

ENGLISH HORSES generally have been, in the writer's opinion, no better purchased than any of the others. They have been all sizes—universally too big and heavy for cavalry purposes—and many of them not adapted for any particular arm of the service in South Africa. The only reason for the purchase of some of them which the writer could ever discover was that they were required to make up the number which would fill a certain ship.

Heavy saddle or cart horses are worse than useless for Cavalry in South Africa, they are dangerous at all times. The heat is too trying for them in the day-time, the nights are too cold, and their bellies too big to get always decently filled on active service. All the buyers should, after the first few months of warfare, have been selected from officers who had served in South Africa; there would have been some likelihood of these men knowing the sort of horse to buy.

The recuperative power of the English horse is no greater, if as great, as that of horses of other countries. It is most certainly slower, because the small horse is nearer his food and can generally look after himself better than a big horse. After he has reached the convalescent stage the English horse will perhaps make fairly rapid headway if he is kept well fed and warm; but he will also contract any and all diseases that may come in his neighbourhood, the contrary being the case with many of the South African and Colonial horses. Lastly, the English horse will stampede at any excuse directly he is the least bit fat.

CANADIAN HORSES, taken all round, are good. They are much the same stamp of horse as the New Zealander. They are not too big, have quality and are active, with plenty of bone. They were generally landed in fairly good condition and were all well broken and very quiet. The lot that the first contingent had with them were exceptionally good, but the Canadians were then of the opinion that the rations allowed would not be sufficient when in the field. The writer expects that when they got to the front, they would have been more than satisfied to receive the full horse rations allowed by the Imperial Authorities, which are liberal, and if good, should be ample under all conditions.

HUNGARIANS.—The writer has seen a number of these animals arrive in South Africa in all sorts of condition, in his honest opinion—shared by all to whom he remembers the question being put, “What do you think of Hungarians as remounts?”—is that they are extremely unsuitable for military use. The Hungarian’s good points may be freely granted. He is extremely docile; he takes to harness as though he were born to it. He is nearly always whole-coloured, with a nice shaped head and small ears, fair rein, wither and rump, but no barrel. Viewed sideways he is pretty; a well-matched pair of Hungarians would look nice attached to a coupe or tiny brougham. Add, that he easily puts on fat, and the case for the Hungarian is concluded.

Viewed from the standpoint of a competent remount buyer, however, his demerits are overwhelming. The Hungarian has a very narrow chest, no second thigh and no bone, whatever. His hocks are too far from the ground, and his feet are much too big and heavy in proportion to the size of his legs. He has no riding paces at all and he is a miserable walker, without an easy jog or amble such as is invaluable in all saddle horses which are expected to make long and continuous journeys. He is not even a fast trotter; galloping is beyond him, and he has little or no idea of jumping. Withal he is a beggar to stampede and impossible to drive in a mob, especially just after his leaving the ship. Whatever may be said of the Argentine "plug," he is preferable to the Hungarian.

NORTH AMERICAN.—The writer's experience of these horses was as follows.—While at Port Elizabeth Camp, he was in the habit of riding them about the depot and town. They were quiet, with nice trotting action in front, and this particular lot landed in grand condition. With very few exceptions, they were good-tempered and placid. They were, as a rule, browns and bays; many of the browns were rich in colour and dappled, with long (in many cases very long) glossy manes, and thick long black tails, which they carried well and did not shy or knock about at all. Altogether the writer must have ridden about 150 in this manner. They did not give him the impression of much stamina

or endurance; they were grand feeders, never giving any chances away at meal-times. The majority of them had good bone and fine black points, great strong carty quarters, with a carty head and a short carty neck. They might, in some instances, have been modelled from pictures of the ancient war horse. Others may have shown a little more quality and looked less carty; in some was visible the coarse strong hunter and light harness type; and undoubtedly harness blood was unmistakably evident in all these horses that the writer saw at Port Elizabeth Depot. The poorest specimens were sent on to a farm twenty-five miles out and very soon picked up. As the phrase goes, the North American horses are "good doers."

While the writer was in charge of a convalescent farm, he rode several of them daily in his business, as there were three farms joining each other, each of which contained 25 square miles of country, with camps distributed all over them, and as far apart as possible in order to give the horses the benefit of the best of the grazing. It was thus easy to test their endurance and the accuracy of the writer's first impression of them was fairly well proved, because out of eight, only one turned out to be a really good one. The exception would shy as quick as lightning, sideways, and in so doing, scramble, perhaps, up a bank 3 feet high. There was one thing about him, he never tripped once; he was like a cat on his feet and could jump well.

Another one that was frequently ridden by the writer on the same farm was a big dappled brown horse—a “runner” or “running trotter.” He would go this pace as fast as you pleased, but you could not get him to break it. For this reason alone he was an uncomfortable mount for a very rough country, but he was also a great puller, and had to be held hard all the time.

Both these horses went to the front at the same time and nothing more was heard of them afterwards. From his experience of the others the writer formed an unfavourable opinion of the North American horse as a riding-horse for remount work in South Africa.

Another opportunity was afforded the writer of testing them for harness purposes. Nine were sent up to the depot to which he was attached from which to select two or three for harness purposes, as several outlying farms had to be visited for inspection and other matters. The writer selected two and rode them first, and was very dissatisfied with them in saddle; in fact, he never rode either of them again. Then all the horses were put into harness and tried. They all went quietly in single and double harness, but completely collapsed after a few miles, being absolutely without stamina. For the first mile or so anyone would really have thought he had struck a “plum,” but not one of the nine proved capable of doing the work required, which could have been easily performed by small Africanders, worth at that time about £17

or £18 a-piece, though before the war their price would have been about a fiver.

A big horse in South Africa is no good for harness or saddle unless he is nearly or quite thoroughbred and has been born in the country or had a lengthy acclimatization.

The more the writer thinks of his experience, the more he becomes convinced of this. All the information the writer has gained concerning this animal is now known to you personally. In other words he has a very poor opinion of the North American horse as a remount, although he saw it noted in one of the newspapers that "in conjunction with the English horse the North American had come out on top for cavalry purposes."

