

This article was downloaded by: [130.132.123.28]

On: 25 December 2014, At: 19:13

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

The Lance As A Cavalry Weapon

Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Mayne R.E.

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Mayne R.E. (1905) The Lance As A Cavalry Weapon, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 49:324, 118-140, DOI: [10.1080/03071840509418666](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840509418666)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840509418666>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE LANCE AS A CAVALRY WEAPON.

By Lieut.-Colonel C. B. MAYNE, R.E.

Thursday, 24th November, 1904.

Lieut.-General Sir H. C. WILKINSON, K.C.B. (Colonel 4th Dragoon Guards), in the Chair.

BY Army Order 39, of March, 1903, the lance was abolished as a part of the war armament of British cavalry. A certain number of lances, however, are allowed to each cavalry regiment in order to make the men familiar with the appearance and use of a weapon against which they may some day be pitted, and so more able to oppose it; and also to teach the troop horses to go up to men armed with lances, which many will not do at first. But for war purposes our cavalry is to be armed with sword and firearm. The reasons for the Army Order were given at some length in an official memorandum issued about the same time. This official memorandum gave rise to a flood of adverse criticism, as striking at the proud traditions of our cavalry, as being a bit of special pleading in which the conclusions were not borne out by the evidence adduced, and as failing to grasp the true idea and spirit of cavalry action. Although, as will be seen, I am not an advocate of the lance, it is only on account of the underlying tactical principles involved that I, who have not the honour of serving as a cavalry officer, have ventured to offer certain views in support of my opposition to the lance for your consideration and discussion. I feel no compunction in doing this because all the arms of the Service have a right to express an opinion as to the use to which any one particular arm is to be put, and as to the manner of its employment for the purposes of war. Of course, this statement only applies to the more general considerations affecting each arm; but it arises out of the fact that an army in the field is an organism with such closely and mutually inter-related parts that they cannot ignore each other, or work, in fact, by themselves without weakening the efficiency of the whole as a striking force, even if such

independent action does not lead to disaster. Thus I do not intend to deal with any detailed matters as regards the manipulation of cavalry weapons, but only with the broader questions and principles of the employment of the cavalry arm in the field, and from which the minor question of armament must follow.

The argument that I am presenting to you to-day was committed to paper in April, 1903, nearly a year before the issue of *Cavalry Training*, 1904. The more I study this manual the more I feel that our cavalry must congratulate itself on the triumph it marks of the cavalry over the mounted infantry idea. The very preface—so absolutely contrary in tone and spirit to the prefaces of our other training books—is a plain acknowledgment of this triumph by its pleading for the book to be read in a mounted infantry spirit. The long reviews of *Cavalry Training* that appeared in *The Times* of the 2nd and 9th June, 1904, were evidently intended to secure a mounted infantry interpretation of this book, though such an interpretation is absolutely contrary to the whole tone and spirit of the book. Our *Cavalry Training* thoroughly recognises the value of opportune cavalry charges, even in masses, and legislates for our regiments being trained to execute them with vigour, while, at the same time, the whole question of the relation between dismounted and mounted action is most judiciously dealt with. I am glad to dwell on this, for when the following remarks were first penned, over a year ago, they were opposed to the trend of official pronouncements, whereas I now have them in support of my contentions.

The uses of cavalry in the field may be classified as follows:—

1. Scouting and reconnaissances.
2. Skirmishing on foot or when mounted.
3. The charge in battle.
4. The conduct (or warding off) of pursuits.

The lance is avowedly a weapon for the charge, and so the question of its usefulness or desirability can only apply to the two last-named uses of cavalry. The lance is also admittedly of little use in a *mêlée*, and a long list of writers can be given who, in consequence of this, have advocated either the lance for the front rank only and swords for the supporting rear ranks, or that "lancer" regiments should be closely supported by "sword" regiments. The lance has only been of use in skirmishing when used by races (such as the various Cossack tribes and the kindred Poles) accustomed from childhood to its use and to riding, and whose horses had also been specially trained to the weapon and its use. Moreover, these races were opposed to fire weapons which were practically harmless except at a very few yards' range. But even then, with all these conditions in their favour, these "lancer" races failed before equally good horsemen and horses who were not afraid to charge home at speed, sword in hand. For example, the Line Cossacks had to give up their lances and take to the sword in order to compete with the Circassians, who invariably defeated them until the change was made. The Cossack and Polish lancers, from whom the Western nations in Europe have borrowed the lance as a cavalry weapon, were essentially irregular light corps, whose speciality was scouting, skirmishing, and plundering, and who only attacked small detached parties of the enemy in days when exposure at short ranges did not mean pretty certain death. However, it has been

fully recognised that in the face of modern rifles and smokeless ammunition the lance nowadays is a serious encumbrance during scouting and skirmishing work.

The lance, after a long period of disuse in Western Europe, only came into use again in this part of the world during the 19th century owing to the rôle played by the Cossacks and Poles, during the later Napoleonic campaigns, in the irregular warfare that was their *métier*. But a very slight investigation will show that the great services rendered by these irregular light corps were due more to the intelligence of the men and the training of their horses than to the mere weapons carried by the men. Indeed, the Turkish cavalry (which for many long years was the best cavalry in the world) and their successful imitators, the Hungarian Hussars—both irregular light corps, but armed with the sword—performed equally valuable services for their own Armies. The lance was only introduced into the British service *after* the Battle of Waterloo, long after the brilliant traditions of our cavalry had been formed, and its most daring exploits made matters of history.

The sole question nowadays is the advantage of the lance in the charge and in the pursuit. It is a positive disadvantage to cavalry when scouting and skirmishing. But the chief claims made for the lance is its moral effect as a charging weapon and its power of reaching to the ground as a pursuing weapon. Hence it may be asked whether it cannot be kept as the armament of certain cavalry corps who would, as far as possible, be kept back either for executing decisive charges in battle or for the pursuit. I may here say that I am a firm believer in the *truth* that the day of effective cavalry charges is not over, provided that the cavalry arm is correctly used. In the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* a paper of mine was published in 1902 on the relative rôles of cavalry and mounted infantry, in which I strongly insisted not only on the possibility of the use of shock tactics by cavalry under modern conditions of war, but also on its desirability for securing decisive results when deemed feasible on account of the enormous moral and physical results that are to be derived from it. That we did so little with our cavalry in South Africa is due to the fact that the proportion of cavalry proper to infantry was about one-twenty-eighth instead of one-fourth, as it should have been. But supposing we have a full proportion of cavalry, can they hope to find opportunities for effective charges under the conditions of modern warfare? Evidence was given to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa that after half an hour's firing, the efficacy of our fire so fell off that the Boers did not mind it much. And in the present war in Manchuria the infantry fire of both sides, in the prolonged fire fights that have taken place there, has in the end been so ineffective as to allow of bayonet fighting by masses to take place. If this was done by slow-moving infantry, it could also have been done by mobile cavalry, had the occasions been suitable for the use of cavalry. It stands to reason that if a man has to lift his rifle to his shoulder 100 or 200 times his fire must become one of purely chance hitting from sheer physical fatigue. Even with our new shorter and lighter rifle there is the same physical fatigue entailed, because its reduction in weight has largely increased the recoil. For this reason I have pleaded, even with high authority, for the early introduction into our Services of an automatic-loading rifle that need be

