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FIELD AND STREAM



Camping and Vacation Number

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ACCIDENTS IN CAMP

BY ZANE GREY

EXPERIENCE in the woods is often very dearly bought; and I can remember many times when prevention of accidents would have appealed to me infinitely more than knowledge of how to cure them. That is the supreme test of a camper's wisdom—to prevent accidents, to ward off illness. For there is scarcely ever a canoe, or hunting trip of any length on which something painful does not happen. I like hard work in the woods and the thrill of danger as well as anybody, but I have learned not to court accidents. And recklessness and carelessness are responsible for ninety-nine per cent. of them.

The little things that can break up the pleasure of an outing seem ridiculous when considered at any other time but the critical one. Yet every experienced camper knows how serious they are. Just as the days away from the hot dusty city make one grow wild with freedom, so at every turn they are full of unaccustomed duties and chances that involve risk.

Unnecessary risk is the thing to avoid. No one minds losing a patch of skin, or getting a bruise in the chase. I have plunged down a steep rocky bank and scrambled after a slippery trout to be crippled up in a way that would not have misbecome results in an auto crash. But such things as that are part of the game of outdoors, and no one tries to prevent them, though very often one is compelled to cure their effects.

It strikes me that it would be wise for every young fellow who expects to spend his vacation camping to formulate a philosophy of outdoor conduct, so to speak, and by constant thought and practice when in the woods to make it a second nature. This will go far toward the prevention of unfortunate incidents, make for greater enjoyment and proficiency, and eliminate almost to a certainty the possibility of those terrible tragedies one reads in the papers every summer.

Let me illustrate by mentioning the two last fatal accidents here near my place on the Delaware River. Two brothers were shooting the Westcolang Falls—which they should not have attempted—and the canoe struck a rock and upset. One fellow held on to the canoe; the other let go, and in attempting to reach shore was drowned. He should have stuck to the canoe. He should have known before entering the rapids, that in case of an upset, the thing to do was to hang on and drift out. The other case was an example of carelessness, or worse. The river was high. One morning a small canoe passed where I was camping. It was sunk deep in the water, being heavily laden with outfit and two paddlers. I saw at a glance that they were risking much. I hailed them and asked if they knew the river below. They laughed and replied that they knew it well enough. Then I said they were not acting as if they knew it. For which pains I received a rebuff for interfering with their business. But that did not phase me, and I yelled for them to keep close to the left shore, which would have been safe for them at that stage of water. They did not change their course, and I had many misgivings when they turned the bend. Well, they capsized at Big Cedar Rapids. Five days later one of them was found miles below; the other was never found.

Now, in regard to the use of firearms, there is only one safe rule—a rifle, or a shotgun, must always be considered loaded and absolutely must never, under any circumstances, be pointed at a man, unless in self-defense. This "I didn't know it was loaded" is about the most pitiable excuse ever uttered by human lips. Never shoot at any object until you see and know what it is, and for that matter do not hurry even then. Never climb a fence, or a windfall, or down an icy bank, without remembering to keep the

muzzle of the gun well in front, and think of it even if you do fall. Never carry a revolver at all. They are not of much use and are extremely dangerous. If one must be carried keep the hammer on an empty chamber, as was the habit of the Western gun-fighters years ago. It is a strange fact that the more a man has used firearms the greater grows his fear of them. It was said of Billy the Kid, that perfect man-killing machine of frontier days, that he was extremely careful with his weapons. Certain it is that deliberate caution is a mark of the skillful.

Be careful in the handling of a hunting knife, or any kind of a knife. Have a pair of heavy gloves and slip them on occasionally, especially when opening a can of corn or sardines. The ragged edge of tin makes a bad wound. Look out for the axe! I do not mean that a fellow should shirk his share of cutting firewood—for a shirker in camp is about the meanest thing—but go about chopping wood in a serious way. It's really an art. If, however, you cannot be an artist, you can at least keep your feet out of the way, and when the other fellow is chopping, give him room. An axe is the most useful thing about a camp, and for those unaccustomed to its manipulation about the most awkward.

