CHAPTER I.

REMOUNTS FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THEM WHEN THERE.

From the commencement of the War to this day the Remount Question has been a most trying and important one. The Remount Department constitutes a very expensive branch of the Service, and one in which any laxity might cause great leakages of public money, and even serious loss of life.

It is natural that Englishmen should put the English horses first, as being most likely to meet all active service requirements; but until the outbreak of the present war very few of those who held this opinion had any experience whatever in horses of other countries, or of the conditions under which the remounts would have to work. Yet the South African War is, from the British standpoint, almost wholly a war for Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, the conditions and area of combat excluding the use of Infantry pure and simple. The enemy is always mounted, and, in most if not all cases, well mounted, each man having, in addition to his mount, sometimes one, two, and often three led or driven horses. All these horses have been bred in the country, and are only asked to perform something that they have been

in the habit of doing as a matter of course in the past, viz., a journey of fifty to a hundred miles without a break. The horse which is ridden one day is a led or driven horse on the morrow, so that he is always comparatively fresh and ready for any emergency. Now, to compete against these animals the British soldier has almost invariably had only one horse, which has not only had to carry his rider, but, in addition, a saddle, heavy saddle-bags, waterproof sheet, two blankets, overcoat, mackintosh, nosebag, rifle, belt and bayonet, 300 rounds of ammunition, haversack, water-bottle, etc. Now, how many days, or even hours, can a horse do that? We know at least that he is made to do it until completely exhausted, a result which, with such liberal assistance, is soon arrived at; then he is condemned, and perhaps shot on the spot, to prevent his falling into the hands of the enemy, and another obtained in his place from the nearest depot or elsewhere. Some of the horses that went to the front at first were just rideable—and a pretty rough ride it was at first! The writer has some beauties in his memory, but as much as possible was done by mankind to quiet them before leaving for the front, the rough-riders working long hours, many being so tired at night that they could hardly walk up to their tents and carry their saddles. Some of the rough-riders rode as many as thirty different horses in a day—every one of them "rough." If perchance a horse was not rough, but very quiet, he was only

ridden a distance of about half a mile, to the water-trough and back, the rider dismounting and mounting while going each way; "darlings" of this sort were mostly reserved for the Mounted Infantry.

Now, the mounted man should be strictly limited to his saddle and wallet, water-bottle, and overcoat, with one blanket underneath his saddle, which should be waterproof, if possible. Light wagons, drawn by six mules, should take all the rest of the kit, unless, as is to be preferred in some cases, pack ponies and mules are used; and every man should have a led horse. If this rule had been carried out, the waste of horses would have been greatly lessened, much unnecessary cruelty obviated, and facility of mobilization much improved, with the result that success would, in some regretted instances, have probably taken the place of disappointment and reverse. Under the improved system suggested an animal would have to be found to carry about thirteen to fourteen stone twenty or thirty miles every alternate day, instead of eighteen or twenty stone every day.

Under all circumstances the horse of the country is the best qualified to do this; the next best is the horse of a similar country, carefully selected and acclimatized. It is a recognised fact that no attempt was made to acclimatize horses and get them into condition in the first year of the war. Even now this necessary work is not effectually done. It is done after a fashion in some depots, but it might be done

better. There is still (1902) no organized system of rough-riding and breaking in any depot.

What is meant is this: In a large receiving and forwarding depot there should be at least 100 N.C.O.'s and men. These men should ride the fit horses twice a day, say for one hour each time, with the object that they may be fit when they leave. Fit, not fat. Fatness means fitness to many Remount Officers. The men should be drilled on them—not in the home style, but in the South African style: this course would ensure for the horse a preliminary training that would be of great advantage to his riders at the front. During the rough and ready training proceeding, shoeing-forges should be erected, in the kraals devoted to the horses, shoes removed and refixed, each horse being attended to irrespective of apparent requirements. All the horses should in their drill be habituated to firing, both from their back and alongside of them, and taught resignation to the process of knee-haltering or hobbling. They should also learn to refrain from backing when approached by their riders at a run, and mounted. How many lives at the front have been sacrificed for want of this particular kind of training? The writer does not state that no training of this nature has been given; but that all has not been done that should have been done. The junior officer is not allowed to make suggestions to his O.C., and on one occasion the writer, who was sent with an N.C.O. and ten men to a certain depot with

the view of getting horses fit for the front, was prohibited from training them, as he was told by the O.C. "that the horses when landed were to have absolute rest." They were allowed to stand in their own muck until sent up—a matter perhaps of a few days—and that without their feet being looked at. At all times and in all depots but one, there has been always a deficiency of blacksmiths to do the work properly and thoroughly. The C.V.S. is not a man as a rule to look for work and trouble, for when in private practice, supposing him to have had a practice of his own, his work was found for him, whereas, in the Remounts he is supposed to find his own work.

It is a known fact that in all large countries the horses are small, and vice versa; it is therefore to be assumed that the English horse is greatly out of it in South Africa, where he is a big horse in a vast country. Moreover, from an equine standpoint, he is a cultivated gentleman, used to the best of treatment, under the very best conditions. Not only is he pampered himself, but he comes from a pampered stock; he is thereby rendered susceptible to many diseases and ailments that are unlikely to attack his less fortunate mate. The English horse has been used to being well fed at certain times in the day; kept warm, stabled, etc. All these things militate against him on active service in South Africa. He cannot look after himself, his natural instincts have been weakened by civilization; he neighs for his food, instead of grazing,

stands shivering in the cold and wet all night, without moving, instead of looking for a sheltered spot, like his half-civilized brother, and grazing to fill his belly, whether or no there is enjoyment to be extracted from the rough and frequently sparse herbage, which is all he can get. He forgets to indulge in a roll when just off duty whereby his seasoned comrade rests himself, and makes himself contented, and ready to perform what is required of him the following day. So the pampered horse soon goes to the sick lines—if there are any to go to—and probably never leaves them until, hitched to a span of bullocks, he is dragged to his grave—a dead witness to departmental inexperience and lack of organization. It is true that a few of the English horses exported for military use to South Africa do really well, but their success is due to exceptional circumstances; some others do just manage to do a turn in the front and get back to recuperate on a farm. The writer knows that some of the Remount Officers place the English horse first, both as a cavalry and draught horse in South Africa.