only raised and lowered 10 times for each 100 shots fired.¹ Not only would the physical fatigue be proportionately lessened, but still more so by the absence of recoil which would be taken up to work the mechanism of the rifle, while the accuracy and observation of the shooting would be greatly enhanced. But, as matters are, men must shoot badly after firing for half-an-hour or so, and nowadays bullets are used that will not stop a horse,² unless it is struck in a vital spot or by a considerable number of bullets at once, as from a machine gun or a concentrated volley. The French and Japanese have adopted, without protest, a copper-covered bullet that flattens on impact — the much-abused Dum-Dum principle under another form. Whether this bullet will stop horses has yet to be seen, but it does not get over the fact of a more or less harmless fire from physical fatigue. And some four incidents in the Boer war—Sir John French's ride in mass to Kimberley, De Wet's ride in mass through our lines at Springhaan Pass, and the successful Boer charges on Lord Methuen's and Colonel Benson's columns—show that, even under modern infantry fire, charging horsemen can reasonably hope to reach their objective without undue losses. At Tweebosch, some 400 Regular infantry, in good order and full of fight, could not stop the Boer horsemen with the 37,000 rounds they fired; indeed, owing to the physical exertion of raising and lowering the rifle rapidly, and the inaccurate aiming it entailed, very few Boers or horses were hit.³ Of course, every cavalry charge involves an enormous risk, as so many "accidents" can contribute to its failure, but in advocating the possibility and desirability of cavalry charges, I presuppose that a real tactical decision of sufficient importance to influence the fight as a whole and worthy of the risks are kept in view, and that the strength of the cavalry is not to be frittered away in small charges that will not produce any real effect on the issue of the battle one way or the other. It is these useless affairs that bring discredit on cavalry charges.

But coming back to the question of whether certain portions of the cavalry force with an Army in the field should not retain the lance for charging and pursuing purposes, it may be said that nowadays it is essential that *all* cavalry should be capable of performing, when necessary, all the four classes of duties that I have already mentioned, and should, therefore, all have a good firearm. If *all* may be called on to scout and skirmish, then lances are a disadvantage; but even then the supposed advantages of the lance in charging

¹ See Appendix.

² As a matter of fact, our men should be taught to spare horses as far as possible, while disabling their riders. Every horse is of value in war. Napoleon I. often issued orders for expeditions to cut off hostile cavalry simply for the sake of the horses, and the men were paid the value of the horses captured as an inducement for them to spare and capture all the horses possible.

³ The losses inflicted during the present Russo-Japanese War, when analysed and estimated *per day*, appear to be relatively small. The casualty returns of the battle of Gravelotte on the 18th August, 1870 appear to be equal to those of about 10 days' heavy fighting in Manchuria.

and pursuing may be great enough to outweigh its admitted disadvantages in scouting and skirmishing. In reply to this, it may be pointed out: (1) That by far the greater part of cavalry work in the field is its strategic use in scouting and skirmishing,¹ either with or without the co-operation of mounted infantry; and (2) That the charge in battle, supposing, of course, that a successful charge is possible, is far more dependent for success on the mass (including reserves), order, speed, mobility, and direction of the charging body than on the weapons held in the hands of the men. The first of these two points is abundantly self-evident, and is conceded by *Cavalry Training*; the second point only requires proof.

In attempting to prove that the charge is more dependent on the manner of its execution than on the armament of the men making it—that is to say, that the horse is the true weapon of cavalry in a charge home—the difficulty is to present shortly and concisely the overwhelming mass of evidence that comes to hand in almost every war. We need not commence further back than the 17th century, when firearms, in spite of their crudeness, became an established and controlling factor in war. We have first the Thirty Years' War, in which the shock power of cavalry, after a long period of decadence, was once more raised to its proper place by Gustavus Adolphus by the simple means of making a proper use of it. Up to his day cavalry were so overburdened with defensive armour (made heavy enough to resist the projectiles of the firearms in use) and were grouped in such cumbrous masses as to deprive them of all rapidity and ease of movement. Hence the trot had become the pace of cavalry, and the pistol the cavalry weapon. This system had, however, already failed before when pitted against the irregular light cavalry and dragoons who took their rise in the 16th century, and who charged home sword in hand, even though they did so in loose order. Some of these light troops had lances, though they were not used in the *mêlée*, but the men were lightly armed, skilled in the use of the sword, and mounted on active, well-trained horses.

The value of cavalry in battle for obtaining decisive results at the critical moment of a battle was early appreciated by the great military reformer, Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. He abolished large and unwieldy squadrons in favour of mobile regiments, composed of 8 small and handy troops, and, arming his men with sword and pistol, he ordered them to ride boldly up to the enemy, fire a single volley, and then dash in, sword in hand, with reserves in support. He depended for victory on the shock of charging closed masses, and on the keen edge of the sword in the *mêlée*. Furthermore, he made every endeavour to obtain a combined use of all arms, so that, when possible, his cavalry should charge an enemy already shaken by gun and musket fire. The most successful opponent on the Imperial side to the great Swedish king was the fiery Pappenheim, who also sought for shock results, as Gustavus did, by means of mobile, closed masses of cavalry moving at speed, and launched forth at the right moment.

The Civil War in England was marked by the most brilliant use of cavalry by both Prince Rupert and Cromwell, both of whom were bold in action, but the former impetuous, and the latter prudent.

¹ See pp. 195 to 200, *Cavalry Training*, 1904.

The sword and firearm were the only cavalry weapons of the day in England, and results were sought for and obtained by mobile closed masses moving at speed with reserves close at hand, and by following up a first success with a strong and vigorous pursuit. Cromwell strongly discouraged the *mêlée*; he relied on rapid rallying after the shock and charging again. At the battle of Dunbar, 1650, the Scotch cavalry used lances, and in describing the battle, Cromwell wrote:—"But here on the right their horse with lances in the front rank charge desperately; drive us back across the hollow of the rivulet; back a little; but the Lord gives us courage, and we storm home again, horse and foot, upon them, with a shock like a tornado tempest; break them, beat them, drive them all adrift." Thus it was the men and leadership, and not the weapon, that won. As a matter of fact, most of Cromwell's chief officers had served in the Thirty Years' War, and so had learnt the methods of Gustavus and Pappenheim.

During the latter part of the 17th century there was a decadence of the cavalry spirit for shock tactics, and a revival of armour and slow paces, involving a greater reliance on the firearm. This may be partly accounted for by the want of good leaders, for as soon as such arose—*e.g.*, Condé, Turenne, and Luxemburg, men who had not forgotten the teachings of Gustavus and Pappenheim—great successes were once more won by a bold and vigorous use of mobile cavalry charging home at speed, sword in hand, especially on the flanks and rear of the enemy. By this time the lance had disappeared from among all the European nations west of semi-savage Russia. The most prominent German general during the later part of the 17th century was Montecuculli. His cavalry were protected by armour and armed with sword and firearms. He has often been quoted of late as a great authority in favour of the lance as a cavalry weapon. He called the lance "the queen of weapons." But in expressing this opinion he further stated that lancers should be well and closely supported by heavy cavalry armed with swords, and that they should be powerful men, dressed in armour, and mounted on first-class horses. He also added that the ground on which they should operate should be level, firm, and unobstructed. And he concludes by stating that unless all these conditions obtained the lance was useless! Those who quote Montecuculli might take the trouble to read first what he said, and not take a sentence of his from its context. Of dragoons, he said that they are still infantry—to whom horses have been given to enable them to move more rapidly—a useful hint for mounted infantry corps to bear in mind.

