

## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF THE REMOUNT DEPOTS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

THE Report of July, 1900, by Col. W. H. Birkbeck, Assistant-Inspector of Remounts in South Africa, which the writer only read after drafting the material for this little book, fully corroborates many of the statements herein contained respecting the mistakes that have been made from time to time by the Remount Officers. It is not disputed that they did not err wilfully, but because they had no knowledge of horse management from a farm or depot standpoint, and very little from any other.

The writer would be sorry to be considered egotistical or boastful, but he thinks it probable that his experience of remounts equalled, if it did not excel, that, of any other Remount Officer employed in South Africa. He has certainly never had thousands of remounts under his charge at one time before entering the Imperial service in South Africa, but he has had hundreds which were his own property and were principally remounts for India, this experience of these horses and their requirements was probably unique.

He is quite certain that Col. Birkbeck never had

a more enthusiastic and zealous officer on his staff than himself, and he doubts if there is anyone who can say that he has engaged himself in remount work at a greater personal cost.

But to return to Col. Birkbeck's Report. It shows that, at the Stellenbosch Depot, on the Declaration of War, the strength of the remount animals and personnel in Cape Colony was 2 horses, 402 cobs, 866 mules, 1 lieutenant, 1 veterinary officer, 50 non-commissioned officers and men, 7 conductors, 200 native boys, while 2 officers, with a few boys, were purchasing at De Aar and Queenstown respectively. No preparations had thus been made locally in anticipation of the War. During October and November the Army Service Corps arrived, and some were detached for remount work. "This was considered sufficient for the present and prospective needs of the department at that time." On the arrival of Lord Roberts, there were 249 draught horses, 127 cavalry, 1,571 cobs, and 5,473 mules in the depot, but, at the moment when it was seen remount work would be largely increased, "the entire Army Service Corps personnel of the department was suddenly withdrawn." A scratch establishment was, therefore, made up and increased, until at the time of the report the staff at the depots numbered 4,425. Colonel Birkbeck says:—

"This capacity for efficient expansion in the time of war is lacking in the Remount Department. With

the exception of two officers sent out, not a single one (meaning of course an "Imperial" officer) has had any technical training or previous experience in the department, and many of them, fifteen out of thirty-five officers now employed have not even had experience with the mounted branches of the service."

And again:—

"It will be seen from the above outline that the provision made by the war establishment has hardly had a fair chance of being tested; that, as regards personnel, the Remount Department has lived rather from hand to mouth, and, in fact, been rather a scratch business altogether. The calls made upon the department have, moreover, been quite abnormal, and beyond all precedent; not only has the wastage of horseflesh by Cavalry and Artillery been beyond all expectation, but the Department has been called upon to handle a vast number (41,000) of mules for transport, and 30,000 cobs for Mounted Infantry, the latter mostly being half-broken. It has also purchased in South Africa 18,058 cobs and 11,710 mules. It may well be stated here that it has been absolutely impossible latterly to attempt to train remounts owing in a great measure to the circumstances explained by the writer; they have passed through the Remount Department's hands far too rapidly to enable us to do more than keep back any which appeared more than ordinarily wild, and the remainder have gone to the Cavalry depot or to the ranks just capable of being ridden and no more."

A telegram for which Colonel C. H., Bridge is responsible contains the following passage:—

“Remount establishments on scale laid down in war establishments were not sent out from England, but the personnel to work the Remount Depots was added as it could be found, and as the requirements of the depots imperatively demanded.

Col. Birkbeck further states that what the Remount Department wants is “a supply of (Imperial) officers experienced in horse-management. In the present writer’s opinion, he has at this moment the finest material in the world at his finger ends wherewith to create the nucleus of an incomparable Military Remount Service.

But to proceed with Col. Birkbeck’s report. He states that there was at first no conception that such enormous supplies of animals would be required; there has been more or less avoidable wastage from a variety of causes; the demand has steadily been growing greater and more urgent until quite lately; the War Office has evidently made extraordinary efforts to satisfy it, and in point of numbers may claim to have done so. In a further report it is remarked that “the waste of public money by incompetent purchasing officers (but the only available ones at first)” has been serious. To this one can only say that, if Col. Birkbeck had selected some out of his civilian personnel for this work, this want would have been supplied so well and so honestly that he could not but have been

gratified and the saving to the British public purse would have been a large one. If colonial officers can be found to have acted dishonestly in the purchase of horses they should be criminally prosecuted, and so should the Imperial Officers as well.

The writer has known the buyers for one of the established South African Corps to pay regularly more per head for remounts than the Imperial Officers were paying for them, but then their margin for purchase was at least £5 higher. The writer also heard that there had been great abuse of public funds by some who had authority to buy remounts, but these offenders did not possess any military standing whatever and probably knew but little about horses. But because these few non-military men who had no connection with the remounts even in any civil capacity chose to do wrong, colonial officers should not be blamed for it. Moreover, why attach the word "colonial" to these persons? If they are Cape Colonists or Natalians, why not say so? The word "colonial" is too comprehensive just now and causes pain and annoyance to loyal and interested colonials who are innocent of all such charges.

Here is what Mr. Brodrick says:—

"Since the war broke out the purchase of remounts has jumped at from £2,500 a year to £150,000 a year. Of course there have been mistakes made, and there have been hasty purchases, but hasty supplies were necessary, and at one time they were better than no supply at all. Of course, too high prices had been

I aid, but I think the House would have had something to say if, instead of high prices having been paid, the supplies had not been on the spot when they were required—(hear, hear)—and the horses in the possession of the Government were good and well selected and have done their work well. The department was not sufficiently provided with an organisation to undertake this war, or possibly not for a lesser war, but still the expansion (civilian) under the circumstances was remarkable. In the first six months of 1900, 82,000 horses were landed in South Africa. In less than 30 months we have landed 290,000 and 126,000 mules, and we have purchased 126,000 horses locally in South Africa. That makes a total of 550,000 animals landed for the purposes of the Army in 30 months, giving an average of 600 animals per day for the whole period. I think it would be unreasonable to suppose that in so gigantic a transaction there should not have been failures or mistakes. (Ministerial cheers.) (There were many made that should have been avoided.) From the Report which I have put before the House, it will be gathered that we have not been altogether satisfied on this side of the water with the treatment that the remounts have received when they arrived in South Africa. It is our business not only to find horses and supply them, but to make sure that they are being fairly dealt with, and I am bound to confess that some of Lord Kitchener's subordinates have hurried horses up country without regard to the fact that they had

just come off a long voyage, and it is not due to us, and it is not due to bad purchases, if, under these circumstances, horses have died in hundreds within a few days of landing. We sent three months ago to South Africa Lord Downe and another to investigate the condition of the Remount Department. Their report, on the whole, was exceedingly favourable. Whatever have been the earlier mistakes, the department is now well manned and well conducted. In a letter I received two days ago from Lord Kitchener, he tells me (and I mention it to allay any anxiety as to the present supply) that he has 16,500 horses at the present moment at the depots waiting to be issued. It is not very easy at this moment for the Government to keep up those supplies even by drawing on all the sources of supply which are before us. A particular class of horse is wanted, and we have bought an enormous number of those horses.”\*

