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TO THE
COAST RANGERS,
ON
CLEANLINESS.

The importance to the soldier of personal cleanliness can hardly be over estimated. There are many reasons why soldiers should be the healthiest of men. They are, generally, in the very prime of life, living much in the open air, with such opportunities for exercise as should fit them to endure all they ever are called upon to.

They have some of the advantages so beneficial to most constitutions, of change of scene and climate, and they are abundantly supplied with good food and clothing.

Under strong, despotic governments, much attention is given to see that the most is made of these advantages. The soldier is cared for in all that relates to his physical well-being, for he has a constantly increasing value, so long as he is of an age to stand the work for which so much care is bestowed upon him.

The soldiers of despots are always better cared for than those of free governments. Despots know what it costs to place a soldier on the field before his enemy. They have paid for it. The soldiers of free governments cost nothing. Those of the South can almost be said to have

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placed themselves in the field. Their value is only realized after they are lost, and the South will mourn for many a long year the loss of their best men, not by battle, but by disease.

If the South had to pay in advance the value for the soldiers she loses, we will venture the assertion that everything relating to the health of the troops would, at once, be regarded as of the utmost importance.

The most vigorous measures would be taken, for we should then realize that the individual Southern soldier is the most costly, in an industrial, social, or political view, that ever did battle for his country.

Our men are all taken from the best of our population, and not, as with some nations, from the poorest of the laboring classes. The loss of every man is to us a serious one, which will be felt even after long years of peace. The soldier, who dies in battle, may be said still to live. His endurance, devotion to duty, and courage, are remembered with advantage by his friends and their foes. The dead of a hard fought battle field long remain a bulwark to their country, a terror to invaders. To fire the mind of the soldier, or to obtain consent to his sacrifice, from mothers, sisters, wives, would hardly be done by any inspiration drawn from the graves of those who have died by unnecessary disease. We say unnecessary, and we mean it. The soldier should not die of disease; and he would not, if he wore good clothes, ate well-cooked wholesome food, and was exercised and cared for by officers fit to command him.

Not ages ago, a long sea voyage was thought to be one of the severest trials a constitution could be put to. Lord Nelson, in his day, had a ship under his immediate command, for three years, without the loss of a life. This favorable difference is largely due to cleanliness.

It is, now, no uncommon thing for men-of-war, with

nearly one thousand souls on board, to be on service four years, with a loss of only three or four, when, without cleanliness, one-half would die.

Can any one say why a thousand men should not be kept in as good health in the field? Must not every one acknowledge that they could be continued equally healthy if there was the same regard for food and cleanliness? Does any one claim, by a mere assertion, that the advantages, with equal care, are all with the ship? Let him turn from the clean man-of-war to the filthy emigrant ship, and knowing the fearful mortality which has frequently swept away, in a few days, their strong, laboring passengers, if he still persists in his folly, why turn away from him.

The truth is, that men realized in advance the necessity for attention to remedy the evils which they saw must proceed from long confinement in crowded ships. But, let an army take the field, filled with the young and vigorous, the hardy and the bold, and how few realize that so many are to die of sickness. How little effort there is in advance to prevent disease.

We shall not here dwell upon the seeds of disease as sown in the bodies of our soldiers, by the want of any proper care for their food or comfort, as they travelled their weary way, by rail, to Virginia.

Those who suffered and think, will remember; and the young soldier of to-day, as he becomes the officer of to-morrow, will, it is to be hoped, exercise more care for the wants of his men than he received.

That the injury hinted at is not over estimated, is rendered probable by the rapidity with which disease developed itself amongst our troops, elated with victory, and masters of a healthy and beautiful country. That a want of cleanliness had much to do with the sickness none can doubt who remember how utterly indifferent to it our men

were. The habits of a people during peace follow them during war; and ours have some which, working no injury whilst they live scattered, are followed with deadly effects when they are crowded in camps.

The habit of resorting to the woods instead of using privies, poisoned the air around our camps to a degree which can hardly be realized.

The beautiful plain, befouled during the night and early morning, by men answering to the calls of nature upon it, became, at a later hour, the drill ground for regiments, every man of whom must have carried off portions of the filth on his own person. No wonder that on those plains the burial parties became larger, and the little mounds daily increased, beneath which were buried the hopes of families and friends.