In the 18th century we have Marlborough, Prince Eugene, Charles XII. of Sweden, and Frederic the Great, with his great cavalry generals Seidlitz and Ziethen, all winning great and world-renowned battles by a bold and vigorous use of cavalry masses armed with sword and firearm only. Charles XII. abolished defensive armour for his cavalry in order to increase their capacity for speed and endurance; he forbade the use of firearms on horseback, and ordered the use of the sword only, which was a long and straight weapon. Peter the Great of Russia went in largely for dragoons armed with sword and musket, though he relied on his Cossacks for the execution of outpost and detached services. The French leader, Marshal Saxe (a son of the King of Poland), though he had no lancers, and evidently

from a racial regard for the weapon, advocated the reintroduction of a 12-foot lance as part of the armament of the front rank of heavy cavalry, who were also to wear defensive armour and carry swords and carbines in addition. This heavy cavalry were only to be used for the charge in battle, the light cavalry service being carried out by dragoons, who were to be lightly equipped, in order to better endure fatigue and make rapid marches. He also advocated the final charge being made at speed and in close order, and he held that cavalry should be taught to gallop at least a mile in good order. Frederic the Great of Prussia adopted Marshal Saxe's ideas as to the method of conducting cavalry charges, but not as to the armament of cavalry. All his cavalry were armed with the sword, and relied alone for victory on the charge at speed in closed masses. To this end every effort was directed at lightening the equipment and armament of the men, and at enabling them to move more rapidly, though in good order, over every kind of ground. Frederic was ably seconded by his great cavalry generals, Seidlitz and Ziethen, and out of the 22 great battles fought by him his mounted swordsmen won at least 15 of them. The secret of his success lay in the careful training of both the individual soldier and horse as the foundation of and preparation for rapid manœuvring and fighting in enormous mobile masses, and in which they were constantly practised. But, like Cromwell, his great cavalry generals combined prudent judgment with fiery energy. The Prussian cavalry consisted of cuirassiers, dragoons, and hussars, all armed with sword and firearm, the hussars being used for scouting, outposts, and other detached duties that entailed the scattering of the cavalry into small parties. The mistake that Frederic made was that his cavalry were far less well trained in these latter duties than in manœuvring and charging in large masses in battle. The Austrian cavalry, on the other hand, were less well trained in charging, and were unable to withstand the impetuous onrush of the Prussian squadrons, but they were so splendidly trained in scouting and detached duties as to most seriously harass Frederic at times by their extraordinary vigilance and activity. They invariably cut his communications, seized his messengers, letters, and patrols, and prevented his getting forage and provisions. The Austrians had but few lancers at this time—only 8 squadrons out of 226. If the lance had any intrinsic value as a cavalry weapon in these days of close and shock tactics, it would surely have had a more adequate recognition than this. If Frederic had been better served by his own light cavalry his successes would have had greater results, and he would not have placed his Army so often in such dangerous situations as he did do, and from which he only extricated himself by possessing a relatively greater tactical ability than the generals opposed to him.

The Russian regular cavalry towards the end of the 18th century copied the Prussian cavalry of the day, but they also had in their Cossacks an irregular body of invaluable horsemen armed with lance, sword, and firearm, and very efficient in carrying out detached services. The French cavalry of the same period were armed with sword and firearm only, but their horses were far too heavily loaded for mobility, though they were trained to carry out both detached services and charges in battle as far as possible. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Prussian cavalry had retrograded as regards collective action in large masses, though they showed that they could

still hold their own in small fights, proving how much depends on the cavalry commander.

Now, in all the fierce and almost continuous fighting of the 17th and 18th centuries, when everything was in favour of the cavalry arm, and presumably of the lance also, none of the great Western nations of Europe made any effort to make use of the lance as a cavalry weapon, although they must have been fully cognisant of its supposed advantages and disadvantages.

Coming to the 19th century, Napoleon I. never failed to show his high appreciation of the services that could be rendered by cavalry in all phases of its duty. No one knew better than he did of the importance of light cavalry for covering the movements of an army, for searching out the designs of the enemy, and for watching the progress and direction of his marches. But he was equally impressed with the value of cavalry used in large mobile masses on the battle-field for the purpose of turning the scale of victory, when it was wavering in the balance, and for executing vigorous pursuits, by the mere force of numbers and impetuosity of movement. In this latter respect, however, his cavalry were not so well trained as those of Frederic the Great. He had not time in his constant wars to give the personal attention required to reach the latter's high standard. But, on the other hand, he succeeded in making his cavalry more useful in every phase of its duty than Frederic did. Up to 1812 Napoleon was almost always well informed about his enemy by his cavalry, and it was only after the disastrous Russian campaign of that year, during which the mass of his trained cavalry was either destroyed or captured during the retreat, that he failed in this particular. It was in consequence of this that in 1813 he was surprised at Lützen into a general action, for his new cavalry, inefficient as regards both numbers and experience, left him in complete ignorance of the proximity of the Allies. Napoleon recognised the weakness of his newly-raised cavalry in manœuvring capacity on the battle-field, and endeavoured, with considerable success, to make up for it by the use of overwhelming numbers moving at the trot, at which pace alone could imperfectly trained men preserve order when moving in masses. The French dragoons acquired a very high reputation in the guerilla war in Spain, as the Duke of Wellington himself acknowledged.

During his campaigns in Eastern Germany, Napoleon had come in contact with the irregular lancer corps of Poland and Russia, and he considered it necessary to raise similar corps for the express purpose of opposing them in their own peculiar manner of warfare, because for such duties his regular cavalry had proved itself incapable. So in 1807 he raised his first regiment of Polish lancers. Two more were raised in 1810 and 1812. And in 1811, just before his entry into his fatal Russian campaign, he converted 9 of his dragoon regiments, that had done so well in Spain in detached duties, into lancer corps, but they were quite unable to effect anything of real tactical value against the more highly trained Cossacks opposed to them. These Cossacks so successfully cut off all detached parties that the French cavalry were soon only able to move in safety in relatively large groups. It was in the Russian campaign of 1806-7 that Napoleon felt, for the first time, the difficulty of carrying on a campaign against a nation whose armies were covered by such an efficient light cavalry as the Cossacks of that

day. After Eylau his messengers and foraging parties were as completely cut off as Frederic's had been by the Austrian hussars. This shows that armament has very little to say in the matter so far as detached duties are concerned.

It is impossible in the short time at my disposal to give any detailed account of the magnificent services performed by Napoleon's cavalry, armed with sword and firearm only, at Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Eckmühl, Wagram, Dresden, Leipsig, Waterloo, and other battles. The pursuit after Jena, that broke up the Prussian power, was conducted by intrepid swordsmen led by an impetuous leader; the Austrian and Prussian cavaliers were so badly used even in 1813 and 1814, that even Napoleon's newly raised regiments were generally able to defeat them. At Lützen the Allied cavalry, though having a great superiority in numbers, remained idle spectators while their infantry were driven back. The British cavalry in Spain and in Belgium, though armed with the sword, covered themselves with glory. The records of the cavalry swordsmen of the German Legion in Spain is a most noble and enviable one; they were true cavalry in every sense of the word. The British heavy brigades that charged so recklessly and victoriously at Waterloo were driven back when exhausted and disordered by French lancers, but these in turn were attacked and driven off by our light cavalry swordsmen. In the final advance at Waterloo a British hussar regiment successfully attacked a French lancer regiment. In the retreat from Quatre Bras, a British hussar regiment was checked in the streets of Genappe by a line of French lancers jammed up close together, but, after holding their own for a while, they were ordered to retire, and a little later a regiment of our Life Guards (without cuirasses) went at the French lancers sword in hand as they came out of the village and drove them back in headlong rout.

