"Hints to Campaigners" from the *United States Army and Navy Journal*

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The following practical tips for campaigning troops in the field originally appeared in August and September 1863 numbers of the *United States Army and Navy Journal* and have been slightly edited and annotated for clarity. The editor presents this information solely in the interest of historical research and makes no claims, pro or con, regarding the efficacy of any particular method described below.

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HINTS TO CAMPAIGNERS.

No. I

In bivauking [sic] on the march, or on a scout, attention to the selection of a proper camping ground is of great importance. A novice is apt to make the mistake of selecting a tree for his camping place, which spreads out nobly above but affords nothing but a bare stem below. The broad shadow cast by its foliage attracts him, and as he *stands* to the leeward it seems snug and comfortable but as soon as he lies down he finds the distance between him and the foliage increased, and it proves valueless for shelter. What is needed in blowy weather is a dense low screen, perfectly water-tight, not higher above the ground than the knee. Thus, in a low turf plain, a sod can be turned up, seven feet long by ten feet wide, and, if propped up on its edge, it will form a sufficient shield against the wind.

In heavy gales, the neighborhood of a single tree is a positive nuisance. It creates a violent eddy, which leaves clear evidence of its existence. Thus, in wheat fields it is common for a storm to batter the grain quite flat in circles round each tree while elsewhere no injury has been done. It must be borne in mind, that a gale of wind never blows in level current, but in all kinds of curls and eddies, as the driving of a dust-storm, or the vagaries of bits of straw caught up by the wind unmistakably show. Little hillocks, or undulations, combined with the general lay of the ground, cause these eddies, and entirely divert the force of the wind from particular spots. These spots should be looked for; they are discovered by watching the grass or even the sand on the ground. If the surface be still in one place, while all around is agitated by the wind, we shall not go far wrong in selecting that place for our bed, however unprotected it may seem in other respects. Indeed a slight mound will sometimes shelter the ground for many feet behind it.

A clump of trees yield[s] wonderful shelter. The Swedes have a proverb, that "the forest is the poor man's jacket." In the cruel climate of Thibet [sic], Dr. Hooker tells us that it is the habit to encamp close up to some large rock, which absorbs heat all day and parts with it but slowly during the night.[1] It is thus a great reservoir of heat when the sun is down, and its

[1] This is probably an oblique reference to famed English botanist Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911). The quote discussing Tibetan camping habits may come from Hooker's work *The Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya, Being an Account, Botanical and Geographical, of the Rhododendrons Recently Discovered in the Mountains of Eastern Himalaya....* (London: Reeve, Benham, and Reeve, 1849-1851) or, more likely, his *Himalayan Journals; or, Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia Mountains, &c.* (London: J. Murray, 1854). Biographical details about J. D. Hooker can be found at: http://www.jdhooker.org.uk/

neighborhood is always coveted. The near neighborhood of water is objectionable, for, besides being exposed to malaria and musquitoes [sic], the night air is to be felt more cold and penetrating by its side than at one or two hundred yards distance from it.

Avoid sleeping in slight hollows in clear, still weather. The cold stratum of air pours down into them like water from the surrounding plain, and stagnates there. Spring frosts are always more severely felt in hollows. But in a broad, level plain, especially if the night be clear and calm, look out for some slight rise for an encampment. The chilled stratum of air drains off from it, and is replaced by warmer air. Horses and cattle, as the night sets in, always draw up to these higher grounds, which rise like islands through the sea of mist that covers the plain.

However hot the weather may be during the day, the traveller should never relax his endeavor to keep a dry and warm change of clothes for his bivouac at night. Hardships, in rude weather, matter little to a healthy man when he is awake and moving, and while the sun is above the horizon, but let him never forget the deplorable results that may follow a single night's exposure to cold, malaria and damp. Let the campaigner, when out in trying weather, strive to make his sleeping place perfectly dry and comfortable. A little forethought, and an extra hour spent in making a snugger berth will prevent self-reproaches. He should not cease until he is convinced that he is in a condition to withstand the chill of the early morning air. Any omission in his preparations will be irreparable, for, in the cold of a pitiless night, he has hardly sufficient stamina to rise and face the weather, and the darkness makes it impossible for him to cope with these difficulties.

Due attention to personal comfort is no indication of effeminacy, while the lack of it is evidence either of stupidity or of an ignorance which needs enlightenment.

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In a moderately dry climate there is but little doubt that bivouacking is superior to tenting; fresher air is breathed, and a man is more imbued with a feeling of wild life when he sleeps habitually in the open air than when shut up in a tent. Besides, when in the vicinity of an enemy there can be no comparison between the hazard of a tent and that of a bivouac. In the former, the man sleeps heavy; he can see nothing, and he can hear but imperfectly. Moreover, his position being accurately known, he is at all times in danger of an attack. The first NAPOLEON was always in favor of the bivouac as being for more healthy than tenting.

One of the most simple methods of securing the protection of a wind-tight wall under the lee of which to sleep, is to take advantage of two or three small bushes standing near together, and intertwine their branches with boughs so as to form a thick hedge. Or, a few leafy boughs may be stuck in the ground so as to incline over the bed, and wattled-in with other boughs to make the screen secure against wind. A good arrangement is to have a cross-bar supported by two upright forks driven into the ground; against this cross-bar a number of poles are made to lean, on the back of which fir and pine branches are laid horizontally; and against the branches are to be placed another set of leaning poles to secure all of their weight.

