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MOUNTED INFANTRY MAXIMS.

BEING NOTES BASED ON ACTIVE SERVICE EXPERIENCE

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I.—MOBILE INFANTRY.

EVERYONE recognises what an important factor in war is speed, and that a mobile force can oppose successfully a much larger one of slower movements. To be able to transfer rapidly a large body of infantry from one flank to the other, or to throw such a force 30 or 40 miles forward in a night in support of cavalry, are very apparent advantages, though only two of many which might be quoted.

The idea of imparting mobility to infantry is not a new one. Long ago brakes and other vehicles were suggested as means of conveying infantry, while the present Dragoon regiments were originally a species of mounted infantry.

Mobile infantry can be divided into three classes:—First, infantry conveyed on wheeled vehicles; secondly, those mounted on bicycles or tricycles; thirdly, mounted infantry proper, *i.e.*, infantry mounted on camels, horses, or cobs.

It is with the third kind that we have to deal: but we may do well to touch on the first two and compare all three.

Troops moved by train have on occasions tactically come under the head of mobile infantry: *e.g.*, the infantry were moved out from Ladysmith actually on to the battle-field of Elandslaagte by train. Infantry carried on motor cars have not yet been tried; but an attempt at this mode of conveyance may be expected shortly. Wagons drawn by mules were used in the late war to carry infantry, and were found most useful. To quote one example:—General Hart, in his forced march on Potchefstroom mounted two companies of infantry on mule wagons and sent them in support of his mounted troops, completing 39 miles in one night. Towards the latter part of the war, where columns consisted chiefly of mounted troops, the few infantry retained for outpost purposes were frequently carried on mule wagons, to enable them to keep up with the mounted troops, and not impair the mobility of the column.

As occasion demands and opportunity offers, infantry can always be put on empty supply wagons, and be carried thus from one point to another; but the clumsy nature of a column of wagons (and even motor cars), which are necessarily confined to good roads, makes it very doubtful if these will ever be generally used as a means of imparting mobility to infantry.

Cyclists have formed a separate arm in our Army for some years. Where good roads are plentiful, their use and importance are indisputable; but these again are almost entirely confined to the road; while a wise and plentiful distribution of tacks, glass, or barbed wire by the enemy would seriously impede their progress.

On the other hand, mounted infantry can move over the same ground as cavalry, and are, therefore, more suited to support them. They can even supplement cavalry, and be used independently. Their only disadvantage—from which the other kinds of mobile infantry would not suffer—is the fact that, when in action, one quarter of their fighting force must be used as horse holders, and only three-quarters be placed in the firing line. It is hoped that this disadvantage may be overcome—at any rate, upon occasions—by a good system of “linking” horses. Experiments have, I understand, been lately made in this direction at Aldershot.

II.—RÔLE OF MOUNTED INFANTRY.

It may be argued that cavalry armed with the rifle serve the purpose of mounted infantry, and that the raising of fresh cavalry regiments would be better and less confusing than inaugurating a new arm. It is even suggested that cavalry as such is no longer needed, and that mounted infantry, under the name of cavalry, is the only form of mounted troops required. Those, however, who are not blinded by the exceptional fighting in the Boer war still maintain that so long as armies fight on *terra firma* the shock tactics of cavalry will be needed. Whatever may be the correct opinion, until our cavalry are deprived of their present rôle, the duties and training of cavalry and mounted infantry must be kept distinct.

Mounted infantry, to be of any use as such, and in every way preserve their infantry characteristics, must look upon their horses as a means of conveyance only, and must be trained to fight **dismounted**. Their duties are many and varied; but it is a broad principle that they should be used whenever it is important to occupy positions where the distance and the rapidity of motion required prevent dismounted infantry doing so.

With a large army conducting extensive operations, the mounted infantry will act as a support to the cavalry. Marching behind the cavalry screen, they will be ready to seize defiles, bridges, and other tactical positions, and prevent their occupation by the enemy until the infantry arrive; to cover the advance, and, if necessary, the retirement of cavalry. They would form rallying *points d'appui* for the cavalry. They will also take part with the cavalry in wide turning movements. Formed as a separate body, with machine guns, and possibly artillery, they may help a flank attack by working round to a position from which they can enfilade the enemy. They may be used in large, independent bodies for reconnoitring on a large scale, especially if cavalry are not available, or for raids or operations against an enemy's communications, as in the American Civil War. They would require to be good mounted infantry to do this independently.