In 1828 the lance was introduced in Russia for the front rank of all cavalry regiments, but it has since then been abolished. In 1870-71 much was heard of the German lancers as light cavalry; but on the other hand the French cavalry were very badly used. Yet the great cavalry charges that did take place in that war were indecisive as regards tactical results, and the lance in no way showed any tactical superiority over the sword. However, long after the war the Germans adopted the lance for all their cavalry, while the Russians, even after their experiences of 1877-78, have not favoured the reintroduction of this weapon. In the present Russo-Japanese war the lance has not yet in any way shown itself as tactically superior to the sword. When some of our guns were temporarily lost near Cabul in the Afghan war of 1878-1880, the escort of 3 squadrons of lancers produced very little, if any, effect on the advancing enemy, who simply lay down and were missed, like a tent-peg is missed, by our lancers moving at speed. Jomini gives it as his opinion that lancers should move at the trot in the charge. I do not think that anyone could justly assert that swordsmen could not have done just as well as lancers at Chakdara (1895), Shabkadr (1897), Omdurman (1898), Elands-laagte (1899), and in the ride to Kimberley (1900). At Futtéabad (1879) our pursuing swordsmen of the Guide Corps did as good work as any lancers could have hoped to do. As regards our earlier Indian experiences, I would draw attention to Captain Nolan's work on "Cavalry: Its History and Tactics" (1853); and though he makes statements on

certain matters that cannot be substantiated, yet he clearly shows that it is the use of cavalry (*i.e.*, of the men and horses composing it) and not merely its armament that is of value, and that, as stated by Guibert, speed is the essential thing in a cavalry charge. Nolan pleads for sharp swords and a double rank formation. On the other hand, Beamish, a contemporary of Nolan's, in his work "On the Uses and Application of Cavalry in War" (1855), is an advocate of the lance and single rank; but the value of his opinions is reduced by the fact that he bases them chiefly on small engagements that would have little or no real effect on the course of a war or a large decisive battle. Beamish is a very partial writer. After describing the battle of Aliwal, he states that "such an exploit could never have been achieved by cavalry who placed their dependence upon the carbine or the sabre, for with such weapons the artillerymen could not have been easily reached, and, as has occurred upon other occasions, they would probably have resumed their stations at the guns and continued their fire." Yet a few pages further on he states, most inconsistently, yet with truth, "At Moodkee and Ferozkhab, as subsequently at Aliwal, the triumph over artillery was obtained by cavalry." These cavalry were swordsmen; and he goes on to describe the gallant feats they performed in breaking up the enemy, sabring the gunners, and spiking the guns, as was done later by lancers at Aliwal. But Beamish was an extreme advocate for the lance, and was blind to facts that did not agree with his predilections. And there is no denying the fact that the gallant deeds which have built up our great cavalry traditions in the past have been for the greater part done by swordsmen, though there are a few cases in which the lancers, wherever they have been used, have added to those traditions; but even in such cases it has been by the use of the men and horses, and not by the weapons that they had in their hands. It is the use of cavalry *in masses* that is decisive in battle, and it is the decision that we should work for.

From all the long review that history gives us of the employment of cavalry in war, I would ask this question: Why, if the lance has the great value that its advocates claim for it, has not this value stood out as a marked factor in war, clear and indisputable? As a matter of fact, all the grand traditions of cavalry, including our own, have been made by swordsmen, and not by lancers. It is the training and leadership of both men and horses that have produced the great tactical and strategical results of history, and not the weapon carried by the men. Seidlitz, Frederic's great cavalry leader, was very strong on the principle that a cavalryman should put his horse on top of his enemy. He wrote:—"In the charge it is a matter of indifference what weapon the soldier carries. The chief thing is that he should be well mounted, and that he should bear in mind the unshakable resolution to ride the enemy down with his horse's breast. In the *mêlée* the sword and mace are the only weapons practicable." This principle of using the horse as the cavalryman's true weapon is now enforced in our *Cavalry Training*, I am glad to see.¹ This use of the horse, combined with speed and with mobility in mass, forms the essence of a victorious charge, and the Russians are very wise in accustoming their horses to ride at speed into dummy figures and

¹ *Vide* pp. 133, 202, and 206.

through extended infantry and cavalry, instead of training their horses to pull up at 100 yards or so in front of their objective. This Russian practice has also been introduced into our *Cavalry Training*. In Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood's "Cavalry in the Waterloo Campaign" we frequently read of cavalry opening out and passing to one side of their objective, instead of hurling themselves on to it, and we also read again and again of lancers and swordsmen being alternately successful against each other, the fate of each several action being decided by one or more of the numerous commanding factors that affect the issue of a charge and never once by the mere weapon used by the victors. And hence to put down the value of cavalry to its weapons is to strike at a most vital principle of that essential arm. If, in all wars, the lance had stood out above the sword as the needle gun did over the muzzle-loading rifle in 1866, or as smokeless cordite has done of late years over black powder, then a good case would exist for the lance. But no such predominance has ever been shown by the lance in charging in battle, while it is a positive disadvantage for the scouting and other detached duties that nowadays form the main part of all cavalry work in the field, and in which every kind of cavalry must be ready to take its part. Some have tried to make much of the pursuit of the Boers after Elands-laagte by our lancers, but I venture to assert that equally good results would have been obtained by swordsmen. To me the question is not one of lance *versus* sword, but of lance *versus* revolver. At Tweebosch, the Boers, under De la Rey, boldly and manfully charged our men, and while endeavouring to put their horses on them, used their rifles as pistols during this charge.¹ This is only another example that the horse and not the hand arm is the true charging weapon. It is not necessary to consider at the present minute the question of the revolver as a cavalry weapon, but a more suitable pattern of sword than we have had in the past has, I believe, been determined on.

In making the foregoing remarks, I must ask you to bear in mind that I have had in view cavalry that have been regularly enlisted and trained with the colours for a considerable time. Any other kind of cavalry (such as Colonial and Yeomanry corps) should, I think, be considered and treated as mounted riflemen, but, at the same time, I would plead for an extensive use of such mounted riflemen for all scouting and other detached duties that formed the essential work of the "light cavalry" of bygone days. Regular cavalry are expensive to raise, and take long to train effectively, and hence, though being trained to the highest degree possible in scouting and skirmishing duties, they should be saved as much as possible for the day of battle and pursuit. Mounted riflemen may not be able to scout as well as regular cavalry, but their want of individual skill can be made up for by numbers—that is, by flooding the front of operations with the cheaper, light, mobile rifle corps, who will report the presence of the enemy by mere contact.

As regards the question of saving cavalry for decisive shock action on the day of battle, we have heard of late years from many writers that the day of cavalry charges has passed away, owing to the destructive power of modern artillery and infantry weapons. In reply to this,

¹ Such a use of the rifle as a revolver will be much facilitated by the introduction of automatic loading.

I may say that every war during the last three centuries has shown that, even as in the days of muzzle-loading matchlocks and flintlocks, cavalry can be annihilated by infantry and artillery fire when they have charged at the wrong time and place—that is, if they did not charge either after the enemy had been sufficiently demoralized by fire, or when he could be taken by surprise before he could use his firearms, or when he had no ammunition left, etc. Instances of this occur again and again, and yet it was never said at the time in those days that cavalry charges were no longer possible, but only that an error of judgment had been made. It is the same nowadays. The conditions for a successful cavalry charge remain identically the same to-day as during the past three centuries. And it must always be borne in mind that with the modern rapid-firing rifles cases may often occur, and did often occur in South Africa, of long infantry firing lines running out of ammunition for hours, and of the men becoming too fatigued to fire effectively even when they have ammunition to go on with. And here will be one of the many chances for cavalry in the future; indeed, the South African war showed that exhausted infantry firing lines can be charged at speed by cavalry with comparative safety, especially if the charge comes as a surprise. Given the trained man and horse as a unit, and the leaders of former days, the feats of these former days will again be repeated. The difficulty seems to be to get cavalry officers and umpires to believe this. Of late years cavalry have been so accustomed to be umpired out of action at peace manœuvres, and have been so often told that smokeless powder and magazine rifles have abolished their vocation as mounted men on the battle-field that they have somewhat come to acquiesce in this decision as final. But, as a matter of fact, nothing is more remote from the truth or the real facts of the case, and a revival of the historical doctrine of “the man and horse,” used at speed and in closed but mobile masses, and at the right time and place, is the only real way to cure the present uncertainty of cavalry, in which false ideas of the power of infantry fire in battle has recently plunged it. I need hardly say that the “playing together,” or the combined organic interdependent use of all the arms under the general’s command, is also a pre-supposed condition for the successful use of cavalry shock action for bringing about a favourable decision. Nothing is more conducive to want of success than the isolated and independent use of each different arm, or fraction of an Army, in battle; it is the whole force that should fight as a unit, and not the different parts of it separately and without any tactical connection in their respective activities. Moreover, it may be added that cavalry should not be “wasted” on carrying out charges that cannot have, even if successful, any serious result on the issue of the battle. The tactical result to be gained, in its bearing on the fight as a whole, should be the deciding factor as to whether a cavalry charge should be made or not at any given period of a battle.

