KEEPING WELL IN CAMP

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Common Sense Insurance Against
Turning a Camp Into a Hospital

The coming season promises to be a record-breaker in the popularity of camping as a summer pastime. The times and more sensible manner of living will send schoolboys and college students with athletic tastes to the summer camp for weeks or months. The Boy Scout movement will carry hundreds, if not thousands, more into the simple life where health, as well as recreation and enjoyment, is the object. All this is to be encouraged and the return to nature from the highly artificial conditions of city life is bound to produce much good.

But this very escaping from the restrictions of city life is also escaping from its many protections. While we exchange the indoor life for the fresh air of tent and veranda life, we also exchange the expensive water system for one of which we know nothing. A bad guess concerning the water we are to drink for a few weeks may wreck the summer vacation or even a life. What then are some of the possible dangers the camper may encounter and the ways of avoiding them? The average camper will be one who looks for a place not too far from a town or summer resort where he may live in the fresh air and indulge in boating, fishing, and roaming the woods. It would not seem that danger lurked here, unless it was in the water.

The usual fatalities due to the inexperienced managing of boats will, of course, occur as do accidents in cities. But there are more insidious dangers lurking in the water for the unwary. Typhoid fever and dysentery are waiting for those who are ignorant and careless. Every fall there is an increase of typhoid fever in the cities, five hundred thousand (500,000) cases a year, and no one seems to get nervous about it. So every fall the ignorant and unlucky bring back to the cities disease instead of the health that was so eagerly sought. The organism that causes the disease is, as many of you know, found often in water and milk. Drinking water that has been boiled, or using a bottled water, avoiding milk and food that flies have access to until we can be sure of our surroundings, will probably, at least, get us over the dangers en route.

After reaching the place where we are to spend the vacation, the general condition of the premises should be looked into by those responsible. The water supply should be ascertained and the means learned by which it reaches you as drinking water. Any suspicious supply—water from shallow wells, from wells near stables, vaults or other offensive structures—should be rejected, or boiled before using. The presence in the neighborhood of cases of continued fever or diarrhea, especially among those concerned in any way with the handling or preparation of food, should cause investigation and the opinion of a qualified doctor.

Proprietors of camps and summer resorts are extremely sensitive to criticism of this kind and usually deny, as a routine matter, the existence of any disease in the vicinity. They must be considered as prejudiced and impartial opinions asked before any suspicious matter is settled. When parents or guardians send children or young adults to summer places, they should make inquiry about the water supply. Such inquiry would arouse the interest of the owner and
also force unfit sources of supply to be disused. A water supply that has stood the test of time, the users of which have not been made sick, and which is not readily accessible to infection by sewage will probably continue pure.

Let us remember that the boiling of water will render it incapable of giving us typhoid. The same applies to milk. This simple but neglected precaution will, therefore, do away with this common source of infection. If boiling the water is inconvenient it is an easy matter to render drinking water safe by treating it with small amounts of hypochlorite of calcium, otherwise known as chloride of lime. The slight expense makes this no hardship.

Keeping the Water Pure

A barrel or some other receptacle of good size can be used as a container. This should be provided with one or more faucets at the bottom to draw off water so that "dipping in" may be avoided. When the capacity of the container is known, it is easy to figure the amount of chemical to be used to sterilize the water. In clear water commonly used for drinking purposes, one part of chlorin (the active agent in chloride of lime) to one million of water will be ample to destroy typhoid germs. The United States Army is using this chemical put up in sealed glass tubes, which contain just enough to treat the water in a special container provided for camp use. The "hypochlorite" should contain at least thirty to thirty-two per cent chlorin when it is put up. If in hermetically-sealed glass tubes, it will remain active for nearly a year.

With such a chlorin content, seven to eight grains would be sufficient to treat forty gallons of average drinking water. The chemical as put up in a zinc canister of one or two pounds can be used if it is known to be fresh and to contain the required percentage of chlorin. The latter usually is as low as one per cent in "calcium chloride" when it has been on the market a year. In the strength mentioned the water is wholesome and, indeed, it can be used three times as strong. When too much has been used, the odor will indicate this fact without danger to one tasting the water. Upon standing or being stirred the water may then be safely used.

After a pure and safe water supply is obtained the next requirement is to destroy all offensive materials that might serve to spread disease or breed flies. The heat of summer is favorable to the development of flies which are known to carry organisms to food, hence it is essential to destroy all material likely to attract flies and to protect our food from them. When flies are numerous the cause should be ascertained and if practical measures can reduce them they should be adopted.

