

Beyond the Border: A Thousand Mile Tramp in Dakota on a Government Survey, 1874

WILLIAM J. HURLBUT

DAYTON W. CANADAY, ED.

In March 1968, the South Dakota State Historical Society acquired a collection of manuscript diaries that were written by William Johnson Hurlbut. They cover the period from 1867 to 1878.

Hurlbut was born at Perry, Illinois, on 1 August 1846, the son of William Hocker Hurlbut and Mary Ann Cary Hurlbut. He resided for a time in Chicago, and his early diaries indicate that he lived, in 1867, at Mirable, Missouri, and, later, in Sioux City, Iowa. While in Missouri, Hurlbut's father was a partner in a merchandising store. The business was not successful, and after 4½ years young Hurlbut joined an Uncle John in his work on a telegraph line being constructed by the Missouri River Telegraph Company.

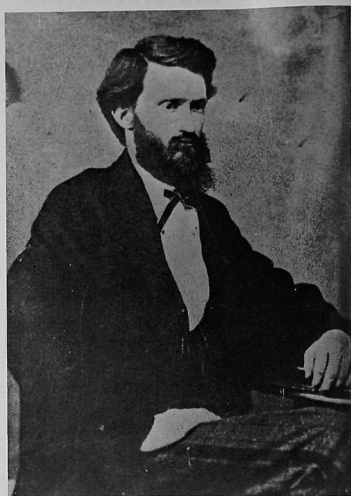
Hurlbut had left Mirable on about 23 May 1871 to work on the telegraph line, which, according to entries in several of his diaries, was not completed until December of that year. He was engaged in this work until 20 November 1871, when he arrived at Fort Sully. Another entry states that he arrived at Yankton on 11 December 1871 and then returned to Sioux City, Iowa, to work on the Sioux City and Pembina Railroad survey.

The diary reveals that he traveled the countryside in the early part of 1872 and sold a certain book by Mark Twain. In October 1872, Hurlbut returned to work on the Sioux City and Pembina Railroad, and his diaries detail his travels and experiences with that line and with the Illinois Central Railroad.

On 13 July 1874, Hurlbut took a surveying job with Edward B. Palmer, and his experiences are recorded in one diary titled "Beyond the Border: A Thousand Mile Tramp in Dakota

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*William J. Hurlbut
in 1872.*



on a Government Survey, 1874.” The original was written in shorthand and was transcribed to the typed manuscript from which the account presented below was prepared.

In one of his diaries, under the date 27 May 1874, Hurlbut mentions a letter from “home” wishing him to return, close out the store, and accompany his parents to Virginia. The precise date of the move is not ascertainable, but one diary entry, under 1 January 1878, indicates he was then living on Irish Creek, Rockbridge County, Virginia, with his parents. They had purchased 700 acres of timber land and erected a homestead with outbuildings and a grist mill with an overshot water wheel.

Hurlbut lived there for several years. He served as a constable, was county Civil Engineer and Surveyor for Rockbridge County, laid out the boom town of Buena Vista, Virginia, married Emma Florence Deaver on 19 January 1888, and moved to Buena Vista, where he lived until the early 1900s.

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He then moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was an agent for the Southern Railway System in their Land and Industrial Department. His duties included locating farms and industries along the SRS lines in the South.

Hurlbut's diaries reveal that he was quite a remarkable person. Through his own efforts he acquired a practical knowledge of surveying, mineralogy, hunting, music, art, and many other fields. His father, William Hooker Hurlbut, was a prospector who, in 1864, led a party of ninety-three wagons from Illinois to Virginia City, Montana, on a gold prospecting trip, returning with eighty-four pounds of gold dust. A diary and map from this trip are deposited with the Library of Congress.

Three children were born to the William J. Hurlbuts: Clarence Julian (b. 23 August 1898), Florence Cary (9 August 1889-10 October 1889), and William Douglas (1 June 1895-5 November 1964). It was through contact with Clarence J. Hurlbut that the South Dakota State Historical Society acquired these valuable documents on an early period in Dakota history, a portion of which is here published. Also included is a selection from several pen-and-ink sketches drawn by William J. Hurlbut while with the Palmer surveying party.—ED. NOTE.

Beyond the Border

THEN AND NOW

Our railroad work being completed, I thought I would seek employment on a Government survey in Dakota, so packing up my traps I went to Yankton. The first time I visited this capital city it was by means of an old fashion stage coach, now it was in a Pullman Palace Car, time about two hours; then it was twelve hours. Now nearly the whole distance was past broad fields of growing grain. The two towns of Elkpoint and Vermillion were assuming city airs and a few dozen more were making pretentious claims to thriving villages. Then Elkpoint and Vermillion were little more than indicated on the map of the real estate agent and in place of waving grain, only the broad barren prairie for miles, without a house or tree in view.

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Such then was the change wrought in less than three years. The city also had much improved. Beautiful residences crown the bluffs, cozy looking cottages nestled lower down, while whole blocks of costly business houses were replete with the busy hum of the prosperous patronage.

Freight trains were bringing in loads of merchandise or waiting to load the rich cargoes of grain while steam boats were daily arriving or departing from the wharfs. Thus I found Yankton in July 1874, when three years before it was only a passable town. In a few days I secured a position in Ed. Palmer's party which was soon to start out for a two month's trip.

STARTING OUT

On the thirteenth of July we left Yankton to survey and explore a portion of Dakota between the James and Missouri Rivers. Our party numbered thirteen men, all well armed. All but two or three had had more or less experience in camp life. Three two-horse teams carried our provisions to Camp — ¹ Of course we had intended an early start, but as usual there were several little things to think of at the last moment which so delayed us that it was not until 3 p.m. that we drove out of town and bid farewell to the city. Palmer said we were going into a dangerous country from which a surveying party the previous season had been compelled to return by the hostile demonstrations of the Dirt Lodge Indians, a band of the Sioux, that had taken up their residence at a point on James River about 150 miles from Yankton and, as reported, were determined at all hazards to prevent further encroachment of the hated white men. Though our force was not large we felt confident they would pay dear for any interference if they should attempt any as we were well armed and nearly all of us had had considerable experience with the treacherous braves; consequently each one believed himself perfectly able to "get away" with his share of any ordinary party of "scalplifters" that had the termidity [*sic*] to attack us.

