

The Telephone and the Flood

The telephone has become to such an extent an integral part of our business and social life that we sometimes lose sight of the fact that it is also our greatest aid in times of emergency.

Attention was forcibly called to this fact during the recent disastrous floods in the Ohio Valley. That there were not more lives lost was due to the fact that the telephone messages of warning were swifter than the onrushing waters. With the vast network of telephone wires connecting practically every outlying district and farm of the Ohio and contributory valleys, warning messages were sent in time to enable the people to escape to the hills.

Here was evidence that the telephone has a wider and more general application than its forerunner—the telegraph. Anyone who can talk and hear can send and receive telephone messages. When the floods were at their heights, the telephone provided practically the only means of keeping the stricken districts in touch with the outside world and facilitating the work of rescue and relief. Daily papers everywhere brought out such headlines as "Governor Cox Talks to Dayton Officials Over Telephone," "Wire Chief Sticks to Post and Telephones Details of Disaster," and "Telephone Directs Rescue Parties to Danger Points."

Column after column in the newspapers bore witness to the telephone's value in the emergency which has arisen. From the very first the telephone brought a comforting sense of the nearness of relief to those in the rural districts and cities isolated by the floods.

The Bell Telephone System, which handles the bulk of the regular telephone messages of the country, also bore the brunt of the work of keeping the lines of communication open during this emergency. A vast army of repair men, known by the picturesque term of "trouble shooters," is always on hand, but such opportunities for their activities are fortunately rare. Upon the very first intimation from the Weather Bureau of impending floods these repair men were gathered together at the strategic telephone centers, with their equipment in working order, ready to respond to any calls that might come in.

At the distributing houses and pole yards of the Western Electric Company, which supplies the bulk of the material for the telephone companies of the country, are immense stocks of supplies, comprising poles, cross-arms, cable and wire, which are constantly kept in readiness for just such crises. These houses are located at the principal cities and thus serve as centers of distribution to the surrounding districts. Upon them and the immense factory of the company at Hawthorne, on the outskirts of Chicago, the telephone service of the country depends largely for its material.

The test of an organization comes in such an emergency. The rise and overflow of the Ohio River made it impossible to draw to any great ex-

tent on the stocks held in reserve at Cincinnati; but the other warehouses and store yards responded to the call and shipments were started forward toward the center of the stricken districts. Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of telephone cable were shipped from New York City by express. A whole train-load of poles was shipped from the company's yards in Michigan. The large stock at the central warehouse at Hawthorne was drawn on for an enormous amount of cable and other material. Shipments being made by express, practically every train carried its quota of telephone material. The immense factories of the company were put on a twenty-four hour schedule and the vast army of employees worked with a willing spirit to replenish the stocks that had been reduced by the emergency calls.

Increasing familiarity with the telephone on the farm, in the home and in the office, has made us blind to the intricate workings of the vast machine that keeps the telephone system working, and it is only during these emergencies that attention is drawn to the never-ending warfare that the telephone people are waging with the elements. At these times the telephone is practically the only public utility that continues business. Electric lights cease to illuminate streets and buildings; as locomotives cannot swim, railroads give up the attempt to run trains; and boats take the place of street cars. But the telephone people keep their lines working. When the wires are broken at one point, they are promptly strung at another. Men in boats string cables along a bridge, one span of which is destroyed. They no sooner finish the work than the rest of the bridge comes down with a crash, taking the telephone wire with it. Thereupon improvised poles are erected, one on each side of the river, and wires are stretched between them. Service over these wires is maintained until cables can be strung across the piling of the ruined bridge. This task of keeping the main lines of communication open was not the only one that kept the telephone people busy night and day. When the man whose office upon the first floor of his establishment was under water, began to do business in the second story, the telephone people came to put in a new telephone. The young women who sat before the switchboard in many of the central offices, were carried to and from their work in row boats. They willingly worked long hours under a greatly increased strain, for in times like these the telephone is called upon to do double and triple duty.

The repair men in the Ohio and Indiana districts able to cope with the ordinary troubles, incident to maintaining telephone service needed help of course in this almost national catastrophe, and hundreds of men were rushed to the scene from New York, Philadelphia, and many other cities. Motor boats were provisioned for extended trips into the stricken districts.