The reader of such a statement will do well to remember that if an officer gets hold of a really good horse he is apt to swear by the class or country to which that horse belongs. This sort of evidence has given rise to a number of foolish mistakes occurring in the reports of the O.C.'s of the various depots throughout the four Colonies. It would indeed be curious if there was any number of a particular national horse so bad that it could not furnish an example here or there worthy of making a staunch friend or two; it is only when one has had the opportunity of fairly testing a certain number that an opinion can be arrived at worth expressing or repeating.

THE ARAB PONY.—There was not a very large number of these valuable ponies sent from India, but what were sent made a great name for themselves and fully sustained their reputation for endurance and strength. It certainly is marvellous how strong they are; many ponies, apparently much stronger, cannot do half what the Arab can. One small Arab stallion carried the rider and his kit sixty miles one day and did not seem a bit distressed about it. It is seldom one meets with a vicious Arab, or indeed one with any bad tricks at all. Their docility is admirable; and in conjunction with the Australian pony, Col. Birkbeck, the A.I.B., has rightly put the Arab pony in front of all others.

The Australian pony is nearly an Arab, i.e., he is an Arab with pure English thoroughbred blood in him. He is a tough little customer and could kill all the big horses that come alongside of him and get his own living at the same time.

The early life of these ponies is spent in the open; they never see a roof of any sort, and it is extremely difficult to get some of them into a stable for the first time; when forced in, they crouch down like a dog going into his kennel.

This brings to the writer's mind an incident which occurred in Australia some years ago. One day when he was down in the "sale-yards" he made a successful bid of £6 for a really nice-looking smart pony of a good hard brown in colour. The pony was quite unbroken, but he was carefully and quietly haltered

and led home. He was put into a large loose box, with half-doors opening out into the yard; the upper one was left open. These half-doors, by the way, were rather above than below the usual size, larger, at any rate, than most of such half-doors in England. Well, the writer had not quite turned his back when the pony jumped through, clearing the lower door most beautifully, and nearly succeeded in dodging the writer and getting out into the street. He was caught and put into the box again and, as the weather at the time was very hot, the lower door was opened, though the upper one was left shut, and he was watched to see if he would attempt to crawl out, which he did in two minutes. This improvised performance became a trick which he would do perfectly whenever one wished, and for which he was always rewarded with a carrot or a piece of sugar.

As a rule, all Australian ponies are marvellous jumpers. The writer has seen a miniature pony in a show-yard jump considerably over its own height. He would be led under the rail and afterwards jumped over it, and he seldom made a mistake.

The merits of the Australian and the Arab pony are perhaps sufficiently clear to the reader in the light of the foregoing testimony to enable him to agree with the writer's suggestion that an Arab stallion to Australian and South African ponies will or should produce a perfect small army horse or mounted infantry pony.

THE COLONIAL HORSE AND PONY.—There can be no mistake in stating that the small horse of South Africa has been quite equal to the best that has been imported, but he took a long time to prove how much better he is than he looks. He is not, as a rule, striking in his appearance. Of course many of his class are good looking horses, but they always fetch a good price, higher than that as a rule given for remounts. A pair of big unbroken colts—four years old—would now fetch £100 easily. But the Colonial cob or pony is a really good one on his native “koppie”; he is very easy to ride, having a very fast walk, also a good “amble,” the best of all paces for a journey over a rough country. He always seems to have a leg to spare and is very sure-footed over the worst of boulder country, in darkness as well as in daylight, he will do his six miles an hour as regularly as clockwork. As a matter of fact, miles are not spoken of in South Africa; there journeys are reckoned in hours. If a place is about 18 miles distant, they say three hours; five hours is the same as saying 30 miles, and so on. This way of reckoning is, in the writer’s thinking, a tribute to the punctuality and dependableness of the horse of the country.

The writer thinks just as much of the South African Colonial horse in his own country as he does of the Australian in his. Of course the latter is bigger, has more breeding, is generally selected before his South African brother, and as a rule, commands a much

higher price in the market. One of the greatest mistakes that have been made during the war was not to impress, at the beginning, all the available native horses of South Africa. It would of course have been difficult to do so promptly, but it could at least have been done much earlier than it was. There was, however, a strong prejudice against the South African in the minds of all the officers on their arrival in the country, and in the early days of the war, the writer had frequently much difficulty in persuading an officer to take one of these to the front. For what the English officer saw was simply a rather mean-looking pony with a long tail, instead of a flash-looking English cob with no tail. But the mean-looking pony never came back with a bad report.

It must be admitted that little or no judgment was displayed at the outset in the purchase of these colonial ponies.

The writer never saw such a heterogeneous collection of ponies in all his life as he saw at Stellenbosch. It included all colours, all ages, all sizes, all conditions; but matters were soon put straight when Col. the Hon. C. H. Gough, C.B., appeared on the scene supported by one of the most careful of all officers of the A.V.D. i.e., Major Day. The Colonel's advent was marked by the purchase of a much better class of colonial pony.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Stellenbosch Depot the country was a hot-bed of rebellion. We

were constantly under arms and frequently had to turn out at night; but the depot was afterwards well entrenched and protected generally by a considerable number of soldiers, besides which, many contingents were horsed and drilled at the depot on their way to the front.

In this part of the Western Provinces there must have been thousands of suitable horses, but two men seemed to have the purchasing monopoly of all horses, which presumably they bought at their own prices, and sold to the Government at (it is to be supposed) the figure they chose to ask, since there was no one to compete with them. And no one was allowed to question the selling price. This little corner must have been as profitable as it was "loyal"?

THE KAFFIR PONY is generally a slightly worse edition of the Cape pony, although there are many Kaffirs who will only ride a good pony, and will freely give a good price for a good animal. It is wonderful what long journeys they go on these ponies—tremendously fat and big men, weighing 20 stones in many cases, with their feet nearly touching the ground. As they ride they generally have an umbrella up—a detail which it would be a pity to omit, though it is irrelevant. Heavily weighted though they are, their ponies average their six miles an hour, hour after hour, being off-saddled every two hours or less.

