

The American Horse and His War Uses

Italian Expert Tells How Cavalry Mounts and Artillery Animals Are Selected for Military Service

By a Horse Expert of the Italian Army Now in This Country.

ITALY needed horses for war, and as she was not able to buy them from other allies, she turned to the United States for a supply. Having been for many months resident in this country and being about to leave New York for service abroad, I take this opportunity to give my impressions of the American horse as I have seen and studied that animal under many conditions.

It was at first the idea of the military authorities of the various nations that the war would be a short one, for it was believed that so deadly had modern weapons become that mankind could not long resist them. The development of the trench warfare which has prolonged the present struggle brought into use much heavy artillery, and also many light, mobile batteries were required, while it was also necessary to organize tremendous transportation systems back of the lines.

Horses Still Much Needed.

Although motor trucks and caterpillar tractors are important factors, horses were greatly needed for sudden artillery movements over uneven ground. To a limited extent cavalry mounts were also required, although a large proportion of the cavalry of the various Powers had been dismounted and sent to the front for active duty in the trenches.

Italy had been buying her military horses largely from Ireland and Hungary. She had received some shipments also from the United States, and therefore she sent buyers to this country, which is now the principal source of horses in the world. The normal horse population of the United States is 25,000,000, and although the Allies have purchased 1,000,000 horses here since the war began, the breeding has so kept pace with the demand that the number of horses has not lessened.

Italy has been buying horses principally for heavy artillery use. These animals vary from four to ten years of age and are considered at their prime at seven years. The commissions which have been sent to this country have found the American horse well adapted for artillery and for general military purposes.

Western Animals Best.

The animals are generally bred in the open country, either on the wild ranges of the far West or on extensive stock farms of the middle West. The Eastern market has been of little importance, as the stock brought here has been considerably picked over before the military buyers can get a good look at it.

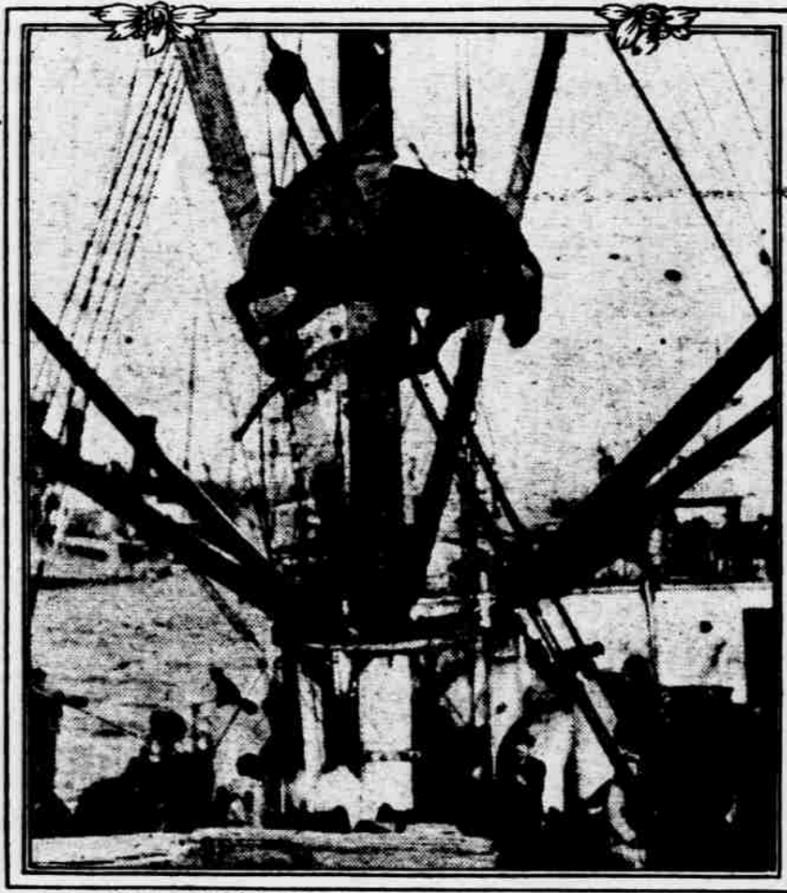
The horses from the middle West, that is from the States which centre about Chicago and St. Louis, have been very useful for military purposes. We get them in good condition and the farmers have already broken them to harness. To buy young horses and to train them for draft purposes would be a task which no army could undertake at this time. The animals from Montana and Wyoming which have been broken to the saddle as well as to harness are also of much value.