It is a moot point if the English horse might not prove the superior of horses of his own size of any other country, where both get the same attention and feed; but this is not the writer's opinion, at least as regards South Africa. There the big well-bred South African horse (number one) in South Africa, the New Zealander, the Canadian, the big Australian (as brought over by the contingents from Australia),

similar to the Walers in India, would run him very close on active service, for they would be very "hard to beat."

Let a test be made of 100, or any greater number, of horses from each country, the horses to be selected by experts appointed by their respective Governments. Let a certain amount be voted by each parliament for the entire cost of these animals, each country to expend the amount in question on not less than 100 horses. Let the horses be shipped to South Africa, there to go through the same length of time—say a year—in acclimatization and drill, and do exactly the same work afterwards under riders of the same country as they respectively represent. This test could be carried out without any extra outlay whatever. As for the men, the training would do them good. After the test the men might return to their respective countries, but the horses would of course remain as additions to the ordinary remounts and used in the usual manner. Thus some correct and reliable opinion might be formed of the relative merits of all cavalry horses.

Cavalry horses will be always in demand, and the faster they can gallop the better the chance for their riders, either for assault or retreat. But the war in South Africa has practically demonstrated that the fine upstanding, shining and glistening cavalry horse that creates such a feeling of pride when you are admiring his imposing and handsome appearance in

Peace times, at reviews, marches and shows, is not the animal he is supposed to be, and is not so useful in actual warfare as the big little horse, with a stout-built round body, strong clean-looking legs, etc., with plenty of courage, and a good dash of Arab blood in him. What is actually required for active service is a wiry and hardy animal, reared for the purpose, unspoiled by high class living, and used to roughing it from his early days. He must possess great endurance and be able to carry a soldier across the worst of horse countries quickly and safely, to withstand exposure, both to heat and cold, and to nourish himself on coarse herbage. The cavalry horse for active service should never be over 15.0 or 15.1.

Then take the draft horses. Perhaps the English horses would come better out of the harness than the saddle trials; if one should take as a whole the samples that have been sent to South Africa as draft horses. The Canadians were good, the N.S.W. not bad, i.e., those that the contingents brought over themselves, but the writer must put the English draft horse first in South Africa. Still for draft purposes mules should be taken before any kind of draft horse; they are infinitely better from all standpoints. Especially suitable is the big American draft mule, he is not so likely to chafe, and get cut as the English horse, whose skin is too fine for rough, wet work, day in and day out on the veldt. Mules came back from the front fearfully emaciated, but generally without a cut or

scar, the horse just as emaciated and cut and scarred all over, though probably with an honourable record for work, the only animal that excels him for heavy work is the American mule; other and smaller mules would be preferable for light draft. The little South African mule is a "ringer" and can always get his own living, whereas the English draft horse requires a lot of good feed, which in active service he has to pull about himself. The writer's experience is gained personally and from close observation under a variety of circumstances.

If you start on a journey with mules, you are bound to get to the end of it, but with horses, you are not so "dead" sure, since in their cases the probability of lameness, sore shoulders or other misfortune is incomparably greater. Another great advantage possessed by the mule over horses for draft work is this: he is steadier and more reliable in soft country, specially when fording a river. There is generally a bit of uphill pulling in soft soil to be done in coming out of a river. Horses are particularly liable to jib at this stage. Mules never will.

Before going into horse management at sea the value of the English horse sent as a remount for South Africa must be further discussed.

While he has the greatest respect for Colonel Birkbeck, both as a personality and for his splendid work in South Africa, the writer absolutely fails to find from his own extended knowledge of the English

South African remounts, what are the grounds upon which the Assistant-Inspector of Remounts has formed his opinion that the English horses have come out on top for cavalry as well as draft. As before stated in this book, they may have established their pre-eminence for draft purposes, where they had little or nothing to compete with. The Australian drafts, selected in Australia, were a most wretched lot; in fact it is a wonder to the writer how such wretched specimens could have been found in such numbers; some of them were absolutely savages, unbroken and of any age. As an instance take the following. If at one time had you walked into the Artillery Camp at the Stellenbosch Depot, you would have noticed two or three heavy trunks of trees lying on the ground. To the end of one of these trunks, which happened by its shape to be raised above the ground, an Australian draft horse was tied by two long halters. The writer believes that when he saw the horse, he had been there some days. The question was asked, why was he tied there by himself and not on the lines with the other draft horses? The reply was, "He is a perfect savage and will kill any man who goes within length of his fore or hind feet, and will also rush you if you go near him. One of us (Tommies) have to hold one rope and stand on this side of the tree, while another puts his feed and water down."

One day two Tommies brought the animal to the writer's kraal, with a request from the officer in com-

mand to "put his nosebag on," which was done in a second, much to the Tommies' astonishment, who wanted to know how it was done.

