

COMMON AILMENTS IN CAMP: THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND PREVENTION.

Dr. Cecil Webb-Johnson, Captain R.A.M.C. (T.F.), in the course of a paper read at the recent annual meeting of the British Medical Association, and published in the *British Medical Journal*, said in part:—

It is a well-known fact that common ailments in camp are responsible for a great wastage of public money and a loss of training for a large percentage of men.

The efficiency of a fighting force depends, *ceteris paribus*, upon the health of its component parts, and one sick man means not only loss to himself but also to the force in general. He is liable to upset the march if he falls out even for some minor trouble, and he may require the services of several stretcher-bearers to take him home, and thus deprive more serious cases of adequate assistance.

We must remember this: in the Territorial Force we have to deal with men who are during the year engaged in civic life, and who arrive in camp in a condition more or less unfit for strenuous training. For this reason it is all the more important to help and watch them, so that they may be able to do their full training without loss. It is the raw recruits who need the most careful handling and watching, for they are tyros at the art and liable to make mistakes through ignorance, which those with previous experience are wise enough to avoid.

Having briefly discussed the means of prevention to be taken before camp, Dr. Johnson discusses what can be done during camp, and enumerates the following points as worth mentioning:—

(a) *Cleanliness*.—It is said that "cleanliness is next to godliness," but we know that with some people it is next to impossible.

One cannot be too strict in insisting upon the utmost cleanliness, not only in the person, but in camp generally. The men should be taught to wash themselves regularly, and especially to see that their feet are bathed and thoroughly dried after work is over. It may seem faddy to make a point of washing before eating, but although we are, according to tradition, compelled to consume a peck of dirt in our lifetime, there is no necessity to do so in fifteen days.

There is no doubt that much of the gastric trouble in camp is caused by the men eating with soiled hands and contaminating their food.

Of equal, or of still greater, importance is the thorough cleaning of all cooking utensils, and the kitchens require most careful and con-

stant supervision. No food should on any account be allowed in the tents. The cleanliness of the camp in general, and the tents in particular, both make for the health of the camp. Remember that flies—carriers of disease—flourish in filth. The risks attending exposure and vicissitudes of weather are very small if the men are well clothed and well fed, but these are not enough without cleanliness is added to them.

(b) *Removal of Tents*.—Whenever possible, the tents should be moved to fresh ground periodically, the length of time for the original tent ground depending on circumstances, such as the weather, &c. If this is impracticable, all tents should be struck at the end of the first week, so that at least the enclosed ground can have the benefit of the sun and fresh air for a few hours. The tent walls must be looped up for a few hours every day, in spite of the weather.

(c) *Clothes and Bedding*.—Proper facilities should be given for hanging up all blankets and beddings, so that they can be sunned and aired. Similar facilities should be given for wet clothes to be dried, not inside, but outside the tents.

(d) While on the subject of clothes, I must mention the importance of every man having good serviceable boots and at least two pairs of good thick undarned socks. One of the greatest troubles in camp is blistered feet, and a large percentage of men are rendered unfit for duty for one or more days on this account.

I have already mentioned the importance of there being a compulsory ablution of the feet daily, and if this is not practicable the feet should be thoroughly wiped with a wet towel, and this applies particularly to the toes. In my opinion, unsuitable socks are responsible for more sore feet than any other cause, and it is a pity that there is no fund to supply proper socks for all the men in camp. The County Associations make a grant to men who supply themselves with suitable boots at camp, but ignore the question of socks. Men arrive at camp with one or perhaps two pairs of socks, with crude darnings or holes guaranteed to cause blisters within a week.

It is better to dispense with socks altogether than wear ill-fitting and shrunken ones, and an excellent substitute is an ordinary newspaper wrapped round and moulded to the shape of the foot, for this can be changed daily.

The socks should be greased on the outside with soap, and when they show a tendency to shrink they should be stretched and worn on the opposite feet.

As in my experience the two commonest

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