



# General Committee of Defence.

RESOLVED, That the "Observations relative to the means of preserving health in Armies," be published, and that a copy be transmitted to every commanding officer of a Regiment and Company, in the public service, for the defence of this district, and that the Committee of Supplies carry this resolution into effect.

Extract from the minutes.

September 7th, 1814.

JNO. GOODMAN, Sec'y.

## OBSERVATIONS

### *Relative to the Means of Preserving Health in Armies.*

IT is a fact, well ascertained by the experience of this country, as well as of Europe, that armies composed of undisciplined troops, hastily collected, suffer more from diseases than from the weapons of their enemies; especially in the autumnal season of the year.

There are, however, good reasons for believing that sufferings of this kind, great as they have been, may be prevented by the commanding officers and surgeons of regiments, and the larger divisions of armies, provided they act in concert for this purpose.

In this point of view, the position of an encampment is of immense importance. It very often happens, in this portion of the United States, that the people who live on the west and south-west side of a river or mill pond, or meadow, are in good health, while those who are to the east or south-east of such places, are afflicted with fevers and other dangerous diseases.

This fact, which is explained by the prevalence of the west and south-west winds, establishes one great principle to be observed in the choice of a position.

The hilly grounds, on the margins of rivers, meadows, swamps, &c., although they may be very high, are not so healthy as the grounds at a distance.

The immediate shores of rivers are generally to be regarded as suspicious.

When camps are necessarily placed in unhealthy positions, numerous fires, kindled early in the evenings, on their windward sides, may be useful.

No situation can insure health, without attention to three points, viz.

*1st. The arrangement of the whole camp, and of each particular tent, so as to produce the greatest possible cleanliness and comfort.*

*2d. The clothing of each individual soldier, so that it may be accommodated to the season, and may be in as good order as possible.*

*3d. The food of the army, which although last mentioned, is of immense importance.*

It is unnecessary, in this place, to enter into a minute detail respecting these heads, but it ought to be observed, that a sufficient number of temporary privies should be made at every encampment, which is to be occupied longer than two or three days, and that every morning there should be thrown into each pit used for the purpose, a quantity of fresh earth, sufficient to cover completely whatever has been deposited in it during the last twenty-four hours.

Offal substances, and every thing about the camp which will become putrid, ought to be buried before putrifaction begins.

The men should sleep as dry as possible, and every expedient to guard against the dampness of the earth, ought to be practised.

With this view, a large quantity of straw is of great importance. The straw should be often changed, and both straw and blankets ought to be frequently exposed to the sun.

The clothing of the men should be accurately inspected at short periods, and measures taken to keep it in order.

When the evenings become cool, flannel shirts will be very serviceable. Each soldier should have two of them.

Regular exercise is of immense importance. With a view simply to this object, short marches in the cool of the day, have been found very useful.

Measures ought to be taken to establish a proper method of cooking, in each mess, of young troops.

If it is possible, bread or biscuit should always be issued instead of flour.

