

The New Field Telegraph Service Corps at Niagara Camp. Lieut. Irving in Command.

THE FIELD TELEGRAPH SERVICE

A New Feature in Canadian Military Camps—By W. M. Scanlan

THE field telegraph service, which was inaugurated this year at Niagara camp, has apparently made good. Under Sergt.-Major Shergold, the nucleus has been formed of a permanent field telegraph service corps, and indications are that it will take its place with the most competent in the world. The little detachment, part of the 2nd Field Company Canadian Engineers, has after two weeks work, manifested an efficiency which is almost amazing. Some instances of what they have accomplished will be given later on. To the uninitiated, however, it will be necessary to describe what the Field Telegraph Service is.

Briefly, it is what its name implies. An instrument of the "vibratory" type; a waggon and corp of men for laying wires; operators; and you have the machinery for the telegraph service used on the field of battle. The instrument can be operated under all sorts of weather conditions; and under efficient hands the wires can be laid (along the ground, except where roads are to be crossed) at a speed of from three to six miles an hour, and can keep up with cavalry on the march, maintaining thus constant telegraphic communication with the base.

The field telegraph has been in constant use in the British army for about thirty years. The campaigns in Zululand, the Boer war of 1881, Bechuanaland, Ashanti (two expeditions, 1895 and 1900), Egypt in 1882-85, and under Lord Kitchener in the Soudan, proved its efficiency. It was in the last Boer war, however, that it reached its greatest effectiveness, and after the occupation of Bloemfontein, Lord Roberts assembled the field telegraph companies and said that in all his forty years' experience in India, he had never before had a field telegraph company that could keep up with his line of march, and he complimented them on having attained this most desirable point.

Possibly the best instance, however, of its usefulness was at the relief of Kimberly, when it was the means of getting the news from Lord Kitchener at Klipdrift to General French at Kimberley, that Cronje was retiring toward the centre of the Free State, with the result that General French was able to cut off Cronje's line of retreat by seizing the "drifts" on the Modder River before the Boer general could get there.

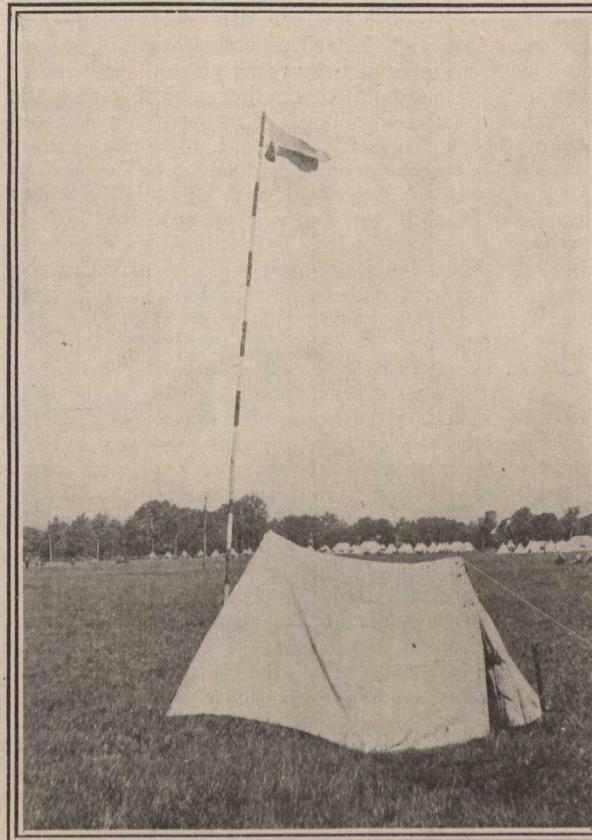
It was the idea of Lieut. Irving, of the 2nd Field Company of Engineers that resulted in the introduction of the field telegraph at this year's camp at Niagara. The suggestion was made to the Government, with the result that the 2nd Field Company were supplied with one waggon, four miles of wire, instruments, and enough poles to make thirteen crossings.

A corps was at once formed. The company were fortunate in having Sergt.-Major Shergold, who was with the field telegraph service all through the South African campaign, to act as instructor. The following men were picked to make up the detachment: Operators, D. McNeil and N. Mackay; men on waggon, G. Priest, F. Barber, F. C. Pemberton, A. K. Whyte; drivers, Chas. Matthews and W. Bennet; linemen, J. Fordham, P. Cailles. Sergt. J. O. Taylor was placed in command of the waggon, part of his duty being to ride behind to see that the wire was all correct.

They worked with a will. It was something new, and interesting. They became enthusiasts, and clustered around Major Shergold when he was giving his instructions regarding the working of the



An Operator using Ear Phone



Operating Tent at Niagara Camp.

various instruments, like so many children in a nature study class.

The result was such as to exceed Major Shergold's most sanguine expectations. On the last test before breaking up camp, it was found that in two minutes after the order to start work had been given, the little tent would be set up, the instruments under the hands of the operators, and the waggon on its way across country.

Crossings are made by erecting poles on either side of the road or track which it is necessary to cross, and stringing the wires across them. These the little detachment developed the ability to make in remarkably fast time. Across level ground, the wire could be laid at a gallop, and so successful in fact have the corps been that they may be asked to give a demonstration at the Toronto Exhibition this fall.

Only once during the two weeks was there a break in the line. The story of how it came about is interesting.

On Wednesday, June 23, Col. Weatherby went out to inspect the work of the corps. They were three miles out from headquarters.

As he rode out, he noticed the long snaky wire lying in the grass.

"I'll just see what these fellows can do," he said to his companion; and, dismounting, took his pliers, unwound the tape from a joint, cut the wire, and rewound the joint. He then rode on to where the waggon was working, a couple of miles away.

"Can you send a message for me?" he inquired.

"Certainly," was the reply.

The message was written out, and handed to the operator. "I want it to get to headquarters as soon as possible," he said, and rode away.

The operator started to call, but the familiar "buzz, buzz" of the vibratory sounder did not come. There was consternation in the detachment. The tester was put to work, but no grounded wire was registered. It must be a break, it was decided, and a galloper with a crook stick was sent back along the line post haste to locate the trouble.

He found it, hidden though it was; and inside of twenty minutes after the first intimation of difficulty, the line was working again; and when Col. Weatherby got back to camp he found his message waiting for him!

The line can be used for telephone as well as telegraph purposes. All sounds, be they Morse code or human voice, are received through an ear phone. For that reason the operator must be at his post continually. The importance placed on the service can be estimated by the fact that in active service, an operator, if he deserts his instrument for only a few moments, may be court-martialled and shot!

THERE were three at the little table in the cafe, a lady and two men. Suddenly the electric lights went out, and the lady, quickly and noiselessly, drew back.

An instant later there was the smack of a compound kiss. As the electric lights went up each man was seen to be smiling complaisantly.

"I thought I heard a kiss," said the lady, "but nobody kissed me."

Then the men suddenly glared at each other, and flushed and looked painfully sheepish.—*Cleveland Plaindealer.*