

FEEDING OUR BOYS.

UNCLE SAM PROVIDES A VERY GOOD TABLE FOR THEM.

Serious Work of Feeding an Army—The Problem of Fresh Bread—How the Soldiers Health is Guarded—The Company Cook.

Uncle Sam's soldiers are probably the best fed and cared for troops in the world. The facilities for securing provisions, even on forced marches, are such that the commissary department has little trouble in supplying the troops with a varied and palatable bill of fare.

The greatest tests in the matter of food supplies during the past two decades have been to secure and transport provisions to the little bands of cavalry and infantry engaged in keeping down Indian depredations in the west. It was during these expeditions that the equipment of the commissary department has been perfected, until to-day each company carries in a small space all the necessaries of a kitchen and culinary department. This outfit is one which never fails to interest women visitors to encampments of United States troops, and to win from the housewife great praise for its simplicity and effectiveness.

Each company has its cook, usually a fat and jolly member of the service, whose headquarters are frequented during all parts of the day by convivial members of the company. The usual habit of cooks to grow fat and good natured seems to be a rule of those who serve in the army, as well as those who are in civil life. The cook is a regularly enlisted member of the army, told off for his duties because of his fitness for the part. He is allowed two assistants, these being appointed by the commander of the company for a week's service in the cook's department, and being under his charge. While they assist in preparing and serving the food, the cook does the major part of the work, and it is his taste and skill which goes to make the victuals served a factor in the health and contentment of the corps.

The cook has one small tent in which are stored the extra provisions and utensils needed. A large fly, with poles and guy ropes, serves to shelter the cooking apparatus and to form the company's kitchen. Under it the stove is placed. The latter is an oblong metal affair, made on purpose for the army, and having griddle holes for the pots and pans. A ditch is scaped in the earth, and on it the stove is placed, leaving room underneath for the fire of glowing weed embers. The cook is an artist at making a fire in this trench and in keeping it at an even heat. Various folding chairs, tables improvised of camp chests and other things, serve to make the necessary apparatus for use in the kitchen. A dozen big kettles, boilers and pans are the utensils needed.

Dinner, at noon, is the principal meal of the day in camp life, and for an hour before the kitchen presents a busy scene. One assistant, with sleeves rolled up above the elbows, sits on a chest peeling potatoes, a bushel or more being necessary for the meal. Near him the other assistant bends over a great quarter of beef, carving out a supply for the meal. The cook watches his men while he attends the stove and begins preparations for the coming repast. A huge boiler on one side of the stove holds four gallons of fragrant coffee, another boiler is filled with water to receive the potatoes, while in a bright kettle on another part of the stove the cook drops vegetables, rice and other wholesome parts of soup and waits for the assistant to finish carving the meat that it may be added.

Soon the dinner is well under way, and the cook and his assistants are busy men. In addition to the hot parts of the meal, there are to be taken from the chests and served great loaves of bread or hard tack. The bread problem is a serious one on a march, or in camp, and away from the cities, and while the cook often has to prepare the corn bread or other cereal himself, it is brought into camp already prepared whenever possible. A company of a hundred men or more will eat a great quantity of the staff of life in a week, and hundreds of loaves are necessary.

There are other parts of the soldier's meal to be fixed, if the company is near civilization and provisions are plentiful. Baked beans often appear on the bill of fare, dried fruit, rice, hominy and other easily carried eatables, and to prepare all these on the one small stove and with only two assistants is an art that only an army cook understands.

When the meal is ready and the bugles blow to mess, the soldiers arrange themselves in an orderly manner, and the cook and his assistants start out. First the soup is ladled out, then the more solid components of the meal, then the coffee and then the sweets, until all are supplied.

To such an extent does cleanliness enter into the preparation of the soldiers' meal that the greatest precautions are taken to exclude dirt. Carefully the pots and pans are scrubbed, brightly, the big knives and utensils are polished and the refuse of the cook tents is carried far off and dumped to prevent the contagion that might arise from decaying slops. The officers are vigilant in keeping watch on the cook and his assistants, as the health of the camp may depend on their careful cleanliness.

Each company has its cook and mess, except where great armies are encamped; then a number of cook departments are thrown together to work in unison. Uncle Sam has all his cooking utensils made to order, and chests are used to pack everything in when on the march.

SMOKELESS POWDER.