The reply was: "You saw how it was done; do the same yourself."

They went away laughing and questioning each other as to how they were to get the "bally" thing off again.

There were in the camp at this time about three or four Artillery officers and over 100 N.C.O.'s and men, yet none of them cared to try to put on the animal's nosebag. This was not the only savage Australian draft horse. Captain B. told the writer one day when he remarked upon the bad quality of the Australian drafts, that he (Captain B.) had seen such and such a horse in harness and that he had purchased the whole team (three in number), and that they were the last he had purchased, since he had purchased them when actually shipping on the wharf before leaving Australia.

Upon inquiry the Captain pointed to the animal under discussion, with the remark, "that one was in the body of the team," whereupon the writer rejoined, "Of course he was there; they (the sellers) would not be fools enough to put him in the lead to kill anyone passing, or in the shafts to kick the cart to pieces."

The English drafts are perhaps the best sent to South Africa, but a "slow racehorse can beat a hack."

With regard to the English horse for saddle pur-

poses generally he was, in the writer's opinion, not in it in South Africa; his size and weight put him out of it, not to mention the impossibility of satisfying his requirements on the veldt. The officers requiring chargers when going to the front from Stellenbosch would all arrive there with the English horse in their eye, and none other; and when one of them was advised by the writer to take "perhaps a rather mean-looking Cape pony," would laugh and say, "That brute wouldn't carry me five miles." Yet in no case was it complained that the Cape pony actually justified such a remark.

There is not one single recommendation that the writer knows of for the English Cavalry horse in the front for South African service. The very best of food, grooming, and stabling are essential to the English horse; without them, he cannot work, and, as before stated, they cannot be obtained on the veldt. A "stable" is one of the few things an officer is not allowed to take with him to the front. Moreover, it takes an English horse nearly all his strength to pull his own food about in South Africa. As long as he gets his three feeds a day and does not chafe or get sore backs, he can work, but not otherwise. The writer has seen indescribably fearful wounds on the back from saddle-galls; and cut withers, which have developed large open rotten sores, frequently with maggots in, and has appalled those who looked at these horses from the front.

English horses have suffered more than any others from sores on the back, shoulders and withers, proving that their skin is not capable of standing rough usage, dirt and neglect. It is not to be supposed for one moment that the horse can be as well looked after on active service as he is in peace times. He has to rough it, in conjunction with his rider, and if he cannot stand it, he is certainly not fit or suitable for protracted active service.

A kind friend sent me a little book on "Small Horses in Warfare," by Sir Walter Gilbey, whom the writer had the pleasure of knowing many years ago. He says—"The experience we have gained in South Africa goes to confirm that acquired in the Crimea, where it was found that the horses sent out from England were unable to stand the climate, poor food and the hardship to which they were subjected, while the small native horses and those bred in countries further east suffered little from these causes."

Now, in South Africa horses have to stand really very hot days and very cold nights. The same writer goes on to state—"All the experience of campaigners, explorers, and travellers goes to grove that 13.2 to 14.2 hands high are those on which reliance can be placed for hard and continuous work on scanty and innutritious food."

People in South Africa often confirm this statement; those who have had repeatedly the chance of buying English horses frequently refuse them and give

the preference to their own instead. The writer has had it said to him often by farmers, "I don't care for the English horses in this country," and the little book mentioned above states "That in past years, before the present war, large numbers of English horses have been sent to Natal for military service, but the results were not satisfactory, all became useless, and the majority died (if this occurred in peace time, what is their chance on active service?). The change from English stables and English methods of managing, to those in vogue in the Colony, almost invariably prove fatal."

And again—"English horses could not stand hard work under a tropical sun with scarcity of water and food."

Here is another test: Take the English horse to Australia and put him, after being a month there, on a thousand mile journey alongside of a Bush horse which probably never had a feed of corn in his life; let the two fare the same on the journey, and see which one would last the longest.

The English horse is out of it altogether where roughing and spare diet comes in. The writer had a longish ride to do while in South Africa. It was from Kaffirland to Bowker's Park, via Queenstown; at the start over very bad country. The first mountain to come down was nearly 7,000 feet high. The cattle at the bottom looked just like so many fowls, and the track, if track it could be called, was stated (where it

was visible) not to have been used for years, and then only by Kaffirs or cattle. It took one hour and thirty-five minutes to get down; the horses were of course led, and it was a great relief to reach the bottom. In most places a mistake meant a fall of hundreds of feet. Twice one of the horses slipped and punched the writer in the back, nearly bringing about an accident that would have resulted in death to one or both of us.

No English horse would have started to come down such a place, and no shod horse could have performed the task successfully. When the writer knew he had to go the journey, he picked out two Barkley East ponies, neither of which had ever been shod, or perhaps had ever had a feed of corn in its life. They went through splendidly; the writer riding each pony alternately, changing mounts about every hour and a half. The distance was about 72 miles, and he weighed fourteen stone exactly. The saddle, which was a rather heavy Australian one, with coats, revolver, etc., would make quite another 35 lb., if not more.

Before leaving the English horse as a remount for active service in South Africa, a few hints to be noted by those in England who have the purchase, management and shipping of him may not be amiss.

For saddle purposes he should not be over 15 hands; 14 to 14½ is better, with a big bit of quality, active looking, and with a thorough "riding shoulder," sound feet, etc. The carty pony or cob is not a suit-

able animal for South Africa. The carty pony is the worst of all, yet the writer heard an English buyer (an Imperial officer) say that he liked a "strong common looking pony," and that it was the sort for Africa. All the writer wished at the time was that the buyer would have to ride them all when there. It is the worst country in the world for riding, you cannot go off the so-called road in most places, without risking an immediate fall. There are so many holes of all sorts and sizes, sluits, etc. If the reader has not been there he cannot imagine the country. It is bad in the daytime, but at night the "common or garden pony" would be far more dangerous to the rider than the enemy's bullets.

