

Confidential

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I.—EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS SENIOR OFFICERS AT THE FRONT.

(a) *Cavalry*.—Up to the present, long-distance reconnaissance by cavalry has been entirely replaced by aeroplanes, the cavalry work being confined to covering the immediate front, or to being confined to covering the immediate front, or to being massed for operations against a flank. The training of the cavalry with the rifle has been invaluable, and has given them great advantage over the enemy. There have been no cases up to the present of large cavalry charges with the *arme blanche*, but the latter has been used a good deal in small affairs.

(b) *Flying Corps*.—No words could exaggerate the magnificent work performed by the aeroplanes. Their information has been extraordinarily correct.

(c) *Infantry*.—I think we may congratulate ourselves on the soundness of our training in peace.

Men are learning now, and indeed have learned, that when ordered to dig they must do it with a will in order to escape heavy loss from shell fire.

Digging is as important as shooting. The country being easy to dig in, the Germans quickly get right underground, making head cover good enough to save them from any shell which does not hit directly. They also cover the front of their trenches with a net work of entanglements.*

(d) The choice of infantry fields of fire is largely governed by the necessity for avoiding their being exposed to artillery fire. (See below, paragraph II., (a) Entrenchments.) A field of fire of 300 to 500 yards is quite sufficient. This indicates the necessity for accurate shooting at short ranges.

(e) Insist on the training of scouts, and particularly on the training of non-commissioned officers as patrol leaders.

An advance should not be made in rigid lines, but with clouds of skirmishers—5 or 6 yards apart—thrown forward according to the ground and available cover.

There seems little new to be learnt. The essential thing is to pay attention to the principles on which our training has been based.

II.—NOTES FROM A CONVERSATION WITH THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF AN INFANTRY BATTALION WHO HAS RECENTLY COME HOME WOUNDED.

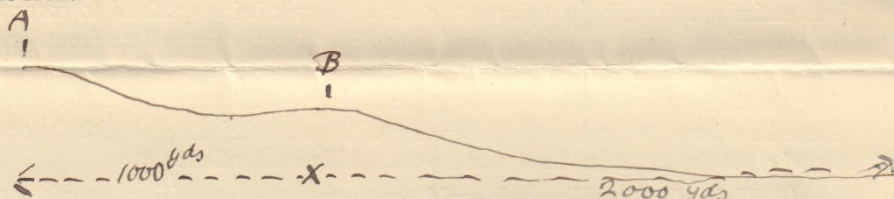
(a) *Entrenchments*.—It has been found that the best form of trench is a deep narrow trench without parapet or headcover. Parapet and headcover form too much of a mark for the German artillery. Trenches 2 feet wide for "fire standing," with earth thrown in rear, are recommended. The draining of trenches is a difficulty; if possible they should be dug so as to communicate with hollow lanes. (For method of siting trenches at night. see under Signalling.) When the men are once ensconced in these trenches they will have little to fear. An entrenched company of the battalion was fired on all day by all types of German

* From other sources, the enemy is reported to make use of dummy trenches in front of his true position. The trenches actually occupied are well concealed, and between them and the dummy trenches are wire entanglements swept by fire from the former.

guns, and only one man was wounded. Battalions which have not dug themselves in at once have suffered in consequence.

Small trenches constructed with the portable tools are worse than no trenches at all against *artillery fire*, as they give the German artillery a better target.

When siting trenches by day it is very sound to occupy a position with a false crest on the enemy's side, rather than occupy a crest with no dead ground to the front.



Trenches sited at A will probably not suffer at all from hostile gun fire. Those at B will be "pounded" with great accuracy by hostile artillery.

From A only 1,000 yards field of fire is possible. The field of fire from B is anything up to two miles. Of these A is by far the best, and the enemy's artillery will find great difficulty in locating the trenches.

(b) *Tools*.—Infantry battalions have been often handicapped owing to the picks and shovels being a long way in rear in a wagon which has been unable to reach the battalion.