It is satisfactory to the writer to note that in most things his opinion coincides with that of other persons capable of forming an opinion, except perhaps, on one thing, viz., the relative merits of the various horses sent to South Africa. Well, the writer will take a lot of convincing before he can be made to believe that a carty nondescript of unknown nationality, composed partly of a cavalry horse and partly of a mounted infantry pony, can beat an Australian

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\* And a few others of a particular class not wanted.—S.G.

as a genuine cavalry horse for endurance simply because he has been sent from England. The genuine Australian remount would give him a "campaign" start and beat him; but the writer declines to speak in praise of those purchased as remounts in Australia by the Imperial Government representatives: they were of a different breed ("Brombies") altogether, and not remounts at all.

Mr. Brodrick stated in the House recently, as, indeed, the Remount Report shows, that Lord Kitchener was quite satisfied with the manner in which Lieutenant-Colonel Birkbeck had performed his duties, and well that officer deserves this slight modicum of praise.

From a note of a lecture on a Reserve of War Horses given by Col. F. G. Ravenshill, R.A., Lieut.-Gen. Sir F. Fitz-Wygram, M.P., being in the chair, the writer finds that the lecturer stated that the total number of horses available for military purposes in the possession of the Government in 1886 was not sufficient to supply a single Army Corps requiring 14,256 horses, and went on to show that, without resorting to compulsion, it would be impossible to obtain the requisite number in case of emergency. Col. Ravenshill advised registration, but the Chairman did not think registration would be of much service, and believed they would have to rely upon the Colonies and foreign countries, and that probably Government breeding-studs would have to be created to supply emergencies.



The above speaks for itself. Sixteen years have elapsed since the date of that lecture without the initiation of these measures of which Sir F. Fitz-Wygram saw the necessity. From an article in the "New Liberal Review" of March, 1902, on Army Remounts, by Sir George Arthur, Bart., whom the writer had the pleasure of meeting in Johannesburg while he was the guest of Col. Birkbeck, it appears that the Remount Department has only existed since October 1st, 1887, and that the personnel was then a very small one. Though it was known that the South African question would have to be settled very soon, the provision made for the all-important work of supplying the Army with remounts, was seven officers, three veterinary officers, and a few clerks.

"For many years no attempt was made to purchase foreign horses." "However, in 1884 and 1886, experiments were tried with Hungarian horses which were pronounced to be failures, and this in peace times." So this item of experience gained has proved of no service whatever, for since their unsuitability was thus practically demonstrated, thousands of Hungarian horses have been recklessly purchased as remounts for active service, But to resume our digest. "Another officer was sent to visit the Argentine Republic to inspect their horses, with a view to satisfying the requirements of the mounted troops in South Africa." These animals have also been pronounced to be a failure in South Africa, but it is probable that,

under better auspices, the Argentine cob may yet install himself as a good mounted infantry pony.

To quote once more, "The Remount Department has never been supplied with funds to enable it to despatch officers abroad to prospect for the Imperial Government's information."

This was probably so. But when the writer wrote from Australia in 1897 respecting Australian horses for the English Army, the reply he received was a very curt one and not of a nature to incline anyone voluntarily to offer his advice or services to the War Office. And again, as to the desire of the Army authorities to increase their knowledge of animals bred in other countries, let it be said that, when in 1895 and 1896 the writer brought over a large number of Australian horses, many, if not all, of which were suitable for army purposes, and sent a notification of their arrival in England to the Remount Department requesting that an officer should be sent to inspect them, no reply was received, and no officer was sent to inspect the horses. This fact speaks for itself. The Remount Department as it then existed was evidently under the impression that they were quite capable of meeting all emergencies and that there was no occasion to increase their knowledge of horses bred in other countries. How has it "discharged its functions when hostilities broke out in 1899?" "The Inspector-General of Remounts," says Sir George Arthur, "was instructed to base his calculations on the requirements

of one Army Corps, together with one Cavalry Division; the number of horses required on this basis, allowing a reserve of 10 per cent., would be 6,908; the number actually supplied of horses and mules exceeded 500,000 up to January this year." Sir George Arthur's figures are confirmed by other sources. To quote again, "The Remount Department was the victim of an entire failure to foresee the magnitude of the task involved in the pacification of South Africa." And again, "That failure has obviously been largely due to the faulty conditions under which the Remount Department was originally constituted and to the narrow limitations within which it has been called to perform its work." To make a last quotation from the same writer, "There is every reason to hope and believe that the near future will witness the placing of the whole question of the supply of Army horses on a new and satisfactory footing. Past mistakes, committed in times and under circumstances of doubt and difficulty, are the more readily condoned by public opinion when it is seen that they are utilised for the attainment of future success."

Of course it is an acknowledged fact that the great wastage of horses has been due to a great extent to the hurrying of horses to the front, sometimes within a few hours of their landing in South Africa. Some of these horses could not, under any circumstances, have done three consecutive days' work at the front, yet they were despatched in response to orders which

said, "Send all horses that will do seven days' work."

The Remount Department, as at first organised, is greatly to blame for the duration of the war. Had the horse management in South African depots been from the first in competent hands (civil, if not military) only the fit would have gone to the front. Some O.C.'s do not even now know when a horse is fit. As has been stated, their only conception of the word fit, is as applied to a pig, a synonym for fat, the opposite to lean; but they would soon find out that it was easier to catch the same "fat" pig, than the wild "fit" one.

It is stated that Col. Birkbeck has formed an entirely new system of organization for the Remounts in South Africa. It is a big task to perform satisfactorily, but he is the man to do it if it can be done.

The difficulties which lie in the way of the accomplishment of this task will be realised when it is said that the Remount depots and farms were increasing in number almost daily up to the time (Jan., 1902) when the writer left South Africa. In the early days of Remount depots the horses on them could be counted by hundreds; but now there are depots containing from 8,000 to 13,000 horses at one time. One can well conceive therefore, that when the man on the spot, at the head of affairs of such magnitude as this statement implies, was one of those of whom Col. Birkbeck says "not a single one had any technical training or any previous experience in the depart-

ment," and when, as was the rule, he was impatient of assistance or advice thousands of pounds were wasted in unnecessary and useless work. Before thorough organization can be undertaken, such men must be got rid of and others put into their place who have some practical knowledge of their business, and the sagacity to avail themselves of useful advice even when proffered by their inferiors in military rank.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### REMOUNT FARMS AND DEPOTS AS THEY NOW ARE, OR OUGHT TO BE.