The writer was continually getting falls through the horse putting his leg down a hole until a bad-tempered and despised Argentine was selected by him. Although the Argentine at first occasionally put his foot into a hole, he never went down, as he always had a leg to spare. After he had been ridden a short time, he never once made a mistake of any kind.

Before shipment, the English remount should always undergo a certain amount of preparation; but the writer does not think that much care or attention is given to this matter, as he has observed the auction sale paper numbers still sticking on him as when purchased. As a matter of fact it is not important that the remount should be daily well groomed and polished up, indeed it is better otherwise. Just a good

rough grooming is all that is necessary. He should be exposed to the open, as much as possible, but not on lines, and he should be rugged if the weather is extremely cold. His hardening-off should be done gradually and with consideration, governed by knowledge and common sense.

If the horse has been in full work, I should, with due consideration of the time of year, advise grazing about four hours daily, if possible, or in lieu, plenty of good hay, a very small quantity of any sort of grain, with full rations of damped bran, and bran mashes, and, four days before shipment, a physic ball, or a couple of doses of linseed oil, with an ounce of spirits of turpentine in it, the second dose after an interval of three or four days.

Discretion should be shown as to clipping; it is cruel if he arrives in South Africa in the winter, when the nights are fearfully cold and frequently wet, and the wind most piercing. If he is to arrive in the summer, well, yes; if his coat is very heavy, it should be clipped, leaving the hair on all vital portions of his body. The seasons in South Africa are diametrically opposite to those in England.

The recognised requirements for the English horse in England are not those of the remounts on active service in South Africa.

It is almost cruel to send a docked horse to South Africa; there he requires the use of his tail as much as a Tommy does his rifle. The flies are there in

millions, such ugly-looking brutes that lie closely into the coat and skin and sting terribly. A horse with a long perfect tail cannot keep them off. You will see him dancing with his hind legs as if he had stringhalt badly, trying to strike them on his belly with his hind feet, flicking his tail all the time; so what chance has a horse without a tail? He goes mad. The writer was one day riding an Australian mare who could not withstand these flies at all, although she had a beautiful sweeping tail. She would stop and kick for two or three minutes at a time and, mounted as she was, attempt to lie down, if she could not get rid of the insects in any other way. In South Africa every rider is obliged to carry a fly switch, viz., a piece of horse's tail tied on to a short stick. The moral is, don't cut a bit of hair off the horses' tails; if even the tail has been docked, let it grow, no matter how ragged it looks.

The same advice as to the tail, equally applies to the mane. The mane is essential for three reasons. First, it protects the horse from flies, secondly, it is of great assistance in mounting; thirdly, a wounded rider is less likely to drop from the saddle if he has it to hold on by. A hogged horse or pony at the front is a nuisance. It is never too easy to mount when fully equipped and may be very difficult without the help of a mane, if you happen to be a little stout, and the soles of your boots being as slippery as ice.

SHOEING.—There is much controversy on this

experience of horses at sea extending over thirty years—an experience by which he holds the record for length of voyage with horses (in his case generally his own) exported in any considerable number. His opinion, then, should have some weight and it amounts to this: don't shoe at all, or only in cases where the walls of the foot are liable to split or because of some specific defect in the foot, such as sandcrack. Trim the feet well, and ship the horses unshod. Unshod, a horse is less likely to slip or fall than if he wore shoes, and when he has fallen down on shipboard he cannot rise without help and a piece of cocoanut matting pulled under him. When you cannot get the matting under the horse immediately, he invariably struggles most violently, a proceeding which causes extreme exhaustion and many abrasions and other injuries.

This sounds conclusive, but there are other reasons why it is generally wise to send horses unshod to South Africa. The number of shoeing-smiths is somewhat limited there—therefore unshod horses would be necessarily compulsorily detained some days on their arrival. The shoeing would be satisfactory in the end, and during the delay the animals would be getting much required rest and acclimatization—full rations and slight training, etc.

Since, as I have stated, "fatness" means "fitness" in most Remount Officers' eyes, the fattest horses are sent away immediately after arrival, or within a few

days, generally with the shoes on just as they were landed. It is seldom that a shoeing-smith is so conscientious that, if he sees the wall of the foot overlapping the shoes, he will go to the trouble of stripping the shoes and replacing them—refitted—to the feet. This neglect is, in the writer's opinion, a great cause of lameness, with the English horses particularly. Their feet get as long as a donkey's—the shoes will remain on six months if allowed to. Horses have often gone through their service at the front and been returned to the depots with apparently the same shoes on that they wore when they left England.

In any case, when the horse arrives, he has been shod five or six weeks, and may remain three weeks in depot. That is a bit long. Three days has been nearer the average. It is a fact that he is supposed to be shod before leaving for the front and most O.C.'s would swear that "never" or "hardly ever" had a horse left their depot for the front unshod. It is absolute nonsense to say that a horse by just stamping his forefeet on a piece of soft timber on board ship could seriously injure his forefeet. Besides, if this were possible, which, in the writer's opinion, it is not, there are always shoes on board ship, and one can be tacked on if necessary.