THE BASUTO PONY.—Least in size is the Basuto pony, a really wonderful little fellow. Small, compact, strong and active, weight never seems to trouble him at all. These were just the animals for the Mounted Infantry; if they fell off they could not hurt themselves. They could live anywhere, and were used to the country. Their qualifications were dinned into the ears of many of those immediately in authority from the very commencement of the war, yet it is only quite recently that the Basuto pony has been purchased in any great numbers. He is not a galloper, but can get over the ground in his own quiet and safe manner, will look after himself, has no vice, and would be most hard to beat as a mounted infantry or pack pony for South Africa.

The writer rode a mite of a thing 30 miles in one day over frightfully bad country. It was difficult to realize that a total weight of $15\frac{1}{2}$ stone was being carried as well as it was by such a small pony. And the pony not only carried his burden well, but carried it as though it did not trouble him in the least. The writer believes that Col. Birkbeck, who is a tall and rather heavy man, always keeps one or two of these ponies for riding; he has expressed a very high opinion of them.

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales also had two or three, presented to him by the Capetown children as a present to H.R.H.'s children. The writer just missed seeing them when shipped at Capetown for England, but heard that they were good specimens of the type.

L

INDIAN COUNTRY-BREDS.—These are a small and rather weedy animal, docile and well-mannered. There were only a very limited number sent, the writer thinks, and he did not see any after they left the depot for the front, but has heard that they were not a success.

The writer wishes to impress upon the reader that all the opinions he has given concerning the remounts of various countries sent to South Africa for active service, are given honestly, and that he has not been biased in any way by his knowledge of the opinions of his commanding officer. The writer has formed his own opinions solely from experience, and indeed it would be difficult to form opinions of one's own out of the contradictory statements on the relative value of different types of horseflesh which can be gleaned by the dozen by any inquirer. Even with all the assistance of experience, backed by careful observation, the writer finds it a most difficult problem to give definitely the first place as a remount to the horse of any particular country.

The remount for South Africa is not necessarily the remount for the world. It would be absurd to think for a moment that because heavy Cavalry have been of little service in the South African War, that in a continental war they would not be greatly needed. They will, and the necessity for them will probably be greatly increased. Battles are fought, won and lost at a great distance now; hand-to-hand business does not

take place so frequently as it used to in the past. But then the Boers are not like a trained army of soldiers, whose sole business it is to fight, and who, therefore, are trained to the use of all arms. "Tommy" likes the bayonet and will perform almost any daring deed to get a chance of using it; hence no one supposes that the quick-firer and the long-ranger will ever "blunt" the bayonet. Well, the bayonet is not more necessary now than would big horses be for cavalry purposes in a civilized war. Civilized warfare provides the chance of the big horses. They have not done well in South Africa. The extra length of leg meant an extra risk of lameness, and the extra height was inconvenient as well as useless to the rider, who on a smaller animal would have been more difficult to shoot.

If it be desired to classify the remounts sent to South Africa we may begin with horses of 15 hands and over. Then we get English, North Americans, New Zealanders, Canadians, Australians, Hungarians, and so very few South Africans that it will only be fair to leave them out altogether.

Col. Birkbeck puts the English and North American first. The writer would be inclined to give the Colonial horses the first place, the English second, and from what he knows of the North American, either to place them with the Hungarians or a little above them. With reference to the North American horses, perhaps the writer happened to strike bad lots; they may really have been North Americans which turned out as Col.

Birkbeck states, second only to the English horses. But then the writer has not given the first place to the English cavalry horse. The South African cavalry horse (from England) is not the horse that has always been known as an English cavalry horse. Oh, no; nothing of the kind. English horses, or rather, horses shipped from England, coarse and heavy animals without breeding, with legs trimmed to look as light and breezy as possible, these are the creatures which were made to pass as English cavalry horses to the buyer on the strength of an artificial resemblance. Many of them were only suitable for butchers' and bakers' carts, and could only have been purchased for two reasons, first, because they were the best that were on the market, and secondly, to fill a ship's stalls. In the name of commonsense, are such horses likely to beat on active service the pick of New Zealand and Canada, the Australian horses from India, and the Australian horses brought over by the various contingents themselves? The writer says most emphatically, no! He has an intimate knowledge of two out of the three countries' horses named, and can form a pretty accurate judgment of what the Canadian horse would be at the front. The English horses, which arrived after the war had been carried on for a short time, were in such a great variety that it was difficult to get a stopping and starting standard for cavalry and draft.

When the orders came from the front that—"All cavalry horses are to be tested for harness." As the

writer had frequently to select these horses for the front, he knew the difficulty of sorting them, and was glad to box the whole lot together, and then a consignment could be used either for cavalry or draft. When Lord Roberts wired to Stellenbosch on one occasion, his message ran, "Send 1,000 mounted infantry cobs; also 200 English tested for harness," and from that time to this the English cavalry horse in South Africa has deteriorated, the Commander in Chief by this order in reference to the English Cavalry Horse proved that he had detected the inferior quality of the English Horses generally that were then arriving, also the difficulty in classing them at the Base. It must be remembered that horses are called English, simply for the reason that they are purchased here, but what becomes of all the horses imported into England, the geldings and mares that are being imported in thousands? Are there no Canadians, Russians, Hungarians, Americans purchased and sent to South Africa as English-bred cavalry horses? Are the Government buyers here so smart that they can detect a "foreigner" at a glance? The best dealer in London can be deceived at times, and one may well ask how many Canadian cobs go direct to Ireland prior to coming to London docked and with an Irish groom, to be sold as genuine Irish cobs. Are none of these bought, and sent to South Africa as English cavalry horses? It is common sense to suppose so, and the writer can prove it beyond

dispute. Yet because a Canadian horse has gone to South Africa with a false pedigree, he is to be put above his honest brother, who comes without affectation straight from his own country.

The truth is that the English cavalry horse in South Africa may be anything, so long as he has a docked tail, and is hogged, with plenty of condition. The Australian horse does not carry much fat, in fact, none at all in his own country, so it may readily be understood, that anyone who looks upon fatness as a criterion of qualification would be led into error when judging an Australian horse in South Africa.