When forming part of an attacking force, mounted infantry may be used, when necessity demands, for rapidly reinforcing points in the

attack.¹ Their true rôle, no doubt, will be to protect the flanks of the attack, and harass those of the enemy. In modern warfare a position is won by superiority of fire, and the result of the action is, as a rule, decided long before the attackers come within charging distance of their opponents. The attack will be carried out in somewhat the same way as the siege of a fortress. Instead of parallels, however, the infantry will use the natural positions and cover afforded by the ground, from which they will endeavour to overcome the fire of the enemy. The main attack, if possible, will be on the flank, a force holding the enemy's front. The mounted infantry will fulfil their duties by taking up suitable positions whence they can bring to bear enfilade and reverse fire at medium ranges on the enemy's position. They will be also ready to oppose any counter-attacks, and support the cavalry in the pursuit.

The duty of mounted infantry in the defence will be to oppose the enemy's mounted troops, and force them to deploy. They might, first of all occupy positions masking the true position, and, when driven from these, extend to the flanks, and by skilful manœuvring prevent the enemy from finding the true flanks of the position. They will also, with the cavalry, make counter-attacks, seizing rapidly—perhaps only for a short time—positions enfilading the attacking line. Well and daringly handled, the mounted infantry might be the means of saving a weakly held position. In case retirement were necessary they would, with the cavalry, cover the retreat.

Finally, there will be many occasions when mounted infantry will have to work without cavalry, and even alone, and must necessarily do their own scouting and perform the duties of advance, rear, and flank guards. But these will be dealt with later.

III.—QUALITIES AND TRAINING OF THE MAN.

To make a good mounted infantry soldier, a good infantry soldier is required. He must feel that fighting dismounted as infantry is his natural rôle. Secondly, he should have a share of common sense—without which it is impossible to teach a man to be of any use in a branch of the Service which requires as much, if not more, individual intelligence than any other. Thirdly, he must be a good shot, and should have come out well above the average in his infantry musketry training. It is of little use going to the expense of giving mobility to infantry who cannot shoot. Fourthly, the man chosen for mounted infantry should be naturally fond of horses. Mounted infantry are only useful as such as long as their horses are in good condition, and all the training in the world won't teach a man to look after his horse properly unless he is naturally fond of it.

1. *Riding*.—Having got this article, the first thing is to teach him to ride. An ordinary course of Riding School will give him a

¹ A general officer of great experience with mounted troops in the late war, however, is opposed to this theory. He does not believe in the possibility of perpetually shifting mounted troops from one point to another of an attack on a probably restricted field of battle.

tolerable seat and ability to guide his horse sufficiently to enable him to take part in simple tactical exercises.¹ He need not be a first-class horseman, but he must be adept at mounting and dismounting, and must be capable of leading three horses of not too lamb-like disposition at the walk, trot, and gallop. Perfection in these exercises can be got by constant practice, and—where active experience is the *sine quâ non* in all other branches of the training of mounted infantry—this at least can be learnt in peace-time.

2. *Care of Horses.*—But more important than riding is the art of looking after a horse. Anyone who has commanded a mounted infantry company or section in the field has had to deal with the man who is always requiring remounts, who kills in a very short time every horse, however promising, entrusted to his care, and, *vice versâ*, with the man who by constant and fond care keeps his charger fit through a long campaign. These are extremes. The average man is fond of his horse and anxious to look after it, but in time of hard work, by sheer stupidity or carelessness, knocks him up when quite avoidable. We teach our mounted infantry soldier that his horse is a means of locomotion. It is very hard to make him understand that it is also an animal, and requires careful husbanding.² Strict discipline in the grooming, feeding, and watering of horses in peace-time will double their chances in war. But it is to the watering that the greatest attention must be paid. On active service the grooming is under the supervision of section commanders, and the feeding depends on the commissariat, but it often rests entirely on each man when and how his horse is watered. When practicable, the horses of a company should be watered together under the supervision of an officer; and even where men are scattered as scouts for the whole day, the officer commanding the section to which they belong should make a point of seeing that horses are watered properly and at the right times. Even old soldiers, when this important duty is left entirely to them, will persistently give their horses a bellyful of water before sunrise or a long gallop, and allow them only a sip, or fail to water them at all on coming into camp.

