

Ski Patrollers of the Yellowstone



UPHILL WORK.



SOFT GOING IN DEEP SNOW.



A HALT BEFORE THE DESCENT.

usually by one non-commissioned officer and three privates. These stations are comfortable cabins, built of logs and chinked with mud or plaster; the men are furnished the ordinary equipment of the soldier, the rations and such additions to it as the state of the troop fund will permit. All supplies for eight months are put in early in autumn by wagon transportation.

Each station has assigned to it a certain district, which the men must keep patrolled, watching carefully for any evidence of poaching, and in general noting anything of interest as to the game, its condition, etc. The non-commissioned officer in charge makes monthly reports to the park superintendent, who is also the post commander, as to the work done, the trips made, and all matters of interest; if anything unusual transpires he makes special reports without delay.

At intervals little huts have been constructed about one day's journey apart, which have been designated snowshoe cabins; these are stocked in the fall with a small amount of food, some bedding, fuel, cooking utensils, an axe and a shovel. These huts increase the efficient radius of the winter stations, for without them no trip could be made which would consume more than one day out on skis, for it is impracticable for one to carry sufficient bedding and supplies on skis to make camp in the open.

Each of these huts is a welcome haven to a soldier weary and worn after a day's skiing; a roaring fire can soon be built in the rude fireplace, and, supplementing the contents of his haversack with the bacon and hardtack stored in the hut, the tired trooper can pass in comparative comfort a night which would be unendurable in open camp.

For the soldier on skis, special clothing is supplied. On the feet they wear soft woolen socks, then German or Arctic socks and over these a lumberman's rubber shoe; their underwear is good, soft, warm, woolen material; their coats are loose fitting, short, "Mackinaw" garments. They wear the blue army shirt and trousers and Scotch caps with earpieces, though some men prefer the regulation fur cap. Fur is unsuitable for all wear except gloves, for the violent exercise of skiing causes profuse perspiration and fur garments do not permit its evaporation and escape.

Formerly the ordinary uniform was used for this duty, but frequent frost bites and occasional loss of life caused warmer, special clothing to be adopted. The winters are bitterly cold, storms are frequent and the duty hard; every precaution and care must be taken to avoid casualties.

Some years ago a soldier started out for the mail from Riverside station, near the western boundary, to go to Fountain station in Lower Geyser basin. He was alone, but he was a good traveler and no fears were entertained as to his ability to make the journey. A storm arose shortly after he started and it is presumed that he lost his way, for, on making a search after the storm had subsided, he not having reported to either station, he could not be found. Not until two years later were his remains accidentally discovered some distance up the Gibbon river, when his route should have been up the Firehole. He evidently became confused in the storm at their junction and followed up the wrong stream.

In the winter of 1896-97 another soldier lost his life through disobedience of orders. Owing to the hardships of winter travel and the liability to accidents orders were given after the accident above mentioned that no man should under any circumstances travel alone.

Two were skiing from the Lake station

to the Thumb; the snow was bad, the travel difficult and a few miles out one man found that he was becoming exhausted and insisted on returning, requesting his comrade to accompany him. Returning was the shorter distance to shelter and the trail was easier, being broken by their coming. The man who was not fatigued refused and pushed ahead; the other returned, reported at the Lake station what had occurred and a search party set out the following morning. The night had been severe and only a mile or so beyond the point where the men had separated was found frozen dead the man who had pushed on. He had sought shelter under a culvert, where he had lain down and gone to sleep. Although he was in a country where dry timber abounds and he had matches there was no evidence that he had undertaken to build a fire.

But it is not only in the cold that danger lays for these men. Should they in their patrols come upon poachers they know that they have to deal with desperate men, who hesitate at nothing. On one occasion the park superintendent learned what led him to believe that poachers were after the buf-

falo in the Pelican valley country, east of Yellowstone river. He caused to be sent out a civilian scout, Burgess, and one soldier, Private Troike, from the Lake hotel. They soon found the poacher's camp, with a number of buffalo heads hung up in a nearby tree. They followed up his trail for some distance and then heard some rifle shots. They soon discovered Howell, the poacher, skinning the head of one of the buffalo that had just been killed. He was armed with a rifle, the others only with revolvers. It was a dangerous bit of work to get over that stretch of open ground and cover Howell with his revolver, but Burgess did it. The wind favored him and Howell knew nothing of his approach until he was called upon to surrender under a cocked pistol only fifteen feet distant. Even Howell's dog did not detect the approaching danger to his master.

Howell remarked that he would not have been captured had he had a little warning of the approach of Burgess and Troike, and those knowing him do not hesitate to assert that he would have killed them both

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CROWDED on a little plateau of tufa, surrounded by mountains on all sides, is the army post of Fort Yellowstone, in Yellowstone National park. Its altitude is 6,300 feet and that of most of the park is from 7,000 to 8,000 feet.