The entire resources of the Bell

system stood back of the force of repair men and supplied the means to do the work required. Its efforts were crowned with success and the operation was pertinently described by the man who said: "In order to enable people to talk by telephone during the flood, the telephone company spent money like water." The value of the telephone was appreciated, not only by those in the devastated regions to whom it brought aid, but to the outside world to whom it brought tidings and relief from mental strain.

The telephone, at one time scoffed at and derided as a scientific toy, has become man's greatest servant.

IN PORTO RICO.

Mr. Frank Parker Writes Interestingly of His Trip Through the Island.

The following letter from Mr. Frank Parker will doubtless prove of much interest to our readers for many and various reasons. Mr. Parker is known to a great many of the Union Farmers on account of his work in connection with the Boy's Corn Clubs in various parts of the State. The following letter was written to his father, Capt. T. B. Parker, of Raleigh, director of the Farmers' Institute of the Department of Agriculture. It is dated at Aibonito, February 27:

"At the time we left San Juan yesterday it was quite warm, it being just after noon. Our trip to here was fifty miles and we rose to the altitude of two thousand feet. Made the trip in three hours with the automobile, and the difference in the air was very perceptible, the higher we rose until it was quite cool. This is one of the highest towns on the island. No great distance to the south, near the famous military road which passes here from San Juan to Ponce, there is a point from which both the Atlantic ocean and the Caribbean sea may be seen. The view, like thousands of others, makes one feel that no country offers such grand views and scenes. In taking this scene in, the line of vision passes over many ranges of mountains with valleys between which brings out distinctly and beautifully the height that one looks from. In the far distance the blue oceans fade into the sky at a distance many miles at sea. Of course it is impossible to tell in words how these things look. For as you know, the vegetation, flora, people, vehicles and even soil and mountains are quite different from any you are familiar with.

"The climate is so uniform that one wishes it would get cold, if only for once, that he may see if it is as pleasant as one remembers it to be. Only yesterday I was looking at a climatological report of Puerto Rico and this town showed that during seven years the temperature had not been below 67 degrees nor over 86 degrees. Every night in the year one needs a blanket.

"The rainfall is very heavy here. In fact, this is true all over the island, excepting the south side, where they have a long drought season, usually beginning in November or December and lasting until May or June. The big planters, especially sugar men, are now building extensive and expensive irrigation plants or systems

for certain sections down there. The water supply comes from up in the mountains, where it rains almost every day. In fact, one place on the island is reported as having had 350 days in which it rained during one year, but this is on top of the highest mountains.

"The Insular Fair is now in full swing—imagine its being fair time in February—and a very good one, too. The principal exhibits are: fruits in the agricultural hall, miscellaneous but well arranged exhibits in the machinery hall; good school work and displays in the educational buildings and a full double midway. The grandstand facing the race track also has a grand position for looking out over the rolling and roaring waves as they break on the shore near by. If one could but see far enough beyond—why they could see Europe or the United States, for there is no land to interfere with the range. However, it would be necessary to look in a curved line.

"The papers have recently been full of photographs and news of the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first Christian church in the new world. I saw some time ago this church. And at San German the second oldest church still stands and fit for use. It is claimed that the original woodwork is still there. All I know is that it is old and hand hewed and the rest of the church is very old.

"Speaking of old things. The forts are the oldest in the new world—started in 1500 and built at a cost of over \$7,000,000 with prison labor. Last Saturday I had the pleasure of looking over two of them. We at one time started down a small passage way in which it was necessary to stoop while walking. We went perhaps a hundred yards and at this point three others joined it. Followed two different ones and the turns, etc., became very confusing. We were told that there were hidden cells all about under these tremendous walls which had no windows. There are told terrible stories about them. These forts are very strongly built with cement and stone, many of the walls twenty feet thick but not sufficient to withstand modern projectiles. Sampson's fleet demonstrated that in 1898.

"So many people have the idea that this is such a small place and it is only one hundred miles long by forty wide, but the topography is such as to make it seem larger. For instance, in going from San Juan to Ponce, across the island, it is eighty miles, due in part to the very irregular formation of mountain ranges of which the whole island is made of. There is very little level land excepting near the coast lines.

Biddy, the hen, will stand considerable thoughtful attention. She has a value to the American farmer equal to that of his wheat fields, and every day, as the sun sinks, there has been added to the store of national wealth nearly \$2,000,000. This is in the face of unsuitable housing and little by way of proper care. May the tribe of Biddy increase just as fast as the farmer learns how to give her the equare hen deal!—Farm, Stock, and Home.

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