Another reason for non-shoeing is that the unshod *horse can have* much greater liberty on board ship. The horse's cabin is small enough, 2 ft. 4 in. wide by about 7 ft. long, and only moved occasionally sideways

one stall, when being "mucked out." He is not able to lie down in his stall, but if he were unshod, the partition boards—say three sets—could be taken down, thus making a loose box for four horses. The writer has done this with all kinds of horses and always found it to answer well. The animal soon finds out that he can lie down, and does so; he turns about in the "box" and rests himself greatly, and rest is the only exercise the remount requires on board ship.

Some officers hold, in the writer's opinion, most extraordinary notions as to the absolute necessity for the exercise of horses on board ship. The involuntary exercise they are compelled to take by the vessel's motion is quite sufficient for such purposes, without the walking and slipping exercise they are frequently indulged in. If the animals' accommodation is so arranged that they can turn round and lie down—that "exercise" will meet all requirements. One inexperienced officer in South Africa was so fond of having animals exercised, that he had all the "bullocks" and their wagons exercised daily, till he found out, that what was good for the horse was not good for the trek ox, since in one animal "condition" means being fat when fit and the other the reverse.

Embarking.—Often the animal to be embarked has had a long railway journey to the port of embarkation, before which he was led to the railway station, whence he entered the train for the ship's side. The distance from the starting-point to the railway station may or

may not be long, but having been well fed, groomed, clipped, etc., the horse has felt a little above himself, and, as he was led rugged up to the Railway Station, probably kicked and bucked about and got into a muck-sweat, and in that state was entrained, perhaps with a long, cold journey before him. Is not this likely to produce a chill? It is; and the animal is thus frequently shipped with the seeds of pneumonia or influenza in his system.

To avoid the likelihood of this, the writer suggests that all horses should be led from the depot without rugs on, and be carefully dried and inspected before being rugged and entrained; that, at the disentraining, the horses should be stripped, and a careful inspection of each animal made by a competent veterinary officer for signs of chill, etc., and the horses led to the vessel unrugged; and that each horse should be rugged in his stall on board ship after he has been tied up. This treatment would, to say the least of it, "do good" as influenza and pneumonia are a great factor in the death rates on the transport of English remounts to South Africa, which are much heavier than those of any other country.

The writer has had great experience with all sorts of horses under all sorts or conditions before and during the war in South Africa; he is a great admirer of the English horse, and places him generally, under certain conditions, at the top of the tree. But his body is too big, his stomach is difficult to keep

filled, he will stampede on the slightest provocation, and he won't knee-halter (hobbles have not been much tested). He won't stand if you drop his rein on the ground. It is unsafe to leave him tied up. If not tied in rings (and this method is not too safe) someone must always hold him. He trots always, high sometimes, and has free good action generally; but he doesn't always look where he puts his feet down. The roads of South Africa are rough, with holes everywhere. It is generally hot in the day, very hot; sometimes trotting makes both him and his rider sweat. The rider becomes bad-tempered, perhaps from the shaking he has had. He remembers the stumbles, etc., and when he gets to the end of his day's march, he is tired, and done up. He has then to groom, and dress the horses. Perhaps the convoy is not up and no feed is available. He has then to put the horse on the lines or lead him about so as to entice him to graze a bit. All the time the horse keeps looking about and frets, expecting his corn, but does not get any frequently for a long time afterwards. All these matters make him an undesirable active service horse for South Africa.

With a pony, or country-bred, you just take off your saddle and bridle, knee-halter him and let him go. He will both water and graze, and, as a rule, not stray away. No grooming is required; he does that himself, for directly his saddle is off, down he goes, has a roll, then, with a shake or two, is both clean and dry.

It is not for a moment to be inferred that, because the English horse is not (in the writer's opinion) the most suitable as a remount for South Africa, as his price might lead one to suppose, he will not excel and perhaps beat all others in other countries more like his own. It is probable that in other and more congenial surroundings, he might excel the pony or horse suitable to-day for South Africa; but for their special work the small war-horse and the mounted infantry pony have come to stay, and it is to the production of this animal, able to do his work under all circumstances, that the Government will have to give its best consideration and immediate attention.

Would the money laid out for English remounts, suitable for active service in South Africa (not like those that are being sent now), be more profitably employed in purchasing horses from any other country? The main points for consideration are:—

1. The purchase price. The English rate is, or should be, much higher than all others.

2. Incidental expenses up to shipping. These are certainly no less in England than in other countries—probably more, as red tape is generally costly, and there is more of it in England than elsewhere.

3. Cost of transport. This is certainly no less and probably much larger from England than from all the other countries where horses are mostly purchased.

4. Likelihood of death during transport. This is greater in the case of the English horse for many

reasons. Among them are the length and probable roughness of the voyage, the change from extreme cold to extreme heat, his greater liability to disease.

5. Comparative duration of service in South Africa. In the writer's opinion the English horse in South Africa becomes unfit for service sooner than all or most other kinds there, and a better and more suitable class of horse will have to be sent in the future than is being sent now. Lord Kitchener's opinion that horses arriving from England are too heavy is absolutely correct. The writer has many times expressed the same opinion.

CHAPTER II.

HINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT AND COMFORT OF HORSES AT SEA.

The English horse, unfortunately, is not so able to bear the fatigues of the voyage to South Africa as horses of other countries, so every consideration should be given to the methods adopted for his welfare on board ship.

Prevention is better than cure. Draughts are bad, a constant cold wind playing upon any one spot, and that perhaps a vital one, soon causes trouble, as the horse in a natural state will always turn his quarters to inclement weather. On board ship, as he is now arranged, he cannot do this, it being out of his power to move. Hence the idea suggested in the last chapter of putting four horses together in a sort of loose box, and thus affording them room to lie down in.