It is most important also that men should learn to save their horses in the field. The soldier, as a rule, knows no pace between a slow walk and full gallop, except when under the direct command of an officer. Unnecessary galloping when hard work is likely to be required not only shortens the life of the horse, but may also mean the life of the rider, when later on he depends on the speed of his charger for safety.

3. *Shooting and Use of Cover.*—We have taken it for granted that the man to be trained for mounted infantry is a good shot, but as this branch of his training is of such vital importance, no pains should be spared in perfecting him. It is essential in mounted infantry that every rifle be used with intelligence, and that every man be a "sporting shot." There is an art in individual musketry, and there are qualities necessary for a good "active service shot" which perhaps sportsmen can best understand.

¹ It is thought by some of the best authorities that the mounted infantryman should be able to ride as well as anybody else, and they disapprove of the theory of his being merely a passenger on the horse.

² A bad rider does infinite damage to his horse.

In peace practice a man with a good eye and a steady hand can perhaps make a possible at 500 yards; but in action, when nerves are highly strained, when the target is a moving one, or seldom visible; when, each time the man lifts his head, the whistle of the bullets unsteadies his aim, all his target practice will be as nothing without nerve. Discipline and confidence in his weapon, which alone can strengthen this quality in those who have it, and impart it to those who have not, are the first qualities necessary for the active service shot.

In actual training the man's powers at judging distances must be perfected by constant practice. A good shot is of little use if his sight be elevated 200 or 300 yards too much or too little. Vanishing and moving targets at unknown ranges are the best means of improving a man's shooting in peace-time, and practice at these should be very frequent.

But though a good shot, a man would not remain long of much use under heavy fire, were he not also proficient in the art of finding cover and of using it. An officer can direct his men to, say, a line of rocks, but he cannot choose each man's cover. The man must learn to do that himself. He must know what is cover, and what is not: how fatal it is for men to crowd behind one rock or mound: how it is often better to lie in the open than behind a piece of imaginary cover, which only serves as a target to the enemy: how slight folds in the ground, though scarcely perceptible, are yet good cover: and how even cover from view is sometimes useful when men are well scattered. The use of the cover is almost more important. A man must be taught by a careful peep to choose his object and, loading his rifle, to shoot round or over his cover, exposing the minimum extent of his body for the minimum space of time. At close ranges this art of combining the use of the rifle with that of cover will be found invaluable. There is one important point which touches upon firing exercises. Whether firing volleys, or independent, men should be taught after firing to come down to the ready *and load* without any further word of command. Whether there be a cartridge in the chamber or no, the motions of unloading are always gone through after "Cease fire" has been ordered, so that there is no danger on this score, while often a good chance at a quickly passing object will be lost through the men not being ready.

Before leaving the subject of musketry, we might touch on the much discussed advantages and disadvantages of men firing and holding their own horses, or firing off their backs. Neither practice would, of course, be resorted to if time and ground permitted of horses being put under cover; but in the field the cases are innumerable where the waste of time in handing over horses and getting them up again is fatal, especially where a line is much extended: while the advantage of the men being able to dismount, fire a few shots, jump on again, and resume the advance or retreat, is incalculable. Firing on horseback is rarely of any advantage, and is generally as dangerous to friend as to foe. There have been occasions, however, where a few men firing back off their horses have induced a timid enemy to imagine that there were still some men dismounted and perceptibly checked the pursuit.

4. *Scouting*.—A perfect scout is born, but not made. The average man, by long active experience, can be turned into a fair scout; but it is very hard in peace-time to train a man to be of any real use in war. The knowledge that a real enemy is near, and the

possibility of personal danger are so essential to the training of the man that on peace manœuvres we can only hope to teach him to be a slightly better scout than he would otherwise have been.

The first thing in training a scout is, of course, to impress him with the importance of his duties, and that on his vigilance depends the safety of those behind. Constantly on the alert, he must expect the enemy, and learn to anticipate every possibility. This does not make him "jumpy," but, on the contrary, gives him confidence: for in a sudden emergency, instead of being taken by surprise, he has already decided what to do. In scouting, a man must depend entirely on his eyes and intelligence. His eye must be trained to detect instantly any object, moving or stationary, near or far, and his intelligence must enable him to reason in a moment what it means. He must watch his front, but also his flanks, and use his eyes not only to detect and follow movements of the enemy, but to watch carefully the movements and actions of his supports and main body, and regulate his own movements accordingly. An eye for country is difficult to acquire, but by constant practice a man can be taught to pick his way across country so as to see and not be seen, to know what is commanding ground, and where he will get a good view, and to remember the ground he has already crossed, and to mark out in his mind the best way for a rapid retreat should such a course be necessary. He must be taught to scout well out, but according to the nature of the country regulate his distance from his support and from the scouts to his left and right.