1. The carbon copy manuscript has the following hand printed insertion after "Camp": "1ST CAMP AT BEAVER CREEK."—ED.

UP THE JAMES RIVER

Our course was nearly due north from Yankton to Beaver Creek ten miles out, where we made our first camp. The cook had been sent on ahead but he gave us a poor excuse for supper. Next morning we made a start in better time and the day passed without important event. We camped this evening at Scotland, a "town" of one house. During the next forenoon we noticed several hazy clouds in the north and northwest. They were of such singular appearance that many were the conjectures concerning them. They had somewhat the appearance of columns and broad sheets of smoke rising from the prairie, ascending high up in the air, then spread out into a broad thin cloud-like arm. It was not until we stopped at noon, however, that we found out the cause. Shortly after we camped it began to rain grasshoppers. The clouds were passing over us and were composed entirely of these voracious insects. Upon looking toward the sun the air seemed full of snow flakes, the exhausted ones were falling to the ground where they would remain apparently lifeless for some time before they would begin to hop about. We struck James River a few miles below Rockport, the stream being at this point about 150 feet wide running in a tortuous course through a beautiful and fertile valley of from one to three miles wide. Rockport is a small village of some half dozen houses and is so named, I suppose, from the great masses of red granite which lie scattered over the valley and hillsides. The greater number of these masses are almost cubicle in form varying in size from a few inches to a score or more of feet in height and breadth. Some are just exposed above the surface soil which in one instance has been taken advantage of to form a natural floor to a dwelling. These masses are scattered along the valley for a distance of twelve or fifteen miles above here, with occasional boulders of sandstone. The country to this point is much the same as in the vicinity of Yankton, being an alternating level and rolling prairie, dotted here and there with the homesteader's cabin, and in many places having thriving fields of grain promising abundant harvest to the farmers.

There has been great improvement during the last three years in this section and the vacant land is being rapidly taken

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up so that in a very short time hence claims will not be found within a hundred miles. At Firesteel the last mail station on our route, the country is a little rougher and the soil less adapted to cultivation. The soil for the last ten or twelve miles contains more or less sand; what little grass there is seems dry and crisp as if touched by winter frosts though at this point it shows some improvement.

About eighty miles from Yankton on James River we passed the last settlement. Two men had taken claims here, securing a fine body of timber with the advantage of good soil, plenty of water, a very important article in this country, the lack of which will no doubt greatly affect the rapid development of this section as the only water fit for use that we have found has been in James River. When we leave this stream I fear we may sometimes suffer with thirst.

AMONG THE GRASSHOPPERS

In the next two days travel we passed through what must certainly have been the hatching ground of the grasshoppers. About nine o'clock they would begin to rise in clouds, as we had noticed before, to the north and northwest of us for nearly a quarter of the horizon and then by noon they would be passing over us. The noise of their flight was like the distant rumble of a railway train. They would continue their flight until about four o'clock when they would settle to the ground. Meantime, the ground was covered with countless millions of them, so thick they were that each step would crush half a score and as you walked along a cloud of them would rise before you. They were in all stages of development, from the newly hatched, weak and wingless, to the voracious adult, ready and willing to devour anything green that came in his way and they weren't even particular what it was if they could only eat it for we found that it did not take them long to make a hole in our clothing if it was left lying upon the ground. They would all go toward the south and after we had passed this strip of about thirty miles we saw no more of them. At the last settlement which I mentioned the owners had planted several acres of corn. A few days before, a swarm of these hungry bugs had stopped

"Sunday in Camp."



there for dinner and in about two hours they stripped everything, leaving only a field of bare poles. Just above here while traveling along the bank of the river we saw numbers of large buffalo fish from two to three feet long floating lazily near the surface, but we could not induce them to bite a hook. Several shots were fired at them, but we caught none.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR ENTERTAINING A HORSE THIEF

Visitors are so infrequent in the wilderness that I must mention the only one we had from a white man. Sunday forenoon we observed a dark object on the prairie far to the west of us. With a telescope we made it out to be a solitary horseman coming toward camp. That set him down as suspicious from the beginning. About four o'clock he came into camp. He was a tall well made man about thirty-eight years old, dark complexion, black hair and eyes, broad shouldered, muscular, and would weigh about 180 or 190 pounds. He wore a new straw hat and a fine white shirt, new coat, fine light pants and Comgress [*sic*] gaiters. His horse was a large beautiful black, evidently of fine stock. His weapons were only a Navy revolver and a Bowie knife. These he soon unbuckled and threw [*sic*] down on the ground beside his blanket and provisions. The

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latter consisted only of two or three pounds of hardtack and bacon. To our inquiries he replied that he was from Fort Gary and was now returning from a trip to Omaha on his way to Bismark. We informed him that he was considerably out of his way to go to Bismark. He replied that he had got lost and seeing our camp had come to us for directions. He gave his name as Daniel Smith; "A damned convenient name for this country" one of the boys remarked. He laughed and replied "It is as good as any." Supper was announced and, of course, we invited him to eat with us. After supper he went to care for his horse when we soon saw that the animal was not accustomed to the prairie though he stated that he had ridden him over 2000 miles during the last two months. Several other remarkable journeys he had taken. Once he and his partner were attacked near Fort Benton by about forty Indians; his companion was killed at the first fire and lifting his dead body before him he successfully fought back the Indians for two days and made his escape. He related numerous other adventures in which the endurance of his horse and his own bravery were prominent. When he went to the river in the evening we examined his horse closely and besides finding recent harness marks, discovered that his shoes were trotting shoes and were stamped with the name of a Sioux City blacksmith.² We felt well satisfied that we entertained a horse thief. We thought some of taking him a prisoner to Yankton but finally gave it up as we had no positive evidence and it would cause us considerable trouble and delay. That night he wished to sleep out on the ground, but we insisted that he occupy the tent with us, which he did. Before he retired he hung his knife and revolver on the front pole of the tent.