Having provided the shelter, the preparation of the bed is next in order. It is a mistaken notion that the upper covering is all a person need concern himself about; there must be clothing between him and the earth as well as between him and the air. Warmth is as much required by the under portion of the body as by the upper. Let any one try the experiment of rolling himself in a single blanket and sleeping on the ground. The undermost side on a cold night will be found by far the colder of the two, and if the ground be wet, its dampness will penetrate through a very thick substance. To prevent this, the sleeping place should be covered with grass, leaves, rushes, flags, or anything that chance may afford for the purpose. Even small articles of clothing, or horse furniture that cannot be rendered available as covering, should be used in this way.

The texture of the upper cover should be such as to prevent the wind from blowing through, for if it does, no thickness will be of any avail in keeping out the cold. Hence the advantage of buffalo robes or other skins. It is, however, of importance that the outer covering should have such a weight as not to be easily displaced by the movement of the sleeper, or by the blowing of the wind.

When using the ground as a sleeping place, it is advisable to scrape a hollow therein to the depth of about six inches at the position the hips will occupy, and sloping in both directions to the surface at about the place to be occupied by the shoulders and feet. This will permit the body to assume the position it would naturally take if recumbent upon a soft bed or mattress, and will add greatly to the comfort of the individual. Let any one lie on a perfectly level surface for a few hours, and he will think he has attained the very acme of discomfort from the soreness felt by his sides, and hips. At any rate, if a shapely cavity cannot be made, a little hollow should be made in the ground, just where the hip-bone would otherwise press.

In a wet, unhealthy climate, the advantages of a bivouac must be dispensed with, and the tent must be resorted to for protection against rain, dew, and malaria. In the choice of a tent the most roomy and easily pitched should be selected. One that will stand in some shape with four pegs, or at least six, is desirable; it should peg close down to the ground without the intervention of any ropes; it is no objection that it should require more than one pole; and as regards weight, it must be borne in mind that a tent in use weighs heavier than it does in the maker's dry show room.

A tent should never be pitched in a slovenly way, as it is far more roomy when properly pitched, besides presenting a better appearance. To drive tent pegs securely when the soil is loose, the surface sand should be scraped away before they are driven in. Pouring water upon loose mould renders it more tenacious; and when one peg is insufficient to hold, a second one should be drive[n] at its back. In fact, in order that proper proficiency should be attained in this particular, every command should be frequently drilled at tent pitching.

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After pitching a tent, suitable draining arrangements should be made. A ditch dug around the outside of the tent, or even a slight furrow made with a tent-peg, will serve to turn water from the interior. When a storm is threatening, care should be taken that the pegs are not subjected to too much strain, else the shrinking of the canvas when wet will tear them up. Tent furniture should be as simple as possible. The most essential articles are, a small portable bedstead,

folding table, and a couple of camp stools. Where these can be transported they are luxuries that well pay for the providing. Camp stools should be low and wide, and the table should correspond in height, as the tent is less crowded when the furniture is low. The stools, if made sufficiently wide, will serve the double purpose of stool and portion of bedstead. Flannel should always be worn next to the skin. Experience has shown that, in all expeditions requiring exposure, a great proportion of the sick come from those who were unprovided with flannel. Cotton is next in excellence to flannel, and linen is the least conducive to health. For an outside covering, a poncho is an invaluable article, as it also serves for a blanket. India-rubber ponchos are good in wet weather, to shed rain, but render the wearer uncomfortable, and should not be worn except when it cannot be avoided.

Of equal importance with the proper selection and preparation of the stopping places, are the details relating to the means of locomotion. To prevent sore backs on saddle and pack animals, every precaution should be taken at first starting, to have well stuffed saddles and ample saddle-cloths. To preserve the backs of pack animals, short journeys, light loads, well balanced, frequent rests, and salt water well rubbed in, are essential. It has been found that travel very early in the morning is bad for horses' backs, but that travel late at night is not so. The first indications of a sore back must be at once attended to, otherwise the injury will increase in size, and a single day's neglect will convert what might have been easily cured into a serious and irremediable gall. Folding the saddle-cloth, so as to ease all pressure from the injured part, or even picking out the stuffing from the saddle, where it would bear upon it, is the best immediate remedy that can be employed. Girth galls may be relieved on their first appearance, by sewing two rolls of soft woolen on the girth. In stopping for the night, the nature of the country and the dangers to be apprehended must determine whether the animals are to be picketed, hobbled, or knee-haltered. A picketed horse soon consumes all the grass of the circuit he moves in, which necessitates the cutting of more for him. A horse that his hobbled or knee-haltered can grave during the night. A good hobble may be made by a stirrup leather, put at its middle around one fetlock, twisted half a dozen times, and then buckled around the other fetlock. To picket a horse on a sandy plain, fasten the rope to a bundle of sticks or brush, and bury it two or three feet in the sand. Never use a whip to a horse that is to be shot from, else, when a gun is raised to fire, he will imagine it to be the whip, and is sure to be unsteady. In crossing a deep river with a horse, drive him in, and then follow, grasping his tail. Should he turn his head and try to change his course, he may be directed by splashing water in his face. All other methods of swimming a horse are objectionable, and even dangerous with unpracticed horses. The worst of all is to retain the seat on his back, but if that should be attempted, the rider must at least remove his feet from the stirrups before entering the water. In fording a swift stream on foot, heavy stones should be carried in the hands; they will serve as a resistance to the force of the current; indeed, the deeper the stream, the more weight is required, though there is less at command, owing to the buoyancy of the water. Fords which are deeper than three feet, should not be attempted by footmen. For horses, they should not be over four feet. Fords should be tried for where the river is broad, rather than where it is narrow, and especially at those places where it bends in its course. The line of shallow water does not run straight across, but follows the line running from a promontory on one side to the nearest promontory on the other. By entering a stream so as to take such a course, shallow water will be ensured at the beginning and end of the course, which will not be the course in attempting to cross in any other direction.

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