

**CHAPTER VII.**

**MARCHES.**

(See also "*Animal Management*")

*126. General instructions.*

1. The power of making long and rapid marches without loss in numbers or energy is one of the chief factors of success in war. This power is maintained by enforcing strict march discipline and by the exercise of constant care for the welfare of the horses.

2. Before commencing a march commanders of squadrons and troops should make certain that the saddlery is correct, that the shoeing has been properly attended to, and that all the horses are fit for the march.

They should see that materials, such as bandages or old putties, are taken to prevent or cure rope galls and for horses whose legs require bandaging. A small supply of numnah and blanket material should be taken to make any slight alterations that may be required in the saddling of horses whose backs show signs of too much pressure in one place.

3. If it is not likely to be possible to water the horses during the first few hours of the march, a very early start, unless required for tactical reasons, should be avoided, for even in warm climates horses will not drink very early in the morning.

Even when marching at a very early hour a small feed should always be given before starting.

4. Sufficient time should be allowed each morning for the men to saddle up carefully, but on no account should horses be saddled up unnecessarily long before starting, and left standing with their saddles on.

Before marching the men and horses should be inspected in order to make certain that the horses are properly saddled and bridled and that no unauthorised articles are carried on man or horse.

5. The length of a day's march may be reckoned at from 20 to 25 miles. If proper care is taken, a force march of from 40 to 50 miles may be made occasionally without serious detriment to the efficiency of the horses and men, but marches of such length should not be undertaken without urgent reasons.

6. Whenever circumstances permit the men should march on foot, leading the horses, for fifteen minutes or more in every hour.

When the horses are being led they should be held by the reins about six inches below their bits, and should be kept as close to the edge of the road as possible so as to avoid blocking it. The usual distance between horses from head to croup should be maintained.

7. To enable men to look round their horses and saddles, a short halt should be made about a quarter or half-an-hour after starting or as soon as day has broken. Subsequently halts of about fifteen minutes' duration should be made every two hours when circumstances permit. During a long march a halt should usually be made after four hours to water and feed the horses. Whenever a halt is made all horses should be allowed to graze as much as possible. During long halts the horses should be off-

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saddled and their backs hand-rubbed. During short halts girths may be loosened and the saddle eased. When troops halt the commander should give out at once the duration of the halt, so that the men may know exactly at which time they must be ready to march again. Whenever a halt is made the men should be ordered at once to dismount. When in the vicinity of the enemy the rate of marching and the number and duration of halts will depend upon tactical considerations.

8. As a general rule the rate of march should be about five miles an hour, including short halts.

Only when the tactical situation imperatively demands it, should the rate of the trot exceed eight miles an hour.

The time table given below may be taken as a guide; it must be remembered, however, that owing to the fact that the route will seldom be quite flat and that in the neighbourhood of the enemy the tactical situation may compel a force to move in bounds from one favourable position to another, no exact time table can be laid down, and each march will have to be arranged to suit the country and the tactical requirements.

Troops should usually trot when the ground is level and walk or lead when going up or down hill.

Except when engaged with the enemy each squadron commander should change the pace of his squadron at the same point on the road where the squadron in front changed its pace.

The last two miles or so of a day's march should always be traversed at a walk, so as to allow the horses to cool.

Suggested normal time table:

### First Hour.

*Start -*

Walk,	5 minutes	
Trot,	10 minutes	
Short halt,	5 minutes	Tighten girths, look over saddles, shoes, &c.

Walk,	5 minutes
Trot,	10 minutes
March, <i>on foot</i> ,	15 minutes
Trot,	10 minutes

### Second Hour.

Walk,	5 minutes	
Trot,	10 minutes	
March, <i>on foot</i> ,	15 minutes	
Trot,	10 minutes	
Walk,	5 minutes	
Halt,	15 minutes	Look over horses and saddles, &c.

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9. In all circumstances when marching an even pace should be maintained throughout a column, in order that the fatigue caused by repeated increases of pace and sudden checks may be avoided. The officer leading the column must proceed at a uniformly even pace. He should never, unless specially ordered, move faster than the normal rate, and if the column is of any length, he should move slightly slower.

If a good look-out is kept, everyone should be able to anticipate variations in pace when they occur, and be prepared to lessen the suddenness of them. If a sudden check is unavoidable men should usually pull out across the road, so as to avoid running into the horses in front of them, and at the same time passing the check the whole way down the column, but this should not be done if there is a risk of blocking the road.

10. When any body of mounted troops is approaching a defile, to pass which it is necessary to diminish the front, the leading body or bodies should trot on, cross the defile, and clear such a distance beyond it as will obviate any delay or obstruction, then halt if necessary for the remainder. This applies to each successive body in rear.

11. To avoid tiring the horses the men should sit square and steady in the saddle whether sitting *at attention* or *at ease*.

No man should quit his stirrups, and when trotting each man should rise in them. The correct places in the ranks should always be maintained.

When dismounting the rifle must never be left on the saddle.

Men should notice and report the least signs of any injury to their horses. A small lump on the horses' backs, if noticed in time, can generally be relieved at once by altering the fold of the blanket or by changing the saddle or rider. Whereas, if no notice is taken, and the horse worked as before, a sore back will result in a few hours. A loose shoe should be attended to at once.

A third horse may brush, but if at the first signs of this a brushing boot is fitted, and when there is time his shoeing altered, he can be kept at work.

12. Whenever possible, both when on the march or when halted, the right of the road should be left clear for other traffic. In all cases sufficient room will be left for the passage of staff officer,s orderlies, &c.

Occasionally it may be advantageous to march on both sides of the road, leaving a free passage down the centre. This is not recommended, however, unless the road is exceptionally wide and clear of traffic or has good grass borders. If a halt takes place on such occasions, those men on the right of the road should usually be moved over to the left before they dismount.

Horses should never be halted on a bridge, or in a gateway or ford.

When halted in narrow roads the horses' heads should be turned towards the centre of the road.

13. To ensure that each unit marches correctly, an officer or N.C.O. should march in rear, and behind every force of mounted rifles there should be a small rear group with farriers attached, which will collect all men who have fallen out and keep them in rear until the main body makes its next halt, when they will re-join their units.

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14. Good march discipline is as important with the transport as it is with the fighting troops, for the mobility of mounted rifles is largely dependent upon the mobility of its transport.

No unauthorised person should be allowed to ride on the wagons, and officers; servants and all other men marching with the transport should always move in formed bodies under the command of a N.C.O.

It will often fall to the lot of mounted troops to assist transport in difficulties caused by the fatigue of the draught animals or by the nature of the roads. In these circumstances it is of great importance not to let a wagon or cart stop while crossing a bad place. Squads of men should be placed at the specially bad places to assist in turn each wagon whose transport animals show signs of stopping.