For heavy artillery use the American horses of the Percheron strain are best. They are of good Percheron stock mixed with the typical native horse. They combine strength, weight and stamina with endurance and quickness. Horses of this variety tip the scales at from 1,200 to 1,500 pounds each and are from fifteen to sixteen hands high. They have good appetites, yet they are not heavy feeders.

Percheron Breeding.

That the United States has so many horses of this excellent class is due to the enterprise of private citizens. In other lands the Government would decide what kind of horses were best suited for military purposes and see to it that the farmers and breeders developed them.

The Percheron Society of America, with headquarters in Chicago, should have much credit for the public service it has rendered in encouraging the breeding of this very desirable type of draft horse. The importation of Percheron stallions on a large scale and their breeding with



A WAR HORSE FROM AMERICA ARRIVING IN ITALY.

American stock began in 1885, although there were also Belgian and Clydesdale stallions brought here. To the Percheron, however, this country owes the perfection of that draft horse which has come to be regarded as typically American. Many of these fine animals may be seen in the cities attached to express company wagons or working in the delivery service of merchants.

Their bones are strong and large, the legs comparatively short and very strong, the shanks being especially short and yet well proportioned. The chest is broad and deep and covered with well developed muscles. The back is short and large and covered with a wiry and efficient musculature, while the hind legs are especially firm and powerful, as the haunches are exceptionally well developed.

A Sure Footed Breed.

The animals are sure footed, and when they are going down steep declivities they have such strength and stamina, as well as such bulk of body and such power in their hind legs that they can hold back the gun carriages. Lighter horses might be overwhelmed by the heavy loads behind them.

This breed is intelligent and even tempered, and is not easily frightened. Such artillery horses stand quietly in the midst of artillery duels. They do not take to their heels or break up their harness, as animals of other types might do. As in the Italian heavy artillery nearly every horse is ridden by a gunner, they must be good saddle horses.

The raising of horses for artillery purposes gives a good return to the American farmer or breeder. The prices are determined in accordance with terms made at the markets in Chicago and St. Louis, the freight to those points always being counted in the price. In the early stages of the war light artillery horses could be bought for \$140 each and for heavy artillery animals \$170 each was paid. The present prices average \$40 more on each type, owing to the increased demand as well as the higher cost of forage.

German Names Discarded for American

"THE war has caused a change in geographical nomenclature in the United States," said a man who does considerable travelling. "Everywhere towns with German names or with streets or avenues with German names are changing them to good old American names or talking of doing so in the near future. Why, pretty soon one will be able to look through the gazetteer without finding a town with a German name. And some time in the very near future there won't be any streets with German names in the United States."

"There's the case of New Berlin, Ohio. The citizens there put up with the German name of their town until a few weeks ago and then they got tired of it. It didn't seem patriotic to live in a town with such a name, so 784 adults of that Ohio town—a majority of the residents—signed a petition asking that the town be

These sums, however, are considerably less than the actual cost of a horse from the middle West by the time it has reached a European port. Formerly many animals died in transit, both by land and by sea. The loss factor from ocean transportation has happily been much reduced by our present policy of giving all animals at least two weeks rest between their arrival by rail in the East and their final shipment by steamship.

The Italian Government to insure the shipment of horses under the best conditions established a large depot at Goshen, N. Y., where all horses which it purchases are taken for a fortnight or so before they are committed to the ocean ferry. Animals that show any symptoms of sickness are segregated, and none is loaded on the liners except in apparently perfect condition.

While considering draft animals I would say a few words in praise of the American mule. The breeding of this useful animal has been much stimulated since the beginning of the war because the foreign buyers are willing to pay a higher price for them than they do for horses.

Mules Valuable Too.