EXPERIENCE has to a great extent begotten organization; there are more officers now—gentlemen who have been some time in civil life, after a long military training, and who have entered the Remount Department with some idea of the functions of their office. Some of these gentlemen do their work in a most thorough, conscientious, and intelligent manner, and are not, thanks to their experience as civilians, married to “red tape.” They carry on the work in sections that Colonel Birkbeck did single-handed in the early and middle periods of the war, and they are in hourly communication with their chief. True, their presence is often grumbled at by those who have borne the brunt of the critical period of the war and the hardships and annoyances already referred to; sometimes their ideas are not approved of, or appreciated, and in some instances, they are condemned by the “experienced” ones, but taking matters as a whole, there is an improvement all round in remount work to which the animals them-

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selves are witnesses. There are better shelters for the horses, and more comfortable quarters for the officers and civil officials.

In the old days it was pretty rough on a man who had been out from sunrise to sunset riding in all sorts of weather to return tired and dirty to a tent, which occasionally blows down on the top of him, for the daily hardships inseparable from remount duty in war time are bad enough. When the enemy has been about, the Remount Officer is up all night on patrol and outpost duty, never knowing the moment when the camp may be attacked, and having the responsibility of, perhaps, 8,000 or 10,000 animals, or more, on his mind. At sunrise he is back to work again none the less; for all the day work must go on just as if the night work had never taken place; but the Remount Officer accepted his lot with zeal and courage, and never a grumble of any kind. It is no joke, just as you have done your day's work, to get a wire telling you to "move all horses at once to a place of safety, ditto all forage." Perhaps there are 600 or 700 tons of the latter; a train must therefore be got for it and sent off somewhere at once. The horses are all removed at the same time, and the occupants of the different camps, as far as possible, kept separate; but this can never be accomplished satisfactorily, as at night the horses stray everywhere, within certain limits. Then the order comes to return at once. The entire depot has then to be reor-

ganised; each horse of the 8,000 or 10,000 has to be re-sorted and sent again to his respective camp. This entails many days' hard work and is estimated as "extra labour" to the Remount Officer; yet it is done, done thoroughly, carefully and well. The Remount Depot is not a bed of roses in fact, it often is not a bed at all. No one in this country can realise the trials and hardships endured by Remount Officers in the early days, and, what was infinitely worse, the annoyances which they had to put up with and the contradictory orders with which they were pestered and perplexed. They have plenty to go through even now, for as long as the war lasts, the Remount Depots are a great attraction to the Boers, since the Boer must have horses, and will get them from a depot if he has half a chance. The raid constitutes a terrible anxiety at all times, the responsibility being so very great. Outlying depots have been always more or less subject to attack, and this cannot be remedied, because it is absolutely necessary to have large tracts of country where the grazing is best, in districts not affected with that horrible and fatal disease "horse sickness." Not only are the outside depots liable to attack, however, but those low down, near Queenstown even, have been obliged to remove lock, stock and barrel at a moment's notice; but gradually organization stepped in and prevented this. The depots were fortified and garrisoned, though not too soon; and Mr. Boer was eagerly instead of anxiously waited



for. The Remount Officer was ready for him ; he had men who could fight and were boiling over for a go at the enemy. Somehow the wily Boer got to know of this, and, after finding out that he was expected, carried somewhere else his murderous and thieving system of civilized warfare, much to the disgust of all in the depot. The civilians in the depots are armed, and as a rule are good shots, most of them having served in the irregular forces, and are just as keen to pull a trigger as the regular, they themselves having been soldiers in the near past. Beyond doubt rapid strides have been made lately in the better organization of Remount work generally, and improvements are still taking place. The pitfall to guard against is the over-assertion of "red tape," which would leave too little to the discretion of the A.I.R. and O.C.'s. The O.C. must, or at least should, know the requirements of his particular depot better than any officer who pays it a flying visit of inspection. Yet these flying visits do good ; they keep the O.C. up to the mark, as he knows full well that his depot is being compared with others, its state crucially criticised, together with his arrangements for keeping the army horsed, the number of "fits" he has sent forward taken in connection with that of the "fits" he has received, and the number of the "debilitateds" he has "recuperated" or "resurrected" and despatched to the front. It is no sinecure, the work of a conscientious inspector, or, as he is generally styled, an S.O.R.

(Senior Officer Remounts), of that particular district to which he is relegated for duty.

The remounts have lately taken over the captured cattle stock. This was, in the writer's opinion, a great mistake; horses and mules are enough, but when cattle (with all known and unknown diseases) are added to a Remount Officer's charges, it's a "bit too much." These extra beasts entailed a lot of night work. There was not only the care of them to be considered, but the barter of them for horses in Kaffirland, and elsewhere; and the local restrictions put upon the movements of diseased cattle would take a man a lifetime to learn. The writer, however, believes that this system is now discontinued to a great extent.

If the cattle are captured, they should be farmed, after being sorted and carefully inspected. If diseased, they should either be killed straight away, or treated, and a separate temporary department should have been created for the handling of these animals. One man may have knowledge of a horse and the value of it, but may know nothing about cattle or their value, and a man must be born to it to have any knowledge of the value of South African cattle as a whole.

It is a good thing that remount farms in suitable districts are being well and properly farmed; that stock is being carefully reared and cared for, and crops grown with a good result to the Government. The existence of such farms indicates that the British Government is aware that England will have to pro-

vide herself with remounts to a great extent, if, in the future, she ever engages in a European war. Other countries have government breeding farms, and so must England. Happily no country in the world just now has such a plentiful supply of good and useful breeding mares, many with foals at foot, and other young stock, to draw on, as England now possesses in South Africa. The writer regrets that some thousands of horses were sold at comparatively small prices, which should have been carefully cared for to make remounts in the near future; but he believes that the sale of this particular kind of stock is now very properly prohibited.