The next day, Monday, we drove up the river a few miles to find a ford which we did and crossed with but little trouble. While we were driving off and waiting for dinner "Prairie Dan" gave us a specimen [*sic*] of his marksmanship. He was a good shot with a revolver and could have "brought his man" every time at 150 yards. He made many inquiries about his route to

2. The carbon copy manuscript has the following hand printed insertion above "blacksmith": " 'KNUBS' " [?].—ED.

Bismarck but when [we] produced our map he would endeavor to obtain all possible information regarding the direction to Fort Gary; paid but little attention to Bismarck. He was very anxious to trade horses with us, would give an even trade, though the difference was largely in his favor. He was also anxious to trade for or buy a rifle but we had none to spare. Tuesday he left us and galloped away to the northwest. We were glad he was gone but thought it best to keep watch for him. We saw several antelope today but did not get any and spent most of the time instead of hunting them in hunting for the town (township) corner which we found about two o'clock. We got short of water but found a large pool about six o'clock when we camped and remained all next day on account of a lame horse.

We kept guard on the first night and the second we had another visit from "Prairie Dan", as we had named our visitor. About one o'clock we were all roused up by the snorting among the horses. We grasped our weapons and rushed from the tent. There was a little starlight and by lying flat upon the ground we saw an object moving along or over the crest of a low hill about 200 yards away. One man crept up nearer and sent a rifle ball toward it. It quickly disappeared and we were troubled no more. We concluded that our guest had returned for a horse trade without the consent of the owners. This was the absorbing topic for several days, and little could be said without "Prairie Dan" coming in for a good share. Our suspicions concerning him were correct. Smith was not his real name, but the Daniel was. He was a gambler from Bismarck, had killed a man there in a quarrel and went to Omaha where he got "cleaned out." He then came to Sioux City and hired out to a farmer as a harvest hand. Meantime, he had seen this horse which was somewhat noted as a trotter and valued at four or five hundred dollars. He awaited his opportunity and suddenly disappeared with the horse. His course was up the Big Sioux River to near Canton where he crossed into Dakota and struck out into the wild prairie. He had gone too far west when he discovered our camp and came to us. His real destination was to a point on James River below N.P.R.R. crossing where a party of horsethieves had a rendezvous.

OUT OF WATER
A FORTUNATE DISCOVERY – BUFFALO

Next morning we were early starting, filled our water barrels and broke camp. It was very warm today and at night we camped with only what water we had left in our water barrels and by next day noon we were entirely out. It was terribly hot and we suffered considerably. As far as I could see there were no indications of water. About three o'clock we halted on the summit of a high knoll or hill. The horses were suffering more than ourselves. From present indications it looked as if we would have to make another dry camp. Three or four men struck out in as many different directions to prospect the country for water while the rest of us endeavored to obtain a little relief from the burning sun in the scanty shade of our wagons. We kept close watch of our scouts and in about an hour one of them who was about three miles away just visible on the summit of a low hill gave a welcome signal. We drove on at once and in about an hour more came to a large pool of pure cold spring water. We certainly appreciated it after being deprived of it so long. Before we reached it, however, had a little sport in capturing a badger. At our present camp there are well worn animal trails branching out in all directions from the pool and the country for the past two days travel has been more or less cut up with buffalo wallows while numbers of their bleaching skulls and skeletons were scattered over the ground. We found several with portions of the skin and flesh still adhering to them. One old skull had a flattened rifle ball imbedded in it and an iron arrowhead which had penetrated about half its length. This at no very remote date has been a great buffalo range.

After the fatigues [*sic*] day we slept soundly, but just at daylight were aroused by some one calling out "Texas", "Texas", the name given to wild Texas cattle which have been stampeded from some Government post or Indian Agency and never recaptured and are now running over prairies single or in herds of five or six, now as wild as deer. Two or three sprang up with their rifles, but most of us felt little interest in the matter. We heard subdued talking outside and presently one of the boys came to the tent door and said "It is buffalo, boys." We needed



"Home Sweet Home."

no second bidding before seizing our weapons and hastily rushed from the tent. Sure enough, not more than a half-a-mile away was a huge old fellow coming directly toward us. He was evidently coming for a drink. He approached and then stopping, raised his head and gazed long and steadily at us. Our tent was a conspicuous object on the prairie and was evidently new to him. If each one had not been so eager to get the first shot I think we could have killed him but he took alarm and struck out for the high bluffs on a long lope when we tried to approach him. It was disappointing to us and each one blamed the others for their indiscretion. Probably not one of us could have brought him down at a hundred yards. Our camp where he was seen was in Section 7, Range 60 west, Township 115 north as I remember numbers now. He was perhaps the last that will be seen in this section. Thus far we had seen a little game only, now and then an antelope or a jackrabbit and these at long distances.

BEGINNING WORK

On the twenty-fifth of July we reached the starting point of our work, 138 miles on a line north of Yankton and 30 miles west and here we began the 4th Standard Parallel which is the line between townships 116-117 N. beginning at the corner

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between Ranges 59-60 W. of the 5th Principal Meridian. Along this line west to the James River the country is nearly all level prairie destitute of timber and water while the grass is short and stunted with only occasional patches which our stock would eat readily. In the more rolling portion of it there was an abundant growth of prickly pear on the sunny knolls with a plentiful supply of granite boulders. On the second night out we camped beside an alkali lake. The country continued of this character until we approached within two or three miles of James River where the soil showed a decided improvement though still containing some marl.

INTERVIEWING THE DIRT LODGE INDIANS

As we approached the river every man was on the look out for Indians for we knew we were not far from the Dirt Lodge Tribe who were reported so hostile. Signs of them were noticed during the day but no indians [*sic*] visible. We camped for the night on the bank of the river where we once more had plenty of wood and water, this being the only wood we had seen, except a few stunted willows near a water hole for the last 67 miles.

About 100 yards from camp is an indian grave and as we came up we disturbed a couple of coyotes that were gnawing at the bones and rolling the skull around.