The greatest importance, in the absence of a sewerage system, is the proper care of the substitute for closets. Where camps are moved every day or two, shallow pits or trenches are sufficient; some of the earth removed in digging being used to promptly cover whenever the trench is used. A camp without this simple device, if it remains but a few hours, invites disaster as flies promptly carry on their feet matter to the food. Where a camp remains on one site for a week or longer, most thorough care of the latrine becomes mandatory if health is not to be imperiled. If horses are used in camp the refuse from the ground they occupy should be collected and burned or flies breed rapidly and spoil an otherwise attractive camp.

At slight expense netting or screening can be provided for camp kitchen and meal tent. If professional cooks and servants are employed, they should be known to be in good health, and not typhoid carriers. The washing of the hands before meals is a requirement for soldiers and should be for every camper. Opportunity for cleanliness should be provided for servants equally with the vacationists.

Certain rules should be used in the selection of a site to be occupied for any length of time. Clay and limestone are undesirable as the surface water stands on them after rains. A gentle slope drains the ground; the liability of storm water from higher ground must not be overlooked. A light loamy or sandy soil is the one of preference; avoid damp
low places and ground in which the water is very near the surface. The foot of a hill is liable to remain wet several days after a rain. The tendency is to get too near the river or lake on which a camp is usually pitched; unless the land there is well above the water, it is undesirable. Avoid a site that has just been vacated by a camp that has occupied it for some time. Put kerosene on all stagnant water—it prevents the breeding of mosquitoes; if water is kept standing in fire buckets, it should be changed twice a week or have a thin coating of oil.

If you are buying new tents, get the khaki or tan-colored canvas, as it excludes more light and so is less tiring for the eyes on sunny days. A tent fly should always be included and two are better than one, as the second can be pitched in front and adjoining the tent, affording a pleasant place to sit. Adjust the fly so there is an air space between it and the tent. A piece of heavy canvas makes a clean floor, especially on sandy soil.

If the tent is to be used most of the summer, a board floor adds much to the comfort. Usually, and always on sloping ground, a ditch should be dug around the tent just describing its outlines, the earth placed at the inner edge of the ditch to further obstruct water from running in. Tents should never be entirely closed even in cold weather, when they are to be slept in, as ventilation is wanting. The sides should be rolled up every fair day to let the sun and air in.

Do not sleep on the ground, take folding cots or construct something that will lift you above the ground. A lightweight blanket should be used in place of a top sheet, and always sleep under a mosquito bar, if recent sufferers from malaria are camped with you. When practical the tents should be shifted to new ground, uncovering the old site to sun and air every ten days.

Untidy kitchen arrangements are thought by some to be part of roughing it; not so in the Army. True much less care is required when camps are moved daily, though the conditions left behind are of importance to campers following, and sometimes we may be the followers. But in the permanent camps, the Army spends most of its efforts in cleaning on the kitchen and latrines. These two places must be clean if health is to remain. No wastes from the kitchen can be thrown out at random. Burying or burning are the usual methods of disposal. Even tin cans, "air-tights" as the soldiers call canned food, attract flies by the residue of their contents and must not be thrown about the camp. Further, if filled with rainwater, they will, in warm weather, be found to be breeding places for the pestiferous mosquitoes.

Slops from the kitchens should be collected in special buckets, or garbage cans provided with covers and regularly disposed of. The best way is to dig out a shallow pit about two feet deep and three by four feet and line it with small cobble stones or other rock; wood is burned and after the rock is hot the wastes, water and all, are thrown on; the water is evaporated and the other materials easily disposed of; even bones and tin cans are rendered no longer attractive to flies.

In regard to latrines, dry earth is the most convenient covering, but to be efficacious it must be dry. By throwing in inflammable wood (shavings or kindling) or straw, and pouring on crude oil, most effective disposition can be promptly made of the contents of the trench and much labor saved in digging new ones, as this will fill it up less quickly than dry earth. A small tent used as a covering is worth the expenditure in permanent camps as flies are excluded and the place kept dry.

Camps should not be only loafing places; much can be learned of woodcraft and of nature, and they are much better places than houses to learn the importance of sanitation. Whether the Boy Scout movement partakes of military instruction or not, it will miss much if it fails to teach its lesson of hygiene, a lesson taught the recruit in every army in the civilized world. Upon every prospective camper or traveler in good health I would urge the advantage of being immunized against typhoid fever before leaving home.