The organization and buildings on some of the Remount Depots and Farms are now nearly perfect. Special mention might be made of Fisher's Farm, near Bloemfontein, the depot at Johannesburg, the Remount Farm and Depot at Dordrecht (of which Captain H. Gordon Turner, D.S.O., is the officer commanding), the depot at Port Elizabeth, the depot and farm at Stellenbosch. The farm and depot at Mooi River was a good one, well organized, and very extensive; but the writer has heard that the depot has lately been removed. The owner, Mr. Robert Hall, gave the Government a month's notice to quit; this was after the Government had spent some thousands of pounds on the place. The agreement for occupation was faulty, and whoever drew it up should be censured, as it is a serious loss from a pecuniary stand-

point, to say nothing of the inconvenience and disorganization removal causes. The writer was informed that the owner thought he had a grievance against the Imperial Government, and if what the writer was told is true, his grievance was a most serious one, and his action justifiable from his point of view; but, at the same time, he should not have had the power to turn the Remounts out at a month's notice. This matter might well be enquired into. Agreements for occupation were as a rule not well drawn up, from a commercial standpoint. The rents were invariably too high, excepting in very few instances. The writer believes that the Government had the right of purchasing one of the best farms and depots in South Africa at a very low figure, compared with the rent paid. The money that had been expended on this particular farm was enormous, and the Government, he was told, could have purchased it for about a fourth of what the improvements cost and turned it over the next day at a profit of some thousands. But "red tape" stepped in here again, saying, "No one has authority to purchase land on behalf of the Imperial Government." Red tape enjoyed an expensive victory, and the property in question was bought—if the writer was correctly informed—by the late Cecil Rhodes. The A.I.R. should of course have had power to recommend such purchases.

Col. Stevenson, who, at the outbreak of the war, was appointed Inspector-General of Remounts in Natal,

has done, by all reports, some excellent work in that Colony, and Mooi River Depot, consisting of over 10,000 acres, was the principal depot in Natal. The farm was entirely fenced and sub-divided into many large separate paddocks, with shed stabling, feeding-troughs and a small stock-yard and catching-kraal in central positions throughout the farm. Col. Stevenson has a very high opinion of the country-bred horses and ponies, and considers them to be probably the best animals for Mounted Infantry in the world; of the imported horses suitable to South Africa he is inclined to give the preference to the Australian horses and cobs, if well selected.

At the time when the writer expressed his opinion of the relative merits of the different horses imported, he had not seen Col. Stevenson's report; he is glad to be independently supported by so good and high an authority on the subject. Col. Stevenson—whose capacity in his own line was unsurpassed—had a splendid opportunity of seeing all the animals at work in front, and all the facilities necessary to arrive at a correct estimate of the respective value of Remounts both imported and local.

There are only one or two depots known to the writer which have not developed as they should have done, but after a fashion, they have perhaps coped with requirements up to date, and may do so till the end.

The O.C.'s have more power now than they have

hitherto had; their requisitions for buildings, etc., have for some little time past met with consideration, instead of an abrupt "snub, which "red tape" knew how to administer in the most courteously objectionable manner.

There are railway sidings to most of the depots, used solely by the military authorities who have constructed them, in most cases having to pay for the labour only.

The Railway Staff officers in connection with the Remount Department have done their work most efficiently, trying at all times to provide all the trains required, and always giving the Remounts the preference necessary to enable them to issue prompt supplies to the front. It is satisfactory to know that a very large percentage of the wastage that did take place, is not taking place now. Lord Downe's report states "that on the whole matters are very satisfactory."

If Remount organization had been commenced when it was quite apparent that the war was not to be the walk-over expected (and those in authority should have seen from the start that it was to be a war of mounted men), steps would have been immediately taken to provide buildings, shelters, and properly constructed and fitted depots, so arranged as to meet all likely requirements; but the authorities were deficient in foresight, and much necessary work was not done till long after expensive wastage or other evils had

conclusively proved its importance. The writer is not tired of repeating that if buildings on depots had been erected when required, thousands of pounds might have been saved, and much pain and misery to the animals prevented. But "red tape" was always opposed, more or less, to the expenditure of money on the depots, though at this date the improvements which it would not sanction, have, in nearly all cases, been effected.

And yet there need never have been any difficulty in perceiving, for instance, the impossibility of treating medically, with the slightest chance of success, severe cases of pneumonia, when the patient had to stand all night with a light rug on, or, as was more probable, with the rug under its feet, in a bleak and piercingly cold wind. Even "red tape" should have seen that rugs ought to fit the horses for which they are provided, and have supplied girths and surcingles of a length not so excessive that it was necessary to tie a knot in the horse's tail to prevent it from walking through the lot quite easily. A small imperfection in arrangement may be as evident as a large one. However, since Lord Downe's report is a favourable one, it is to be supposed that things both small and great have changed for the better in the Remount Depots and Farms of South Africa.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### THE BREAKING DEPARTMENT AT THE STELLENBOSCH DEPOT, IN COMPARISON WITH PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS.

From November, 1899, the Stellenbosch Depot was in full swing. Remounts arrived almost daily, these being principally Argentine cobs. In December and during the ensuing four months they came almost in thousands. As I have stated elsewhere, the poor brutes generally arrived in camp sore-footed, going like a lot of cats on hot bricks. On their arrival they were always watered, then divided into about 200 lots, put into kraals and fed. Sometimes they were allowed to rest for a day; some perhaps for a day and a half; but as a rule the rough-riding commenced the morning following their arrival.

There is little doubt that, at this time, the Stellenbosch Depot was the biggest breaking depot the world has ever known. Over 1,000 people, white and black, were at times engaged in the work of the depot, which included receiving and entraining the remounts for the front. A train-load is generally about 220 head. Frequently three or four of these left in one day.

The accommodation for the horses consisted of a number of kraals, each of which was numbered, the



odd numbers being on one side of the main thoroughfare and the even numbers on the other. Supposing 1,000 head to be received, these would be put into (say) the kraals numbered 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, an arrangement allotting 200 head to each kraal.

The following morning, at 4.30 am., 20 Kaffirs in charge of their white conductor, fall in and are marched up to one of these kraals. Halters are supplied, and the process of catching the horses and tying them to the mangers is commenced.

This process is no joke to anyone concerned. The niggers are repeatedly charged by the brutes which, open-mouthed, strike out with their forelegs, and lash out behind in all directions. Ultimately, after a few niggers have been temporarily disabled, an animal is caught. Oddly enough the niggers have no sympathy for one another at all; if one unfortunate "boy" is lying and squirming on the ground, rolling about in pain, the onlookers enjoy the spectacle of his plight immensely and roar with laughter.

Well, the halter is on at last; then another halter is tied to the shank, a couple of boys get on to the end of it, and a couple more behind just tap the animal on with a whip. The pony is fighting all the time, at one moment striking out in front, then rearing up, and frequently throwing himself violently down and bashing his own head on the ground. On rising, he tries to bolt, kicking, bucking, and striking, all at once. Ultimately, he is tied to the manger with his

food in it, and after a little sulk will perhaps start eating; but sometimes, owing to the strangeness of the food, he declines to feed at all, and does not do so to any extent for some days. Well, as soon as 20 head are caught and tied up, about 5.15 a.m., the N.C.O. and ten rough-riders appear on the scene, with saddles on arm and bridles in hand. Dropping the saddle on the ground, each man approaches his animal carefully with hand extended; perhaps he gets the bridle on, perhaps he doesn't. The animal uses his teeth like a dog and his forefeet like Tom Sayers.