To secure these necessary elements for successful fighting, suitable training or manœuvre ground of sufficient extension are required. However perfect our Army may be on paper, it will enter into the next war as unprepared and as untrained as it did in South Africa, unless it is given the means of training itself in peace.

I have only touched on the uses of cavalry as affected by their armament. Consequently many vital questions affecting its strategi-

cal and tactical uses and the conditions for obtaining really decisive strategical and tactical results with cavalry have not been dealt with. All that I have endeavoured to show is that the true weapon of a cavalryman is his horse, that the historical hand weapons of cavalry are the sword and firearm, and, therefore, that the abolition of the lance, especially under the conditions of modern warfare, is a step in the right direction. The sword is for use in the charge at speed and in closed mobile masses, when suitable occasions arise for a great decision to be made by shock tactics, as they will do in any fight; on the other hand, for the greater part of the other duties of cavalry in war the firearm will be the weapon that will be made use of by the trooper.

The vast majority of those officers who in any way cultivated the art of sword-play, have always disliked the pattern of cavalry sword that has been hitherto in use. If we had more faithfully followed the fashions of our forefathers, who were essentially swordsmen, the sword would be much more in favour than it is now. A lance is of little or no tactical use if the men and horses are not individually highly trained to make the best of it, but, with the enormous wastage of horses that takes place in a campaign, how long can we ensure the supply of adequately trained horses? In this respect the swordsman has the advantage.

As a matter of fact, every success in which the lance has taken part, whether it be a charge or a pursuit, or an attack on a battery, etc., can be balanced by an equally good success of a similar character carried out by swordsmen. The great traditions of cavalry have been formed apart from the lance, the use of which practically disappeared 300 years ago in Western Europe, and which only gradually came into a very limited and partial use in the great wars of the last 100 years only. And during these wars there is nothing whatever to show any predominance of the lance over the sword as a victory-compelling weapon. Cases have been quoted where, in the Franco-German war, German swordsmen, being unable to deal with French carbineers who had been unhorsed and who took to using their carbines while lying on the ground, called out for lancers to come and aid them. But at that period of the war, German cavalry did not possess a firearm which they would otherwise have made use of. Such incidents do not form part of the charge, and have little or no effect on its tactical results, and they only point out the need for a firearm for cavalry, and not the necessity for the introduction of the lance. The same remarks apply to individual skill with hand weapons in the confusion of the *mêlée* that takes place after a charge. The cavalry contest near Mars-la-Tour on the 16th August, 1870, ended in the leaders of both sides calling their men off from a fruitless *mêlée*, in which relatively little damage was done and no tactical advantage gained by either side.

De Brack has often been quoted as an advocate of the lance. As a matter of fact, he, with all his wide experience, states that the sword is the hand weapon in which the trooper ought to place most confidence; but he admits that the lance has a powerful moral effect, and that its thrusts are very deadly. He is, however, speaking of detached warfare and petty actions, and his admission is somewhat weakened by a later admission, that he had seen men receive as many as 22 thrusts from Cossack lances without being laid up from active service, because the lance was not properly cared for. The sword, he says, should be kept sharp by means of files or ragstones, to be carried by

every trooper. A Cossack would range his pony so that his enemy would come to him from the left-front, and he would strike him with his long lance, and before he could recover, the pony would swing round, and he could take his opponent in the flank; but that could only be done by individual men in the open.

The lance is a weapon that requires a long and continued use before even average skill can be attained with it, and even then it is of little or no use in a *mêlée*. Moreover, it has never prevented determined horsemen from attacking cavalry armed with it, nor is there any historical example where such attacks have been overcome solely because of the weapon in use. In the charge the man and his horse, taken together as a unit, is the cavalry weapon, to be used at speed and in as great a mass as possible, consistent with mobility, so as to create what Cromwell called "a tornado tempest" with which to destroy the enemy's power of resistance. Such impetuous cavalry charges in mass and at speed, when made at the right moment and at the right place, have always produced such astonishing and far-reaching results that cannot ever be reached by the other arms of the Service, and, as I have already said, all the magnificent traditions of cavalry in winning victories have been made with the sword. In fact, the hand weapon is altogether a secondary question to that of the shock use of "the man and his horse." Cavalry are not required to make a charge an occasion for a display of skill of arms, but for breaking down the enemy's power of resistance by the force of the shock of the charge. The use of hand weapons is a secondary matter in the charge, though, like all secondary matters in war, should be made as efficient as possible in order to make the primary factors more telling and effective.

APPENDIX.

The advantages of an automatic-loading rifle:—

1. Increased rapidity of loading, and so more time for aiming, other things being equal.
2. Increased rapidity of aimed fire while the objective is exposed, and also of all firing. This rapidity is sometimes necessary to get a greater useful effect.
3. No recoil, and therefore a greater chance of accurate shooting, even when an increased rapidity of fire is considered necessary.
4. A great reduction of fatigue by reducing the number of times the rifle has to be raised and lowered;
5. Consequently a longer duration of efficacious fire whenever this is once obtained.
6. Less exposure when firing from behind cover.
7. A more continuous and even rapidity of fire than with present rifles.
8. More accurate snap-shooting from not having to lower the rifle after each shot. The rifle can even be held at arm's length when firing.
9. Consequently, far better results in resisting a rapid cavalry advance or charge.

The only real objection that can be urged against automatic-loading rifles is the probability of an increased expenditure of ammunition. This objection has been raised against every improvement in the means of quick-loading. But Earl Roberts and others have borne testimony that our soldiers in South Africa very soon learnt to husband their ammunition, and did not uselessly waste it in action.

The CHAIRMAN (Lieut.-General Sir H. C. Wilkinson, K.C.B., Colonel 4th Dragoon Guards) :—With your permission I will now say a few words before I invite others to join in the discussion. First of all, we must thank Colonel Mayne for his interesting lecture. It is on a subject which is certainly of the very deepest importance to the welfare of British cavalry. I have made a few notes on this lecture, but time will not allow me to criticise it *seriatim*. Many of the details in connection with the training and employment of cavalry, which Colonel Mayne has advocated as important and desirable improvements, are not new; they are well known, and are inculcated in our Drill Books. Cavalry soldiers are taught, and know full well, that the horse is their first arm; and that to ride home in the charge, with their whole heart in the work, feeling sure that they can, and will, crush and overthrow their enemy, is the pith and soul of cavalry drill. The lecturer dwells on the alleged fact that in the annals of history the lance has not achieved as many great triumphs as the sword; but he neglects to remind us that the sword has been used by mounted men since the dawn of history, and was winning for itself laurels during many centuries before the lance was known or used in any of the European Armies, and even in later times, when the great value of the lance began to be understood, it was only partially adopted in two or three of the great Armies of the 19th century—always excepting the Russian Cossacks, who, with that arm alone, have made a name for themselves that will last for ever. As Napoleon the Great gained experience and knowledge of war he gradually adopted the lance, as the lecturer has stated, till in the year 1812 he had converted twelve of his best dragoon regiments into lancers, for he found that, armed with the sword, they were quite unable to meet the Russian lancers in battle. The Germans—whom we are always talking about, and whom we are told to copy—at the end of their great war with France converted the whole of their cavalry into lancers.¹ I think that these two instances may be accepted as evidence that the lance has made its mark, and has convinced those who are best able to judge that it is the best weapon for cavalry. The lecturer allows that British lancers have frequently distinguished themselves in recent years, but he refuses to accept this as evidence of the excellence of the lance, by saying that he thinks that the sword would on those occasions have done equally as well. This is hardly a fair argument. If, when the lance distinguishes itself, you say that “the sword would have done as well,” you must allow me to assure you that in all the brilliant operations of war recorded in history where the sword has been successful, the lance, had it been known and used, would have been still more successful. I am glad to note that Colonel Mayne has not omitted to mention the very important achievement of lancers at the battle of Aliwal, which was won by the 16th Lancers riding down and destroying a well-armed and unshaken square of infantry, formed of the flower of the Sikh Army,