Sometimes sunburn proves to be very serious, not to say extremely painful. Avoid exposing neck, arms and legs two successive days until there is a good thick tan. Those who are susceptible to poison should keep a sharp watch for poison-ivy. It looks like Virginia creeper, or woodbine, only it has three leaves. To be on the safe side give all creeping plants and vines a wide berth. There does not seem to me any reason to have a mineral or vegetable poison in camp; so internal poisoning is easy to prevent. A few yards of mosquito netting are invaluable. Close the flap of the tent—leaving a space for ventilation, and pin the netting up and down the opening with safety pins. If a sleeping bag is used arrange the netting over a couple of sticks. One of the most uncomfortable nights I ever spent could have been avoided by the possession of a little netting. It happened on the Tamween River in the jungle of Mexico. We

had not seen a mosquito in two weeks, and had lost or mislaid our netting. One night a swarm of big black, white-barred mosquitoes descended upon us. We were compelled to cover ourselves completely with the blankets, and whenever we stuck our noses out to get a breath of air we got stung. What with the stings, the smothering and the maddening ceaseless buzz of the mosquitoes we passed a very unhappy time. And on a strenuous camping trip a man needs sleep.

Exercise care and judgment in selecting a camp site. If possible avoid low, marshy ground. Sand is excellent. A high bank with a spot open to morning sun, and shaded in the afternoon, is the ideal place. If no tent is used try sleeping with the head a little lower than the feet. The Mormons and Navajos on the Painted Desert are the best campers I ever learned from, and they sleep that way, with their feet breaking the wind, and they never catch cold.

Fortunately illness is rare in camp. Diarrhea and constipation are the most common ailments. Each person should take medicine suited to his own peculiar needs, and treat these ills in time. A change of water and diet are not so responsible for illness as over-eating and irregularity. Two meals a day are enough. Eating of too much fresh-killed meat causes more trouble than anything else. I was ill on the before-mentioned Mexican trip. I wanted to taste all kinds of wild meat. There were venison, javelin (wild boar), turkey, and a wonderful variety of wild fowl. Of these I partook, sparingly I thought, for I was well aware of the risk; nevertheless I was so ill I nearly spoiled the trip.

Canoeing is one of the most fascinating of sports, and when combined with hunting and fishing cannot be beaten. For me personally it has always been a perilous sport, for I like wild, swift, unknown rivers. It is safest and most sensible for inexperienced campers to let such streams alone. The ordinary much traveled rivers will furnish excitement enough for the beginner. The Delaware is considered by many canoe clubs and parties as a safe, mild, easy river; yet I observe that it exacts its yearly toll of victims.

Learn to steer a canoe before attempting quick water. Don't be ashamed to wade through, or portage round, rapids. Try to understand that it requires years of practice to judge water. But do not neglect to study every bit of rapids that you come upon. Pick out your passage, learn to know the depth of water over smooth, sunken stones; beware of the waves with the white curling back-lash; and bear in mind that in the actual shooting of rapids the danger lurks just beyond the places it takes all energy and skill to avoid. For there you are about spent, the canoe is glancing like an arrow, and there! under the bow is the treacherous sunken rock.

It is one thing to pick out a channel through a bad rapids, and quite another to follow it. On most of my canoe trips, especially those down rocky rivers, I have been accompanied by the best man I ever saw for the front end of a canoe. His quickness, power and skill are marvelous. But, perhaps, owing to my long fishing and wading experience I am a better judge of water. I can pick out a better passage than he. This, I believe, makes an ideal combination. And our method of procedure may be interesting.

We judge rapids at a distance by the sound. A canoeist acquires a remarkably educated ear. The low, murmuring, hollow rush of water tells us of the easy rapids, and for these we do not change our course, but keep straight on. When we reach the level just above the fall I stand up and take the lay of the water, so to speak, and down we go. But the dull rumble, the heavy roar—these are matters of a different coloring! How many times, as we turned a bend in the river, has the deep boom of rapids actually raised our hair upon our heads! Even now, as I write it, I can feel the skin tighten on my face. We always beach the canoe well above the rapids and walk along the bank to see if we can shoot them. Here lies the peril, the fascination, for we want to shoot them, and every rapid successfully passed tempts to a more daring achievement. It devolves upon me to pick out the channel; and this I have been aided in by a photographic visualizing power. We go back to the canoe, and put our little rubber life-

preservers round our necks. These, by the way, are indispensable, and come in handily otherwise as seats and pillows. Then we shove off, and after having taken every precaution possible, we forget the danger, unclamp fierce energy, and go at that rapids like a couple of devils. Nevertheless, we have been spilled often. Once we drifted a mile in swift water before we could get to shore. It is not too much to say that this sort of sport should not be attempted at all, certainly not without the rubber life-preservers, which protect the head from rocks as well as hold the body up. In this connection I don't want to forget that it is necessary to cling to the rolling canoe, to lift the legs and float feet first high in the current—things not easy of accomplishment.