Italy has been buying a great many mules, more than I feel at liberty to say, because these patient and efficient animals are well adapted for service in mountainous districts. They are sure footed and agile. Wheelers, which are useful for drawing heavy artillery; leaders, which do the work of light draft horses, and especially pack mules, which are of great value in carrying rapid fire guns or parts of light artillery, are much in request.

A wonderfully hardy and enduring animal is the American mule. The mortality among them in transportation over long distances in railroad cars is about 2 per cent., while the deaths among them on shipboard are less than one-third of 1 per cent. of the total number, provided that they have had the prescribed two weeks rest at a depot before being loaded on the steamships.

Mules have done remarkably good ser-

given the name of North Canton. They were moved to sign this petition because of the atrocities and barbarities of the German army.

"There wasn't any delay in the granting of the petition; it was referred to Robert Day, Common Pleas Judge, who, after a hearing, directed the issuance of an order permitting the name to be changed to North Canton.

"That's typical of what has been going on all over the country since we went into the war. There's the case of Hutchinson, Kan., where they had a street by the name of Bismarck. The citizens there didn't feel as though they were serving their country properly by permitting such a name to remain, so they signed a petition and submitted it to the city commission asking that the name be changed to Funston street, in honor of the late General. And that change was made too."

One of the Brightest Pages in Equine History Is Being Written on the Battlefields of Europe

vice on the Continent. Not only have the Italian forces made good use of them, but they are also much appreciated by the American and British commanders. It is to be regretted that the mule census of the United States includes only 5,000,000 and that the percentage of them available for army use is much smaller than is the proportion of horses. Many of the mules are undersized and there are a great many long used in mines which cannot be adapted to field work.

Not only is the United States producing excellent draft animals, but it is also a market where some first class cavalry horses can be purchased. For the foreign armies the average hunter which may be obtained here answers very well. What is required is a saddle horse able to carry a weight of 260 pounds and to gallop, jump, trot and walk and to cover a distance of at least forty miles a day.

It is hard to find such horses in large numbers, and especially enough of any one type required for the mounting of regiments or squadrons which have special duties. Europe has for years given much attention to the breeding of horses of this class under Government auspices, the breeders acting under definite instructions from the war departments.

Cavalry Supply Short.

There have been bought many horses for individual officers, although for general cavalry purposes the supply here has been short because the United States has never had a large standing army. There have been obtained horses broken to the saddle by cowboys, and also riding horses which were used for recreation and exercise purposes.

The promotion of racing undoubtedly has a marked and important influence on breeding horses of this type. The greater number of thoroughbreds there are in a country, the easier it will be to have the half bred horses which are essential to cavalry service and for general equestrian purposes.

The Italian cavalry had been finding the best horses for its use in Ireland. These animals were nearly all sired by thoroughbreds, well built steeds which became a credit to the stud after they were through with their performances on the turf.

The horse shows which I have observed in the United States have had a marked effect in perfecting the best kinds of the equine species. This is especially true, I think, of the show annually held in Chicago, which tends to increase the competition among the breeders of draft horses and so to elevate all standards.

The horse shows of the Eastern cities are most attractive, but, in my opinion, they have little or no effect upon American horse breeding because most of the animals which get the ribbons and the prizes have been imported. The hunters, some of which are reared in this country, would have an important effect in the production of good cavalry horses were there more of them. Horses of this type are supersport animals which represent large expenditures. They are used largely by the wealthy classes in their out of door sports, in their drag hunts and their field days, and have not as yet had much effect in the propagation of animals which might readily be used for cavalry work.

Hunters Among the Best.

They are of the same strain, however, as those Irish hunters from which are bred some of the finest mounts in the squadrons of Italy. Owing to the mountainous nature of my country the cavalry horses have to be ready climbers. They are trained to do work which appears to many persons as a series of spectacular feats. It has been difficult indeed owing to the embargo on the Irish horses to get the kind of animals required for this service. We hope, however, in the years to come to draw more upon the United States for cavalry mounts.

On the whole the American horse has been of great service to the Allies and to Italy in the present war, and we count ourselves fortunate to have had the opportunity of drawing upon so fine a supply.