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### PRINCIPLES OF TRENCH CONSTRUCTION

By Capt. R. W. Powell, M.C., C.E.

In a few short articles the writer intends to give some details of interest in connection with the principles of trench construction.

Trench warfare, which was adopted at the close of the battle of the Marne, and has practically continued on the western front since, presents three decidedly different conditions that have to be considered, apart from conditions due to unequal strength in the air, inequalities of natural strength, gas, tanks, etc., in order to appreciate the principles of construction adopted.

First. The enemy may be the aggressor, launching attacks with a view to taking the territory in our possession, either for strategic reasons or for the purpose of inflicting more casualties upon us than is necessary for him to sustain in his assault.

It may be well here to note that in the early days of the war, troops launching an offensive usually suffered more casualties than those defending; but conditions have materially changed, owing primarily to the great weight of

artillery now employed, together with the valuable aid now provided by the air service. Consequently a successfully launched assault under later day conditions reaps the greater number of casualties among the enemy.

It might also be well to remark at this stage that the depressing effect produced upon the troops that are placed in front to stem the onslaught of an offensive is a tremendous factor, and at some period of the fight is bound to bear results.

The nature of warfare is continually changing, due to one side or the other adopting new tactics or introducing new weapons of destruction. It would possibly be not too much out of the way to relate, as an illustration of this, the following story:—

As new instruments of warfare are invented they are, most probably, first brought into use on the more important fronts until the supply is sufficient to furnish them to other fronts of lesser importance where the fighting is naturally of a more crude nature.

The war was going along merrily on the western front with the introduction of Stokes guns, 60-pounders, 200-pounders, etc., the latter, being fired either by

mechanical device or by a charge, heave a bomb of 200 pounds, which when it hits creates no small impression. In the meantime the Turks were fighting in a more primitive sort of way. They lived in their trenches opposite ours, and the only thing that suggested war was a lonesome bullet ploughing its whining way across; and possibly, where the trenches were close together, a home-made bomb, manufactured from pieces of horse-shoes, razor blades, nails, etc., contained in a tin, might be thrown across.

The British eventually became more aggressive in this field and produced a few trench mortars.

On a fine sunny day, without any undue provocation, they let loose a 200-pounder. As luck would have it, the first shot was a direct hit on the Turkish trench with the usual result, such as flying timbers, sand-bags, etc. A "Tommy" at our parapet was closely watching results, and to his astonishment there arose from the damaged trench a Turk of tremendous stature, carrying a white flag. The following conversation took place.

Tommy:—"What in Blankity Blink is the matter with you? Do you want to surrender or do you all want to give in."

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