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Why I Am An Artilleryman

If you were to ask me why I am not a doughboy, I would tell you its because I'm too lazy to walk. If you were to ask me why I'm not a Cavalryman, I would tell you what a friend of mine said to me at the time that I first thought of enlisting in the army, which used to be going into Mexico. He said nice things like this: "Remember, your horse comes first;" "If there's a night attack you go right out and scare them away;" the Cavalry always goes out ahead of the rest of them and gets shot at so as to warn the rest of them that the enemy's there;" "If your horse wants your blanket, he gets it;" "A saddle makes a dandy pillow except when there's tarantulas around and there's lots of them in Mexico." All of which made me decide emphatically that I would have been an artilleryman. Best branch of the service anyway, goodness me! I couldn't be a doctor. I couldn't be a baker. I couldn't be an engineer. I couldn't cook. I couldn't signal corps. So what else could I do but be an artilleryman. I know now that I ought to have been a quartermaster—but now it's too late. I gaze at the tear in the left knee of my O. D. wools and sigh and wonder why they didn't call them B. C. wools. Anyway, I'm just an artilleryman.

But I am writing about why I AM an artilleryman and not about why I became one. There's a difference. When I became an artilleryman, I didn't know anything about soldiering at all. Some people seem to think that I know less now, and they do not hesitate at all about telling me so, but I can't help that. I don't believe it, myself—only I wish they would tell some body else so that I could get a discharge for mental disability. It's awful hard on a man, after he's been chewing Texas dust for four months, to have somebody tell him he doesn't know anything. They might at least concede that I know enough not to visit McAllen again.

But now to begin with, I want it very well understood that I am not trying to lower this branch of the service in the eyes of anyone who may be successful in wading through this chatter of mine. I'm not kicking about being an artilleryman at all. In fact I am very proud of the wroth of a red guidon. I love to see it. I love to see it waving in the breeze. I'd even love it better if I could see it waving in the breeze on Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn.

No, it isn't the red guidon that bothers me. It's the fact that I have to follow it around—just as if I didn't have any more intelligence than a bull. And when it comes to places like Texas, I think it just ought to be ashamed of itself. The idea of bringing a fellow to a place like this!

But speaking of Texas reminds me that there's a lot of very brave boys down here. Very, very brave boys. Why, they came down here to die for their country, they did, and now half of them even wish they WERE dead! Just think of it, how brave!

Yes, Texas is a mighty peculiar place to be in. But it's particularly peculiar when a fellow has to get out and take the mud off a gun or [illegible] Texas mud is worse than [illegible] bones. Not so with the artilleryman. He not only has his horse to work over, but he must give much care to that three-inch piece before he can wander off into the land of sweet forgetfulness where all is peace and labor a dream.

Yes, the follower of the red guidon gets all the routine of soldiering, and besides gets a tall lot of work that other branches miss. On his hikes, the doughboy carries himself and his pack, if he can, but if he thinks riding a gun is a lovely, comfortable thing to do, he'd better get on a gun seat going across a cornfield at a gallop or bump all day along these parlor-floor roads of Texas, or ride the boulders of Tobyhanna. And if the cavalryman thinks the red hat-cord boys can't ride, he'd better try a green team with two other green teams, hitched to a gun, and try to keep his traces stretched instead of tying them up in a bowknot. Perhaps he'll concede that he's green himself by the time he gets through.

And when it comes to drilling, the other fellow don't have to know half as much as the other boy of the scarlet runner. He must know the close order drill on foot as well as the mounted drill. Besides he must know his gun-drill. He must be able to take any position of the gun squad. It he is sitting in a puddle under his caisson listening for the range and the "ups" and "downs" of his corrector and is suddenly ordered to jump into the gunner's job he must be able to do it,—and do it moreover, with the alacrity and precision that means success for his commander's fire. If in actual warfare he fails, it's the doughboy and the cavalryman who suffer the consequences. They may think they are self sufficient, but they are not. The artilleryman must know his gun as he knows the alphabet. That three-inch piece is a demon of technicality and cannot be overcome in real action until every man of its crew understands the whole of it and makes himself a precise automaton, never failing by so much as a hair's breadth, never late, never ahead, always sure.

And the drilling and the grilling that it takes to attain to this state, is something only the artilleryman knows. To think of firing a gun so perfectly as to put 248 out of 250 shrapnel bullets from bursting shell into a target! That is something worth while. It was done recently by Captain Albert S. Hamilton, commanding Battery C of the Second Regiment at La Gloria. When the firing officer knows he has worked his problem correctly and his trial shots have given him almost exact knowledge of range and burst, then he can be sure of his game if (the big IF) he can rely upon his gun crews. He can pin a hostile battery to one spot, attack and destroy it at will with shells. It cannot escape him because he can immediately cover it with shrapnel so thickly that its cannoneers are unable to move from behind their gun screens. But without the precision and rapidity necessary on the part of his men this same commander is helpless.