The Australian horse has more thoroughbred blood in him than the ordinary English horse, and never carries a very big barrel. As he has not got to keep this tub full, he must in time wear the other down, especially as he can keep going on much less and coarser food than the English horse. The writer is fully aware that it would be just as unpleasant to many of the Imperial officers to acknowledge that the Colonial horses are actually better than the English as it has been to some of them to acknowledge that the Colonial officer is as good a soldier and fighter as themselves. But such petty jealousies do good in a way. They stimulate competition, and hence lead to improvements.

The writer thinks he has said enough to let the reader know what his opinion is on the matter of the respective values as remounts of the horses in South Africa of over 15 hands.

We must now consider the relative values of the horses of less than 15 hands. The class is an embarrassingly broad one, comencing as it does at 13 hands. The best criterion is certainly utility. In the ideal small horse, we must seek the best properties that should exist in the war pony, whose requirements have already been explained. He must be strong, active and not carty; he must jump a bit, unmounted as well as mounted, gallop, but not so fast as a polo pony, have fire, yet be very tractable and teachable; withal he must be cheap. In the endeavour to find the pony which most nearly corresponds with this ideal, it will perhaps be best to work backwards and decide which would be the worst pony to adopt for the Mounted Infantry.

First, we rule out Kaffirs and Basutos. The Basuto is a good pony for most purposes, but he has no fast pace, and as a jumper he is nowhere. Argentines are next dismissed. The Argentine has been tried and condemned, and it is only on sufferance that he will ever get another trial; if he does, he may improve his reputation. The writer thinks he will, but on his present record he is dismissed. Small Hungarians are quite as worthless as the bigger ones; they are all bodies and feet, without bone—and no pace. Then come the Indian country-breds. These have proved to be of no use in South Africa, though they looked likely animals. Their Arab blood was in their favour, but they were weedy and perhaps had been over-indulged.

The so-called English pony comes next. The writer does not suppose for one minute that one out of ten is really an English-bred pony, but he is looked upon as such in South Africa and must be classed as he is called. His chance is somewhat spoilt by the numerous common and carty ponies sent to South Africa as English-bred ponies simply because they were not high enough to be classed as "horses," and which were of no great service except for packing, or light draft. Breedy, genuine English ponies are good and suitable, but they are a very different article.

We have now left the South African Colonial, Australian, and Arabian. Cannot we safely leave it with them to produce the best army pony of the future? In the writer's opinion we can; and if the well-bred and genuine English pony mare is enlisted in the same service, well and good; she, too, is worthy to assist in producing the pony remount of the future. Of those which under this name have lowered its prestige enough has been said.

The writer's opinions may be ignored, or even laughed at, but at all events he has been on the spot and knows what is actually required. If he has expressed himself tautologically, it is because memory and conviction are both apt to repeat themselves. The circumstance matters little, since there are so many who write with dexterity and grace about matters of which they practically know nothing from actual personal observation and experience.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE SYSTEM OF COMMANDEERING WAS PRACTISED IN SOUTH AFRICA.

ALTHOUGH the duty of commandeering is not wholly relegated to the Remount Department in South Africa, it comes naturally within the range of their duties in connection with stock generally, and horses in particular.

Orders were given frequently to commandeer all horse stock "likely" to be of service to the enemy. In consequence of this rather comprehensive command, everything with four legs, excepting yearling foals, was commandeered, the bulk of the animals taken being absolutely useless to the Remount Department, even if they survived the vicissitudes of their life in protection (?) camps and on Government depots and farms.

Not only was the mere collecting of all this available rubbish the cause of great expense, and the outlay in feeding it considerable, but it was of course valued by its former owners at tip-top prices. These amounts total up to a nice little bill which will have to be paid some day; indeed there must be hundreds of thousands of pounds owing for commandeered stock.

In the North-Eastern Province of Cape Colony, the following circumstance came some time ago under the writer's notice. There were several train-loads of bullock wagons and trek oxen in the Railway station, waiting to get up the line, and, at the local Remount depot, there were about a dozen bullock wagons and 200 head of trek oxen. The writer, out of curiosity, had a look round the wagons. Two or three of them were in first-class condition; the next three were in fair order and the remainder were old, sun-rotted wagons patched up in a bad sort of way, with a few felloes and spokes put into worn-out wheels, a board, inserted here and there, in the bodies, etc. As soon as the writer had examined them, he said to the "valuer," "What price are you putting on these commandeered wagons?" The answer was, "£80 each on the best and £40 on the worst." In response to an observation, he said that the lowest priced ones were in good condition. The writer quickly proved to him that they were not, that even the tyres were loose; and told him straight that they were not worth a cent for service, being only suitable for breaking up, and that at a fiver each they would be dear.

Then the valuation of the trek oxen was asked. The reply was £12 a-head for "Rebels'" stock and £15 for "Loyalists." If the writer had been valuing these goods, he would have started at £5 for the wagons and stopped at £40. As for the oxen he would have given

£12 for the "Loyalists'" stock, and a fiver (if anything at all) for the "Rebels'."

Wherever the valuations of the commandeered horse stock has come under the writer's notice, the same magnanimous and liberal spirit has been displayed, with one exception. The exception was supplied by an officer who had had an extensive Colonial experience and was not to be over-reached by farmers or dealers of any description, or even Rebels.

In one district the writer saw an individual who, although born a British South African, became Intelligence Officer and Spy for the Boers at the beginning of the war. A little later on, when the English occupied the town where he lived, he became Intelligence Officer for both sides; later on, he threw up the Boers altogether, but remained an Imperial Intelligence Officer. He then joined the Town Guard, the pay for that service being 10s. a day and 2s. 6d. horse allowance. The writer was informed that this gentleman was doing a little commandeering on his own account, but at a very different price to that paid by the Government. To do this, he donned his khaki and rode about the country, calling at the farms. £5 down was his price per head for horses which he offered to a Loyalist; to a Rebel he offered nothing if possible. A larger price was often offered if the seller would wait for his money till the termination of the war. Naturally all were glad to get the fiver down. When this gentleman had commandeered about 20 head, he would

bring them into the nearest depot and get his 18 to 20 pounds a head for them. Of course his act of commandeering was illegal, and, if he had been discovered, he would probably have got the punishment he deserved.