Reports of scouts are nearly always verbal, and a man should be able to give them clearly and intelligently. He should never report until he is quite certain of what he has seen, and has made up his mind what to say. Having decided to report, he should waste no time about doing so. In emergencies, where the enemy is close at hand, and it is important that he should not go back, the scout may shoot to give the alarm, and by riding one way or the other indicate the movements of the enemy.

5. *Cossack Posts*.—Closely allied to scouting is the duty of cossack post, or vedette, which frequently falls to the lot of mounted infantry. These generally consist of a non-commissioned officer and 3 men, but as often as not an old soldier is placed in command. The duties of the cossack post are the same as those of a "group" in an infantry piquet, but a mounted post is, as a rule, so far from camp that a great deal more watchfulness is required. If the post is put as far as possible in a state of defence, the fire of 3 magazine rifles, made the most of, may seriously delay the advance of a large party of an enemy. The commander must clearly understand his orders, whether he is to retire or be reinforced on giving the alarm, and must be particularly careful that he cannot be stalked and that his line of retreat is open.

IV.—QUALITIES AND TRAINING OF OFFICERS.

Much more so than in infantry the good condition of a mounted infantry corps or battalion depends on company and subaltern officers. Mounted infantry are frequently so scattered that on section commanders great responsibility rests. The officer for mounted infantry must therefore be carefully chosen. Like the private, he must be thoroughly grounded in infantry work, but must be picked for his

intelligence and keenness. He requires a great amount of common sense, and should be willing and capable of taking the greatest responsibilities without hesitation. He must be anxious to study his profession and be possessed of initiative, dash, and courage, tempered with wariness. The better horseman, and the better horsemaster, the better mounted infantry officer he is likely to be, while a natural eye for country is most necessary.

1. *Care of Men.*—In mounted infantry fighting the occasions are many where a great deal must be asked of the men, where their confidence in their officer must be severely put to the test. A risky dash for a position, which the enemy may reach first, or the necessary retention of a rear-guard position, when isolation is almost certain, are two cases on which, perhaps, the safety of a column or convoy might depend. The men, to do this, must have confidence in their officer; they must feel certain he will get them out of any hot corner if it be within the bounds of possibility. It is to this end that mounted infantry officers should be so careful to look after the comforts and interest of their men, see that they are as well fed as possible, and thus gain their love and confidence.

2. *Care of Horses.*—As regards the care of horses, short experience will enable an officer to gain sufficient rudimentary veterinary knowledge for the purpose. He must know the horses of his company or section, and by watching his men ensure strict discipline in the grooming, feeding, and watering of his horses.

3. *Drill.*—As mounted infantry have little to do with ceremonial parades, the drill is very simple. The principle that the few evolutions necessary rest upon is the division of each section into groups of four men, of which one is the leader and No. 3 the horse holder. That a company can form column of half companies or sections, reform into line or advance in column of groups without confusion is really all that is necessary in the way of mounted drill—simple infantry drill adapted for horseback. As has before been pointed out, the “dismounted service” drill is the one which requires most practice and precision.

4. *Control of Fire.*—A mounted infantry officer should have, and under the present regulations will have, gone through the course of musketry. Mounted infantry are so often fighting in such small numbers that the accuracy and direction of their fire is all the more important. Not only should an officer be a good shot himself, but in peace-time he should be thoroughly capable of instructing his men; on active service he should be able to direct their fire to the best possible advantage. Active experience, a knowledge of men under fire, and the effect of fire are necessary. It is easy under peace conditions to direct the fire of men on beautifully marked targets at fixed ranges. But under a heavy fire, where men are being picked off, and the shooting is wild and inaccurate, a complete control, and, therefore, a thorough knowledge of his men, is required before an officer can hope to turn the fire of his party to any good effect. The first thing is to steady the men, and to do this an occasional cessation of fire, followed by a few steady volleys, will be found most effective. The officer must also (cover being available) move along his firing line, seeing that sights are elevated to the proper range, and pointing out the object to be fired at. He must encourage his men, showing the good effect, even if only imaginable, of their fire. The heartrending discouraging part of modern warfare is the fact that,

however much and well you may fire, you rarely see any effect. By making the men believe that they are making good practice, the officer is certain to attain his object, *i.e.*, a steadier and better-aimed fire. A knowledge of the effect of fire will enable him to understand where and how to direct his fire; while thorough competence in judging distances is, of course, essential.