Yes, I'm a[illegible] man, and I'm glad I'm [illegible]

REAL FIELD ARTILLERY TRAINING AT LA GLORIA

First Regiment Has Finished and Second Field Artillery Now On Range.

COL. WINGATE'S REGIMENT EFFICIENT

(Lieut. E. A. Holmes.)

"The sole reason for the existence of field artillery is its ability to assist the other arms, especially the infantry, upon the field of battle.

To enable it to render effective assistance upon the battle field, artillery must be able first, to march rapidly and in good order, and to establish itself promptly and without confusion, in such positions as will best utilize the available terrain; second, to deliver an effective and overpowering fire upon any designated part of the enemy's position."

In the foregoing, the Field Artillery Drill Regulations of the United States Army, 1911, has said much in a very few words. Little did the board compiling those few words realize and fully appreciate the depth to which our Regimental Commander, Col. George A. Wingate, would take them to heart, and instill in all his officers the full meaning and purport and the amount of study and application necessary for National Guard officers to reach a degree of proficiency in the conduct of fire that would reflect itself in the fire discipline of the batteries.

Little did we appreciate how soon we would be brought face to face with everything short of actual warfare, and how soon we would be putting our theoretical into the practical. As we approached our officers examination table, month after month, in the armories last winter, how we approached that "Room of Despair" with sharpened pencils, trepidation and palpitation of the heart, how we repeated, time and time again, as we ascended those stairs, those pet rules that the parallax of the target or aiming point is the angle subtended at the point in question by the wroth of a platoon front at the Battery, or that rule V says the deflection of the right piece is equal to the angle from aiming point to the target, increased algebraically by as many times the convergence difference as there are platoon fronts in the interval between observing station and right piece or D equals A plus N (P-T.)

Again little did that same board realize and fully appreciate how those same National Guard officers would burn their midnight oil and bone and study to meet the requirements necessary (and insisted upon) to handle the highly technical proposition of firing a Battery of Field Artillery—but we knew, as we sat there, biting the end of a pencil, figuring the drifts, deviations for cross winds, slopes of fall, time of flight or maximum ordinate, or terminal velocity from the range tables or finding the factor from [illegible] he can best observe the effects of his fire, the position of the guns, cover for the limbers and the aiming point to be used; the battery is then brought in, and unless extenuating circumstances surround the situation, at a walk; but from the time that battery moves from the road, every manjack is busy and mighty busy, and from then on, there are things to be done surely, accurately, quickly and without confusion; there is firing data commencing to come in, the smallest error in which will seriously impair the laying of the guns. There is deflection, deflection difference, angle of site, corrector and range—every numeral of which means much to a gunner.

There is deflection to be set off and an aiming point to be brought into the line of sight, an angle of sight and range to be set off on the range quadrant, the correction and range to be set off on the fuse setter and the fuse to be "cut" if the situation demands shrapnel, the projectile is sent home and the breech block closes behind it. "Set" Calls No. 1—"Ready," sings out the gunner and up goes the arm as each chief of section swings round and faces the Executive Officer. "Fire comes the signal and from right to left they begin to talk. There is a discharge, the gun recoils, and goes back into Battery, and almost before the projectile goes screaming on its way, the breech block is swung open and the cartridge case is swung to the rear; there is a scream, as the projectile, propelled by the expansion of gases, caused by the burning of the nitro-cellulose, is traveling towards its target. A puff of smoke informs the Battery Commander of the position of the burst; at three second intervals now they are coming. Nothing in the terrain on which to range, fire to the right, and high bust for positive sensing, also too close, add 20, open by 10, down 5, same (add 20 mills to the deflection, open the sheaf of fire by 10 mills, come down 5 mills on the corrector, leave the range the same) over comes the next salvo and in front of the target, the mind of the B. C. immediately says "Short," but his voice says 400 more (400 yards more on the range, (opening at 2800 yards, now firing at 3200;) again those white puffs, but lower, and a cloud of dust forms the pattern of the shrapnel balls, "over" (2800 short, 3200 over,) "200 less," comes over the phone, and again 4 more are on their way; again 33000 pounds per square inch of energy is expended by the burning of about 24 pounds of nitro cellulose, the gases from which is sending that 15 pounds of shrapnel on its way and for just 7.83 seconds that B. C. has his eyes glued on that target. He senses 2 on burst, 2 on graze, a zero height of burst —3200 over, 3000 short, a 200 yord bracket— "Battery one round," and before they have hardly left the gun, "100 more," and again "100 more," "100 less," "100 less," "cease firing," known as walking through the bracket."

