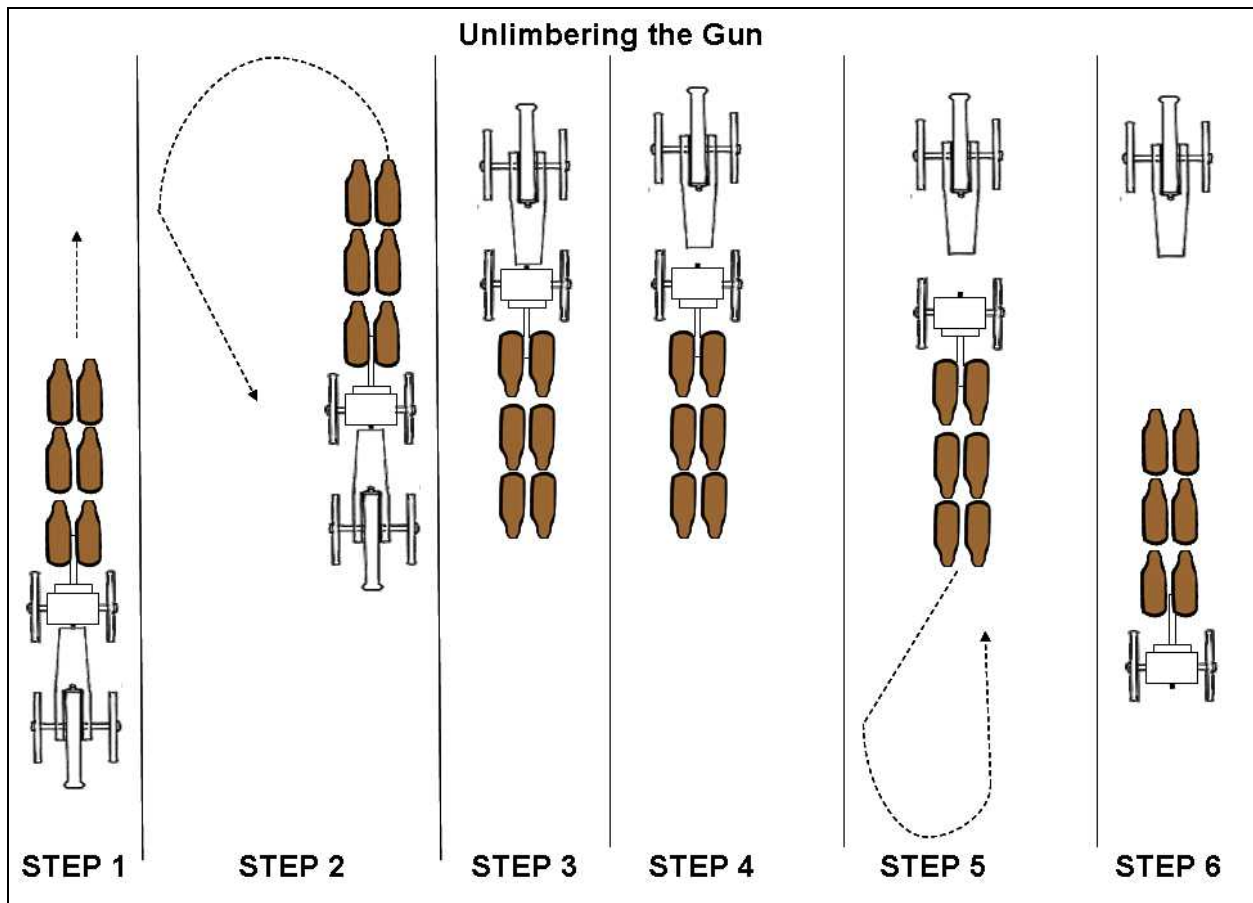


This section discusses the deployment and retirement/retreat of artillery using horses (both mounted artillery and horse artillery). The Field Artillery Tactics 1864 Edition by French, Barry & Hunt goes into great detail regarding the foot drills and horse drills for artillerists. The commands presented here relate specifically to mounting and dismounting the guns from the limber and horse teams, and how artillery should retreat in the face of the enemy.

