

# Annual report of the Secretary of War

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### INSTRUCTION AT MILITARY AND NAVAL ACADEMIES.

The course of instruction commenced at the Naval Academy at Newport, Rhode Island, to which reference was made in my last report, has been continued, as I am informed, at that institution during the past year. A communication from Lieutenant Commander S. B. Luce, United States navy, the officer charged with the duty by the Navy Department, states: "At the coming June examination, twenty-one (21) midshipmen leave the academy for active service. I shall make a special report of the fact to the department, that they may be sent on board different vessels, and thus the entire number be made available at once. In October next thirty-one (31) more midshipmen, competent to act as signal officers, leave the academy, and the wants of the navy will be in a very great measure supplied."

Practical illustration of the progress and skill of the 2d class were, I believe, given before the board of visitors at the annual examination at the Naval Academy of this year.

In July last instruction in military signals and telegraphy was made, by an order of the War Department, part of the course of instruction at the Military Academy at West Point. Captain Samuel T. Cushing, acting signal officer, with proper assistants, were detailed for this duty. The course has been ably conducted by this officer. It has embraced instructions in the drill and management of signal parties, the theory and practical use of aerial and electric telegraphy, and a thorough field practice with the field-line modes used in the army. At the last report of the officer on duty, the first class of cadets had so far advanced as to read easily, by day or by night, communications telegraphed with flags or torches, from Newburg to West Point, a distance of eight miles. They have studied, by practice, the working of the light field telegraph lines, which come within the management of the corps. The course to be conducted by Captain Cushing and his assistants would embrace practice on these lines and the modes of working them in common use. The addition of this branch to the studies before pursued at the Military Academy promises, in my opinion, an advantage to the service.

The use of field signals and field telegraph lines has now become so common in military operations that an officer can hardly be considered instructed who is not informed as to their employment. This especially applies in the existing war.

In 1863 Capt. Samuel T. Cushing was ordered to West Point to give instruction in signaling. The results which followed from his instruction must have been more gratifying to Maj. Myer than to the commandant. He says: "From Washington I went to the Military Academy at West Point to introduce the system as part of the course of instruction. I reached there in July, 1863, and was kept on duty until February, 1864, when I was relieved from signal duty and commenced my duty as Commissary of Subsistence. The Signal Course was a popular one at the Academy. The first class was instructed fully and learned to be good signalists. The officers charged with the discipline of the Academy said that I had 'ruined the service,' since, by several methods not known to the officers, all the cadets could, by winking their eyes, wiping their lips, tapping on gas pipes, etc., etc., communicate information as to inspections going on, and give intelligence in section rooms as to abstruse questions, etc., etc., and consequently the cadets could engage in all sorts of rascality with less fear of detection than ever before. I thought it quite a compliment to the usefulness of the code."