Draughts should be noticed at once and canvas shields erected where necessary. Cold nights should be particularly guarded against, and frequent shifting of quarters is good for them when it can be so arranged. If an animal is declining in condition there is a cause for it and he should be shifted at once.

VENTILATION.—Means of ventilation should be carefully tested before the horses are shipped. On the top deck stalls, the second and third boards from the top at the rear of these stalls should be joined together and hinged in convenient lengths. A light lifting-rope should run over the top of the stalls on a little wheel, so that in the heat of the day these two boards can be lifted up and let down again at night. They can be prevented from flapping at night by a large wooden button fall.

Stalls are frequently fixed where none, or fewer, should exist, in alleyways, etc., alongside the engine department, places generally most difficult to move horses out of, owing to bulkheads, etc., places where the drainage is generally bad, and the scuppers difficult to keep clean. All accessories for drainage should be practically tested before the ship leaves the dock, or better still, before the horses are shipped. This has not been done properly from any port except New Orleans.*

Drainage and ventilation are in most cases closely allied. On board ship, a sufficient number of wind-sails should be provided, and these also tested, so as to see that the length and sizes are suitable, and in all stuffy places electric fans are absolutely necessary;

* The writer does not know the shipping officer there, but whoever he is he knows his work well and must do it fearlessly. The benefit of his zeal and knowledge is proved by the death rate from New Orleans being lower than from any other embarking point. Looked at from one standpoint that from England is the highest!!

for without these in calm weather, or when the wind and ship are travelling together at the same pace, no ventilation can possibly take place.

Canvas protections from the sun and the extreme cold are necessary to the stalls on the top deck.

A few more words as to the construction of the stalls. As they are now made the boards at the back of the stalls are flat and high enough to chafe a horse's tail and quarters. In many cases, when the weather is rough, these chafes develop into very bad wounds and sores which on most ships are difficult to detect. These wounds often get into a rotten state before being discovered. To prevent this there should be an oval-faced 9 in. breechen bar, so that when the horse inclines backwards in his stall, his tail shall not come in contact with any portion of the stall or ship, the breechen bar alone taking his weight.

The flooring of the stalls should have cleets in all cases on both sides—the lower, as well as the upper side—for the purpose of both drainage and cleansing. The bottom division board should not come flush on to the stall floor, but should be about 2 in. off.

Fodder.—This is almost the most important matter; bad food means great mortality, no matter how good and perfect all other arrangements may be. There is a great diversity of opinion as to the exact form and nature of the food suitable for horses on board ship. There is economy to be studied, as no place in the world is so conducive to waste of fodder

as a ship. The writer recommends no hay, except for sick horses, and all hay should be chaffed and packed in bales and dumped. At least 33 per cent. of the hay given to the horses is wasted, trodden under foot, creating dirt and work; blocking up the scuppers, etc., till it is ultimately thrown overboard. Chaff would prevent this waste. The quantity of bulk food given could be better regulated, and the quality better tested. No bad hay would be chaffed. The point is that a lot of hay shipped cannot be properly inspected in bales. The quantity being limited to a certain scale, the animals are compelled to eat it, good or bad. The chaff should be made under Government supervision, or by the Government itself, as at all times and in all places (excepting when the horse is fed off the ground), it is better for the animal as well as for its owner, that the bulk food should be chaffed hay. Moreover, it is most difficult to feed horses with hay on board ship. If you put it into string nets, after the first night nearly half the nets are gnawed to pieces and unserviceable. If it is in the usual small box manger, it is all on the deck at the first pull the horse gives, and soon spoiled. The animal, thus getting very little bulk food, soon looks tucked up; moreover, the want of bulk food causes digestive troubles to arise, constipation, colic, etc.

When the writer was shipping horses to England, France, or India, or anywhere else from Australia, a very small quantity of hay was put

on board; only chaffed hay being used, just the same as is universally used in Australia, and in spite of bad weather and heavy prolonged gales, he has landed horses in England in top condition. For its purpose it is a beautiful food, of, as a rule, a lovely pale green colour, with a grand "nose" to it. It is particularly convenient on board ship, as it only requires a little bran and salt mixed with it. The oats in the hay when cut are quite sufficient for horses at sea, and a bucket or so damped is all the feeding necessary for any horses. The writer feels certain that if the Government had purchased this chaff in Australia, loaded it on the horse transports to South Africa, and distributed it there for use on horse ships, and also in the depots and farms, a great saving would have been effected in cost of forage and freight and a greater benefit still have been done to the horses. The writer brought a cargo of horses to England from Australia some few years ago, and at the farm where they were located, which was rented from Sir Thomas Barrett Leonard, the visitors were astonished at the perfect manner in which the Australian chaff was cut, the cleanliness and good feed in it, its weight, etc. They voluntarily stated that they had never seen anything to touch it in appearance and quality and wanted the writer there and then to contract with them for a large and continuous supply.

Grain food, either oats or crushed maize, should be

sparingly used always. It is necessary with English horses to use a little of it after the first three or four days, say at most 2 lbs. per day, and for the next fortnight or so after; then, 4 or 5 lbs. a day can be used, it being given in three or four feeds, slightly damped sometimes. All grain should be crushed.

Bran.—The entire daily allowance, viz., 6 lbs., should be used and more during the first two weeks (as a nightly mash it is beneficial). Bran should be mixed with the chaff and grain, just damped with fresh, and sometimes sea water. The food, viz., chaff, bran and grain, or bran and grain only, or the mash, should be mixed in large boxes, about 2 ft. 6 in. high and 7 ft. square, in different parts of the ship handy for distribution of the food.