Now, as regards snakes, I want to say that I have not had a great deal of experience with the moccasin snake, the cottonmouth of the South, but rattle-snakes and copperheads are old acquaintances of mine. I do not believe it all exaggeration to say that I can smell either many rods away. This is another educated outdoor sense. In fact, woodcraft seems to consist of remarkably developed sensorial perceptions. I have heard it said that rattle-snakes are fair and square; that they always run or give warning of their presence. As a general rule this may be true; it certainly has not been true for me. There are rattlers that do not run, nor rattle, even when wide awake. I have had a rubber boot pierced by the strike of a rattler; and now I wear the heavy canvas-covered wading boots. The copperhead is not so often run across, which is a fortunate thing. Both snakes like the sunny south slopes of rocky hills, or banks. In August the rattle-snake sheds his skin. He usually goes blind at this period, and is most frequently met near water. He is particularly vicious at this time.

The thing for campers to do is to watch where they step. A rattle-snake is black, or brown, with golden, or bronze, triangular markings. A copperhead is the color of cinnamon. Either can be easily distinguished from rock, or ground, or grass, or brush. Cultivate the habit of scrutinizing the ground a few yards in advance. It is wonderful how much can be learned.

Train your eyes to be keen and think about these things. Pit your wits against the cunning of the forest denizens. Pride yourself upon avoiding accidents.

But if accidents happen, as they are bound to, it is imperative that they be treated promptly, skillfully, intelligently.

To the little store of personal medicines and articles almost every camper takes with him add the following: Bandages and antiseptic gauze, one ounce bottle of Glyco-Thymoline, one ounce bottle of witch hazel, one ounce bottle of ammonia, one dozen half-grain permanganate of potassium powders, one hypodermic syringe and several points for same, several small phials for carrying boiled water, one small jar of resinol, one of vaseline.

In case of snake-bite bind the limb above the wound to stop circulation, cut a little about the wound to insure egress of blood, and let some one with sound teeth and lips suck out the poison. Then dissolve one-half grain of permanganate of potassium in a phial of the boiled water and with the syringe inject freely in and about the bite. Small doses of whiskey are helpful. Above all be cheerful and do not let the patient see, or feel, your anxiety. The shock following snake-bite is almost more deadly than the poison. Be unfailingly optimistic as to results. Keep the patient awake at first.

In case of drowning lay the body face downward over a log. Loosen clothing, open the mouth, pull out the tongue, then roll out the water. Next lay the body flat, back downward, and kneeling behind, work the arms from the sides back over the head. Keep it up regularly, slowly. Don't give up for hours. Try ammonia held to the nostrils. Don't give stimulants until there are indications of life, and then very sparingly. Massage the body and wrap in warm blankets.

In stopping the flow of blood from wounds observe whether it is venous or arterial. Blood from a vein is dark red; in this case bind below the wound. Blood

from an artery is bright red and spurts out; in this case bind between the wound and the heart. Insert a small wad of anything under the binding, and then twist till the bleeding stops. Next, using the Glyco-Thymoline freely for antiseptic precautions—take your tackle pincers, pull out both ends of artery, and tie them securely. Clean the wound thoroughly with pure water; apply the antiseptic gauze, and bandage carefully. It is absolutely necessary to get the injured person to a physician as soon as possible.

A fish hook imbedded in the flesh is often a serious proposition. Push the barb through, and, if the hook has a ring, clip or file it off. After the hook is pulled out inject Glyco-Thymoline in both openings of the wound.

Ammonia will take the sting out of most insect bites. Witch hazel will cure sunburn. Hot water is the best application for a sprained finger or ankle. Resinol is a capital application for burns, bruises, abrasions, inflammation of any kind.

In the case of a broken bone, when the sufferer cannot be gotten to a physician in a day or two, it is necessary to act promptly. Have bark splints and bandages handy. Pull the broken parts evenly and steadily in opposite directions till they snap together. Hold tightly and bandage splints in place.

A compound fracture, where bones are broken in several places, splintered and protruding from the flesh, is the most appalling accident, short of a fatal one, that can happen in the woods. It is absolutely imperative to get the unfortunate man to a physician. Some kind of a litter is necessary. Cut two poles, and with vines or bark construct a litter. Make it soft with blankets, or leaves. Cleanse the wound with boiled water and bathe with a strong solution of the antiseptic. Boil a towel and wrap it round the injured parts. Then keep moist and cold. That done, get the man out of the woods as carefully and speedily as human hands can do it.