¹This is incorrect. It was not until 1890 that the German cavalry was wholly armed with the lance.—EDITOR.

which had been taught and trained by a European officer. The lancer squadrons charged through and through this square repeatedly, utterly destroying it and crushing the right flank of the Sikh Army. This resulted in their disastrous defeat and the loss of all their guns. The battle of Aliwal was an extremely critical affair, and if we had lost it the map of India might have been a different thing to what it is now. The "Value of the Lance as a Cavalry Weapon" forms part of a big question, which is: the general efficiency of our cavalry, as *Cavalry*, in the future, and much will depend on the arms which we choose to put into their hands. We are very weak in cavalry, I grieve to say. It is well known that we ought to have about four times as many as we have at present to conform to the ordinary rules of European Armies. Having, then, this mere handful of cavalry, it is of the most vital importance that we should arm, train, and equip them so as to make them as efficient as is possible for their own special duties. We all agree, I think, that the horse is the first arm of a cavalry man, and that the lance or sword (whichever you like) is his second weapon. Yet we are asked to approve of our small body of cavalrymen being taught to frequently and habitually abandon both their first and their second weapon—i.e., their horses and their swords—for the sake of performing and practising some of the duties of infantry on the ground with their rifles—duties that can be better and far more economically done by mounted infantry. We also, I think, all allow that it takes a long time to make a good cavalry soldier, and that when made and well mounted he is the most formidable fighting unit in any Army, but only when he is mounted. Let us never forget that we must have good cavalry, ready at all times—as they cannot be quickly made—to meet the good cavalry possessed by most of our possible enemies. It is, therefore, obvious that we should spare no time, trouble, or expense in training and equipping the handful of splendid British and Indian cavalry which we do now possess in the best way and with the best weapons that can be obtained for their particular duties. I hope to show you immediately that the lance is by far the most efficient, most deadly, and most terrible weapon in the world, when used by well-trained lancers. Those who have not been closely connected with the teaching and practice of the use of this "Queen of Weapons" can have no idea of its deadly power and efficiency in battle, not only in the charge in line, but also in the *mêlée* and in pursuit. It has been my duty and privilege as a regimental officer and as a general to pass many days, weeks, and, in the aggregate, even months, of my life, in the riding schools and in the open, adjudicating on the skill of our troopers, British and Indian, in the use of the lance, sword, and rifle with fixed bayonets, pitted one against the other. But in these most valuable practices the lancer, owing to the deadly powers of his weapon, has to be denied the use of no less than four of its most effective actions. In the first place, the flag is removed from his lance, so that his opponent's horse may not be frightened. Secondly, he is not allowed to strike, prick, or injure his opponent's horse with his lance; and, thirdly, he is denied the use of the "round-wave," which I shall show you directly is a powerful, sweeping, circular movement of the lance, which, in the *mêlée*, would empty every saddle within six feet of the lancer. Fourthly, no side blow of the lance is allowed against either man or horse, on any account. I will now ask the instructor to perform the lance exercise. [This was done by a non-commissioned officer of the 21st Lancers.] You have noticed the "round-wave." Imagine yourself in a crowd, such as we are all familiar with, at a gate

in a hunting-field when you are trying to get away with hounds, and that you found a lancer facing you in the gate-way and making the "round-wave" with his lance, what destruction would be wrought among you all. Remember that the butt-end of the lance is as formidable as the point in real fighting, for if you were hit by it on the head your skull would be crushed like an egg. In all of our practice competitions between lance and sword in the riding schools, the swordsman is in no way handicapped; indeed, he enjoys certain advantages, for instead of a sword, weighing about 2½ pounds, he is armed with a handy single-stick, which is covered all over with chalk, and if he can manage to touch the lancer with whom he is fighting with this single-stick, even though he does it with what, in real work, would have been the back or the flat of his sword, he wins his round. So, not only is the lancer heavily handicapped in the use of his lance, but he is fighting with a swordsman who is not handicapped at all, but on the contrary, is given two or three very important advantages; and yet out of all the countless encounters that I have witnessed the lance won by far the most frequently—more than two to one—which is an absolute conclusive proof of the great superiority of the lance over the sword. In mortal combat in the field, a good lancer will defeat a good swordsman in nine cases out of ten. A very distinguished cavalry officer, now long deceased, told me that in a mixed cavalry fight, one of his own non-commissioned officers (who do not carry the lance) saw a lance lying on the ground, and he asked and obtained his colonel's leave to pick it up and use it. In the course of the day that non-commissioned officer, who was a brilliant lancer, encountered four horsemen, who attacked him with the sword, volunteering the encounter, and in every case the lancer killed the man in one or two passes. You can easily imagine the great advantage that the lance, properly handled, must have over the sword, owing to its great reach, its all-round action, and the instantly incapacitating nature of the wounds that it inflicts. Its deadly efficiency in war is well known to, and quite undoubted by, all who have had many years' experience with it. They know, appreciate, and with one voice acknowledge the supreme efficiency of the "Queen of Weapons." You will, therefore, not find a single experienced cavalry officer—certainly not any lancer officer—in England or India that approves of the deplorable, and, I think, disastrous, changes that have been recently made in the equipment and drill of our cavalry. Against cavalry swordsmen in line, lancers are overwhelming. Who that has ever seen a charge of lancers can doubt the result of such a shock-conflict? In the *mêlée* and in pursuit they are immeasurably superior to swordsmen, and the moral effect on the enemy of their very existence is great. In the attack of baggage and ammunition columns when on the line of march, lancers have an immense advantage. The infantry soldiers on baggage guard have little to fear when attacked by swordsmen, for they can instantly find shelter under carts and wagons, even baggage animals, rocks, bushes, or trees, etc., will enable them to keep out of the reach of the sword, till they can load and fire; but none of these things afford protection from the lance, and the very knowledge of this has a most disquieting effect upon troops in such positions. Some people think that the long range of rifle fire and the still longer range of modern field guns will make it impossible for cavalry to attack in line, as of old. But they do not remember that as cavalry can pass over the "danger zone" and reach the enemy in about one-fifth of the time that infantry take to go the same distance, the loss experienced by attacking cavalry must be much less than that of infantry. A well-timed cavalry charge