Ultimately, with the assistance of both black and white, the bridle is put on. Then comes the saddle; this is brought up to the pony from the front near side. It is nearly on many times; not infrequently the saddle is kicked yards out of the intending rider's hands, and he himself is knocked down; the latter is a common and expected occurrence. At last, while two men hold the "remount's" head (a hand on each of his ears), the rider quietly and gingerly mounts, and when he is firmly seated the animal is let go, and go he does, bucking like mad, the rider being generally thrown. Off then goes the "remount," perhaps with the saddle under his belly, as all the saddles served out were too large and the girths too long for ponies, so that the rider has no chance whatever of sticking on.

Well, it's all the better for the rider in the long run if the saddle does twist, as this takes all the buck

out of his horse. The remount is then driven into a corner and caught again, the saddle righted; the rider gets on again, but the animal generally starts sulking, and won't budge. The N.C.O., assisted by black and white, proceeds to thrash him out of the kraal, and away at last the two go, if possible at a gallop, and you don't see them again for about 15 minutes. Then both appear, hot and sweating; the rider jumps off and on again a few times, after which the remount is ridden down to water, brought back and tied up again to the manger.

The next morning he is again mounted, and the N.C.O. takes out his men (10 as a rule) and gives them about 15 minutes drill; then the mounted infantry pony is put into a "Fit" Kraal.

In this sketch the writer has depicted the good sort of Argentine. All those which were extra bad came under his personal attention, and not only had he to deal with these fractious brutes, but also with the other cobs, Artillery and transport animals, and the Cavalry as well. Among the latter there used to be some murderous brutes, and they were by a long way the most dangerous to handle as they were so much bigger and quicker in their movements than the other and smaller remounts. There were six breaking-rings in small yards, going all day from 5 a.m. till dark, and perhaps 30 horses would be handled in each ring every day. In the centre of each ring was an iron telegraph-post sunk some five feet

into concrete; to this, the animal was tied first, and some of them could make these posts ring like a blacksmith's anvil with their forefeet. Besides these breaking-rings, there were about six yards of various sizes, in which the unbroken animals exercised with the mouthing-tackle on. Then there was a crush with iron doors for catching and haltering the worst in. The man who built this crush had never used one, and in its original state it was useless.

There were seldom less than 200 horses handled daily in these special kraals and yards. Of course, some of the remounts would be treated several days. Into these kraals, too, would be brought animals of all sorts and sizes with some dangerous vice or bad habit for the writer to cure. No man could do this sort of work without getting injured, and the writer is not an exception. He will be always more or less crippled, and has not only sustained injury of limb. On one occasion, as he was galloping a horse up-hill to take a bit out of it, the animal put his foot into a hole. Oh! what a lovely "purler" was the result. The writer pitched on to his head and arms, and did not think at the time that he was much hurt, but the "napper" has never quite got over it, and it is now nearly two and a half years since he fell in this way!

Many of the animals supposed to be "broken" were quite as bad and sometimes worse than those that were sent as "unbroken." All these had to be made reasonably quiet for the front in hours, not days, as

urgent wires were continually coming through for all classes of horses.

If, in the second riding, the mounted infantry pony was considered tractable enough not "to lay his rider out" before he had a chance of mounting, he was passed from the "Testing" Kraal to one of the Fit Kraals as being suitable for active service. Here the ponies were fed, watered, and groomed a bit, also shod. There were forges in each corner of the kraal, and it was from these kraals that the animals were selected for the front.

Before leaving the Argentine as ready to go to the front, the shoeing process must be described. He was invariably shod in front—sometimes behind as well. The smith never approached him to pick up his forefeet, as in England. The foot was lifted by a hook at the end of a long iron rod; then the animal was quietly approached and a rope with a loop was passed round his fetlock, and held by another man. A rearing and striking combat would then take place, until the animal rested on both front feet for a moment or two, when the two front legs would be tied together and held by a rope. If the animal fell, as he generally did, he was held down by Kaffirs and then shod. But the writer introduced into all the smithies a strong post, to which the animal's head was securely tied. This aided the whole business greatly, preventing accidents all round, as the "Bromby" could not get away, or pull the men all over the place.

About December, 1899, the nondescripts from England began to arrive. These horses had just been purchased and shipped; no information was given as to whether they were quiet in harness or not, but it was assumed that they were "made" harness horses. It would be almost beyond anyone's power to describe the proclivities of these supposed quiet harness horses.

Lord Roberts instructed that all harness horses should be "tested." It was no fool's job to put the harness on some of them, but the harness always was put on in the end. Two Tommies went with each wagon and sometimes two so-called "blacks," who might be Indians, Kaffirs, Pondos, or Zulus. One of the blacks held the horses while they were being harnessed and unharnessed, and the other brought up another pair and held them so that they might be ready immediately the harness was removed from those just tested, and thus no time was wasted. Perhaps two or three pairs would go all right, then would come a succession of "wrong 'uns" sometimes rearing and kicking, though cases of jibbing and running away were most frequent. When the "wrong 'uns" were very lively the men would all be pitched out of the wagon, sometimes one at a time, sometimes all together, and away the horses and wagon would go "on their own." over hedges and through fences as though they were non-existent; it was marvellous to witness their mad career. One could well imagine that the last had been seen of the turnout. All at once th

horses would turn and gallop for all they were worth back to the camp, over fences, etc., as before, and perhaps a six-foot "sluit" in the road. By that time they could be stopped with comparative ease, when it would be found, as a rule, that nothing—not even a harness-strap—had been injured in the least.

It was always the writer's system to put all pairs in twice, he being most particular not to send to the front any that showed a determined inclination to jib. The runaways did not matter so much, as nothing would be left of their skittishness after they had been driven a few miles.

Thus all horses and ponies were tested before being sent to the front, and as much done to render them serviceable in the short time allowed as it was possible for man to do. Here and there a "dead wrong 'un" crept through, but hardly enough to count.

The rough-riding Tommies were paid 1s. per day extra, but they had a very rough time of it indeed. They never rode less than 15 different horses a day each. Some have even ridden 30 head in a day, when they happened upon a good crowd, and for one man to put on and remove 30 bridles and saddles is a day's work in itself. In the writer's opinion there was more danger in this work than in being actually on the field of battle. The men were frequently heard to express this opinion and often applied to be sent to their regiments in the front, rather than stay at the depot to be ignominiously injured or killed.

The hospital tents were always full of rough-riders laid low, and in some of the cases, the writer is certain that the injured men will never regain their health and reasoning faculties again, concussion of the brain being the most frequent result of an accident.

