

The Trip to England

Exclusive Correspondence to the Canadian Courier by Trumpeter
H. W. Philp, Signal Corps Headquarters

The following is the first letter from the Courier's special correspondent with the first Canadian Contingent, Trumpeter H. W. Philp, of the Divisional Signal Corps Headquarters, 1st Canadian Contingent. It is the best story yet published from our men in England. It announces the taking of the German transports by the convoy en route to England. It gives some idea of mistakes in provisioning the transports, mistakes which must be guarded against in future, and it is a quietly but vividly written picture of the voyage.

Plymouth, England, Oct. 17th.
"OUR voyage is about at an end, I am very thankful and so, too, I think, is everyone in the flotilla. On the afternoon of October 3rd the port column loosed its moorings in Gaspe harbour and began to steam out, soon to be followed by the middle line. Our line, the starboard one, was under way just before the sun began to drop behind the hills. As we steamed slowly out of the harbor one or two of the launches of the fisher-folk bobbed past with their farewells and 'goodlucks.'

"My last glimpse of Canada was the gray coastline about the harbor dimming into the twilight. Slowly—very slowly it seemed to most of us—the ships have moved since then. We have averaged in the neighbourhood of 220 miles a day; our course being set around the southern coast of Newfoundland, then east and northeast. To-day, October 13, we are directly south of Ireland. The formation of the flotilla is being changed to the red, the white and the blue lines, for what reason we do not know. Torpedo boat destroyers have come to escort us. Almost direct east we are going, which leads us to believe that our destination, a thing that has been withheld from everyone apparently, is Southampton. A typical Irish coast storm, the first one on all the voyage, has come out to greet us. We're right glad to meet Oireland, and foggy England, too, will be a welcome change, I fancy.

"At two o'clock Monday morning, September 28th, we were awakened without the customary blasts of the trumpet. Horses were fed, the packing of our spare kit was completed and then we hung close to the fires eating our lunch, the preparing of which had cost the cooks their night's rest. Snow was falling, mingled with chilly, driving sleet and rain.

Moving at Dawn.

"At dawn we saddled up and moved away, leaving the dismounted sections to come in later by train. The roads were very muddy. Only now and again did they broaden out sufficiently to allow two rigs to pass. So it was necessarily slow travelling for our cable wagon detachments. Passing trains sent our horses into hysterics almost, playing havoc with our ranks, but giving us somewhat of a sideline of interest. At various points along the route watering troughs had been arranged. At some of these places biscuits were supplied us with the compliments of the Daughters of the Empire, and as we went through the one or two hamlets along the route we were again regaled with pieces of cake and bits of maple sugar which the French-Canadian girls and women handed up to us, keeping at a respectful distance from our horses as they did so. Seven hours in the saddle brought the corps into Quebec shortly after noonday. At the Exhibition grounds we bivouacked and awaited orders to embark.

"The first order called for twenty-five men to go aboard the Andania as soon as possible. Before they were paraded orders arrived for the entire corps to move, and horses had scarcely been saddled and the march begun when we were told to remain there for the night. Another counter order came, however, and near midnight we arrived at the wharves. It was hard work there, but at last the horses were all loaded and the wagons hauled to their places. We had been at it from 2 a.m. Monday until

after 3 a.m. Tuesday. Then we went aboard.

"I sought a place alongside the horses on the Corinthian, rolled into my blankets and was soon peeping into slumberland. Not for long, however. 'Parade at shed 18 in half an hour,' someone yelled out, 'we sleep on the Zealandia to-night and go aboard our own boats in the morning.' We slept that night in shed 18 instead, and at 7.30 were awakened and marched to the Andania, having had about three hours' sleep. In the afternoon the Andania was moored in the middle of the river. On Wednesday evening she pointed her nose down the river, to the harbour of Gaspe, where the flotilla was to assemble. Here, impatient, we were anchored until Saturday. Little old Gaspe will not soon forget that sight, I fancy, and the one when the three lines, each headed by a cruiser, steamed slowly out of sight. Another cruiser brought up the rear of each line. When we were well out into the Atlantic, still another war vessel came to guard our starboard side, our port side being open, apparently, until near the end of the week, when another—one of the new type of cruisers—took up its position there. We haven't seen a German anywhere.

Captured German Tramps.

"One or two German tramps chanced within reach of our cruisers. They are now part of the flotilla. The capture of one of them I was fortunate enough to see. I chanced to be in the bow of the ship after dinner one day, wondering wherein lay the beauties of the deep and almost convinced that only along the seashore, where one's point of view did not rise and fall with each swell, could the ocean possibly be beautiful. Previously to the call for dinner the cruiser leading the middle line put on steam and raced ahead. As I was standing at the bow it was still in view, a mere speck on the horizon. Another smoke was soon to be seen to the south. Later on the cruiser shifted its course and began to return. In the course of two or three hours the tramp, whose smoke I had seen, was standing by to our starboard waiting to fall in line. There didn't appear to be anything strikingly exciting in the capture. Outside of these happenings the voyage has been exceptionally tame.

"For some few of us the most important event of the trip has been seasickness, despite the fact that the old Atlantic has held down her waves to proportions most nearly suited to landlubbers. A heavy swell for two days and to-day's storm have been the only exceptions to a smoothness that was almost lakelike. Personally I can pity those who were seasick. I was there myself, very much there. At times the grub has been fairly respectable, at times very bad. At one meal the Highlanders refused point blank to eat the fish which was served to them. The result was that 'bully' beef and pickles replaced the fish. A pretty good treat it was, too. After one or two strenuous kicks on the part of the men the officers took steps to bring about an improvement; but for a few days, while we were in mid-ocean, some of the meat that was served to us was disgraceful.

"Then one day orders were posted up to that 'owing to a miscalculation on the part of the caterer,' the stores of meat, butter and jam were short.

A Really Dry Canteen.

"This state of things was aggravated by the fact that only pop and soda could be purchased at the canteens. The canteens were open only at certain hours of the day. Their supply of tobacco, cigarettes and matches was insufficient to last the voyage, and men have been splitting the last named articles to make them hang out. Five cents for two matches, and fifty cents for a 15c box of cigarettes have been prices commonly paid during the last week and I have of-



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