Thousands of horses have been commandeered in the Cape Colony at absurdly high valuations—not only by the Imperial Officers, but by others, some of whom held no military position whatever, but the best commandeers were the proved Loyalists who had served at the front and knew who were the rebels.

As an illustration of the occasional injustice of commandeering, the following will serve:—

Several well-to-do farmers keep a good and valuable pair of driving-horses, up-standing and well-bred, their value being at least £100 a pair. These were occasionally commandeered for remounts at about £45 the pair. This depreciation of their property was unfair to these loyal men, and such acts caused a great deal of dissatisfaction and grumbling, which might have been avoided if common-sense, to say nothing of courtesy, had been shown by the authorities concerned.

If these loyal farmers and others required to keep particular horses for their own use, they should have been allowed to do so, on condition that they provided two others suitable for remounts, at a fair market price.

In the bulk of commandeering transactions, however, conciliatory valuations have been the order of the day, and the rebels have in most cases got much the best of the commandeerer. The very day after a sale, they would go on commando again, chuckling to themselves to think what soft fools they had been dealing with.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOUNTED INFANTRY PONY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT BREEDING AND TRAINING FARMS.

THE first question to decide is: What is the kind of pony required? There are many quite distinct types existing to-day. The polo, up to the present, has always headed the list; and the writer supposes the best type for this sport is a miniature thoroughbred steeplechaser, capable of carrying a heavier man in proportion to its height than its full-sized progenitor can. It is hardly likely that the high-class article of this type would be quite suitable for mounted infantry purposes, as the Mounted Infantry have not, as a whole, that reputation for horsemanship which would suggest the ability to manage and control a spirited pony in tip-top condition. We had better pass it by, however reluctantly. Neither do we want a carty pony, but we must have a strong and active well-bred typical saddle pony, free from too much fire. He must be a pony that can be readily trained for mounted infantry work, for mounted infantry ponies will have to undergo special field training if they are to do the work required of them efficiently and safely.

The pony, to the infantry soldier, is simply some-

thing to enable him to move faster, to make longer journeys than he can perform himself, and to land him on the scene of conflict in fighting condition—fresh, and with more ammunition than he could have carried himself. The pony should be trained to remain wherever his rider leaves him; this is easy to do, if properly understood. In fact, the pony can be made to come at call, just like a dog.

Now, the too highly-bred pony, full of fire, would not quite meet these requirements. We must look for one nearly as good, but some sort of cross.

First, let us consider the Argentine pony. The Argentine pony arrived in large numbers in the first part of the South African War. He is a strong, cobby pony, up to weight, with a bad sort of face, small eyes and slightly Roman nose; not a taking pony, but with a look of utility about him at the same time. All Argentines were bad-tempered when first handled; in fact, some of them were devils incarnate. They would strike, bite, kick, jib, lie down, and to shoe them standing was an impossibility in most cases.

The writer has never been in the Argentina, but some men whom he had with him in the remounts were born or had travelled there. They were good horsemen, and knew the Argentine horses and ponies well, and they informed him that the specimens sent to South Africa were bad, and did not fairly represent the equine produce of that country; that a lot of them were "culls," and that many were aged and absolutely

unbroken. As to the writer fell the task of breaking the worst of these, he is able to endorse the opinion expressed of them by his subordinates.

The breaking of these Argentines, it must be said, was necessarily hurried—a circumstance which did not improve tempers or create that confidence which should exist from the first between the breaker and the animal.

The writer was informed—he is unable to state with what accuracy—that the value of these ponies in Argentina did not exceed £4 per head, but that the Government was paying £8 and over.

But the Argentine pony was soon condemned. The writer always regretted this, as the pony never had a show. The Argentine consignment was put on the ship clean off grass, after a tremendous railway journey. During a voyage of about three weeks, the ponies were, as a rule, standing in their own muck. They were landed in Capetown with soft and frequently rotten feet, in many cases were afflicted with thrush and canker. They were driven somewhere for temporary quarters (perhaps to Maitland Camp or Durban Road) when landed, and taken thence the next day to Stellenbosch Depot, thirty-five miles. On arrival there they were like the proverbial cat, etc. Then, the next day or the day after, they were tested for riding, and broken (if required), were shod somehow and sent straight away to the Front, generally only moderately quiet, and with no "mouth" whatever.

As they worked entirely by touch of the reins on the neck, it was impossible to haul them round with the bit. In fact they could not be ridden on the bit at all: you had to ride with an entirely loose rein, long stirrups, and a balance seat. Well, the Mounted Infantry man did not know this; if he had been told, he would have been just as wise as he was before. But the writer has ridden several Argentines during his South African experience, and preferred them to any of the other imported ponies, excepting a good Australian cob. It is his belief that, under different circumstances, the Argentine cob will be admitted as a useful mounted infantry pony. At all events he would like to have a thousand selected and trained by himself, and to issue them to men trained to ride them in the Argentine style, which is after all a better style for active service riding than the military seat in present use.

The Argentine pony is not a cross; he is a distinct type: at all events those that were sent to South Africa were.

The writer would strike out any type of pony with hackney blood in it. The army pony only requires two paces; as a rule he must be a good ambler, and fast for a spurt. It is astonishing how fast a pony can get over the ground ambling, with no fatigue to himself or to his rider. These paces, which all the South African ponies have, alone suffice to enable the Boers to do the "disappearing trick." Trotting

is no pace for active service, especially in South Africa.