Because in the late war the Boers never employed volleys, people are inclined to think that they are obsolete. The chief arguments against volleys are that a man cannot take such good aim, and that when much extended—as is frequently the case—the direction of volleys is impossible. In scouting and skirmishing lines, in an extended line of attack or defence, and even in fairly close formation, when rapidity of firing is needed, independent fire must be used. But whenever a section or group of men can easily hear the word of command of one officer or non-commissioned officer, volleys, in my opinion, are preferable to independent. Firstly, they have a steadying effect; secondly, owing to this the fire is likely to be better directed; thirdly, it is more under the control of the commander, and, therefore, less ammunition is wasted; and, lastly, the fire can be more easily concentrated on one object. At night, in attack, firing of any kind should be avoided; in defence, volleys alone must be used.

5. *Patrolling.*—Patrolling is a duty on which an officer's capabilities are most severely put to the test. He has, as it were, to conduct his own little campaign, and often act entirely on his own responsibility. With a fair share of intelligence, and if he takes sufficient precautions and keeps his wits about him, he should find no difficulty in conducting his patrol with success.

The objects of patrols vary considerably; but the general principles for their conduct are nearly always the same. The first necessity is that the officer in command should see that he thoroughly understands his orders, *viz.*: the object of his patrol, the nature of the information required, the importance of this information, the risks he is to take, and the intelligence already at hand. He should then decide roughly how he is going to work. He should anticipate every possibility, and form a general idea how to meet each, and finally mark out in his mind the line of route he intends to take, either from his own knowledge of the country or from his map.

It is an infallible rule that however unlikely he be to meet the enemy, the commander of a patrol should take all necessary precautions against surprise. The number of scouts he puts out depends upon the strength of the patrol and the nature of the country; but he should never put out more than are absolutely necessary to cover his front, rear, and flanks, at sufficient distance to give him timely warning. The utility of a patrol depends largely on its handiness; so that the more compact the commander keeps his party the better. A scattered patrol is clumsy to manage and difficult to conceal.

Before sending out his scouts the commander of a patrol must make them clearly understand his intentions, and the direction he means to take, and must instruct them what action to take on suddenly meeting the enemy.

The patrol being in a handy formation, the necessary scouts well out in front, on the flanks, and in the rear, the next thing to decide on is the actual route to be followed by the main body. The party being small, and the warning the commander is likely to get of the enemy short, he must always be within easy reach of some defensible

position, and so it is necessary that he lead his patrol on or near high ground, at the same time keeping it as concealed as possible. When his route necessarily crosses low and disadvantageous ground, he must span it as quickly as possible, and never halt in it. Woods, defiles, etc., should not be too closely approached by the patrol until searched by the scouts, the former waiting on commanding ground during the operation.

But halts should, if possible, be avoided. The success of a patrol often depends on its rapidity. It must get the information required, before the enemy knows it is seeking it, and delays are therefore frequently fatal.

The distance a patrol goes depends on its orders, the time available, or the condition of their horses, but if entirely at the discretion of the commander, he should if possible not return until some sort of definite and useful intelligence be gained.

On meeting the enemy, the patrol either drives him back, attempting to take a few prisoners, or, if the enemy be too strong, retires, avoiding the loss of prisoners to its opponents. The commander must in any case decide at once what to do, and act promptly on his decision. To do the wrong thing with decision and promptitude is better than to do the right thing hesitatingly and too late. Even if the enemy be too strong to drive back, the commander, by showing a bold front, should draw as much fire and gain as much information as possible, keeping, however, on advantageous ground and watching his flanks carefully. Should he find the enemy threatening his line of retreat, he must not hesitate to gallop without regard to formation or order, provided he has made arrangements for a rendezvous near camp.

In giving his report—as a rule, in writing—the commander must be careful to report only what he has actually found out, and avoid mixing his own conclusions with actual facts.

V.—MOUNTED INFANTRY COMPANY IN ADVANCED, REAR, AND FLANK GUARDS.