A Remarkable Compound Soon to be Used in Our Navy.

It has been remarked that gunpowder is to the gun what the soul is to the body. It gives it life and makes it of some account. It is the means to an end. Gunpowder drives the shot that the man behind the gun aims at the enemy, and enables him, if he be as skillful as most of the marksmen in the United States Navy are, to demolish his target, whether it be a bird or a man or a ship or a fort.

Ordinary gunpowder, the kind one buys in a store, is a mechanical mixture of 75 parts of saltpetre, 15 parts of charcoal and 10 parts of sulphur. The properties such a mixture possesses may be altered to any desired extent by changing these proportions; the method of treatment also modifies the character of the resulting powder, and the size and shape of the grain likewise influence the action of gunpowder.

To manufacture gunpowder quantities of each ingredient are thoroughly mixed in the proper proportions, in a machine called a mixer; the composition resulting from this is known as green powder. Green powder must be subjected to the incorporation process, an extremely dangerous one, for it is in the incorporating room that nearly all powder mill explosions occur.

The green powder is put into a tub, where heavy runners of three or four tons weight grind it into a homogeneous mixture. After incorporation the "mill cake," as it is called, is crushed between gun metal rollers, then it is subjected to different treatment, according to the kind of powder to be produced, whether grain, pebble or prismatic. Granulated powder is the ordinary grain gunpowder of commerce. Pebble powder, or giant powder, or blasting powder—for all three are practically the same—is quite like grain powder, except that each grain is of the average size of a pebble. Prismatic powder is the kind used in our service to drive shot home, therefore a short description of it may not be uninteresting.

The powder charges for guns of the United States Navy are made up of hexagonal prisms of brown gunpowder. Brown gunpowder contains usually about 82 parts of nitre, three parts of sulphur and fifteen parts of underburned charcoal, which accounts for the chocolate color of the powder. Prismatic powder passes through the same process as other powders, only the grains are pressed into prisms by hydraulic machinery instead of being separated and glazed. The prisms thus formed are one inch high and three-quarters of an inch on the sides; there is a round hole, half an inch in diameter, through the middle of each hexagon.

Smokeless powder is so called because when exploded it produces no smoke. As a matter of fact, however, a light, thin, transparent vapor is usually seen, but it quickly disappears. Smokeless powders, from the nature of the ingredients employed in making them, leave no residue when exploded, the products of the combustion being gaseous, whereas in ordinary gunpowders, whether black or brown, the products are partly gaseous and partly solid, the solid parts being visible in the deposit left in the bore of the gun, in the bits of fire blown out of the muzzle at the time of discharge and in the thick, heavy smoke that hangs about, obscuring the view.

Japanese Babies.

When a boy baby comes to a Japanese family it is the invariable custom to put a huge paper fish, resembling a carp, on a bamboo pole outside the door. This is done in the first month of May after the boy's birth. The carp is the chosen emblem, because it is strong and hardy and is typical of good luck. When the baby is a month old it is presented at the temple and a first name given it, the choosing of which is novel. The father writes on three slips of paper different names. The priest prays, tosses the slips in the air and the one first striking the floor is supposed to be especially favored by the god of the temple, and is chosen.

When the Japanese baby is 3 years old he begins to wear the obi or girdle, which confines the loose robe worn by all Japanese and commonly called a kimono. When the boy is 15 he is considered of age, and a feast is held by his relatives, another name is given him and his head no longer shaved on top. He is now a man and his relatives, even the nearest, in addressing him, must now affix "San" to his name. San corresponds to our "Mr." If his name is Omi he will hereafter be addressed as Omi-san.

Even the tiniest villages have their toy shops, for Japanese children are all liberally supplied with playthings. The business of amusing children is a recognized industry, and the street jugglers, acrobats, singers and story-tellers make comfortable livings. In the family the children are amused by the father, who tells them stories of Japanese heroes and warriors, or they play cards. Sometimes they play a game like checkers, in moves, but requiring 360 pieces instead of twenty-four. Backgammon, theatricals and kite-flying are also popular among children. When there is snow the youngsters play just as our own children do. Football, stilt-walking and contests with tops are in vogue.

New Soldering Liquid.

A German has brought out a soldering liquid which is acid free. It is made by dissolving 600 parts of zinc in 1000 parts of hydrochloric acid and 500 parts of water. When the solution is complete the remaining free acid is neutralized by the addition of ammonia water.