need never be stopped by modern rifle fire. Look at the magnificent way in which the Japanese attack, in spite of all fire and all loss; their infantry dash up against even fortified positions and carry them with the bayonet, suffering heavy loss, certainly; but how much more quickly, and therefore with much less loss, could this be done by cavalry, especially as we know that the bullet from a modern military rifle will not, in many cases, stop a charging horse. It must also be remembered that as a rule cavalry attack by surprise, which gives them a few moments of immunity from fire; or they wait for a chance of attacking unobserved—smoke from burning houses, grass, crops, or brushwood, dust from troops in movement (such as we have often seen at Aldershot) blinding rain, snow, or fog, the dusk of evening, or the grey light of dawn, all give them opportunities for overwhelming their enemy with a destruction that, if they are lancers, is complete. When the enemy gets to know that cavalry cannot now be instantly stopped when charging, as in the days of the Brown Bess or Sneider rifle, the dread of them will be an ever-increasing one. I have shown you how efficient the lance is in the *mêlée*, but I claim that the *mêlée* is a mistake, and should never be allowed. The lecturer has told you how that Cromwell found this out, and immediately discontinued the practice; it is a thousand pities it ever found a place in our drill books. As the horse is the cavalry soldier's first weapon, it is with it that he should try to break down all opposition. If the charge is not quite successful, each man should press on and get clear of his enemy, out of the *mêlée*; the leader then quickly reforms his squadron and charges back again, striking another blow, which will do more to complete the overthrow of his enemy than any amount of hand-to-hand fighting in the *mêlée*. There is one other matter that many people do not understand and that they bring forward as an argument against the universal use of the lance, and that is, the uses and duties of the rear rank. They think that the rear rank of a squadron remains the rear rank throughout the charge, and, indeed, all through the day of battle. This is not so with British cavalry. The first and chief object of a cavalry charge in line is to reach and strike the enemy with one unbroken, serried line of horsemen, riding knee to knee, at the utmost speed of the slowest horse (as laid down in our drill books). But every cavalry regiment in line is at all times formed with vacant spaces of eight yards between squadrons and of sixteen yards between regiments. If these vacant spaces were to remain unfilled throughout the charge it would mean a very serious weakening in the cavalry line and in the force of the blow inflicted on the enemy. What really happens is this: troopers, when charging at speed, invariably and almost of necessity open out slightly from the centre of the squadron, thus partly filling up the squadron intervals; but doing so necessarily leaves many small spaces in the front rank of the squadron, and in battle further gaps are made by horses falling, and those that are killed or badly wounded. It is the duty of the rear rank men to immediately fill all these small gaps, so that when the impact takes place the brigade strikes the enemy with one unbroken and serried line of horsemen charging at twenty miles an hour. You can readily believe that such a charge, with levelled lances, is irresistible. A few men and the "serrefiles" will probably still remain in the rear of the squadron. The lecturer wonders why the lance has not been more generally adopted. One reason is that a really good bamboo lance is very difficult to get, and a bad lance is comparatively useless. We, fortunately, have the best lances in the world. Another very cogent reason is that it takes about two years to make an efficient lancer; so many great leaders found

that they could not spare the time that was necessary, though Napoleon did undertake the work in the middle of his great wars. Von Moltke, on the other hand, waited till the war was over, and then he converted the whole of his cavalry into lancers.¹ Some people try to argue that because half-trained lancers are of little use as lancers we ought not to adopt that weapon. A more futile reason could not well be given. Having so few cavalry, it is our duty to train them to the highest state of efficiency, remembering that if war should happen to surprise us at a time when, by bad management, a number of our young lancers were not fully trained, such men would simply leave their lances in their camps or bivouac when they went out to fight, and they would then still be armed in every respect as well as any dragoon or hussar. Lancers carry the sword and rifle as well as the lance. In the same way, if in any conceivable circumstance it was found or thought that the lance would interfere with the performance of any special duty, it could and would, at a moment's notice, be left in camp with the reserve ammunition, and the lancers would still be fully armed. I am well aware that true cavalry, engaged in their proper work, will have countless opportunities for using their rifles with great effect; but I ask that, as a general rule, only half of any squadron or regiment of lancers should be dismounted at a time for this purpose, the other half guarding and holding the horses of the dismounted men, and I claim that lancers can and do so dismount and open fire far quicker than can swordsmen, who have first to return their swords. On many occasions where the horses can be safely guarded in an enclosed place, the whole strength of a lancer regiment can be brought into the firing line just as well as hussars. But as a general rule, I think that when a powerful rifle fire is likely to be wanted, mounted infantry should accompany cavalry; the two acting together can accomplish great things. And I earnestly advocate a great increase in our mounted infantry. We are a riding nation, and could easily produce suitable men. I would like to see at least one company of every infantry regiment mounted on ponies. This would add enormously to the power and efficiency of the British Army; but when employed in large numbers they should be accompanied by cavalry to fully reap the advantage gained by their fire, and to protect them when moving from one place to another, for infantry when mounted are helpless. I am ashamed for having taken up so much of your time.

Major-General J. CECIL RUSSELL, C.V.O., Colonel, 12th (Prince of Wales's Royal) Lancers: — I must first offer my personal thanks to the lecturer for the most interesting lecture he has given, on a subject which to me is of very peculiar importance. I am afraid I do not agree with him in all the conclusions he has come to, and I think I see a good many officers around me who will possibly be more inclined to sympathise with me than with the lecturer. There is not time to go into all the points which he raised, but I will confine myself to one or two. The Chairman, in his very carefully-thought-out remarks, mentioned with some emphasis the moral effect of the lance. After all, the moral effect of any weapon is of the first importance, and if you are going to consider the value of one weapon as compared with any other, or as regards the place which it is to take in our military armament, its moral effect is what you have principally to consider. The

¹This, as has been pointed out already in previous foot-note, is incorrect.—EDITOR.

effect of every weapon, even of artillery and rifles, is after all often more moral than practical, and we know what a vast number of shots are fired in the field which have no effect whatever other than moral. But the moral effect of both artillery and rifles has never been questioned. In the same way, even supposing the lance never succeeded in doing any particular damage in the field, if it would merely produce a moral effect on the enemy, and only account for a small proportion of destruction, the lance's moral effect must still be remembered as a most important item in considering its value. Colonel Mayne was rather inclined to doubt whether lancers had ever asserted themselves as being of great value in modern war as compared with swordsmen. I can recall, of course, the stories of our great Mutiny campaign, in which a very gallant and distinguished Lancer regiment did most splendid service—I mean the 9th Lancers. In the 9th Lancers, so highly was the lance esteemed, and so useful was it found in the *mêlée*, in pursuit, and in single combat, that all the officers of the 9th Lancers carried lances themselves. I can only repeat, as an instance of the effect of those lances, that one very gallant officer, who has been taken from us in the last year, whom I daresay many of you will remember, Captain Evans, carried a lance, and on one particular day he killed, or at any rate disabled, eleven men with his own hand; and on that particular occasion he was the means of saving the life of an English officer who was in considerable difficulties in a hand-to-hand encounter with one or two rebel swordsmen. At any rate, the 9th Lancers very thoroughly depended upon the lance, and the officers of the 9th Lancers thought it was a weapon which they could use themselves with better effect than the sword. I will not repeat the stories of our own later campaigns, except that at Ulundi the 17th Lancers charged with very great effect indeed. I have had the opportunity of speaking to non-commissioned officers and men who served in the ranks there, and certainly, if I may believe all that they told me—and I have no reason to doubt it—the lance was a most effective weapon on that occasion. Now, to go to foreign examples of actions on a grand scale; in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, at the battle of Nachod, the Prussian Uhlans (lancers) charged most effectively, and disposed of the heavy cavalry of Austria, of whom a great part were cuirassiers. Again, at Königgrätz, a body of Austrian cavalry, principally cuirassiers, which was commanded by a gallant Englishman called Beales, charged the Prussians with considerable effect. But they were eventually upset completely by a charge of Prussian lancers, which did what the swordsmen were unable to do. These are some instances of the value of the lance, in which the lance has certainly proved its value as compared with the sword. Colonel Mayne said that the sword and firearm of the cavalry would enable it to fill its *rôle* in the field. The sword and firearm form a most excellent equipment. I think it is a great mistake that any cavalry soldier should have more than one arm besides his rifle. He should have either the sword and rifle or the lance and rifle. But I do not believe we need think that the *rôle* of the cavalry is so limited that lancers may not sometimes be of special value, and personally I should be extremely grieved to see the final abolition of lances in the regiments of our Service which were armed with the lance. And, in the same way, I should be extremely grieved to see the abolition of the sword in regiments which have been armed with the sword. I think both the lance and sword have their own particular rôles, and I regard it as a pity that the lance has been even tentatively done away with. I can only hope that the question is still in the air, and that possibly

the comparative value of the two weapons may be again considered. I apologise for having taken up so much of your time.

