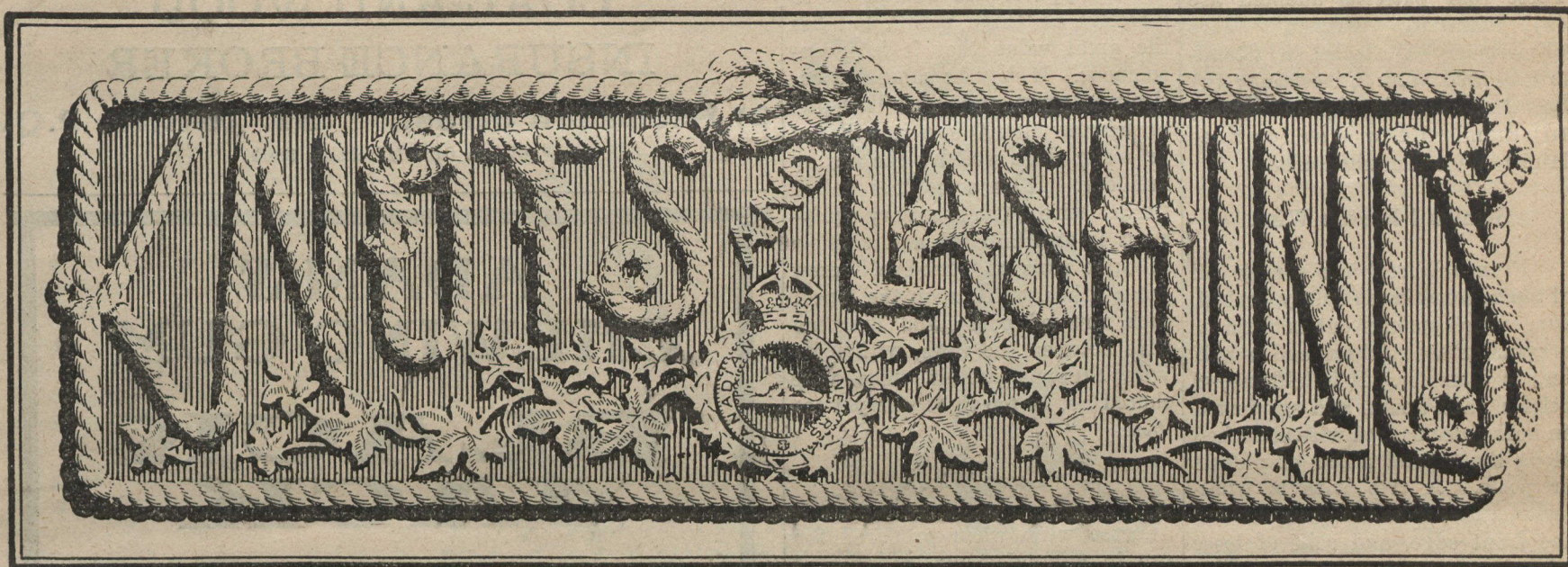


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Development of use of Obstacle in modern warfare

OBSTACLES.

By Lt. E. T. Adney, C.E.

(Continued from last week)

“Gooseberries”.

Another portable type, known as a “gooseberry”, is made of barbed wire. The relative positions of the individual coils, are similar to those of parallels of longitude on a globe, the coils being secured together at the “poles”. A stick, extending several inches outside, may be added, by means of which the “gooseberry” may be thrown some distance out in front.

Another form consists of wire wound on a frame of three crossed sticks. Each of the obstacles referred to, are from two and a half to three feet in diameter. They may be thrown over the parapet, or used to block the passage ways through a belt of fixed wire entanglement.

Fixed Obstacles.

Whenever it is possible, a belt of fixed entanglement is placed well out in front of the fire trench, along the front of support and other rearward trenches, and on both sides of communication trenches that may, at some future time, be the objective of a flank attack. All are of wire fixed upon stakes, are generally known as

“high” and “low” wire entanglements, and may be arranged in a variety of ways. Originally, for high entanglements the posts used were of wood, standing four to five feet above the ground. Later on, metal came into use, a common form consisting of “angle iron” with pointed top, notches slashed on the sides, and a screw base. The metal stake now in very general use is, however, a half inch round rod of iron, turned upon itself to form “eyes” every foot, and with a corkscrew base. The Germans use such stakes of two to five “eyes” and a picket of a single “eye”. The British of course have been using many of these German stakes, captured with other engineer material from time to time. At the present, however, the usual practice is to use posts with four “eyes”, a low post with two “eyes”, and a picket with one “eye”. Wooden posts, of course, had to be driven in with mauls, a procedure which even when undertaken at night generally drew enemy fire. The screw type of post may be silently screwed into place, and, by using a windlassing stick through the lowest eye, the work may be done while lying close to the ground.

High Wire Entanglements.

At one time, a common form consisted of two to five rows of posts, say six feet apart, the posts being

“staggered”, and at about an equal distance apart. A vertical fence might be carried along the outer line of posts, but the interior construction would be, in general, that of carrying the wires, “tent-wise”, from top of one stake to bottom of those adjacent. It might also have an “apron” in front and also at back, consisting of three or four horizontal strands carried by stay wires, sloping from top of stake to a ground picket. The Germans regularly employed wide belts of wire, erected in somewhat this general way. General von Arnim in instructions to the Fourth Army, facing the British in Flanders, gave orders to erect three belts, each 33 feet wide, with 15 to 29 feet between, the outermost edge being 65 yards from the fire trench. Ordinarily 35 to 49 yards is considered beyond effective bombing distance of the fire trench.

Passage Ways.

It is necessary, of course, for patrols and troops generally, to be able to get through one’s own entanglements. Passage ways are therefore left, running slash wise, or S-shaped. The posts on the inner side, may be painted white on the near side, so as to be plainly visible in the darkness. Again, belts may overlap in such a way as to leave a passage between. Such openings are not visible from the front.

“Standard” Wire Entanglements.

The British have found it necessary to definitely “standardize” the construction of obstacles. There were too many types, and too many “drills” for erecting them. A recruit in England would learn one drill, a different one altogether at the Base in France, and on reaching his company or battalion might be told to forget both of these and to adopt the Divisional standard pattern. Accordingly four patterns were selected, and units



Orderly Officer:—“Sentry, hand over your Orders.”
Sentry:—“Sure, Sir, an’ if you want ‘em, Sir, you’ll find ‘em all pinned up in the sentry box, Sir!”