On one occasion the writer saw a "Tommy" on the ground under one of the wagon-horses. After two or three abortive efforts to free him, the animal was made to rise somewhat, and he was lugged out by main force. After a bit he was up on his feet and the question put, "Are you hurt?" "Oh, no!" he said, rubbing the dust and blood off his face, at the same time laughing and limping about. "I'm all right; give us a leg up." Considering their lack of experience of really "rough 'uns," the rough-riding "Tommies," in those days did their work well and most courageously. Yet these men were staggered at what a savage wild horse could do. They utterly failed to realize it at first. Many accidents that occurred in these early days were afterwards avoided, and it is a wonder, looking back on some of the rough-riders' hairbreadth escapes, that so many of them got off as lightly as they did.

The whole of the rough-riding was at that time done in much the same way in all depots, but as a rule it has now to be done without any particular gear and without the Tommies, only niggers being allowed. Under these circumstances it is quite impossible to produce such good results. The saddles sent up to the writer later on to one depot were simply brown



paper and not worth picking up. The writer was told that these were supplied by a well-known contractor at £6 each, the accompanying bridle being just toy leather, the bit absolutely worthless and dangerous, the girths of the cheapest webb description, unsafe to use. Yet these articles were sent to the writer in answer to an application for some saddles suitable for breaking. One would have said it was impossible to break horses satisfactorily, or to get men to do their work with such worthless gear as this; but the work was done—somehow!

Only at Stellenbosch was proper stabling provided for animals while they were being broken. As things were there (the staff was working against time), this was true economy, for at Stellenbosch as many as 1,000 head have been put through a breaking or testing trial for harness or saddle in one day. But how is it possible, with (say) 50 to 100 wild horses to break, to catch one of them in a kraal, 100 yards square, with a fence that any one or many can go through, as if it didn't exist, without a lot of damage to the mob being done incidentally? By being constantly driven about and cornered the animals became much wilder and more difficult to handle, and when one has caught them, what is to be done when there is no place to tie them up to, and no mangers in which to feed them? The animals in the depot I have in mind had to be caught somehow, haltered and ridden by niggers, who invariably gave them sore

backs, and so the work was done in the most crude and unsatisfactory manner it is possible to imagine. The animals had to be turned loose again in the kraal, although brought back sweating, perhaps in a bleak cold wind. It is necessary for a colt to be tied up and groomed a bit, while being broken; it quietens him, gives him a bit of confidence in man, and makes him more ready to stand still to be mounted. A system which does not take this into account is simply a "happy-go-lucky" system, producing a result worse than useless. It is a thousand pities that it has been in vogue in many of the depots.

The entire system of breaking requires organizing, under an efficient and qualified staff, aided by suitable ground and erections with the needful tackling. Efficient organization would save a great waste of horseflesh, and the perpetration of much ignorant cruelty.

Almost the last words of Col. Ryder, S.O. Remounts, Cape Colony, to the writer, before temporarily leaving for England were, "I want you, Galvayne, to organise a thorough system of breaking at all depots, when you return." In fact, the writer had, in a way, started on this work before leaving, but as it was the winter season in South Africa at the time referred to, it was better to delay the actual breaking till the spring had advanced a bit, as the condition of the animals was not good, and in most cases they were quite unfit to break. No man can break an ill-conditioned and

weak animal: there is nothing to break—in a few minutes he is exhausted and you cannot get a move out of him. In condition he is quite a different beast.

Nothing can be done satisfactorily without organization, and breaking is greatly in need of it throughout South African depots and farms. In no depot visited by the writer, except at Stellenbosch, has proper shedding, appliances and tackle been obtainable; and considering the thousands of horses that only require proper breaking and feeding to make them serviceable as remounts, it is marvellous that these essentials should have been overlooked, or ignored. Money well spent in a judicious manner for yards and buildings suitable for breaking purposes would have repaid itself an hundredfold. Just before he left Capetown for England on conducting-duties with horse-ships, the writer—under military instructions—got out plans of such erections—the estimated cost of labour being only £70—so that 50 or 60 horses could be handled at one time at each depot. These plans were given to the S.O.R., Cape Colony, upon the understanding that the buildings and yards would be erected at once where required, and ready for the writer to organise on his return.

The construction of the buildings was so arranged that they could be used for various purposes, when not actually required for unbroken animals for instance, as sick lines, isolation kraals, "fit" horses' kraals, black smiths' forges, or as places for sorting and drafting

or for the reception of horses offered for sale. In fact, they would have been most useful adjuncts to all and every Remount Depot and Farm.

It is with reluctance that mention has been made of Col. Ryder in connection with a matter of which the upshot can hardly be termed satisfactory. For this officer the writer has the greatest respect and admiration, as for one who is most thorough in all his undertakings. Col. Ryder was the only officer to see that an entirely independent department for breaking and testing required to be organized, under the immediate supervision of an efficient officer. Whether this department has been created during the writer's absence, he does not know, but he thinks he could guess.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### HORSES FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES IMPORTED INTO SOUTH AFRICA FOR WAR PURPOSES, ALSO INCLUDING THE SOUTH AFRICAN.

THE writer has always had the remount question at heart, and tried to introduce the Australian horse into the British Army in England some seven years ago, an attempt in which he lost all he had at the time. He left Australia with 120 head of assorted Australian horses, to test the English market, but owing to a 21 days' gale, beginning ere the voyage was fairly commenced, a large percentage of them never actually left the vicinity of the Australian coast. From Cape Leuin to England he lost only one or two horses, but the knocking about which the survivors had received produced diseases and injuries that rendered many of them of little cash value in the English market. Still there were a good many that were suitable for Remounts, but although the writer sent particulars to the War Office Remount Department he never heard that any representative of that department was sent to inspect them.

The Australian as a remount in India is well known, and as a matter of fact there are no other remounts than "walers" imported there. The Australian horses brought over by the troops from India were as good, if not better, than any thing in the field as also were the Australian horses which accompanied the contingents from Australia. The former animals had been selected by probably the best judges of remounts in the world—Australians, who have become rich by their knowledge of horseflesh. Most of them are men of undoubted integrity, who have been buying remounts for India almost as long as they could speak, for the buyers of to-day are the sons of bygone buyers.

Price with these experts is only a secondary consideration. If they see a horse put up for sale and he suits them, they buy him in spite of price. That is why they do not always bid themselves at auctions; they get outsiders apparently, to buy for them, so that there is no "running." But they invariably buy every horse that they want.

When two or more buyers are present, they have a talk first, then one buys for the lot. But they do not buy the horse that Imperial Officers purchase for remounts. If the Imperial Government had put the buying into these men's hands or worked with them under a contract, there would have been no grumbling at the quality of horses sent, and no leakage and wastage of public funds.

It is impossible for any two men to go from England

to Australia or any other country and buy horses as well as the man who knows how to do it in that particular country from past experience, and who makes it his living to buy to sell again at a profit.