Though we had plenty of wood we made but a little fire and extinguished that as soon as we had cooked our supper. We posted a guard but slept undisturbed. In the morning we had to work several hours in fording the stream which was about four feet deep and four rods wide. We unloaded our wagons and had to carry most of the articles over on our shoulders. It was wet work but we crossed without accident and were soon on our way again after we had called in our sentinel. No indians had been seen but we could see smoke about two miles to the northwest. Just as we halted for dinner we saw several mounted ones riding out full speed in different directions over the bluffs. Of course, there was some little excitement, but as they did not approach we ate our dinner then moved on again. Before we got well under way we saw a party of about twenty indians approaching us and though they were nearly a mile distant they

made quite an excitement in camp. The chain was dropped, the compass left standing; we rushed after weapons. One teamster who had boasted what he would do, mounted his wagon, reins in hand before he had hooked the traces. His horses started but he was left behind. He shouted lustily for assistance, but he only got ridicule instead. Before the indians had arrived we were all ready for them and awaiting their approach with loaded weapons and cartridge boxes open. From the manner in which they came I thought that we need not fear any open attack and as they rode into camp I stepped forward among them and shook hands with the chief and two or three of the principal men. They dismounted and one of them approached the compass [*sic*] and pointing toward it said "You must go away with that; you no go any further." We told them we must go on with the survey and parleyed with them at first, but as this was not Indian manners we soon had to set ourselves in a circle and were ready for a big talk. They objected quite strongly at first to our going any farther, saying we must go back and they would not molest us. To this we replied that the Great Father at Washington had sent us out here to survey this country and that we had to do it; that we had heard how they treated our people a year ago and we came prepared this time to go through with the survey; we had long rifles and if they wanted to fight us they could begin at once; we wanted to get along peaceably if we could but we would go on unless they killed us all, which if they did the Great Father had plenty of soldiers to revenge our death. This was talk they probably did not expect for it silenced them. They consulted among themselves for a little time, then changing their impudent tone begged for something to eat. We gave them some provisions and it was really amusing to us how suddenly they became friendly. We now had quite a sociable talk with them. They gave us some valuable information about the country we expected to travel through regarding wood and water.

In asking them why they drove away the surveyors last summer, according to their story a little dog was the cause of all the trouble. The dog bit one of the Indians and he shot at him which so alarmed the party that they turned their teams and took to flight. The Indians followed them for a mile or so

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yelling as they said "just to see them run." I think they told the truth about it, as the party was composed mainly of young, inexperienced boys who had never had any practical experience with frontier life. We told them that we had seen a buffalo a few days previously. They could hardly credit it, but we learned afterward that they went out and captured him. They also imparted to us some interesting news. One day they saw a man, which they supposed to be an Indian at first, some distance to the east of their camp, evidently trying to pass them unobserved. They gave chase and captured him. He proved to be our "Prairie Dan". He had sold his revolver. When he found he could not escape he was so pale and trembling with fear that he was utterly delirious. The Indians supposed him to be an escaped murderer who had committed that crime in Yankton early in July and of whom they had heard. They intended to bring him to Yankton and deliver him up, but one of their band who had been to Fort Thompson told them he was not the man from the description he had heard, so they let him go. It amused us not a little to hear that he was so cowardly after he had made such extravagant boasts as to what he had done and could do in time of danger. Thus we met and passed without trouble and with but little delay the much talked of hostile Dirt Lodge Indians and when we prepared to start again most of them left us for their own camp though a few followed us along until we camped for the night on Turtle River about a mile below their village. We had several extra plates to fill at supper that evening.

These Indians are camped on Turtle River, a tributary of the James about 150 miles northwest of Yankton. There is good soil here with plenty of wood and water and will make a good farming country, better than most of the country we have passed over to this point. We took note of some very fine sections that appeared to be everything desirable to a farmer. They are as follows: SW1/2 Sec. 36, R43W, T.117 N. and NE 1/2 S. 6, R 43, T. 116. [*sic*] The Indians did not want to leave here saying they did not like to live on their reservation, for here they could get game in plenty. They are merely exercising a right of the noble red men, and expected to do just as they pleased, though they are very particular to draw their monthly

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rations at their Agency about 75 miles distant. As in all other things they are independent and though they are required to reside on their reservation by their treaty, there are but few of them that do so. This band numbers thirty-five lodges being a portion of the Sioux whose reservation is at Crow Creek. They profess to be peaceable and desirous of engaging in farming and say they have a few fields of grain but are discouraged as they have no tools or implements to work their land with. They claim to have lived here for eighteen years and don't want to leave their home. As to their farming, however, I think if they would go on their reservation they would have no difficulty in procuring all the implements they needed as well as instruction in their use. I know the tribe well for I had considerable experience with them. They bear the name of being the most treacherous and most troublesome of all the tribes along the Missouri. We saw no more of them after the next day.

CAUGHT IN A SIMOON

On our first day's trip on the 9th guide we were compelled to stop about two o'clock by a genuine simoon. For about two hours the wind had been blowing in strong puffs from the south, heated almost to a furnace heat, dry and parching. The burning sun would reflect back from the barren earth with increased violence. Water was in constant demand but the supply was almost exhausted. The skin became dry, so hot was the blast that there was no perceptible perspiration, the eyes, mouth and nostrils felt as if they were blistered. For two hours we lay under the wagons on our blankets, the heat of the bare ground being unbearable. About four o'clock the storm abated and we went on but not until the next day about noon did we find water. Here we camped until the next day when we ran out the guide and started east for the 5th standard parallel which we thought would be well watered.

On the map there was laid down a large lake and several streams and taking it for certain that we would find them as represented, Palmer made a great mistake at the outset. Before starting in the morning we filled up all of our water barrels. After running east about three miles we discovered timber

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"Sioux Teepees."

around a dead lake, and supposing we should find plenty of water there, Palmer emptied out nearly all we had to lighten the load. When we came to it we found only a dry lake, not a drop of water to be found, and we steadily in need of it. It was like many of the lakes in this country, containing water only in the winter and spring. The lake bed was about a mile in breadth and three or four long. Here was the first timber we had seen since leaving Turtle River, a distance of over fifty miles. We had been using "buffalo chips" for fuel and found them a very good substitute. At night we made our camp beside a large pool of excellent water and by the next afternoon had reached James River again.

AN OLD BATTLE GROUND
A GOOD COUNTRY

The next day being Sunday we did not move our camp. We are at present on an old Indian camping ground and we found many indications of it. Piles of broken bones where they had been making pemmican, arrow and spear heads, while for half a mile along the river bank were the remnants of their old "tepee rings" which are circles of stones which they lay around their teepees to hold the canvas down. About a mile below camp was a tall pole which had been erected upon the bank of the river for

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a look-out station. It was about forty feet high and a foot or more through at the lower end. The limbs had been cut off about a foot from the body, holes had been bored and pieces put in so that a person could ascend to the top from which a wide view could be obtained. We thought it was probably erected by General Sibley when he was after the Minnesota Sioux. We cut our names on it and returned to camp. Not far from here Sibley came up with them and a battle ensued. There seems to be plenty of beaver, otter and muskrat here; several beaverdams are within half a mile of camp and signs of other game are numerous.