The writer thinks there is only one sort of pony that will do for Mounted Infantry, viz., the pony with an Arab sire. The Arab is naturally good-tempered, not excitable, yet full of spirit and game. He can do a long day's journey and repeat the performance for several consecutive days, seemingly with the minimum of fatigue to himself and to his rider; his paces are comfortable, his size, strength, and general appearance suitable. Now what should he be crossed with? Certainly with nothing containing hackney blood. At the same time it must not be "weedy," or (the other extreme) "carty," but an animal with a good shoulder and wither, a breedy but strong and active pony, with perhaps a dash of thoroughbred or Arab blood. This class of pony can be readily procured in Australia and South Africa, so it should be in these two countries that the Imperial Government should establish their own stud farms. Matters must and will come to this. The suggestion that the Imperial Government should undertake the formation of breeding farms for the supply of suitable animals for military purposes is by no means new. Many of the great European nations have for a long time past depended almost solely upon their own farms for their remount requirements. Nowhere else has this important matter (the breeding of ponies and horses suitable for military purposes) been taken up so much as on the Continent.

Some idea of the magnitude of these undertakings

M

may be gained from the fact that over a decade ago there were more than twenty depots for stallions in France, and the annual Government expenditure in connection therewith amounted to nearly £300,000 a year. Hungary spends about £120,000 a year with a similar object, and her expenditure has amply repaid her, as we have had to go to Hungary for an immense number of horses for South Africa. Austria again spends the best part of £100,000 a year in the encouragement of horse-breeding; while the royal establishments of Prussia cost about £85,000 a year. Since the advent of weapons of precision and rapid firing it was considered by many that the days of the mounted soldier had passed. The South African war has not only disproved this but has shown that horses and quick mobilisation are now more than ever necessary, and that mounted men are likely to play a more important part in future warfare than before the advent of the quick-firing and long-range rifle. The difficulty of obtaining suitable army remounts in case of war by simple application to the open market, was fully realized by these European Governments; hence the establishment of depots and the encouragement of horse-breeding by farmers. Most of the best sires now at these European studs have been procured from England; latterly a few have been selected from Australia. Should the British Government ever require thoroughbred sires, the writer would suggest that they might be obtained better from Australia than

from England, as horses bred in Australia are generally more free from and less liable to contract hereditary diseases than their English cousins, while they are all descendants of the best English blood imported into Australia.

It has been clearly proved that, for purposes of war, the long-legged horse is not the horse to be selected, and special attention and care will have to be taken to bear this in mind. As soon as the right type is developed the future breeding should be carried on according to experience. "Red Tape" should, for the sake of success, be chiefly conspicuous for its absence, and the payment of the manager should be principally by results. As to the selection of the localities for the Imperial Government Horse-breeding Farms in South Africa, every care must of course be taken if the idea ever assume a practical form.

There is no time like the present for starting these farms in South Africa. The writer had the selection of a lot of mares and foals for the South African Breeding Farms (which, it was rumoured, were to be organised in the Orange River Colony) from the captured stock sent to the Mooi River Depot, Natal, and he picked something like 1,000 head of just the right sorts. They had come principally from the Orange River Colony, and it was a pretty picture to see a "good-shaped, ringing good sort of a well-bred mare" and her foal, with one, two and three year olds walking alongside of her; the strain must have been good,

as the likeness was most striking between each of the progeny to the other, and also to the dam. The writer was afterwards informed that the brands were good and well known to be the best in the Orange River Colony.

The Government (the writer has been informed) have already started stud farms in South Africa, and there is no reason why they should not be self-supporting, provided that a good district is selected, where there is no horse-sickness; though since this fatal complaint has spread to many districts which before the war were never affected by it, it may be difficult to guarantee its non-appearance on any farm.

The Government need not purchase a single mare in South Africa; they have already thousands of suitable ones there. The question resolves itself into the selection of a particular sire, and the proper management of subsequent details. There are "lands" or cultivative plots fenced in on all the Orange River Colony farms, where hay and root foods can be plentifully and cheaply grown, if the locusts don't happen to come that way.

The percentage of horse stock that dies in foalhood when the animals are reared in a semi-wild state is infinitesimally small, as compared with the percentage of such deaths when the animals are under confining conditions, as in England. The diseases in the former case are fewer, especially in Australia; and hereditary diseases are almost nil in South Africa, as well as in

Australia. The likelihood of the foals being injured is greatly lessened by the vastness of the territory covered by the farms upon which the stock is reared.

One cannot insist too much on the necessity of breeding on certain recognized lines. The requirements of any army embrace almost all classes of horses and ponies, excepting extremes in tall weedy and small weedy. Any pony with strength, if not strong enough or fast enough to carry a man and his accoutrements, will do for pack and draft purposes. Six or eight to a light wagon would do quite as well as mules. So with ordinary care and luck there should be no "misfits" at all. The possibility of misfits has, however, always been in the past a great stumbling-block in the successful organisation of Government stud farms.

The breaking and training of mounted infantry ponies can be done cheaply if done on a large scale by soldiers. I should strongly recommend reservists for this work; they are less likely to be rough and more likely to have the requisite patience.

The whole system of training these ponies will have to be properly organised by an expert; the better the training of these animals, the less mortality for man and beast in war time.

Each stud farm should have its own men for each department of training, and the horses and ponies should be passed and repassed backwards and forwards between the departments until the training of

the animal is complete. If the organisation were sound, there would be no difficulty for a thousand, or two, or ten thousand to undergo the necessary training at one time. The writer has had hundreds of re-vervists under him from time to time, and he testifies to their universal good behaviour and to their endeavours to do what is right and meet all emergencies. He thinks that if he had five hundred of these men—all to be selected—he could train on special lines for mounted infantry purposes 12,000 head a year, at a cost for labour of less than forty shillings per head, including stable as well as training duties.

Every pony should receive a certain amount of training at three years old, more at four years, and complete his education at five; after which he would be handed over to the riding-master for daily exercise and drill—in fact, for ordinary regimental use.

These animals should be specially trained for active service, and the idea of active service should underlie all their training from the beginning. The exhibition of them at reviews, etc., should always illustrate their capacity for active service.

The more a horse is “coddled” up and civilised, the less he is adapted for active service; especially deteriorating is “coddling” in the foalhood and early life of the animal. His surroundings should be as nearly as possible natural, but he should be well groomed. He should never be clipped, or confined in close, warm stables, though, of course, he should be

protected from the worst of inclement weather in a reasonable and suitable manner.