When a battalion is sent forward to secure an important point (*e.g.*, at the passage of a river), there should be at least 200 picks and shovels actually distributed amongst the men before they go forward. The small portable tools are useful, however, for improving a bank or ditch at the side of a road.

Whenever possible tools should be collected from all farms, &c., in the neighbourhood.

(c) *Outposts*.—The rule of standing to arms an hour before daybreak should always be observed. In the forward lines a quarter to half of the force is on outpost, and even in the third line one-eighth of the troops are on outpost duty.

(d) *Intercommunication*.—Operations in woods call for the most deliberate preparation, the work of the scouts being of the utmost importance. Careful pre-arrangement is necessary in order that friend may not be mistaken for foe. In this connection, experience has emphasized the importance of employing all possible means of maintaining communication between infantry and artillery.

(e) *Signalling*.—Electric torches have been found most useful by battalion and company commanders. Much valuable intercommunication can be carried out at night by this means.

In siting trenches *at night* it has been found most useful to send out a man with an electric torch in front of the proposed trench, holding it some 2 or 3 feet from the ground and going gradually backwards towards the enemy. If this is not done, trenches may be made at night with a field of fire of, perhaps, only 50 yards.

(f) *Billets*.—The difficulty of finding officers at night in billets where they are covered up in straw, or on roads, must be recognised. An adjutant must know exactly where the captain of each company is lying, so that he can wake him up without disturbing others. In the same way a battalion commander must sleep at a spot where the brigade-major can instantly find him.

(g) *Advance under artillery fire*.—Several times it has been necessary to advance under unsubdued hostile artillery fire. If the ground to be traversed is open, small columns at 50 yards interval and 300 yards distance seems to be the

We call this "File" to teach our battalions to assume this formation this single word of command
3 *CPL*

best method of avoiding casualties. A brigade lying in the open in this formation was shelled by two batteries for half an hour and had only 25 casualties.

NOTE.—In almost every letter received from the theatre of war emphasis is laid on the fact that a high standard of discipline is vitally necessary. Under the conditions which have to be faced in modern warfare, too much stress cannot be laid upon this essential.

We lead this in close order
File

REMARKS GATHERED IN CONVERSATION WITH MAJOR J. M. HUTCHINSON, THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS, WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

1. Want of sleep rendered Officers and men more tired than excessive marching. All ranks should endeavour to accustom themselves to a minimum of sleep.
2. Mounted Officers must be fit to march.
3. Sergeants' packs should be carried. It is of paramount importance that Officers and N.C.O.'s should be capable of work immediately on arrival in billets. Much extra work thrown on N.C.O.'s in preserving march discipline owing to number of reservists who were not accustomed to discipline and bad marchers.
4. Tools should be carried on pack animals. Limber wagons cannot move through woods.
5. All buildings should be avoided. The effect of German artillery fire awful, never can rely on being free from it.
6. Roads should always be avoided, in attack and defence always shell traps. German range by maps.
7. When moving under artillery fire (Coalbox fire), lie flat on hearing the shell coming. Percussion and shrapnel shells bursting blind always throws upwards. Men lying flat escape unhurt.
8. Scouts in case of Infantry, ground scouts only of value. They should always be out about 3 to 500 yards.
9. Signallers never seen used during a fight, impossible under fire.
10. Names of regiments should be worked in worsted and sewn on clothing.
11. Wood fighting should be constantly practised. Most important. Impossible to avoid going through woods. Germans have snipers in woods for express purpose of picking off officers, etc. File suggested as best formation going through woods. Easy to meet flank attack by turning to right or left. On deployment No. 1 Section right, No. 2 left, No. 3 right, No. 4 left.
12. Trenches narrow and deep. No particular design.
13. Orders very brief. March tables impossible to work accurately, but should be constantly practised in peace, to accustom all ranks to be able to roughly calculate time and space. Staff work in this respect wonderful during retreat from Mons.
14. March discipline of paramount importance.
15. Men never to move anywhere without arms.
16. Observers most useful, in such close country constant watch absolutely necessary. Officers eyes and ears should be everywhere.