The chaff can be cut in England from assorted hay, mixed, but all of an equally good quality, not musty. The chaff so made would be a great benefit to the animal, and a great improvement upon what he is now getting.

All the feed tins should be cleaned daily, and at feeding-time laid on the deck in front of the horses in a row, and the feed put in, the horses thus being all fed at the same time, an arrangement which will avoid a great amount of biting and kicking. The cleanliness of the tins and the quantity given can be more easily certified by this method than any other.

There is an opening for great improvement in the

feeding-trough, specially if the continuance of whole hay feeding is decided upon, as against hay chaffed. String nets are no good, or only of very little service; nets should be made of wire, after a pattern the writer knows of, or if chaff is to be used generally, with a small modicum of hay, the last thing at night, there is a kind of manger that will answer all purposes and enable the user to dispense with a net. The writer has designed and used this combination of manger and trough; it does for water, grain and bran or hay, and costs but a little more than the present galvanised iron box manger, while it effects a great saving of forage and labour.

HALTERS.—Those in use on shipboard now are certainly not suitable, because as a rule every part of them is too large, and the ropes are frequently chewed up. The writer has found a plaited rope halter (to a pattern) with chains and T links the best and cheapest for ship use.

CLEANLINESS.—This is a rather difficult matter to attain in some instances, and many details control it. For instance, the Government theoretically allow one man to fifteen horses. In practice some men are required as watchmen and under-foremen, and to repair nets and provide for other contingencies. Thus it often happens that the average number of horses dealt with per man amounts to eighteen or twenty, which is too many. Ten English horses are in fact plenty for any one man to look after, feed, water, and muck-out. Ten per man allows for daily grooming and

mucking-out and the proper cleaning of the scuppers. Of course where troops and horses are sent together on the same ship, it frequently happens that every horse has a soldier to look after it, but the average stated above is what the horse-ships are required to supply in the Government contracts. The worst part of the whole system of horse sea-transport from England, is the signing on of the horsemen at 1s. per month for three years, on the understanding that it is a matter of form, and that they will be allowed to sign off at the end of the outward voyage and secure a bonus of, say, £2 if satisfaction has been given.

To begin with, the men who undertake the work are, as a rule, worthless and capable of committing almost any crime. At any moment they may refuse to work, then mutiny, insult and threaten all on board, the Captain and the Remount Officers coming in for the bulk of their violent threats and filthy abuse. Why not in all cases, since details are always being sent to South Africa, give the Remount Officer, say, 50 to 70 soldiers? The work would then be better done, the average condition of the shipment improved, the death-rate probably greatly reduced, and the expense of sending the soldiers by ordinary transport saved. And if these men were paid a small amount for the extra work, say 20s. each, no greater expense to the Government would be incurred, but probably less; for, instead of the labour being paid for indirectly through the shippers, it would be paid for directly by the Government and be a benefit to those receiving it.

CHAPTER III.

VARIOUS METHODS OF BUYING REMOUNTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE.

The Imperial Officer is no doubt honest, straight and honourable, as he should be; but these qualifications are not the sole requisites for a capable buyer of remounts. And now for some criticism and advice.

The purchase of animals in a foreign country, or in the Colonies, should have been conducted under the immediate supervision of an accredited (but

who should have had a free hand in every way, he would naturally have gone direct to the breeders of the horses required, and have advised their purchase or non-purchase, according as the quality suited and the price was reasonable. Of course, the adviser would not have a hand in any respect in the negotiations for purchase; that would be done by the Executive Officer under the advice of the Local Government representative.

The buying in Australia could all have been easily arranged from centres. The writer always did this when in the market for any large number of horses.

A notification should be printed in the local paper a fortnight in advance to the effect that a purchaser will attend for the purpose of buying remounts, etc., and that those having suitable horses are requested to bring them to the sale yards on a certain date, for inspection. The horses could all be arranged in the yards as received, each individual's horses kept separate, the asking price booked against the owner's name, a cursory examination made, the quality and price asked criticised. A dealer inclined to charge exorbitantly would receive a hint to remove his particular horses from the yards, or else to quote a fair market price; thus he would know at once that he was not dealing with a "flat."

By following such a system as this, there would have been a certain amount of competition created among the sellers. They bring their horses to sell,

and intend selling at a reasonable and fair price, if they cannot get a higher one. They do not want to take them back again, perhaps a hundred or two hundred miles. All the horses selected should be purchased, subject to a saddle trial later on, and one man should be employed by the purchaser to ride the lot. If the saddle trial can be given the following morning, so much the better, as horses are frequently rendered temporarily quiet by exhaustion, but this rule for trial of course is not absolutely necessary. It is, however, extremely important that the owner should not be permitted to give the animal its riding test.

Of course there are plenty of cases where a riding test is not necessary, but in Australia and all foreign countries, it would almost always be advisable.

No stranger in any country without sound and straight help, could buy horses in that particular country to advantage. Of course, the buyers in South Africa should have gained a litle knowledge of the proper price to pay for any animal shown them, but the majority of the seemed utterly to fail in acquiring this knowledge, and generally went by the sellers' valuation at the start and made them offers accordingly. Some of the methods of purchase adopted in South Africa were very funny, yet the officers who practised them thought that they were doing the correct thing. "Red tape" should not exist where individual horses are only offered, or horses in very small

numbers by each seller, for it is impossible for prices to be regulated from Headquarters under these circumstances. Many have been the conflicting orders made in regard to purchasing in South Africa. To-day instructions would be received to "buy everything capable of carrying a man," followed by the orders, "No unbroken horses or mares are to be purchased," "Mares may be purchased if suitable," "Cease purchasing," Purchase every suitable horse in your district," "Inform me how many you are likely to get," and so on.