Neither were the habits of our men, as to personal cleanliness, better. Nor is it through the whole of our camps. Our soldiers do not seem to realize how much more than usual attention they must give as to the cleanliness of their bodies, when called upon to live day and night in the same clothes, sleeping with each other in crowded tents. All men do not know how many more soldiers die from disease than by the hands of the enemy. Few would dwell a moment on the thought that the French sent over one hundred thousand sick men from the Crimea, nor would they ask how many they left there.

None seem to think that the most of this suffering and loss can be avoided.

Robert Jackson, M. D., Inspector-General of Army Hospitals, says, in his work on the *Formation, Discipline and Economy* of armies, that—

“Among the personal cares and practices which contribute in a high degree to preserve health, and even to improve its condition, personal cleanliness is one of the most striking.

“The act of making the body clean affords the highest gratification of pleasure to the animal sense of which man’s nature is capable.

“It is accompanied with an accession of physical force and vigor; and is not alloyed by vexation or remorse as a fruit of enjoyment.

“As the exercise of purifying the person has a tendency to increase physical power, and to preserve bodily health, it will necessarily be one of the cares of a well-considered system of military economy to assure to the soldier the means of carrying the purpose into effect in the completest and most perfect manner. For that end every soldier is supposed to be provided with a sponge and towel, as a part of his necessaries; and, when so provided, it is supposed to be a custom, not to be dispensed with on any occasion, that he wash his body from head to foot every day, preferably at noon, when the day is at the hottest, or when the animal heat has been preternaturally increased by previous exercise.

“It is not necessary to be scrupulously exact in wiping off the moisture; it is even useful that the subject move about, and expose his naked body to the open air after bathing. Besides the general ablution here alluded to, the hair ought to be washed frequently with soap and water, or water and potash, brushed, and cleared of vermin. If, in addition to ablution, the skin were occasionally rubbed with oil, as was done by the Greeks in ancient times, the health would be better protected against injurious impressions of weather than it is or can be protected by a shirt of double-milled flannel; and whilst guarded on this point, it would also be guarded in a great degree against febrile contagions.

“If the practices which are here described be duly executed, the body of the soldier will be perfectly clean, the sensations gratifying, the vigor improved to the utmost

point of improvement, health will even be secure, comparatively. Where a form of discipline, similar to that now recommended, is regularly enforced, the application of moisture to the skin, in incidental wetting, inseparable from field service, as not new or uncustomary, is little likely to be injurious; and, as noxious causes generated in the body and deposited upon the skin, are washed away by water, or swept away by fresh currents of air, contagious fever has no chance of being engendered in a barrack, or even of existing long should it be accidentally introduced.

“In this manner attention to personal cleanliness brings with it a numerous train of advantages to the soldier; and as personal purification is a radical part of the institution of military economy, the execution of the duty ought, in the just reason of things, to be conducted under the eye of commissioned officers not less punctually than evolutions in tactics or training to the use of arms.”

Florence Nightingale, in her notes on nursing, has a chapter, which we will make use of, on

PERSONAL CLEANLINESS.

“In almost all diseases the function of the skin is more or less disordered, and in many most important diseases nature relieves herself almost entirely by the skin. This is particularly the case with children. But the excretion which comes from the skin is left there, unless removed by washing or by the clothes. Every nurse should keep the fact constantly in mind, for if she allow her sick to remain unwashed, or their clothing to remain on them after being saturated with perspiration or other excretion, she is interfering injuriously with the natural processes of health, just as effectually as if she was giving the patient a dose of slow poison by the mouth.

“Poisoning by the skin is no less certain than poisoning by the mouth, only it is slower in its operation.

“The amount of relief and comfort experienced by the sick, after the skin has been carefully washed and dried, is one of the commonest observations made at a sick bed. But it must not be forgotten that the comfort and relief so obtained are not all. They are, in fact, nothing more than a sign that the vital powers have been relieved by removing something that was oppressing them. The nurse, therefore, must never put off attending to the personal cleanliness of her patient under the plea that all that is gained is a little relief, which can be quite as well given later.

“In all well-regulated hospitals this ought to be, and generally is, attended to. But it is very generally neglected with private sick.

