asia, the enormous extent of Africa, China, Siberia and Australia must be taken into consideration. In the two Americas we have a few good roads on our Atlantic seaboard, a narrow strip, and a few good ones on the southern end of our Pacific seaboard. Against these must be put the enormous territories of South and Central America, Mexico, the remainder of the United States and Canada. To base our transportation needs solely upon conditions existent in the comparatively tiny proportion of the earth's surface containing good roads and to disregard the hundreds of thousands of square miles not so blessed is putting too many eggs in one basket. The weakness of this is further exemplified when one takes into consideration the remote chances of another war between two white civilized races on civilized terrain, as compared to a war between a white civilized race and a colored race of lesser civilization fighting on a primitive terrain. And the greater portion of the earth's surface is primitive terrain inhabited by semi-civilized, barbaric or savage peoples.

In addition to the great extent of the earth's surface where it is impossible to use gasoline transportation, there is another phase of the problem that few people know or reflect on—the fact that the gasoline supply of the world has a known limit and that limit much closer than people realize.

Before relegating cavalry and the horse to the limbo of forgotten things, it is wise to reflect a little upon the Palestine campaign—a campaign undertaken and pushed through while the fighting on the Western front was in progress—with forces having access to the innovations introduced in this war. Because of the terrain, these forces fought, with few modifications, as Richard and Saladin fought in days gone by. The man, aided by the horse (a proportion of something like three divisions of cavalry to four of infantry) struggled as he has always struggled and always will struggle when a little removed from the good roads of civilized countries.

Civilization has been overrun by horsemen from time immemorial. At recurrent periods throughout the course of history, hordes of horsemen have swept over Europe from the highlands of Asia. Our own America was discovered because of the closing of the trade routes to the East by the Seljukian Turks, marauding horsemen who had, themselves, been pushed from their fastnesses by still other roving horsemen in the interior of Asia.

As long as the enormous stretches of almost trackless land surface on the globe are so much greater in extent than the small area of improved country, as long as these great domains are inhabited by people inferior in civilization, just so long will there be need of the mounted man.

This necessity for cavalry was impressed upon the writer after having served on the plains of the Texas-Mexican border, after having served with Cossacks and