## Unlimbering the Gun

When a cannon is being brought up into line of battle by a team of horses, the cannon is initially facing backwards. The horse team must bring the cannon forward of the line, do an “about” (turn around), unhook the cannon from the limber, and take the limber to the rear of the gun line. The horse team must do another about with the limber so that the horse team is facing forward when the limber is in its position behind the cannon. The horses are calmer when they can see what is causing the noise. This position also allows the limber drivers to watch the Section Chief for subsequent commands. In addition, because of how the limber chests open, this allows the lid of the limber chest to protect the cannoneers who are preparing charges for firing.



The commands for unlimbering the cannon and placing it into line of battle begin once the horse team is at HALT on line with the guidon bearer. If the cannoneers are on foot, everyone stops at this point and waits until the cannon comes about and is facing forward.

## **Commands.**

### **ACTION FRONT**

**Gunner** – unlocks the lunette from the pintle on the limber and lifts the trail off of the pintle by grasping the trail handles with Number 5.

**Number 5** – lifts the trail off of the pintle by grasping the trail handles with the Gunner.

**Numbers 6 & 7** – remain on the limber.

**Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, & 8** – remain at the rear (and dismount if mounted) and prepare to move forward to the cannon. If on the caisson, they run forward to prepare to assist. If on the gun, they remain in their positions to prepare to assist once the trail is lifted.

### **DRIVE ON**

**Numbers 6 & 7** – drive with the limber forward and do an about to the left, driving in a complete circle and coming to a stop facing forward (toward the cannon) with the end of the limber pole 18 feet from the rear of the cannon carriage trail handspike. Once the limber is in position, Number 6 & 7 dismount the limber and assist the Gunner and Number 5 in placing the cannon into position if needed.

Once the cannon is in the desired position, the Gunner and Number 5 lower the trail, Number 4 removes the trail handspike from its travelling position and places it at the end of the trail. All cannoneers unhook and take their implements, and come to the POST position.

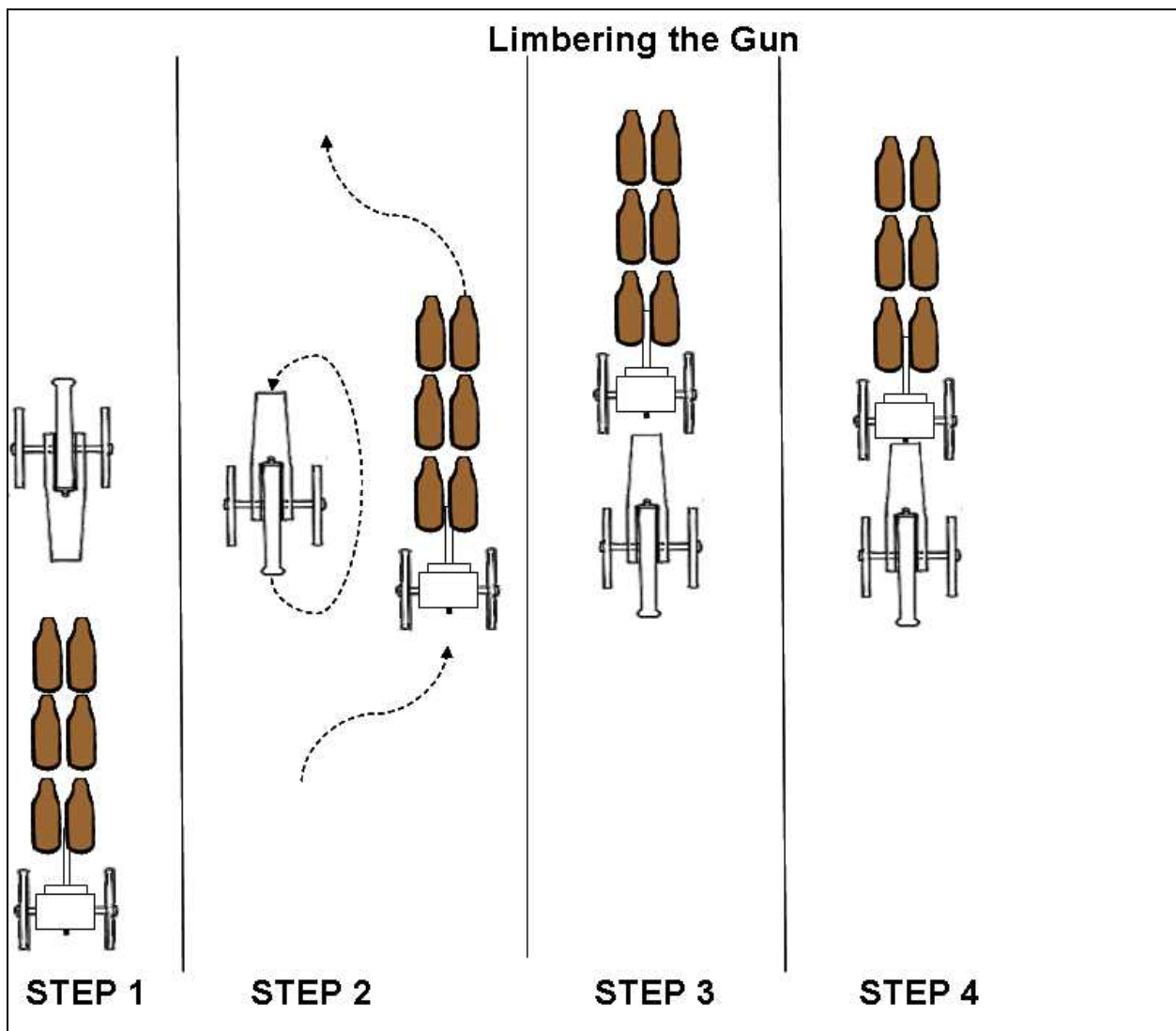
*Note:* the horses remain hitched to the limber while the cannon is in action.

