

The Soldiers' Shelter Tent As Used By The French

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Next to scarcity of rations, the greatest inconvenience to which the soldier is exposed in active campaign is separation from the tents and baggage wagons. Exposure to wet and night dew is the greatest enemy. Sickness destroys more soldiers than do the bullets of the foe. The soldier, however, should *always* be in a condition to encamp at any moment upon any ground, and at the same time be protected from the rain and dew. Experience has taught the French soldier to accomplish this in a great measure. The means were first employed by him in Africa, and I believe were first suggested by Marshal Bugeand, surnamed "*L'Ami du Soldat*", the soldier's friend. I would suggest the contrivance as one which should be adopted by our troops. Like the French soldier, the American one should *never* be without it in campaign. The blanket alone does not suffice. India rubber goods are too heavy to be added to the kit.

The contrivance I allude to is extremely simple, is known to every sportsman, and is extremely light and cheap. Its cost need not exceed 30 cents. It is called by the French the *tente d'abri*, or shelter-tent.. Every French *foot* soldier carries it. The additional weight of the "kit" is not over two pounds. This little tent has saved the lives of thousands of French soldiers.

The English, whom we too blindly follow in military matters, have not adopted it, preferring to improvement the charms of red tape. The shelter tent consists, first, of two sticks, about 1 1/2 feet long, of tough wood, and not larger than the third finger. The best wood is perhaps ash. These two sticks are each divided in the centre, where there is a simple tin or brass ferule, into which the other half of the stick is fitted, as in the case of common fishing rods. Each soldier carries one of these sticks, which is pushed into the side of his knapsack. It may project some six inches above his back, without inconvenience, or the two halves may be separated and stuck in two parts into the knapsack. Every two soldiers, therefore, have four sticks between them. Each soldier carries also a strip of thick cotton or linen cloth of about two feet, three inches broad and six feet long. The French carry shorter strips, inasmuch as their average stature is less than ours. These strips have strings or buttons down the centre, allowing them to be tied together and overlap, forming a roof four feet six inches wide. At the end of these strips are holes made round to fit o the sticks, and a string to tie them thereto. The sticks are sharpened a the end so that they may be stuck more firmly into the ground. Where the soldiers encamp they place these four sticks in the earth, and stretch the cotton cloth over them, inserting the sticks in the holes or tying them by the strings. Under this cotton roof they stretch their blankets, (the French do not always carry blankets, however) and the little affords shelter for tie men and their arms at night, two soldiers occupying one tent.

The tent thus fixed is about two feet high. The knapsack serves for a pillow.

In wet weather the end of the little cotton roof of the "tente d'abri" over the feet should be lower than the part over the soldier's head-thus forming a shed for the rain to run off. Some soldiers carry an additional narrow strip of cloth-each soldier carrying half of the whole strip} in order to form sides to the tent. This is not indispensable, however, but it adds to comfort. A French regiment will encamp by the above means in about a quarter of an hour. A certain number fix the tents, the others light fires, put the cooking pots over the fires, and prepare the supper, and the whole regiment is in order for the night in an incredibly short space of time. French soldiers are the best campaigners, for they are taught to be sufficient unto themselves. The above little shelter tents are the sleeping places of the soldiers in the absence of the large tents, and suffice until the baggage wagons come up.

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