We spent most of the afternoon Monday bridging the river which is too deep to ford, then leaving part of our camp we continued east on the random. We were all greatly deceived in regard to the distance to a range of high bluffs directly east. On Sunday when we viewed the country from the look-out, the farthest distance guessed at was twelve miles, but when we came to chain out the line we ran 16 miles to the corner and then had not entered the hills. When we arrived at the guide we sent a team and two men to the bluffs for water. They found some after a three mile drive to the foot of the hills.

There are many groves of fine timber in the ravines. The boys returned about 3½ o'clock [*sic*] and we at once started back but did not reach our old camp until next day. The valley of the James at this point is about 25 miles wide with a very fine quality of land, just rolling enough to give good drainage and a heavy loam soil at least two feet deep and in some places near the river much more.

Breaking camp next day we continued our work for several days without important incident, joining with the guide and then up we were among the sand hills and boulders, making camp again one night without water. Sunday one of the men found a water hole about a mile distant so we moved to it and remained all day. Monday, August 10th, we ran out the guide and started east again on the 6th Standard. We ran about ten miles and camped in a deep ravine just as a terrific afternoon storm broke upon us. It did not last long but there was a grand display of Heaven's artillery. It cleared up before sunset but rained hard again during the night and though our tent

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remained standing we all got more or less wet. Next day after a seven mile run we left two teams and men beside a water hole. Six miles further we came to a stream we had to bridge and then camped in a low bottom a short distance beyond. Next morning we moved on and after a five mile run came to what we supposed to be Moccasin or Hump River. This we bridged and crossed by noon and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles farther arrived at Lake — ,³ which is a widening of James River, at this point nearly a mile wide and as near as we could ascertain about 25 miles long. We pitched camp at once as the teams could not cross it, and prepared to do so ourselves, packing our provisions on our backs together with our blankets. As I was running the compass [sic] my share of them was distributed among the others except my rubber poncho which I strapped to my back. The water proved to be only from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet deep; we had no trouble in wading through. We ran about six miles then rolled up in our blanket for the night with no other covering but the starlit sky. Next morning our breakfast was only a biscuit and a slice of pork and the remainder of the water which we had carried from the lake in the tea kettle. Five and a half miles farther we crossed on the 8th Standard only thirty links from the corner. We did not spend much time here as we had to travel the whole distance back again before we could expect dinner or anything to drink. Thanks to the cook, however, who dispatched his assistant immediately after his breakfast what he could carry to meet us. We met him about four miles from camp and we certainly appreciated his thoughtfulness, having been out about thirty hours on only two scant meals.

The lake is a great resort for all kinds of water fowl. Geese, ducks, cranes and pelicans seem to have resorted here to rear their young. There were multitudes of them everywhere. In the vicinity of the lake there are also abundant signs of larger game such as deer, elk and antelope with occasional signs of buffalo. If it had been possible I would have spent several days here in hunting.

This has been the best water line we have yet been on, but

3. Spaces are left after "Lake," but no name is given.—ED.

not much wood. While running this line I found the greatest variation of the magnetic needle I have heard of. The variation before had been steady at 14 degrees E., about six miles from the 9th Guide to the East the variation suddenly began increasing and in a mile and a half had attained an east variation of 43½ degrees but fell again within the next mile and a half to the old standard of 14 degrees. In going back on the line to the 9th Standard we camped for a day near our old camp where we had the afternoon storm. It is quite a rough country along the ravine which is undoubtedly a river bed, though we thought there was no water hole here before we now find an abundance scattered along the valley in pools. It was evidently an Indian camping ground judging by the number of tepee rings. Stone signal mounds are erected upon several of the high points up and down the valley.

We finished the Standard and started up the Guide among the sand boulders and cactus again. Three or four miles from the guide corner is a range of high bluffs with occasional groves of timber in the ravines. About ten miles from the Standard the country began to improve; the gravel and cactus gave place to a fine gently rolling prairie with a rich soil extending eastward from the base of the hills, but we found no water. Half a mile below the 7th Standard we left the line and went to the bluffs which we found to be about three miles distant. We found a good camping place with plenty of wood and water. We discovered also a broad, well worn, wagon trail which we supposed to be the military road between Forts Wadsworth and Rice. Loading on a supply of wood and water we started east early next day on the random for the 7th Standard. We ran to the James River without incident and crossed on the 8th Guide two miles beyond it, arriving at our camp in the bluffs the next night after dark; all of us very tired as we had run out 34 miles of line in two days. The next day being Sunday we remained in camp.

This range of hills were about 10 degrees east of north and very rough. Peaks loom up all around of peculiar shape, round, oval, square and pointed at the summit. Several which we ascended had Indian signal mounds on them. Some of the

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mounds were higher than a man's head. Two or three were stone walls built square or round about three feet high with an opening on one side. They were Indian sentinel boxes who were thus concealed from observation but could view a large extent of territory.

To the east the view was uninterrupted for a distance of 25 miles or more. In this clear atmosphere an object the size of a man could be easily seen at that distance. Toward the north the hills seemed to be more rough and broken than here but to the south less so, while a few miles to the west the range was terminated by a broken valley which extended to the base of another range of still greater altitude.

Our camp was in a beautiful place, a little amphitheater of about two acres, opening to the east to a grand view of the broad prairie over which we had just run the 7th Standard. Here we had a fine spring of water, plenty of wood and luxuriant grass for our horses. Monday we went back to finish the Standard up to the guide, and run up the latter three miles when we were northwest of camp and had to foot it in about five miles. On the way we tried to flag an antelope but could not persuade him to come within range and therefore did not get into camp until after dark.

Towards the upper end of the guide we entered the worst country we had yet seen. There were several alkali lakes, so strongly impregnated with alkali that it would take the skin from the mouth to drink it. It also exhaled a strong fetid odor which was perceptible ten miles away when the wind was blowing from the lake. Around the shores of the lake the pure alkali was piled up like snow drifts. About four miles northeast is White Stone Lake, the scene of General Sibley's battle with the Indians in 1863. We finished up the line and returned next day, found our camp about three miles above the Standard corner. We are now through with our work to the east and from here are to run the 7th Standard to the Missouri River when our work will be done. This night we had to battle with misquitoses [*sic*], the only time we have been troubled with them. Their attacks about midnight were so vigorous that we had to get up and smudge the tent before we could obtain any peace.