If the action is to the left or the right, the command will be ACTION LEFT or ACTION RIGHT. The manoeuvres will be the same, except that the Gunner and Number 5 will point the muzzle of the cannon in the direction of the ACTION command.

If the action is to the rear, the command is given FIRE TO THE REAR; IN BATTERY. The cannon is unlimbered as above, but rather than the cannon being turned around and the limber being brought into a full circle behind the cannon, the cannon trail is set down immediately and the limber rides forward and turns around so that it is now in position to the rear of the new gun line.

## **Limbering the Gun**

When a cannon is ready to be moved from the current line of battle, the horse team brings the limber forward so that the cannon can be re-hooked to it.



### Commands.

#### LIMBER TO THE FRONT

**Numbers 1 & 2** – secure the rammer/sponge and worm to their positions below the cannon carriage with the help of Numbers 3 & 4. Once this is done, Numbers 1 & 2 take position on the muzzle to help turn the cannon around.

**Numbers 3 & 4** – help Numbers 1 & 2 secure the rammer/sponge and worm to their positions below the cannon carriage by locking them into place. Once this is done, Numbers 3 & 4 take position on the wheels to help turn the cannon around.

**Numbers 6 & 7** – move on the limber around to the front of the cannon.

**Gunner** – grasps the trail handle and lifts the trail with Number 5.

**Number 5** – grasps the trail handle and lifts the trail with the Gunner.

At this point, Numbers 1 & 2 push down on the muzzle of the cannon and Numbers 3, 4, 5 and the Gunner turn the cannon around to the left and set down the trail facing the limber. The Gunner removes the trail handspike from the trail and hands it to Number 4 who returns it to its travelling position.

#### HALT – LIMBER UP

**Numbers 6 & 7** – stay with the limber as the drivers halt the forward motion of the limber.

**Gunner** – grasps the trail handle and lifts the trail with Number 5.

**Number 5** – grasps the trail handle and lifts the trail with the Gunner.

**Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and Gunner** – roll the cannon toward the limber.

**Gunner** – places the lunette on the pintle on the limber with Number 5, and then locks the lunette in place.

**Number 5** – places the lunette on the pintle with the Gunner.

Once the cannon is limbered, the cannoneers return to their marching positions (and mount their horses if mounted).

If the cannon is to be limbered up to the left or the right, the command will be LIMBER TO THE LEFT or LIMBER TO THE RIGHT. The manoeuvres will be the same, except that the cannon will only be turned in the direction of the LIMBER command.

If the cannon is to be limbered to the rear, the command is given LIMBER TO THE REAR. The cannon is limbered as above, but rather than the cannon being turned around and the limber being brought around the cannon, the limber turns around and the cannoneers manually push the cannon forward to the limber.