So far, so good, but before those guns are fired, there is lots to be done. There is the breech blocks and breech mechanism, elevating and traversing gears, and its recoil mechanism, a most delicate and intricate contrivance containing its recoil springs, cylinders, [illegible] recoil buffers [illegible]

Under The Red Guidon

Brigadier General William S. McNair, commanding the First, Second and Third Regiments of the New York Field Artillery, tells here the story of the Artillery Range, and makes plain many things concerning the range now in use at La Gloria. Incidentally he answers a number of the questions that are asked daily by both soldier and layman regarding the actual firing, and the general working plan upon which the artillery regiments are proceeding. The Second, now in action at La Gloria, is taken as a working model for the story.

"When the Second regiment of this brigade began firing at the LaGloria range, near Sterling Ranch, about two weeks ago, the regiment had an allowance of 1520 shrapnel and 120 shells. This ammunition was distributed as nearly as possible equally between the six batteries. A series of problems is given, each battery working out one problem under the direction of its battery commander, this being an instructive problem in which the element of time does not enter. After each shot or salvo the observed results are discussed and there is discussion also of the proper changes to be made in the firing data for the next shell.

After the preliminary problems are fired, each batter commander is required to fire three problems and each other officer at least one. The remaining ammunition is alloted to all the officers at the discretion of the regimental commander.

"Targets are as a rule only represented. A line of infantry, for example, is represented by wooden silhouettes merely to mark a line and to register as nearly as possible the effects of the shot. Battery targets are wooden shields, representing the shields of the guns and caissons.

"A variety of technical situations are assumed, and these are made more and more complicated as the practice proceeds, and as the success in lesser problems warrants. For example, an infantry target may be a trench, which therefore remains indefinitely in one place, permitting the officer firing to adjust his fire to narrow limits. In other cases infantry targets are assumed to be advancing. This requires more speed and therefore makes it necessary for the battery commander to give up the advantages derived from a narrow bracket. The idea in such a case is to get some effect on the target in a minimum of time rather than attempt to get the maximum effect with a chance of securing no effect at all.

"In the case of the battery target the firing battery first adjusts with shrapnel on the terrain occupied by the hostile battery and then is ready to prevent any movement— uch as the movements of the cannoneers amongst the carriages and the bringing up of horses to limber up and take a new position or get away. Shrapnel bullets have little effect on a battery in position. Having thus pinned a battery to a single position, the firing battery is then able to attack it deliberately with shell and effect the destruction of the [illegible]

can be efficient at any range, but at long ranges the probability of getting a hit is small, due to unavoidable dispersion of energy. In other words, it requires firing a great many rounds to get one hit, thus raising the question of whether the expenditure of ammunition is or is not worth while. It might be worth while in some cases to fire away a whole chest full of shells for one hit, but such business is generally too costly for target practice. Consequently, extreme ranges are not used.

"The ranges being used by the New York Field Artillery at La Gloria vary between 1000 yards and 4000 yards. This range is never known by the officer firing. He must find it with his gun. In order to assist him in his first approximation, he uses various expedients, such as range finders, maps, data obtained from other batteries which have been firing at targets in the vicinity of his own.

"The Second Regt. is firing two classes of problems. The first class is of short ranges where the battery commander handles his guns from a point near them. The other class is where he is unable to see the target from the vicinity of the guns and is compelled to find an observation station to the flanks or at the front. In such problems he has to rely upon the field telephone for communication with the battery and it is necessary for him to be familiar with geometry and trigonometry in order to be able to properly instruct his battery for opening fire. He needs to have a clear conception of these subjects, also, so that he can deal with the paralaxes which result from his position to one side of the line of fire.

"The terrain over which the Second Field is now working presents many new problem to them, since its training heretofore has been received at such places at Fort Sill and Tobyhanna, where the ground is not so covered with brush and where there is infinitely more opportunity for getting high points for observation stations. The regiment is receiving experience in firing over the kind of terrain which is typical of this part of the country, and their present experience is broadening their ideas by reason of the comparisons they are able to make between this kind of work over the bare prairies of Fort Sill, and the high rocky places of Tobyhanna."

REOPENING THE OLD WOUNDS.

When Tom Sharkey was in the heyday of his prominence as a heavyweight contender he capitalized some of his popularity by opening an athletic club at Vallejo, across the bay from San Francisco. He hired Tim McGrath as manager.

For the opening night McGrath arranged a program of boxing bouts and a large crowd came to witness the sport. Tim was on the door, taking tickets. The owner lurked in the offing, keeping a general eye on things.

Presently there approached a sizable group of McGrath's cronies, and Tim, extending the hospitalities of the occasion, waved them in. Sharkey saw them pass the wicket and drew near