Yet this was nobody's fault. The Headquarters' Staff desired to save every penny of outlay it was possible to avoid. But they did not know what the actual requirements were, or, in point of fact, how long the war would be likely to last. Every British success gave hopes of a speedy termination of the war, then orders came "Cease buying." In some instances the O.C.'s would notify the main suppliers to his particular depot that no more horses would be purchased. Then these men would cease buying, and when the order was rescinded, there were no horses to be immediately obtained.

So matters have gone on from day to day, ever since the war started, and they are not to be mended by the present system of purchasing and supply.

That prices paid for remounts in South Africa have, in some cases, been very excessive, was the result of utter ignorance of the art of buying, but yet the

officers, who wasted and flung the public money away out of sheer incapacity, did not, in the writer's opinion, put any of it in their own pockets. They had never bought a horse, probably, in their lives, before, and were perhaps Infantry Reserve Officers, men who frequently and voluntarily acknowledged that they knew nothing whatever about horses, and shifted their responsibility as much as possible on to the shoulders of the civil veterinary surgeon, who in many cases was absolutely incapable of rendering any practical assistance whatever. Of course he could as a rule tell whether the horse was "sound" or not, but beyond that nothing. When ponies were being purchased, the writer has heard the O.C. ask the C.V.S., "Will that pony carry a man?" The reply was often, "I don't know, I suppose he will with a little more condition on." The C.V.S. in some very few instances have come out well, but as organisers they are in all cases terribly deficient.

The writer will now particularize some of the various methods of buying in South Africa, by way of demonstrating the justice of the foregoing statements. A certain officer was one of the "very best" in most ways, but in buying his idea was this. Looking through the lot casually, he would have them tested as to size (each one being most accurately measured); then make his offer, from his own valuation, as thus, "I will give you £25 a head for this lot; £27 10s. for this, and for those two, say, £30 each." He never asked the seller what price

he wanted for them, though in some cases the writer could see that the seller was agreeably astonished at the price offered in spite of the fact that he managed to stammer out something like—"It's very hard, it won't pay me, I shall not clear expenses at that price, but I suppose I must take it, if I cannot get any more, as I cannot take them back," etc. So the deal is promptly concluded, the seller being as likely as not a rebel, who is fighting against us when he is not collecting horses and selling them to us. This sort of man always puts on a "whine" at first, then a sort of grumble, finishing off with a chuckle when he takes the cheque, which induces him to "whine" out the question if the buyer could take any more, as he might be able to get some, etc.

If the seller had been made to put his own price on at first, a much lower average price would have been paid, and the deal done in the ordinary way; but the above system was not confined to the officer I have alluded to; many government purchasers did just the same.

It used to make the writer's blood boil to see these very scoundrels who had been killing our men, and thieving at all opportunities, selling to us horses, that should have been taken months previously in the ordinary course of war, and at prices they never expected to realise. The writer does think that he could have done a bit better, although he hails from one of his Most Gracious Majesty's loyal Colonies.

Another and rather peculiar method was adopted by an O.C. of a depot, also one of the "very best." Although he always did his best in all matters, he would often voluntarily state that he "knew nothing whatever about a horse." This was quite apparent to the writer and was frequently illustrated by his (the O.C.'s) acts and orders, but never more so than when he was buying. He could not buy without a table, two chairs (one for himself and one for the C.V.S.), branding irons and books all complete, and a measuring-stick. As a preliminary the animal was furiously galloped up and down once, to see if he was rideable, then stood in front of the table and viewed, the judges remaining seated, and was afterwards most critically examined and measured by the C.V.S.; passed as sound, or rejected. If the horse was judged sound and suitable, the pair argued the value of the animal down to 5s, neither of them actually having the slightest idea of the market price, then the seller was called up and asked what his price was, and if it were higher than the O.C.'s valuation, another private discussion would take place, the result of which would be an offer accompanied by the statement that he (the O.C.) had come to the conclusion that the horse was only worth so much, say £18 10s. 4½d. If this were refused he would after more private consultation extend his offer by 2s. 6d., the difference being then probably only a few shillings. The seller always knew this officer's peculiarity and worked accordingly.

The writer has frequently seen horses purchased by this one of the "very best," and on one occasion saw him purchase 26 head, of which only one was fit, in his opinion, to carry a man, an opinion supported by the fact that the O.C. himself selected this particular horse for his own use during the time the animal remained at the depot All the remainder were a fearfully weedy, narrow, poor lot, simply children's ponies, certainly most unsuitable as remounts. One of them, a 13.0, was purchased at a small price, "so as to reduce the average cost." This animal was absolutely useless for riding purposes, but it might possibly come in as a pack pony, if required; the other 24 were not fit for even that purpose. The writer has known this one of the "very best" to refuse a pony one day as unsuitable for remount purposes and to buy him the following day as suitable; a different seller had of course brought the pony up for sale and the pony had had his tail squared off, and perhaps his mane hogged. This sort of thing was done repeatedly at this particular depot. At another depot, there were two of the "very very best" who used to buy—gentlemen above all suspicion—but they used to make the mistake of entering into the part of both seller and buyer, until the writer suggested the advantage of another course. These good gentlemen had never bargained over a horse, or perhaps anything else in their lives, but they might have used more discretion and common sense in buying horses with other people's money.