Yet the reader may ask why the Imperial Government should have purchased in numbers horses of a conspicuously inferior quality. The question is at bottom unanswerable; the writer can only shed a sidelight upon it.

In September (if he remembers rightly) of 1899, two officers, with two A.V.D. vets., arrived in Australia from England to purchase remount horses. As in 1897 the writer had been in communication with the War Office concerning remounts, with the result that he was informed "that in the event of emergency his name was noted,"—he took occasion, on learning that Imperial officers had actually arrived in Melbourne, to communicate with Major Thompson, one of the officers in question. Well supplied with information in the shape of letters from most of the well-known breeders in N.S.W., he met Major Thompson one Sunday, after the latter's arrival in Sydney. The upshot was that Major Thompson said, "I intend seeing Mr. Lyne and will do nothing till I see you on Monday."

The writer waited about all Monday in the expectation of seeing the Major or his representative, but without avail; so on Tuesday he called at the Australia Hotel, and discovered that Major Thompson had left. The writer then sent Major Thompson all the

papers and information on the matter he had collected for him, and did not see him again until the first contingent was about to leave Sydney. Upon the steamer which conveyed them there were 70 so-called remounts purchased by Major Thompson. The writer saw them and told the Major that he would not have taken them to be remounts at all if he (Major Thompson) had not said so. The prices quoted on the letters which the writer handed to the Major ranged from £17 to £23 for suitable remounts (as horses had been going up on the market for the previous six months), but the animals selected by the Government purchaser could certainly have been purchased for an average of £7 or £8 even at that time.

The writer observed to Major Thompson that he was leaving for South Africa that very day, which he did.

It was soon after this, that the late Col. the Hon. G. H. Gough, C.B., was made O.C. of the Stellenbosch Depot, then the most important one in South Africa. All the animals then going to the front from Capetown went through the Stellenbosch Depot. The Stellenbosch Depot was the Base Supply Depot for horses of all kinds, as well as mules, and under the control of that O.C. it was splendidly organised and worked, in all details, for the late Colonel was one who spared neither himself nor anyone about him; always up early, he was generally the last to leave off work at night. The writer gladly gives this humble testimony to the worth of a most charming man for whom it was a pleasure to work.



The writer's post under Col. Gough was that of Director of Breaking. The work was very heavy, as there was always on hand an immense number of broken horses to be tested for saddle-purposes, for use by the Mounted Infantry, the Cavalry, and the various irregular corps that had to be horsed from Stellenbosch. Horses, too, had to be broken to harness for the maxims and pom-poms. On one occasion 450 were ordered to be broken at once for these arms. Another duty was the testing of the artillery and transport animals, and another the arranging of mule transports and the testing of them in teams. Fortunately, by working long hours, viz., from 4.45 a.m. till dark, daily, the writer managed somehow not only to please his O.C., but to be mentioned more than once in terms of praise to the officer in command of Lines of Communication, Lieut.-General Sir F. W. E. Forestier-Walker, K.C.B., C.M.G. (who occupied that position till he returned to England in 1901).

On one occasion Col. Gough came to the writer with a telegram from Lord Roberts, stating that 1,000 mounted infantry cobs and 200 draft were required at once and were all to be tested before being sent.

When the Colonel was informed that 500 could be sent to-morrow, and the others the day after, he went away delighted and complimented the writer on his foresight and industry.

We Remount Officers and men not only worked six days a week, but frequently seven, and sometimes put

into one week the hours of eight working days, but all was done cheerfully and without a murmur.

When Sunday work could be avoided, it always was, Church service being held every Sunday morning at which everyone in the depot attended. If work had to be done, it was done after the church hours. It was a grand sight and one never to be forgotten to see the late Colonel Gough reading the Church service. This he did in a most impressive and heartfelt manner that appealed to the better nature of everyone present. Sometimes a "regular" parson would come, and conduct, but it is no depreciation of that gentleman to say that he did not present so impressive an interesting figure as did Colonel Gough on the occasions when he conducted Sunday worship.

The congregation often included regiments which happened to be passing through the depot for the front. On one occasion there were the Railway Pioneer Regiment, the first or second contingent of the C.I.V., the Galloping maxims, and the Canadians (first contingent). Of the latter many of the officers who were present at our Stellenbosch Sunday services have crossed "that bourne from whence no traveller returns."

No one who has not been present, when on active service, at one of these military outdoor Church services, can imagine the intense solemnity that surrounds the proceedings. The services were held under some magnificent, wide-spreading English oak trees,

that for size and beauty would be hard to beat in the old country. During the singing of the hymns one of the officers usually accompanied on the harmonium, but when the vocal powers of the large audience were fully exerted, the harmonium was inaudible. The words of the singers re-echoed from the adjacent mountains, the effect being uplifting and delightful. The silence of the congregation was, in its turn, equally impressive. There were moments when the dropping of a leaf would have been heard.

Among the officers who were present at Divine Service on the Sunday when the Canadian contingent attended, were two who have been mentioned by Lord Roberts for distinguished gallantry, viz., Major Gat Howard and Lieut. Borden, the son of the son of the Canadian Minister for Militia. The former, a tough warrior of over 50, had seen much fighting during his lifetime, and was a noted scout, the latter as fine a specimen of manhood as could be found in any part of the world—and only about 25 years of age. He was twice commended by Lord Roberts—but ultimately he met his death on the battlefield, fighting for the prestige of the Mother Country and glory for his own.

It may be added that attendance at Divine Service on Sunday was always considered a part of the duty of every Remount Officer and man in this depot, as also at Mooi River Depot, Natal, and all other well-managed depots throughout South Africa.

But let us return to our horses. It has been stated

in the House that no unbroken Australian horses have been purchased for South Africa. This is a great mistake. Early in 1900 Colonel Gough informed the writer that he had just received a telegram, stating that some 700 or so Australian horses were expected to arrive at Capetown and that there were 202 head entirely unbroken among them. The writer then and there expressed his opinion that such horses should never have been purchased for remounts, especially as broken and quiet horses were then most urgently needed for the front.

Col. Gough also expressed himself very strongly on this matter then, and many times afterwards, when he saw the difficulty and danger there was in breaking horses and the time consumed in the process. He got indeed really vexed and angry when he witnessed an exciting exhibition of the fighting qualities of a really wild Australian horse, and frequently urged the writer to be careful that he was not hurt or killed. There was in truth some reason for this anxiety. As the writer told the General Officer Commanding Lines of Communication on one occasion, during an inspection, he was always on active service, even at the base, for he had to be active, most active, for self preservation.

But to proceed with the history of the first Australian horses.

