

**THE ART OF
SUBSISTING
ARMIES IN WAR**

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The Art of Subsisting Armies in War by Henry G. Sharpe

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HENRY G. SHARPE

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ART OF SUBSISTING ARMIES
IN WAR.

COMPILED BY
HENRY G. SHARPE,
CAPTAIN AND COMMISSARY OF SUBSISTENCE, U. S. ARMY.

"L'art de faire vivre une troupe en campagne est des plus difficiles."—JOMINI.

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FIRST THOUSAND.

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JOHN WILEY & SONS,
58 EAST TENTH STREET.
1893.



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PREFACE.

LORD BACON said: "Every man is a debtor to his profession, from the which, as men do of course seek to receive countenance and profit, so ought they of duty to endeavor themselves by way of amends to be a help thereunto."

Should this book be instrumental in showing the necessity for the establishment of a Staff School, and thereby tend to increase the efficiency of our Staff Corps, and of such branches in the National Guard in the different States, perhaps some small measure of my duty may have been rendered.

The *Army and Navy Journal*, speaking of the State troops at Buffalo, New York, during the railroad strike in August, 1892, says: "There was, in short, an entire lack of system and ignorance of the duties required in the Commissary Department in almost every regiment. In the

future it is hoped more attention will be paid to the ability to properly fulfil the duties of the office in active service than to ornament the position on parade. It is of vital importance that such positions, heretofore held far too cheaply, should be carefully filled by competent officers."

In justice to the officers of the National Guard I think it should be stated that the vicious system of subsisting a command in a general or post mess has received some encouragement from officers in the army.

It would seem that the system suggested by Maurice de Saxe in his "Reveries" had, as far as the present age is concerned, received its death-blow by the hardship and suffering incurred consequent upon its adoption by the National Guard prior to the experience of the Buffalo railroad strike.

An old officer, in speaking to me of the first Bull Run, remarked that, when the troops advanced to the field to participate in the battle, they threw away their rations, haversacks, blankets, etc., etc., and that the entire country was covered with such articles, "as the men expected to stay at a hotel

when they arrived at Bull Run;" and this is likely to occur with any command that is subsisted in a general or post mess.

That this book is imperfect and incomplete I am fully aware, and also that there are many men more competent to have undertaken the task of preparing a similar work; but no one in our army has done so, and for that reason I have attempted it, hoping that those more competent will thus be led to produce a work which will clearly show what a stupendous enterprise it is to engage in war, and how necessary it is to study all the details beforehand.

The study of Logistics is not, I concede, as fascinating as many others connected with the Art of War, but it is necessary in order to save the country from serious disaster in war.

The authors and their works from which material was derived in compiling this book, are given in the accompanying list. Many of the extracts are inserted nearly *verbatim*.

The effort has been to produce a popular rather than a scientific discussion of the "Art of Subsisting Armies." Volumes, replete with detail, could

be written on the subject of each chapter, but would be read by few.

In every army save ours, regulations for the government of troops in campaign are provided; while with us the regulations apply only when in a state of profound peace.

Should war threaten, regulations must be hurriedly prepared, a staff organized, officers trained and made conversant with the duties they would have to perform, and many things started which should be so elaborated and perfected in peace as to provide for every emergency likely to arise during war.

“A la guerre les instants sont comptés. Perdre quelques minutes avant d’agir est une faute; demander des instructions, attendre des ordres pour ravitailler serait presque un crime.” (Le général Lewal.)

HENRY G. SHARPE,
Captain and C. S., U. S. A.



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COMPILED.

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