PHRASEOLOGY OF THE SEA.

Some of the Most Familiar Titles and Their Origin.

In the early days of the English naval organizations vessels of war had double crews, a military one for fighting purposes and another of mariners for navigating duties. In consequence, a large number of English sea terms have a military origin.

At that time the rank of admiral was unknown, and the chief officer of the squadron was called a constable, or justice. The term admiral as now used is derived from the Arabic "amir" or "emir," a commander (as in "Amiral-Bahr," commander of the sea). The early English form was "amiral," and is still preserved as such by the French.

The title of captain is not a naval, but a military one. Originally, the real captain of a ship was a "master." A military officer was placed on board, though he knew nothing of nautical matters. Gradually his importance increased, while that of the master diminished proportionately till at the present day the master's office is gradually becoming obsolete. Commodore comes from the Spanish "comandador."

The title of lieutenant is borrowed directly from the French, and is meant as a place holder, or one who took the place of the captain when absent. In former days there were no cadets but volunteers, but with the gradual advance of politeness, the term cadet was appropriated from the French.

"Boatswain" is derived from the Saxon "swein," a servant. The term quartermaster, as used in both the army and navy, appears to be confusing and anomalous. In the army it is the title of a commissioned officer who performs important and responsible duties. In the navy he is simply a warrant officer directing subordinate duties. In the old ships and in olden times his position was a more important one; so much so that he was considered to be the fourth part of the master—hence the term quartermaster.

The ship's cook was once a great man and there are instances on record of his being promoted for efficient preparation of food. The ship's steward was originally the caterer.

The terms larboard and starboard come from the Italian "questra borda" and "quella borda," which by rapid delivery became starboard and larboard; but owing to the strong similarity of sound they were changed into starboard and port (Latin porto, to carry), the use of the terms in the original form having been the cause of many accidents.

Gangway has been handed down from the days of the ancient galley of the Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans, it having been a board which ran along the whole length serving as a passage for the rowers to and from their seats. It was also used as a

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resting place for the mast and sail when not in use.

The cockpit, in the lowest part of the vessel below the water used during an action for the treatment of the wounded, is derived from the old days of the English sport of cock fighting; but this has been modernized and is now known as the "flats"—why, no one can explain.

Lubber is from the Dutch, meaning a lazy, cowardly fellow.

Anchor came from the Latin "anchora," or "ancora," which up to 600 B. C. consisted simply of a large stone with a hole through it.

The peculiarity of so many portions of a ship's rigging bearing names derived from the trappings of a horse can only be accounted for from the fact that the early warships were manned by soldiers as well as sailors, the natural consequence being that they, the sailors, adapted some of their terms to meet their fancy, among these being 'bridles, whips, bits, stirrups, and the like.

Palm Trees of Cuba.

The little island of Cuba has nearly thirty different varieties of palm trees. Chief among them is the royal palm, a majestic tree with a straight trunk and a bunch of plumelike leaves growing out of the top, the lower ones drooping toward the ground. It is the most common as well as the most beautiful tree in Cuba. It has been called the blessed tree for its every part is useful. Its roots are made into medicines; its trunk is easily split into boards for building. The trunk has no bark and the inside is porous, the outer portion being hard and nearly as brittle as glass.

The center bud at the top of the royal palm tree, from which all the leaves grow, is a tender substance and is a very pleasant food, whether eaten raw, cooked as a vegetable or preserved with sugar. The stems on the long leaves are odd. They are semicircular and embrace the trunk of the tree. The stem is called the yagua and looks like a thin board, is often five or six feet long and the natives make it serve various purposes. Sections cut off serve as plates, or if soaked in warm water it becomes pliable and may be bent in any shape, afterward hardening. Sometimes when thus softened it is folded at the ends like a baker's paper hat, fastened with wooden pins and serves the Cuban farmer as a water bucket, basin or pan. Sometimes the insurgents use one of these improvised dishes as a kettle in which to cook their beef and yams. The water in the dish keeps the wood from burning.

In times of peace the yagua or stem of the palm leaf is used to cover bales of tobacco. Set on a frame it may form a very good bed; again, the yagua is used as a tarpaulin or mackintosh. The Cuban soldiers with a few leaves can build tents for themselves.

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