In due time they arrived, and a more miscellaneous lot it would be hard to imagine. The writer believes

that not more than any three of them were of the same brand, these being of the well-known and excellent Z.R. brand. But alas! the three Z.R.'s were three weedy mares. The majority of the 202 were mares of all ages. Never will the writer forget one named "Mrs. Kruger." The Canadians ultimately took her for their guns, though she was purchased for cavalry. The Canadians took also another doubtful beauty, "Oom Paul." "Oom Paul" was a cart-horse of the farming type, yet he was also on the writer's cavalry list.

To tell the plain truth, very few of the horses was fit for Mounted Infantry or Cavalry, or for any purpose whatever in any army, though intended to meet an urgent military demand. They were simply aged brood-mares, perfect devils to handle, who always came at you open-mouthed for a start. The writer would caution the intending rider of a particularly bad one, and say, "Mind you, she is a bit green." On one occasion he saw an unfortunate rough-rider staggering towards him, dragging a brute behind him by the reins. The girths were hanging broken, and the saddle was on the arm of the man, whose face was dirty and dusty, with a trace of blood on the cheekbone. To the natural question, "What's up?" the man replied, "What's up, sir? I've been down." Then pulling himself together a bit, he solemnly continued, "I have ridden a good many green 'uns for you, sir; I should like to try one of some other colour for a change, if you have any, sir."

An incident that occurred one day surprised the Colonel greatly. The writer was engaged in subjugating an unbroken beauty—one of the above-mentioned 202—and to facilitate the putting on of the halter and tackling, the animal was put into the crush, to which there were two breast-bars. The halter was put on after a little trouble, the animal fighting and kicking all the time. Then he threw himself down and crawled out on his belly under the bottom bar, and afterwards jumped a real stiff fence and got away.

Out of all the Australian horses that came through that depot while the writer was stationed there, it is his opinion that not more than 20 per cent. of them should have been purchased for remount purposes. No unbroken ones should have been purchased at all. How was it possible to make these animals fit in time for the front, whence telegrams were coming down almost hourly for horses of various kinds.

Most of these Australian horses arrived at the depot in very bad condition. The Australian cobs were not quite so bad; some very few of them were really nice horses. All these were supposed to be broken; but some of them were not, and others would give you a lively seat for a bit, when they were saddled for the first time. The writer heard Captain "—" tell the O.C. that the lot averaged £11 a head. The price shows the peculiar idea which the buyer had as to horses suitable for remounts, since any good unbroken remount cold would fetch £20 at least on the breeding-station in Australia.

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The best of the Australian horses (really "tip-top" remounts), which the writer saw in South Africa, were those the Australians brought over themselves, and some of the Australian cobs and ponies from India. The latter are selected in Australia by expert buyers who all the year round do nothing but buy remounts for the Indian market.

Of remounts that have been lately purchased, the writer has not seen very many, but those he has seen which have been especially purchased in Australia by the officers appointed by the Imperial Government for South Africa, are of an inferior description, known in their native land as "Brombies" or "Warrigals." There is no doubt whatever in the writer's opinion that Australian horses for the war have been worse than badly selected, with the result that the reputation of one of the best of all country horses has been considerably damaged.

First-class well broken remounts, both for Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, should have been landed in South Africa at £33 a head, allowing an average buying price of £22, with £11 for freight, forage, and insurance. This calculation allows for comparatively the high price which horses reached about the outbreak of the war. Those which the writer saw a short time ago in South Africa were not of the stamp he was in his eye when he speaks of a £33 remount. These "Brombies" and "Warrigals" are simply wild horses, small and weedy, difficult to break, never very

trustworthy. They are broken at almost any age, but rarely before six or seven years old, and can be purchased as they run in hundreds on some of the Queensland stations away north, at prices quoted in shillings rather than pounds. Some years ago the writer was offered 800 colts at £2, and fillies at 30s. each. Were he the buyer, even this price would have been less. Some of them when broken turn out fairly well, and become useful saddle-horses, but not suitable for remounts. They have as a rule great endurance, but it is always a trouble to get them into condition again after breaking, and if they are "turned out" immediately after being handled, most of the breaker's work must be done over again. Their skin is so fine that in the process of breaking they nearly always get girth-galls, and sore backs, mouths and tails\*. They are, be it added, generally good "boxers" and can hit as quick with their forefeet as any human boxer can, with the difference that the equine boxer has a longer arm and harder fist, and if he lands "one," which he often does, effects a clean knock-out at the first hit.

The writer speaks from past experience and does not require to increase his knowledge of that particular brute.

THE ARGENTINE (of which the writer has already said something) will, if properly selected, broken, and acclimatized, prove himself, under certain circum-

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\* Sores on the tail are caused by the crupper cutting the tail when the animal is "having a go," or bucking.



stances, a useful mounted infantry and pack pony. He is strong and can carry a good weight. It was no wonder he went to pieces when he was mounted and had "all on"; so would any other animal of his size. When he was equipped and loaded nothing of him could be seen but his hoofs and the tips of his ears. That was how he appeared on leaving for the front, early in 1900, when he had only been in the country a week or so. At that time, however, every four-legged thing, though hardly rideable, had to go forward.

It may be admitted that the Argentine as seen at Stellenbosch and elsewhere in South Africa is not as a rule a gentleman in appearance, but the writer had one that was a few months ago. He rode him daily at all paces, and long hours, though he is no light weight, and yet this Argentine has been always gay and fit, and never made one mistake. True, he was only one out of many Argentines, but he was at one time a bad one, a fact which shows that his virtues came by training. He was a slight buckler, and would run away at any time—quite a new development in the South African Argentine. With a few days' riding he became most docile and was never lame, sick or sorry. On one particular day he was ridden at a fair gallop on four different journeys of 8 miles each way, making 32 miles in all, and on each trip only stopped once—while a gate was being opened. The writer is fully aware that the A.I.R. in South Africa

has a very bad opinion of the Argentine cob, and that to a great extent he is supported by other Remount Officers; nevertheless he does not alter his opinion that if the Argentine is wisely and well purchased, trained and broken, he is fitted to become a useful mounted infantry cob. The Argentine is not nearly so liable to get sore back and girth-galls as many of the other kinds are; he is particularly hardy, does not readily contract disease, and shows great sagacity and activity in looking after himself under all circumstances.

The writer has seen a good many Argentines return from the front mere bags of bones. But it is astonishing how quickly they pick up; they will never leave the manger as long as there is anything in to eat. From the manger they are off to the veldt, where they do not make many mistakes in finding the best grass. In fact, they waste no time in putting on condition, which they do quicker than any other animal, not excepting the Cape pony itself.

As the writer has said before, the Argentine has never had a fair chance in the war to prove himself the useful animal he is. He should be certainly tried again without prejudice and with a lighter load.

**NEW ZEALAND HORSES**, as seen in South Africa, are really tip-top. They have all, the writer believes, been purchased and taken there by those who have to ride them. The individual buying for himself has, of course, only his own pocket to consider.