## Bringing the Battery Into Action

The information presented above is for a single cannon being limbered and unlimbered. The commands presented here are to bring the entire battery into line of battle at the same time. At this point, the cannons have been brought out of a straight line of march (one cannon in a straight line after another) and each of the cannons are parallel to each other already spaced at the proper interval for a battery in action. The commands for unlimbering the cannons and placing them into line of battle begin once the horse teams are at HALT.

#### Commands.

IN BATTERY. GUIDE LEFT.

The GUIDE LEFT (or GUIDE RIGHT) command identifies which cannon is the guide for placing the guns. Each cannon will dress left (or right) in line with the guide cannon.

At the command IN BATTERY, the cannons will begin moving forward, along with the Chiefs of the Piece and Chiefs of the Sections. The Caissons stand fast and not advance.

## MARCH

Once the pieces have advanced 17 yards, the command MARCH is given. The Chiefs of the Piece and Chiefs of the Sections halt. If the cannoneers are on foot, they also halt and allow the pieces to move past them. If the cannoneers are mounted, they dismount and hold position, preparing to take their positions with the cannons. The horse teams pulling the cannons and limbers do an about (turn around) to the left so that the cannons are now facing forward. At this point, the cannoneers begin the unlimbering manoeuvre as described above. The cannons are placed in line with the guide cannon.

## Use of The Prolonge

It is normal for artillery to move during the course of a battle, either to press an advantage or to keep from getting overrun and captured. The following commands are used when the prolonge is used during these manoeuvres. Note that use of the prolonge can be with or without horses hitched to the limber.

### Fix Prolonge to Fire Retreating Commands.

#### FIX PROLONGE TO FIRE RETREATING

**Numbers 6 & 7** – mount the limber and the drivers turn it to the right so that the limber halts about 4 yards from the trail.

**Number 5** – uncoils the prolonge, hands the toggle to the Gunner, and attaches the prolonge to the limber by hooking it to the pintle and locking it in place.

**Gunner** – attaches the prolonge to trail through the lunette.

#### RETIRE

**Numbers 6 & 7** – advance the limber and cannon, which is now being pulled by the prolonge.

**Numbers 1 & 3** – remain in their position with implements in hand.

**Numbers 2, 4, 5 and Gunner** – turn and march to the left of the piece.

If the piece is loaded when the command RETIRE is given, Number 3 will insert the priming wire and remove it when the command HALT is given.

If the command LOAD is given after the command RETIRE is given, Number 5 will inset the charge and Number 2 will service the vent after retrieving the implements from Number 3.

## HALT

**Numbers 6 & 7** – stop advancing the limber and cannon and dismount, returning to the POST positions.

**Numbers 1 & 3** – return to the POST positions to continue firing.

**Numbers 2, 4, 5 and Gunner** – return to POST positions.

## Fix Prolonge to Fire Advancing Commands.

### FIX PROLONGE TO FIRE ADVANCING

**Numbers 6 & 7** – mount the limber. The limber is brought around to the right of the cannon and stops just in front of the cannon.

**Number 5** – uncoils the prolonge, hands the toggle to Number 2, brings the prolonge around to the front of the cannon and attaches the prolonge to the limber by hooking it to the pintle and locking it in place.

**Number 2** – attaches the prolonge to trail through the lunette.

## ADVANCE

**Numbers 6 & 7** – advance the limber and cannon, which is now being pulled by the prolonge.

**Numbers 1,2, 3, 4, 5 and Gunner** – retain their implements and march with the piece in their POST positions.

## HALT

**Numbers 6 & 7** – stop advancing the limber and cannon.

**Numbers 2** – removes the prolonge toggle from the lunette and gives the command to DRIVE ON.

## DRIVE ON

**Numbers 6 & 7** – return the limber to the rear of the gun line as in the Unlimber manoeuvre, dismount, and return to the POST positions.

**Numbers 1 & 3** – return to the POST positions to continue firing.

**Numbers 2, 4, 5 and Gunner** – return to POST positions.

Once the prolonge is no longer needed, the command is given to COIL PROLONGE.

#### COIL PROLONGE

**Gunner** – removes the toggle of the prolonge from the trail lunette.

**Number 5** –coils the prolonge on the trail after first hooking the ring over the upper prolonge hook.