GOING WEST – A BARREN VALLEY
THE LAST GUIDE – “THUNDERS NEST”
PICTURESQUE SCENERY – INDIAN SIGNS

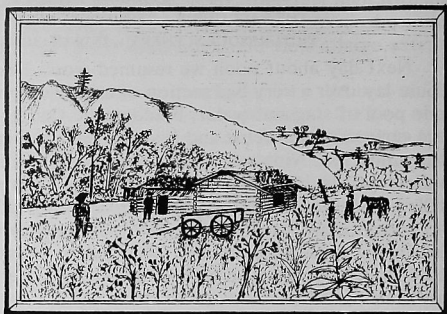
Next day about noon we resumed work. For two days our route lay over a very bad section of country; no wood and only one pool of stagnant water; boulders are thicker scattered over the surface while cactus and prickley [*sic*] pear are luxuriant in the sandy soil. Nineteen miles out we crossed the divide in the valley. At the 10th and last guide we had entered the range of hills I mentioned as visible from our camp east of the 9th guide, 45 miles distant by the chain. They rose very abruptly from the level of the valley though where we entered we had a comparatively easy road and our standard corner was located in a beautiful valley about a mile wide and running in the course of the guide, gradually ascending to the north. Several miles from the starting corner we ascended to the summit of the bluffs which bounded the western edge of the valley, and, looking back we could see every mound we had built for the entire distance.

Ahead of us the country appears more broken, lofty detached peaks loom up in majestic grandeur. One of them, “Thunders Nest” had been a prominent object for several days. Our line ran within about one-half mile of it and while we stopped for dinner one of the men ascended it; the only thing of interest upon it being an eagle’s nest upon a rock, while nearby in a shallow depression of another was a small supply of water. The peak was an isolated one, the sides very steep near the top being almost verticle [*sic*] so that there was only one place where it could be surmounted. It is topped with a cap of sandstone which projects beyond the slope of the sides except in this one place. The summit is about two chains wide and four or five chains long.

A few miles beyond our line led us over one of the highest peaks. From its summit which was only a few feet in area, affording standing room for only two or three persons at a time, we had a widespread view of the surrounding country for 50 miles or more in every direction. We were really in the midst of

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*"Emanuel Creek, D.T.
July 4th 1871."*



a mountain range, though destitute of timber. Far away to the northwest were the big peaks of standing rock on the Missouri. Around us to the north and west we could trace the course of several streams. Between these different isolated peaks were little coves and valleys with occasional lakelets which appeared like sparkling gems in an emerald setting. The scenery was grand and we were loath to leave it, but the wind was blowing almost a hurrican [*sic*] and we hastened on.

Amidst this beautiful scenery we finished the guide; crossed a stream about every mile. We did not waste any time when we closed on the Standard for we discovered fresh Indian signs and did not care to fall in with them. This guide has been through an excellent country to what we have heretofore passed over. Though there is plenty of water, wood is scarce, the valleys are rich but the mountains are barren. Going back to the Standard we continued it on to the West, feeling that our labors would soon be over. We had some inducement to hasten for we were nearly out of provisions and had been on short rations for a few days. All were anxious to see the old Missouri again. A few thought we might reach it the first day, but we did not even get a glimpse of it. After leaving the guide corner we soon entered a terribly rough country. The bluffs were mountains and the valleys were gulches. We, however, made twelve miles on the first day and camped for the night a mile east of the Fort Rice

and Fort Sully wagon trail. Next day in about ten miles more we had reached the summit of the range and came upon a plateau which extended to the river bluffs which descended to the Missouri. Before us for about two miles it was nearly level, but to the north there arose from its surface many lofty peaks, rearing their summits several hundred feet above the generally level plateau. They were of a great variety of shapes, some almost cubical, others round, oval, conical and pyramidal; many with a projecting cap of stone as at Thunders Nest. The glowing sun burnished them with gold and crimson, fading away on the distant horizon in the richest tints of blue and purple.

THE OLD MISSOURI

A GORGEOUS SUNSET – CLOSING UP OUR WORK

PROVISIONS GIVE OUT AND FIVE HUNDRED MILES FROM HOME

We chained on a few miles farther on this beautiful plateau and when about a mile from the crest of the bluffs before we descended to the river bottom we saw the long looked for Missouri in the distance. We hailed it with cheers for it was like seeing the face of an old friend. More than ordinary interest centered in it for when we reached its bank our labors were done. Various opinions were given as to when we should reach it and we all thought we should certainly drink from its waters by Sunday, but all were mistaken. We pushed on faster than ever but the sun sank low in the west and we had not yet begun the descent of the bluffs so we quit work for the day and made our camp in a deep ravine where there was a good pool of water. I still lingered to behold the sunset scene. Words cannot describe its grandeur. The high plateau upon which I was standing was several hundred feet above the river bottom and commanded an extensive view. No where have I ever beheld such brilliant colors, such glowing effects of light as I saw in Dakota. The clouds above and in the western horizon were tinged the richest hues of gold and crimson while the distant hills were vieing with them in tints of blue and purple. I cannot attempt to describe it; the scene was too grand and magnificent. I only wished I could have transferred it to canvas in all its glory. I must have sat and drank in its beauties for an hour. My

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thoughts and feelings were lifted up above this world of care and I felt it was a time for the adoration of the Great Ruler who had created such a beautiful world and that we were capable of enjoying it.

My reverie was broken, however, by a loud halloo from camp that supper was ready. I went to camp and partook of the scanty meal. For some time we had been on short rations and we were hastening to finish our work as soon as possible. We did not sit long around the camp fire at night as we wished to make an early start in the morning. Next morning we had soon passed the bluffs and were on the river bottom again. This being only about a mile wide to the timber was also soon passed over and at the edge of the timber line we left our teams and descended to the timbered bottom which we found to be two miles wide. Here we had the hardest work of the trip for there was a dense undergrowth of vines and brush. But all things must some time have an end and we stood at last on the river bank, the corners were marked and our work was finished. We had dragged a chain over six hundred miles of prairie and mountain and now we must travel over four hundred miles more before we would be at home and that too through a country almost as dangerous as that through which we had just passed.