The duties of covering the front, rear, and flanks of a column frequently fall to mounted infantry. An officer in learning to handle his company in the performance of these duties, will be learning the general principles of all advanced, rear, and flank guards. Every officer has his own particular way of disposing his company on these duties. One way may be as good as another, but in all the principles are, or should be, the same.

1. *Advanced Guard*.—Of the three duties, that of advanced guard allows of most latitude. The officer commanding has to find the enemy, and at the same time protect the front of the column, while it rests on his decision chiefly whether on meeting the enemy he pushes on or awaits the arrival of the column. But protection is his first duty. He must not allow himself to be led into pursuit of an enemy, and so lose touch with the column.

Before taking his company out the officer commanding should first make sure that he thoroughly understands the object of the officer commanding the column, the direction he means to take, and the intelligence at hand.

The advanced guard as a rule acts on the offensive. A timid advanced guard is of little use; while dash will often deceive an enemy

and induce him to quit a position which, if hold, would have delayed the column. To guard against surprise and to try and find the enemy are its primary duties; and having found the enemy, it must drive him back or hold him, according to his strength.

In making his dispositions the officer commanding must bear in mind two things—the safety of the column, and his own safety. He must cover the front of the column at such a distance as to prevent the enemy sniping it, and to give the commander sufficient warning to make his dispositions for attack or defence. He must be well forward, so that if hard pressed he can give way a little without retiring on top of the column; but must avoid being so far ahead as to risk being cut off or defeated before the column can come to his assistance.

The advanced guard must be a fighting line, and not merely a line of skirmishers, and the officer commanding, being responsible for his own safety, must see that his flanks are secure. With these objects, a line of formed bodies, strong at each flank, supplying their own scouts and with the necessary supports and reserves, according to the number of troops available, is the best disposition. In the case of a company, one section would march along the line of route, one well out on either flank, and one in support. The centre section, in open ground, would march intact, sending out a few scouts, who would be responsible for the ground between the two flank sections. In close country, it would be necessary to spread this section out in skirmishing order, and keep the supporting section closer at hand. The flank sections give strength and security to the advanced guard. They would keep on the high ground, ready to take up positions defending the flanks of the advanced guard, but they should also be prepared to outflank the enemy should he oppose the centre section. It is a good rule that, when one part of the advanced guard is checked, the rest of the line should move on until checked themselves, or able to threaten the flanks or rear of the enemy. In this way the strength of the enemy can be more easily judged, while it prevents the possibility of a small patrol of the enemy bluffing the advanced guard into delay. These two flank sections should find one or two scouts in front and one or two on the exposed flank.

The officer commanding company would, as a rule, be with the supporting section, which he would lead, not necessarily in rear of the centre section, but on some ground whence he could see and be within easy reach of all three sections.

The officers commanding the advanced sections, on meeting the enemy, must act on their own initiative, as delay generally mars success, and is sometimes fatal. They should, however, as far as possible, conform with the general plans of their company officer and with the movements of the other sections. Whenever a company is split up, as in this case, the commanders of the several parties should be able to fight independently and yet in unison, without the necessity of laborious signalling. Like the combined play in a game of polo, it is at first difficult and confusing, but after experience becomes instinctive, and officers who can do this have reached a perfection of training.

2. *Rear Guards.*—Rear guards have but one object, that of protecting the rear of the column. But if simpler in this respect, it is a duty which is far more trying on the nerves than advanced guard. The fact of retiring from the enemy, and that the column is ever moving

ONE COMPANY, MOUNTED INFANTRY AS ADVANCED GUARD.

away from the rear guard, has a distinct demoralising effect on all concerned. But to those who understand rear-guard fighting, it is most interesting. A successfully and skilfully conducted rear-guard action is almost more satisfactory than the most complete victory.

Though the rear guard is strictly on the defensive, skilful dispositions and a bold front will often deter an enemy from pushing home what would have been a successful attack, or at any rate one which would have delayed the column.

Much more so than in the case of an advanced guard, the rear guard must be a fighting line, with strong flanks, ready at any moment to resist a determined attack. The dispositions suggested for an advanced guard, if reversed, serve admirably for a rear guard. Three sections would be in rear, the outer ones well out covering the flanks of the rear guard and in touch with the flank guards of the column. Each section would find its own scouts, and the supporting section would move on convenient ground some distance nearer the column.