The garrison consists of two troops of cavalry, and its duty is to patrol and protect from marauders the park and the adjoining timber reserves, in all a vast area of more than 5,000 square miles, the greatest game preserve in the world.

In this region are found elk, deer, antelope, mountain sheep, a few buffalo, moose, beaver, mountain lion, wolverine, bear, fox, mink, otter, wolf, etc., and to obtain the valuable furs of some of these animals, to secure the heads of others which as game trophies have become rare and valuable, and to procure the flesh of still others for market purposes, many unprincipled men deliberately violate the law.

During the summer season the work of the soldier can be readily accomplished mounted, patrolling the main roads and trails, but during the winter season the depth of the snow makes travel of the ordinary kind impossible.

It is in the winter that lawlessness can best be conducted, and it is during this time that the greatest vigilance must be exercised by the troops. The localities where game is known to range, and which poachers frequent, must be often inspected. The snowshoe or the ski is the only means by which this can be accomplished from November until May. So when the early snows have deeply covered the ground the summer mount is abandoned to the stable and the hardy trooper takes to the ski as his winter steed.

Picture a toboggan-like arrangement from nine to twelve feet long, four inches wide, with its sides parallel from the up-curved toe, and about an inch in thickness in the center, thinning toward either end, and you have a ski. The toggle to hold the foot consists of straps and rings, which are fastened just a little forward of the center of the ski, and secures the foot by the toe only, permitting the raising of the heel. The park soldier always carries a pole or staff about six feet long, which he uses as a balancing stick, and as an aid to progress in coasting; when the speed is too great he rides this staff "at the horse" fashion as a brake to retard speed.

In using the ski a peculiar stride is necessary; one foot is thrust ahead so as to acquire a gliding motion, and while thus sliding the other foot repeats the movement, then the first again, and so on. The skis are not lifted, but are pushed forward by peculiar movements or thrusts of the thigh, the weight of the body being thrown forward to aid impetus. On level ground good speed can be attained, in going down a declivity one literally flies, but to go up is a different proposition. If not too steep, one can go directly up, lifting the skis slightly, so that the snow which may adhere will overcome the tendency to slip backward, or, if steep, the summit may be reached by zigzagging back and forth, or by sidestepping, known locally as the "corduroy" method. There is also the feather stitch step, which is, however, but little used, so called because the tracks left resemble the seamstress' stitch of that name; the skis are turned out at a wide angle and advanced alternately one in front of the other directly up the incline.

In turning about a beginner makes awkward progress, for he must take short steps, first with one ski, then the other, in the desired direction, but the expert lifts one foot forward high from the ground, so that the heel can be brought to the front, and with a swing and a turn of the foot causes the toe of this ski to point backward, bringing the foot to the ground, the skis parallel, but the toes pointing in opposite direction. The other ski is then simply carried around the first until the toes point the same way, and the about face is completed. It looks easy, but many a hard fall has to be accepted in mastering this feat.

In many parts of this country and more particularly in northern Europe the ski is used for sport—for trials of speed and endurance, but its use in the athletic sense is not known in the park. It is confined to the hard work of duty and patrol. Skiing is most fatiguing and the progress made depends on conditions of snow and weather. In fair weather and on good, hard snow, many miles can be made with less fatigue than can one when the snow is poor, and the members of the party are obliged to take turn about in going first to break trail.

The itinerary in the park is so planned that not more than twenty miles of skiing is contemplated as a day's journey.

Scattered in the park are eight winter stations for the soldiers, each garrisoned



CAPTAIN GEORGE J. CRANE.

Captain George J. Crane, the subject of this sketch, was born in New York, and in early childhood became a citizen of Wisconsin. When the war broke out he entered the Third cavalry and served through the war. For meritorious service and bravery on the field of battle he was promoted to the captaincy of his company and had the honor of bringing home his command. He bears honorable scars as evidence of his participation in many a fierce battle.

After the war he moved and became one of the early pioneers of Minnesota. Captain Crane prospered greatly and became one of the most successful business men, owning at one time one of the largest wheat farms in the state, flouring mills, store and bank.

In 1853 business reverses overtook him and he entered the life insurance field. As a promoter and builder of companies Mr. Crane has been exceptionally successful and several well established companies owe their present existence to his writing and able efforts.

As an underwriter he is unexcelled in the west and his services are eagerly sought by the best companies. In one year he wrote personally over \$3,000,000 of insurance and with the assistance of his agency force placed over \$25,000,000 of insurance in three and one-half (3½) years. Mr. Crane is now superintendent for the western department for the State Life of Indiana, having offices in the First National bank building, Omaha, Neb., and undoubtedly will have it in the first rank of Old Line companies in respect to new business written this year.

Captain Crane is a heavy taxpayer and stands high in all commercial circles; socially, he is noted as jolly, generous and one of the most companionable of men, making friends of all he meets.

He belongs to the Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Elks and Eagles. As Mr. Crane has written business from Maine to California, there is no man more favorably known over such a wide territory than he.