The writer's opinion of the necessary mounted infantry pony may not be approved of by the hackney breeder, but he has no hesitation in repeating it. The pony required could, he thinks, be best produced by an Arab sire, with Australian and South African well-shaped, breedy, sharp, pony mares, with nothing whatever either carty or weedy about them. It is no good breeding from extremes. From extremes you often get a horrible mixture of extremes in the same animal, and a useless brute into the bargain!

The stud farm should in all cases be self-supporting after the first five years, allowing the farm to be credited for the remounts it supplied at a buying valuation in which the extra value conferred on the animals by their special training and breeding would be duly considered. In ten years the farm and all on it should be to the "good," especially if the number of stock bred were in proportion to the first outlay.

Wherever these farms are to be organised, South Africa and Australia (and for home purposes, Ireland) are the two best (foreign?) countries in which to make the first ventures. It is scarcely needful to add that the men in actual charge of the farms should possess the necessary experience in horseflesh and a fair knowledge of the countries where they would perform their duties, even if for the sake of "red tape" one or more of the "very best" were put in authority over them in the name of discipline, etc.

CHAPTER XII.

MATTERS RESPECTFULLY SUGGESTED FOR CONSIDERATION WHEN RE-ORGANIZING THE REMOUNT DEPARTMENT.

THE following points may now be conveniently offered for consideration :—

1. Where can the best horses be procured for the work required of them in the country or countries where that work must be done?

2. Should the buyers be military or civil, or a combination of both?

3. Should the buyers be men who reside partially or permanently in the countries in which they are required to act?

4. Should not a regular supply of remounts be sent to India, England and elsewhere, so that the buyers' ability might be tested, and comparison made between the remount of one country and the remounts of other countries, with due regard in each instance to the original cost price of the animals in question?

5. Would it not be advisable at first to have two entirely independent buyers in each country?

6. Should not independent reports be obtained from these men as to the quality, type and number of horses purchasable in case of necessity, within, say, one month?

7. Should not a complete list be compiled of the breeders throughout the world of suitable remounts, with the number they could supply, so as to enable orders to be sent direct at a moment's notice from Headquarters to these men to meet requirements?

8. Might not a system of contracts for remounts be arranged on a basis satisfactory to both seller and buyer?

By organising a scheme based on the above suggestions, there should be no difficulty in landing 100,000 horses where required within a few weeks.

With regard to the mechanism of the Remount Depots the writer entertains the following opinions:—

1. An organised system of remount-tests should be so arranged that the animals' capacity for endurance in winter, as well as in summer, would be known.

2. The acclimatization and training should have been, as nearly as possible, the same in the case of all animals subjected to the same tests.

3. Remounts of all descriptions and sizes should be tested together, different scales of rations being used,

and sometimes all rations cut off and grazing only allowed, so as to determine the ability of the remounts to sustain hardship.

4. Various kinds of forage should be used and tested, in order to establish a definite system of purchase, and sources of supply in case of emergency should be known and registered.

5. The various tests should be arranged as nearly as possible in accordance with the requirements of active service. Night marches, scouting, patrol and outpost duty should be recognised as necessary subjects for tests.

6. In order to mark the difference between good and inferior horsemanship among the troopers, there should be three grades of horsemasters—untested, medium, and good, and to obtain promotion the trooper should have passed to the highest rank as a “horse-master in the Field.”

7. Not less than one hundred (more would be better) of each nationality of remount—equally sized—should be used for test purposes; all should be mounted and equipped as required for active service.

8. The tests and drills should be made over wild as well as road country.

9. Different transport animals should be submitted

to an organized system of tests, under the same circumstances as the remounts.

Teams for light transport should be arranged as follows:—

Whole mule teams; whole pony teams; mixed (half and half)—in light wagons, also in two-wheeled pole-carts.

All these teams should be equal in size and up to 14 hands.

Selections might be made from these teams for Maxim and other light guns.

For heavy transport and artillery, mule teams of 15 hands upwards should be selected, or horse teams or mixed teams of the same size.

10. While these animal tests are being made, the wagons and carts can be judged as to durability, weight and construction.

11. The harness, too, might be tested at the same time; hitherto the harness has been badly chosen and distributed.

Three sizes are required for mules—small, medium and large; two for horses—medium and full size. All the mule harness in South Africa was made of one size, and that generally too large; hence many horrible shoulder-wounds. In the case of the small mules the breastplate as a rule just worked on the point of the

shoulder, while the traces were not long enough, or the other parts big enough, for the largest mules.

12. The personnel of departments should be so organised that each could be rapidly expanded to meet urgent requirements.

The military authorities should decide what number of "fits" for Mounted Infantry and Cavalry is to be considered necessary to meet emergencies, and under what conditions they should be maintained.

On this subject the writer asks—Would not these "fits" be the best medium for testing the horses and training the men for active service?

And here is a question suggested by the latter—Would it not be advisable to test the mule for mounted infantry purposes?

A question that should be well considered is the advisability of organising in Ireland a permanent Remount Depot and Farm on a fairly large scale. It is a good horse-breeding country, and no difficulty would be experienced in obtaining a suitable and extensive tract of land of the fairly wild nature most suitable for the training of man as well as horse.

The lines upon which the establishment could be run might be somewhat similar to those which are considered the best in South Africa and to meet active service requirements.

The officers who passed through the Irish depot and farm training satisfactorily might, perhaps, be

the most eligible for buyers. In one way and another an Irish depot and farm, properly organised, would do an immense amount of work, and the floating bodies of troopers passing through it would obtain knowledge in peace times that they would otherwise never obtain except on active service, for there the trooper would learn to look after himself as well as his horse in the field, to use his brains to advantage at the moment required and not to be quite the automaton he has been taught to be in the past.

As a judge of distance for firing Tommy is very deficient. As a rule he cannot judge any distance, in South Africa, with even reasonable correctness after about 300 or 400 yards. His training at the depot would improve his shooting; there soldiers could be trained, in smaller bodies than heretofore, exactly as though in an enemy's country. In fact, the training could be so organised that it should comprise instruction in the tactics of both attack and defence, while the one and main object of training would never be lost sight of, viz., active service conditions alike for man and horse.