When the enemy is threatening, the rear guard must always be ready to fight. It is well, therefore, to halt on good positions, and when the rear of the column has receded sufficient distance to move rapidly to the next, which would have already been decided on in the mind's eye. The conducting of a rear guard becomes, then, the art of quickly choosing defensive positions, each of which should be so occupied (the men not necessarily handing over their horses, unless fighting be in progress or imminent) as to obtain the most effective fire. As each section, the flank sections in particular, must necessarily often choose their own positions, the art of instinctive co-operation is almost more important than in the case of an advanced guard. The centre section must choose the best ground covering the centre of the column. The flank sections should find positions covering the flanks of the rear guard, and should be quick to discern and occupy ground, from which they can bring a cross or enfilade fire to bear on the enemy. At the same time they must be careful not to be so far out as to risk being cut off.

All sections in choosing their positions must find good cover for their horses. This is almost a *sine quâ non*. The loss of the horses of one party often involves the whole column in an action for their extrication, when such an action is disadvantageous to the general plan.

The distance between the rear guard and the rear of the column depends upon the distance between one position and the next. The column should always be well clear of the second position before the rear guard leaves the first, and should never be within sniping distance of the enemy. Similarly the order in which the several sections retire depends upon the nature of the ground and upon which portion of the position must be held longest.

In a heavy rear-guard action where part of the column is engaged, the retirement from one position would be covered by troops holding another in rear. A party of mounted infantry might well form the extreme rear party in a rear-guard of all arms.

In the actual fighting the steadiness and combination of the fire of the whole line are most important. When a retirement has been decided upon, the movement should be carried out as quickly as possible. Men must mount under cover if practicable, every care being taken to conceal the retirement, and confusion must be avoided. Led horses should therefore be as close at hand as the nature of the ground permits, and should be under the charge of a thoroughly reliable officer

ONE COMPANY MOUNTED INFANTRY AS RIGHT FLANK GUARD.

or non-commissioned officer, however much needed he may be in the firing line. If circumstances allow, the men should be roughly formed up before starting, and the retirement should be carried out at a steady trot, the men extended, but not out of hand. When the retreat is very rapid and under fire, the officer must discard all false sentiment and ride ahead of his men, so as to rally them at the next position. There have been many cases where the officer, by staying to see the last man mounted, has lost his section for the rest of the day. A hot and long rear-guard action so certainly brings confusion unless sections and other units are kept together, that it is of the utmost importance that officers commanding small units labour to keep them intact as fighting machines.

3. *Flank Guards.*—The flank guard should be a fighting line extending from the flank of the advanced guard to the flank of the rear guard. The company would be split up into a certain number of small parties, generally about half section each. The leading half section would be under the command of an officer, to whom would fall the responsibility of choosing the exact ground over which the flank guard is to march, the rear parties following at such intervals as the length of the column and the strength of the flank guard allow. The intervals, however, should never if possible exceed 1,000 yards. Each party would supply its own flankers, and should keep touch by the front or rear, according as the enemy is threatening the advanced or rear guard.

The whole difficulty rests with the leading party in choosing the line of route. The officer in charge of this party, in planning his route, has four conditions to fulfil. Firstly, he must always be moving on ground which covers the column and admits of defence and a good view. Should he be obliged to cross disadvantageous ground he must do so quickly. Secondly, he must not be so far out as to risk being cut off or defeated before assistance can come up. Thirdly, he must avoid marching within range of commanding ground on his exposed flank, and must either move over this ground himself or, if permissible, move nearer the column. Fourthly, he must keep touch with the flank of the advanced guard. The route of the flank guard will consequently not be necessarily a straight line or parallel to that of the column. At one time a high hill or good position will admit of the flank guard being close in; at another it may be necessary for it to move some miles out. The rear party have but to follow, keeping scouts well out, and searching all dangerous ground on their exposed flank.

When halts, which are frequent, occur, or when an attack is imminent, each party should take up a position so that the whole line of the flank guard is occupied to the best advantage. When the march is resumed, but fighting is in progress, each party will rapidly move to the position vacated by the one in front; but no position should be left vacant long enough to give the enemy an opportunity of seizing it. Every line of defence must have its weak point and leave an opening for the enemy, if he can see it; it is, therefore, the object of the defence to hide this opening and to induce the enemy to attack the strong points.

I. M.I. Company as Advanced Guard in open country.

II. M.I. Company as Advanced Guard in close country.

EXPLANATION :

● SCOUT

■ SECTION CLOSED

●-----● SECTION EXTENDED

Distances depend on circumstances.