After a deep drink from the old Missouri we went back to camp, I for one thankful that we had passed the dangers of the wilderness thus far in safety, hoping that our return journey might be as free from them. We were called to dinner as soon as we had come within hail. It was nothing to speak of, though the cook had done his best. We still had coffee though, of course, without sugar. Milk was something unthought of. The rest of the commissary was very low. Our bread was merely flour and water, strictly unleavened. Of meat we had about five pounds of hard-soled pork. That was all it was, not very inviting, but then hunger was a good sauce and it was quickly disposed of.

Here we found that a mistake had been made in the last line and two men with a team were sent back to correct it. This was troublesome and at the same time dangerous business. They might meet with hostile Indians and their fate would be certain. With instructions where to meet us we separated, they going back and we down the river. We divided our scant stock of

provisions with them; in all about a day's rations for a healthy man. It was well along in the middle of afternoon when we each started on our respective ways. For several miles we were within sight of each other. The sun had sank again behind the hills before we halted for the night. We camped on a creek, about six miles from the Missouri. Tonight there was some grumbling and no one was in very good spirits; our entire supper consisting of flour and water made into biscuit with molasses of the blackest kind for seasoning. We were all rather weak for having been so long on short rations. We had seen no game for the last fifty miles or we might have supplied ourselves.

Next morning, of course, our breakfast was the same and no one felt like traveling far, but go we must. Before we started, which we were in no great hurry to do, while hunting through one of the wagons for something, I found a few charges of shot; thought that a prize for now I thought I might kill a few of the ducks that I noticed the evening before flying down the creek. I said nothing to the boys about them but took an old shot gun which had laid in the wagon for some time unless [*sic*] for want of ammunition. When they were ready to drive on I still remained. One asked me what I was going to do. I told him I intended to find some meat for dinner. I told them also to drive on slowly and if I did not overtake them by noon to wait for me. They drove off and I started down the creek.

I went about a mile when I came upon four ducks and killed two of them. The others flew but it was not long before I had them also in my game bag. This had occupied me about two hours as game was not plenty, besides I was very cautious as I was in the Indian country and I did not know what moment I might meet with game I did not wish to see. As I was picking my way along through the willows I came upon a trail that had been recently made. It was only wide enough (the willows being very thick) for one person to pass along at a time. You may be sure I was extremely cautious. To leave it was impossible and I thought it was probably the best place anyway for if I should meet Indians coming toward me I would have as good a chance as they for only one could approach at a time. I did not go very far before I came into a small clearing a few rods square, that had been made in the willows on the bank of the stream. I was

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satisfied that no one was near but it had been but recently made. Whether it was an Indian camp or not I could not tell. Here were scattered about pieces of soldier's clothing which had been cut to pieces with a knife, new horse shoes, two or three brand new axes, portions of blankets and numerous other articles. At one side was a place where they had dried meat, and a few pieces were still hanging to the poles. Several horses had been hitched to the trees around. I came to the conclusion that Indians had been out on a horse stealing expedition and that Uncle Sam was the loser and perhaps some of his brave boys in blue were also missing. While I was examining the place a brace of ducks came swimming up the stream. I hesitated some time before firing again. When a man is hungry he is apt to take considerable risk and so I thought I would try them. My shot was exhausted but my revolver did not fail me and I soon added two more to my list. These I thought would be one each for us and as Indian signs were so fresh I at once started for the bluffs.

About two miles from the creek I reached the summit of a high bluff but could see nothing of the team. About three miles farther was another bluff and I made my way toward it. It was noon by the time I had reached it, but as I ascended its summit I saw the team about three miles beyond. I at once signaled to them to which they replied and waited for me to come up. When I came near enough for them to see that I had some game they gave a cheer. It was not long before I came up and you may be sure they were well pleased with the prospect of the dinner. The difficulty now was that we had no wood but some of them started out in different directions and one of them was fortunate enough to come upon an old Indian camp where a few sticks of wood had been left. It was not long before we had them stewing. Each one had to have a hand in the cooking and it was amusing to see how we tried to hurry matters. Finally the boss cook said they were done and we thought they were about the sweetest meat we ever ate. We felt more like traveling but as we had used up all the water we had we must go thirsty until we could find more. We were ten miles from water and before we found any we suffered considerably.

That night the other two men and team came up and we had the good fortune to find a ranchman on the Missouri from



"Fort Sully, D.T."

whom we procured a small supply of provisions and had a regular feast. Next morning I found that the day before was Sunday so I had put in the day with my gun instead of remaining quietly in camp; though had I known the day of the week I think I would have done even as I did for the circumstances were too urgent and there could not have been any wrong in it.

From here we drove to Grand River Agency where we obtained an additional supply of provisions. The second day after we arrived at the Little Cheyenne River about four o'clock. We thought we could make Fort Sully by the next night but had to camp about six miles above at the water hole. From here I was well acquainted with the country to Yankton as I had been over the ground several times.

In the next three days we drove to Fort Thompson which passed without incident. Soon after we left the fort we were overtaken by a party of Indians, about forty in number, who for several days traveled with us. One old Indian and his son seemed to take quite a fancy to our cooking and at length proposed to divide up his provisions with us if we would do his cooking for him and his son. To this we agreed as he had some fresh beef which was the first we had seen since we had left Yankton. He was a fine looking old man, quite intelligent and interesting. We frequently chatted together at the camp fire.

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At Pass Creek we began to see the effects of civilization for here some of the boys found a supply of whiskey and came into camp about midnight drunk and troublesome. They made such a noise and racket that it aroused all in camp. We told them they either had to be quiet or leave the tent. They made some threats but soon became peaceable.

It was now growing quite cold for this was the 18th of September when we arrived at Showta Creek. If I remember correctly there was a little snow on the ground the next morning after we camped there. Here most of the outfit remained to engage in another job, but four of us started for Yankton. That night we camped about three miles from Showta Creek out on the high prairie. The next morning Sunday, Palmer came along in a two-horse buggy and I got in with him and reached Yankton that evening; having been out a little over three months. I must have been a pretty rough looking customer for none of my friends recognized me at first. It being Sunday, the barber shops were all closed and I had to forego the luxury of a clean-up until next day. I was thankful that I had passed the dangers of the wilderness in safety; that I was once more among civilized people. It does a man good to be once in a while deprived of the benefits of civilized life so that he will know how to appreciate them and also on the other hand, he will learn that many of the so-called comforts of life are superfluous.