This sort of training would bring officer and trooper much more into personal contact, with the result of creating a greater "esprit de corps." Both classes would be stimulated to excel. The art of war would become a profession and not a pastime.

One depot and farm properly organised would be capable of turning out every year an immense number

of remounts and troopers fit to go to any part of the world, and should prove themselves superior to the best mounted soldiers that could be opposed to them.

There should be a technical school attached to the depot where the trooper as well as the officer would not only be encouraged to learn all that could be taught him, but where also expression could be given to ideas for "improvements" in everything connected with the mounted service, and remounts in particular. At the depot might be undertaken, too, the training of a certain number of Civil Veterinary Surgeons to act as a Reserve of Veterinary Officers, in the same manner as the R.N.R. officer is trained for the Navy. The utility of this will not be disputed by those who remember that the C.V.S. has, with few exceptions, come badly out of the South African War, since his one and most reliable cure for all complaints or diseases was the "bullet."

What are the improvements which might be suggested and designed, in the matter of remount furniture, etc.? Though he incur the charge of repetition, the writer will enumerate them.

Improvements are required in ship-stall fittings, new head-collars for sea and land use, bridles, food and water troughs, slings for ship and veterinary use. Rugs, which might be adapted to serve both for man and beast, those at present are unsatisfactory in material, size and shape, and saddles in size, shape and weight. Models of improved Sick Lines and

Shelter Sheds are required—the latter to give the maximum of shelter in the minimum amount of shedding. A portable, light, unbreakable lamp is also urgently required. Shoes might also be studied. Those for active service could be less heavy than they are and be equally serviceable, a metal perhaps might be found which would be lighter in weight without loss of durability.

There are many questions to settle respecting the comparative value of various articles and methods for active service. What is the most suitable manger, portable or otherwise, the best pattern of canvas feeding nosebag, the best form of water-cart, the best form of wagon for the transport of forage in the field, the best and most suitable forage for active service and peace times, the best forage for ship use? Which is the best knee-haltering or hobbling? What is the best method of packing and storing fodder at the base as well as at depots and farms, and also for transport? What are the relative values of the high and low systems of picketing? How stands the method of picketing versus ringing?

But for the present here is enough of questioning. The string of interrogations shows that remount work is full of details, and it may be added that in the perfection of the details lies the success of the whole. No doubt many of the hints conveyed in this chapter will be ridiculed, if noticed at all, in official quarters, but, if the public accept them, reformation (if needed?) in an important branch of the public service may not be far off.

THE END.

**EXTRACTS FROM AN ARTICLE WRITTEN
BY CAPT. T. T. PITMAN.**

N

**EXTRACTS FROM AN ARTICLE WRITTEN
BY CAPT T. T. PITMAN, 11TH HUSSARS,
THAT APPEARED IN THE "BADMINTON
MAGAZINE" CONFIRMING MANY OF
THE AUTHOR'S STATEMENTS.**

THE writer cannot resist quoting a few passages, strikingly confirming some statements of his own, from a valuable article by Capt. Pitman which he read after the greater part of this work was committed to paper.

"The fact is that the War has been rushed from start to finish, and the result is that never yet has a single fit horse been issued to the troops from the Remount Department, for the very good reason that the supply has never yet caught up the demand."

"Even now, when the War has been running two years, horses may be seen starting on trek when the ship's marks are hardly off their quarters."

In reference to active service requirements, the same writer states that "Never before have such a collection of inferior horses been gathered together in any portion of the globe."

In discussing the qualifications of the official buyer of remounts and the impossibility of getting experi-

enced officers for this work, Capt. Pitman states: "It was at this stage that the authorities might have turned to the civilian, to the sort of man who has made horse-buying his profession, and offered him sums of money, no matter how great, to buy animals in the interest of the Government. It appears that there was a tendency to expect soldiers to do the work, probably on the plea of economy, as they required* little extra remuneration beyond their pay. The result of this system was that some of the officers who were sent had little or no previous experience, either of horses or foreign lands. This was indeed a penny-wise and pound-foolish policy, as the remount bill at the end of the War will show."

Captain Pitman condemns the North American as a remount for the same reasons as the writer, and he believes in the Arab. He also attributes a large amount of equine mortality to ignorance on the part of the riders of the duties of a good horsemaster. In this he is absolutely correct. He also states that "a small horse has a better chance of keeping in condition than a big one."

* For "required" the present writer would substitute "received" see his comments *in loco*.

LETTERS TO SYDNEY GALVAYNE.

**CERTIFICATES OF SERVICE; ALSO
EXTRACTS OF LETTERS TO SYDNEY
GALVAYNE.**

No. 1.

**War Office,
London, S.W.
15/6/1897.**

**S. Galvayne, Esq.,
Sydney, N.S.W.**

**Your name has been noted here (re buying) in case
of emergency.**

**Inspr.-Genl. of Remts.,
(Signed) "GORE."**

No. 2.

**The Castle,
Capetown.
March 11th, 1900.**

**S. Galvayne, Esq.,
Remount Depot,
Stellenbosch.**

Sir,

**I am directed by Lieut.-General Sir F. Forestier-
Walker, K.C.B., C.M.G., to inform you that, as
enquiries made with reference to you have been very**

satisfactory, your name has been registered for employment, should a permanent depot be located in South Africa after the War.

Yours truly,
(Sd.) D. BEALE BROWNE,
A.D.C.

No. 3.

Port Elizabeth,
June 9th, 1900.

To Hon. Lieut. Galvayne.

I have much pleasure in bearing testimony to your great capacity for work of all kinds with horses, and to your unfailing courtesy and good temper. I know that the late Col. G. H. Gough, C.B., greatly appreciated your assistance.

(Sd.) E. PENNELL ELMHURST,
Capt., Remounts, S.A.

No. 4.

Port Elizabeth,
Aug. 3rd, 1900.

Extract of Letter from Lt.-Col. Birkbeck, Asst.
Inspr. of Remounts, South Africa.

“I shall have much pleasure in calling the attention of the G.O.C. L. of C. to the excellent work you have done in organizing the farm ‘Tankatara’ so successfully.”