“Just as it is necessary to renew air round a sick person frequently, to carry off morbid effluvia from the lungs and skin, by maintaining free ventilation, so is it necessary to keep the pores of the skin free from all obstructing excretions.

“The object both of ventilation and of skin cleanliness is pretty much the same, to wit: removing noxious matter from the system as rapidly as possible.

“Care should be taken in all these operations of sponging, washing and cleansing the skin not to expose too great a surface at once, so as to check the perspiration, which would renew the evil in another form.

“The various ways of washing the sick need not here be specified—the less so as the doctors ought to say which is to be used.

“In several forms of diarrhœa, dysentery, etc., where the skin is harsh and hard, the relief afforded by washing with a great deal of soap is incalculable. In other cases sponging with tepid soap and water, then with tepid water and drying with a hot towel, will be ordered.

“Every nurse ought to be careful to wash her hands very frequently during the day. If her face, too, so much the better.

“One word as to cleanliness merely as cleanliness. Compare the dirtiness of the water in which you have washed when it is cold without soap, cold with soap, hot with soap. You will find the first has hardly removed any dirt at all, the second a little more, the third a great deal more. But hold your hand over a cup of hot water for a minute or two, and then by merely rubbing with the fingers you will bring off flakes of dirt or dirty skin.

“After a vapor bath you may peel your whole skin in this way. What I mean is, that by simply washing or sponging with water you do not really clean the skin.

“Take a rough towel, dip one corner in very hot water—if a little spirit be added to it, it will be more effectual—and then rub as if you were rubbing the towel into your skin with your fingers. The black flakes which will come off will convince you that you were not very clean before, however much soap and water you have used. These flakes are what require removing.

“And you can really keep yourself cleaner with a tumbler of hot water and a rough towel, and rubbing, than with a whole apparatus of bath and sponge, without rubbing. It is quite nonsense to say that anybody need be dirty.

“Patients have been kept as clean, by these means, on a long voyage, when a basin full of water could not be afforded, and when they could not be moved out of their berths, as if all the appurtenances of home had been at hand.

“Washing, however, with a large quantity of water, has quite other effects than those of mere cleanliness. The skin absorbs the water, and becomes softer and more perspirable.

“To wash with soap and soft water is, therefore, desirable from other points of view than that of cleanliness.”

There has been with us too much of the feeling that we were fighting soldiers (I do not mean in this regiment, for I can thankfully say that in it I have seen but little of that weakness), not working soldiers. Too many have thought that all they had to do was to go here or go there, get a fight and go home.

There has been too little buckling down to the real earnest work of war, and that, too, of a war in which we count ten to twenty.

How few have thought that they had entered upon a struggle and taken up duties which might materially affect not only their manners and bearing, but their whole characters.

How many have seemed to think that it would be time enough to wash when the war was over. Would it not be wise to come to the conclusion, whether we are soldiers for three months or three years, that we are to be such until our enemies, not we, are tired of war, and at once to adopt all the habits which we would were we soldiers by profession. By doing so promptly, we shall shorten the war; by neglecting to do so, we shall as surely shorten our lives.

Cleanliness is important to the soldier apart from its necessity for the proper action of the skin. It is his best, perhaps only preservative against many contagious diseases.

Of many thousands of regular bathers, at one of the large bathing establishments in London, but three or four died during the last visitation of cholera.

Everybody knows on whom lice are most apt to be found, and what it is necessary to do to avoid suffering from them when one is surrounded by and brought in

contact with those who have them. The same may be said of the itch.

Both of these are camp diseases or plagues, which everybody knows could be avoided by cleanliness.

No one feels that these are due to any other cause than to a want of cleanliness; and yet when typhus, that dreaded scourge of armies, makes its appearance, everybody regards it as a visitor sent from heaven.

Is this right? We believe not, but think that it is as much our duty to protect ourselves and those in our charge from it as from the others, and, in ordinary times, we believe that to do so is almost as easy. Where there is no great want of food and clothing, and where excessive labor is not required, we suppose that cleanliness of person, of clothes, and of the ground around one, will usually accomplish this. We have seen it scourge armies who did have food, clothes, etc., but who were not cleanly. It took a year for this disease to get under full headway in the Crimea, and then in some of the hospitals it would attack every new comer, and in one it took fifteen out of sixteen attendants.