Thus ended my long tramp on a Government Survey. I did not begrudge the trip in the least, even with all its privations. I had traveled over a wide extent of country, had seen many things interesting and instructive and had been where probably white men had never been before.

Some of the places I would like to visit again, especially on James River where I would like to go with a few good companions and spend a few weeks in hunting and fishing. Just now there is great excitement about the discovery of gold in the Black Hills. That is a place I have often wished to visit for several times I have had stories told me about the beauty and richness of that section by men and Indians who have just had a peep into their mysteries. The Indians regard the Hills as a kind of enchanted ground and guard it jealously from the whites.

OUTFITTING FOR CAMP

There is always a pleasant excitement in preparing for a camping out trip even if it be only a few weeks; the uncertainty of knowing what you will need and what you can do without. If you have more than is absolutely necessary it will cause you much trouble besides being a burden to your team. If you do not have what is really indispensable you will probably be at great inconvenience at times. No set rule can be given for a happy mean, and it can be learned only by the individual experience. But I will say to those who are going out for the first time, lay out what you think you can[']t do without and then take only half of that. Many articles which at home you think you must have are useless in camping and if you should need them it will be a good crisis for your ingenuity to supply their deficiency or else learn to do without them. I here speak more in regard to personal requirements than that of the party, for in the way of teams, provisions and general supplies it will depend upon the size of the party and the time you expect to be out.

Where there are more than two persons I think it is best to be always supplied with a tent. For driving, mules are better than horses being less liable to leave camp; for riding, horses or Indian ponies are to be preferred. Your staple provisions should be flour, bacon, beans, sugar, tea and coffee, with dried and canned fruits. Pickles and tomatoes are a great relish and should be taken also on account of sanitary considerations. If your trip is such that you are to camp a week or more in a place some additional comforts can be taken which would be otherwise troublesome if a new camp was made each night. But as I mentioned above these are personal needs, not for the whole party.

First, you should have a good hat, either fur or wool; it should be light both in weight and color, good height to the crown and the brim $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches wide. Before wearing much insert several folds of brown paper under the sweatband. This will absorb the perspiration, make it last longer and prevent its becoming stiff and hard and it can be renewed when saturated. I also punch a row of small holes around the hat just above the

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band and a few in the top crown which gives ventilation and adds much to the comfort on a hot day. Take about three changes of underclothing of merino or fine wool, three flannel or cashmere overshirts. I prefer cashmere as they wear better. For external clothing, one coat and vest are sufficient. You will need at least two pair of pants of material that will stand hard usage, corduroy are very good if you get good ones. Hard worsted cottonade are excellent. An extra pair of finer material may be found useful if you want to dress up. Next to buckskin nothing stands the prairie grass so well as corduroy or cottonade. Cashmeres will not last any time. I have seen a new pair cut into tatters in half a day. For the feet use woolen socks; take half a dozen pairs. Cotton will blister the feet as soon as they become damp. Wear shoes unless you are generally in the saddle. They keep the feet cooler and are more easily emptied of water if you have occasion to wade a stream which frequently happens in surveying. They should be double-soled, made to fit the feet but have plenty of room. Take two pair at least. Fill the bottoms with round headed tacks and you will find you can walk much easier. In the dry prairie grass the soles will become so polished in half a day that you will constantly slip if you do not take this method of preventing it. For handkerchiefs take a pair of large silk ones. Of course your clothing and shoes will need occasional repair and as you can not stop in the tailor's or cobbler's to have it done, you must do it yourself (and remember that a stitch in time saves nine); therefore needles and thread are important items. Fit up a convenient little "house-wife" with a dozen assorted needles of good size, three or four saddler's needles, one or two glover's needles, plenty of white and black linen thread and cotton thread about no. 20 and 36, a ball of shoe thread shoe wax and bees wax. Two or three sewing and peg awls and a handle. These are small items but indispensable. A good thimble can be made from a piece of leather about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch wide and of the right length to fit the finger, then sewing the ends together. There is a little tool called the "pocket tool chest" the handle of which contains brad awls [*sic*], chisels, gouges, screwdriver, etc., to which you can add the sewing and peg awls to complete the list. You will find it to be a valuable article. Of course, you

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will need besides them a good pocket knife, also a small pocket whetstone and a pair of scissors. For your bedding you will want two pair of large heavy gray blankets. The mackinaw are the best but quite expensive; good Government blankets will answer every purpose. You must have also a good rubber blanket or poncho. I would also take an extra waterproof which you can easily make yourself. Get five yards of heavy drilling about one yard wide, cut it in two in the middle and sew the sides together with a double seam like tents are sewn, lapping about 1/2 inch, then make a broad hem at each end. Now stretch it tight in a frame so that it's smooth and even. Now take turpentine as a dryer, and a little litharge, then apply it to the cloth with a brush on one side. Let it thoroughly dry in the sun before applying another coat. If you do your work well three coats will be enough. It should be so well dried before using that it will not leave any trace of oil on your finger when rubbed over it. This will be found of great use in putting next the ground under your bed and also in using it to cover your bed and arms in rainy weather as well as rolling up your blankets, etc., when on the move. Here I may as well remark that I always air and sun my blankets every few days.

If your trip is "Beyond the Border" or for game your weapons are of the greatest importance. The first is your rifle which should be of the best make, breech-loading and at least of 44/100 caliber. Your revolver is your constant companion and if you are a good shot with it you will have many opportunities to use it on small game. Do not take any of the small kind, they are perfectly useless. Nothing less than a Colt's "Navy" will answer the purpose and perhaps none are any better. A belt or Bowie knife is of secondary importance, yet I would generally take one. The guard should be quite small for if large you are very liable to lose it. Carry it on your left side and your revolver on the right. Do not waste your ammunition. Some think they cannot sleep on the ground and get into the wagon. I have always found it to be best on the ground and would not sleep in a wagon unless compelled to do so. Take a fine mesh mosquito net; in some places you will not get any rest at night unless you do. It should be about two yards square. In some places on the plains the buffalo gnats are more troublesome than the

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mosquitos. As they only appear in the day time you had better have a fine piece of netting made to cover your head and come down well over the shoulders. They come in dense swarms and are very small but their attacks are worse than mosquitos. Almost in an instant they will fill your ears, nose and hair, and are so persistent that you can only escape from them by running or lying flat on your face. I heard of some animals being killed by them though I never saw it, but believe they could do so.



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