Lieutenant C. F. ATKINSON, 1st Notts (Robin Hood) V.R.C. :—It is not for a very junior officer of another arm to give any opinion on the point at issue, but I may perhaps state an instance of the deadly efficacy of the lance in the present war. It was not in the regular war. It is described in a paper in the *JOURNAL* by Colonel Beresford, detailing his travels through the theatre of war. He was told by a subaltern of the East Siberian Rifles of an attack which was made on him by Chunchuses, who apparently were mounted on small ponies, charged irregularly, and had small lances. In the true modern infantry spirit he formed his men (four sections) in extended order, with their flanks resting respectively on a wood and deep stream. His firing-line of two sections he extended to six paces, with another section in support, so that in the end, I suppose, he had one man to four paces. The cavalry charged. He fired one volley (at 600 yards), and then ordered independent in the usual way. The result was never for a moment in doubt, he says; after twenty minutes' fighting they were driven off, leaving half their number on the field. In other words, it took the Russians twenty minutes, with extended infantry, to drive off irregular cavalry mounted on small ponies. Cavalry is supposed to cover 600 yards in less than twenty minutes, so they must have come on time after time, even against the magazine rifle in the hands of Regular soldiers who considered these attacks as "rather fun." But the piquancy of the incident lies in the fact that a few of the Chunchuses managed to get round the right flank by swimming and speared three of the infantrymen. One was killed, one mortally wounded, and it was not known whether the third recovered or not. The lance in this instance, even in the hands of inferior performers, seems to be a weapon which, from the infantry point of view, is extremely unpleasant to come within reach of.

Lieut.-Colonel C. B. MAYNE, in reply, said :—You will forgive me, Sir, if I say I think you misunderstood me when you stated I said that the lance had never accomplished so many things as the sword. My words were these :—"As a matter of fact, every success in which the lance has taken a part can be balanced by the equally good success in which the sword has taken part." I did not try to make out that the feats of lancers were smaller, because the sword has been more universally used, but that any feat which can be claimed by the lancer can be balanced by equally good feats performed by swordsmen. I am sorry I did not put the point clearer. You spoke, Sir, of Napoleon and his lancers. He raised these lancers to deal with men of similar character, and he raised all the Poles that he could to deal with the Cossacks who were opposed to him. But not being able to raise enough, he tried the expedient of turning the dragoons, who had done so well in the Peninsula, into lancers, hoping they would do equally well with the lance. But, as you pointed out, Sir, an inferior lancer, from want of training, could not do very much. At the same time, there were many occasions on which our hussars met squarely hostile lancer regiments in the final stages of Waterloo and overthrew them. Again and again lancers and swordsmen met during the battle; but, as I said in my lecture, nearly all these cases were not decided by the weapon, but by the conditions under which one side attacked the other. For instance, in the great heavy cavalry charge of the Union

and Life Brigades, they were pounced upon when exhausted and scattered by French lancers, and these latter were pounced upon by our Light Cavalry Brigade and driven off. Thus the whole question is so balanced between sword and lance as to shock effects that the result to me is that the hand weapon is quite a secondary consideration, and that it is the use of the horse and the man and the other conditions of the fight which tell in the long run. As regards the moral effect of the lance, which General Russell referred to, it does tell at first until the troops get accustomed to it. I quoted the case of the 7th Hussars at Genappe, where they were blocked up by the French lancers in the streets of the village, and there was very little result. Our hussars had in support a dragoon regiment. When the 7th Hussars were ordered to leave the village, and accordingly trotted out, they were followed by the French lancers. The dragoons were ordered to charge; they did not like the look of the lancers, and there was a good deal of murmuring. The General ordered them out of the way and sent the Life Guards at the enemy, who were handsomely routed. Thus there was one regiment which did not fear lances; they went straight at them, and sent the lancers headlong. Two squadrons of lancers charged gallantly the hostile squares at Aliwal, and did all that Sir Henry pointed out. But from the records of the fight it is a certainty that had these gallant troopers been armed with the sword they would have effected exactly the same results. The French lancers charged our squares at Quatre Bras, and although our men waited till they got thirty paces before they fired, the impetus of the horses was so great that some of them broke our ranks as they fell shot down. The French admired the discipline of the men in not moving until they were ordered to close up the ranks. They were not such good cavalry as Napoleon had had before, but if they had been as good as in earlier days they would have got into our squares when the horses fell on our men and bayonets. But if they had been swordsmen they would have done the same. Take the German legion, which broke square after square of the French simply by dashing their horses on the bayonets; and no square can stand that. These were swordsmen, and they broke many a square. What I have been driving at—and I am sorry I did not put it more plainly—is, that whatever feats have been done by one weapon, they can be paralleled by feats done by the other weapon, and therefore in the shock the weapon is immaterial compared to the use of the man and the horse. Sir Henry spoke about the effect of a lancer waving his lance in a crowded gateway in the hunting field. But he would be as jammed up there as in a *mêlée*, and if he had not room he would not have a chance to wave his lance; and his opponents would probably have something by which to remind him that it would not do to use it in that way. You cannot wave the lance in the charge, and as Sir Henry pointed out, the *mêlée* is not a desirable thing. De Brack, who had full experience of the lance and the sword, gave this advice to his swordsmen:—"If you meet a body of lancers, jam them up and prevent them using their lance except in front of them, and then go straight for them." He had no fear of a straight frontal charge of lances. And although Sir Henry speaks of a man being knocked out of the saddle with the wave of a lance, I do not think, from what I have seen, that I could be knocked out of a saddle with one, but, of course, that is a matter of opinion. Then with regard to the lance in pursuit, when you have a man running away, with his back to you, I should not care whether I had a lance or sword in my hand; it would go equally well through him. I have known men who have taken part in such a

pursuit, and they have told me that the sword enters the human body so easily that you hardly notice it. In the case of the lancer who ran two Boers through on horseback at Elandslaagte, a sword would have gone through equally well. We teach all our men to tent-peg with swords. My point is that it is a false issue to raise the question of hand weapons; and then, in that case, if my contention is right in that matter, the sword and firearm are quite sufficient. I have written to an officer, an old Indian officer,¹ whose reply I had hoped to get before to-day, asking if I might use his name. He passed through the Sutlej campaign of 1846, the Punjab campaign of 1849, and the North-West Frontier campaigns of 1852 to 1856. He was badly wounded at Chilianwallah, and I saw a letter of his written to a relation of mine five or six years ago saying that if he had his own way in leading a cavalry charge he would not allow a single man to draw a weapon until after the contact had taken place. It was so important to lead your horse straight into the enemy that it required both hands to make your horse go fairly into your enemy. And his experience was, after all the heavy fighting he saw, that he would not allow a man to have a weapon in his hand until after a shock had taken place. He was a man of very great experience. I do not think there is any other point that I need touch upon.

¹Major-General C. J. Godby, since dead.—C.B.M.