But let us see what Monsieur Le D'G. Scrive, the head of the French medical service of the army of the Crimea, says, after his tour of inspection :

PROPHYLACTIC HYGIENIC MEASURES.

“All the causes that we have studied, and which determine the birth of the organic miasma, agent unknown, of typhus, ought to be vigorously attacked and destroyed. It is necessary, therefore, to cease the crowding of men in small spaces, dirty, and infected with liquids and animal deposits, and to place them in conditions where they will breathe a pure and frequently renewed air; to avoid excessive fatigues; to improve, quickly, the food if it is unhealthy, unvaried, insufficient; to elevate by every means the moral of the soldier, if he is cast down by sad

and depressing passions; to impose rules of cleanliness, general and personal, and the necessity for a constant and energetic disinfection, by the certain practices of science, of all those places which crowds of men infects so promptly with the causes of disease; to render drinkable the water which serves for the drink of the soldiers.

“Such are the principal rules to follow to prevent the invasion of typhus.

“If the authority has in its power the means of their rigorous execution, typhus affections *will be spared all large bodies of men to which these principles shall be applied.*

“The miasma of typhus is not bound to the conditions of the atmosphere; it is the distress of the man alone that engenders it, that increases it to its greatest disastrous results, when one does not bring to it the remedy.

“It belongs, therefore, to human power to prevent the birth of typhus miasma in the midst of long and painful wars.

“Let us utter the wish that it may be done by all civilized nations, since they have the power by every sacrifice possible to surely avoid the invasion into the armies of such a scourge as the typhus.

GENERAL TREATMENT AFTER THE INVASION OF TYPHUS.

“If typhus has made its appearance, it is yet possible to rule it by putting in execution the preventive measures that we have indicated; above all, if one joins to them the practices which our medical experience in the East has proved the immense benefit of—practices which consist in the isolation, the dissemination upon a large space, in clearing the field of the sick impregnated with miasmatic principles, airing them permanently under a simple shelter of cloth, whenever the weather will permit it, the changing and the rendering wholesome generally the camp.

“In regard to the general treatment of typhus, let

every one be persuaded that it is not to be done by medicine alone, but with hygiene, much hygiene—hygiene always, upon a vast scale.

“Mais de l’hygiene, beaucoup d’hygiene, toujours de l’hygiene sur une vaste échelle.”

What is there left of all this, the result of the experience and observation of this skilful surgeon, the head of his profession in the army of the East, to those who are well fed, clothed, and not over tasked, but a loud call to

Keep clean, keep clean! Wash, brush; keep everything clean as to your persons, and all that belongs to the ground around you.

Will not every officer and man of the Coast Rangers feel it to be not only a duty but a pleasure to do all in his power to preserve the health of all in it, remembering that we have not alone the ordinary diseases of camps to contend with, but shall soon have those of climate. To withstand all that you may be called upon to endure, your bodies should not merely be healthy, but you must be hardy, enduring. With your willing assistance, I not only do not fear disease for you, but feel assured that, even amid all the hardships and trials to which you will probably be exposed, you may, in the midst of it all, continue to become more and more athletic and hardy.

Thanks to a kind Providence, which has so far directed and aided our efforts, you have, to-day, not a man in your hospital who cannot walk out. Let us continue, with increasing efforts, our cares for this physical improvement; and, when you say in later years that you belonged to the Coast Rangers, it will be as if you said that you had belonged to a band of men famed for hardihood and endurance, and who had, by the possession of these qualities, done good service to their country in the hour of her need.

L. M. HATCH,
Col. Comd’g H. Reg’t, Coast Rangers.

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Washington DC
Jan. 18. 08

Major Wm. D. McEwen U.S.A.

Surgeon Gen's Office

Washington DC

Dear Major

Thanking you for your very
courteous letter of the 15th inst with
reference to a brochure by the late Colonel
Hatch C.S.A. I regret my inability
to give precise information as to place &
date of its printing. Colonel Hatch at
the beginning of the war was Quartermaster
General of the State of South Carolina &
subsequently commanded the Coast-Range.
The booklet given to me by its author was
probably printed in Charleston S.C. about

1862. Colonel H. died in Schwilke 18.
about 1894.

very respectfully

Wm. F. F. F.

W. F. F. F.