

oration. The experiments which we report are suggestive, but we hope that others will take up the investigation so that a definite conclusion can be reached.

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 THE BACON BILL.\*
 

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"To promote the efficiency of the Medical Department of the United States Army.

*"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Hospital Corps of the United States Army shall hereafter be known and designated as the Medical Corps, shall constitute the enlisted personnel of the Medical Corps now authorized by law, and shall consist of sergeants major, at seventy-five dollars per month; sergeants, first class, at sixty-five dollars per month; sergeants, at thirty-six dollaars per month; corporals, at twenty-four dollars per month; cooks, at thirty dollars per month; privates, first class, at twenty-one dollars per month; and privates, at sixteen dollars per month, with such increase for length of service and other allowances as are or may hereafter be established by law."*

The purpose of this Bill is to remedy as far as possible the present and long standing condition which makes it actually impossible to secure for the Medical Department the class of men necessary for the efficient performance of duties connected with the care of the sick and the sanitary service in general. Inasmuch as all branches of the Army are practically in competition with each other for men possessing the necessary qualifications, it is obvious that efficiency can only be maintained by offering equal opportunities for advancement in all branches, or, as in this case, by a compensatory increase in the rate of pay in those branches

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in which the non-commissioned grades are relatively few in number as compared with other corps.

\*Prior to the Act of May 11, 1908, the privates first class of the Hospital Corps received \$5.00 per month more than privates of the line of the Army. It appears to have been recognized by Congress that the work of the Hospital Corps was not only arduous and confining, but that, involving as it does the care of the sick and wounded, the compounding of drugs, etc., it was extremely technical and responsible, and that to secure the class of men who met the requirements indicated, it was necessary to offer some better inducement than the pay of a private soldier. The Act of May 11, 1908, gave no increase in pay to the privates first class, Hospital Corps, while the pay of other soldiers was increased from 20 to 80 per cent. with the sole exception of the Hospital Corps. The Hospital Corps constitutes a part of what are known as the "Staff Departments of the Army." In all of these Departments the privates first class, it is true, receive also \$18.00 per month. In all of them, however, about 12 per cent. of the total strength have the grade of corporal at \$24.00 per month on first enlistment, while in the Hospital Corps the proportion of corporals to the total strength is but 1.42 per cent. Plainly therefore the opportunity for advancement for the privates of this Corps are about ten times less than in other staff departments. In actual figures the difference against the Hospital Corps amounts to the loss of 400 corporals; there being in this Corps but 50 corporals (or 1.42% of its total), while on the basis which prevails in other staffs—the Signal Corps for example (12.88%)—there would be 450. It requires no elaborate argument to show that the loss of promotion which would be possible with 450 corporals has a most serious effect on the class of men who enlist for the lower grades—those of private and private first class. To a great extent the Hospital Corps is now compelled to accept men who realize their inability to make good in other branches where the prospects of advancement being so much better, there is a far wider field from which to make a selection. It follows therefore that unless legislation be enacted which will give to the Hospital Corps the same proportionate number of corporals as in other corps, that there must be some compensatory increase in the pay of the privates first class. The increase requested is \$3.00 per month, which will make the pay of this grade \$21.00 instead of \$18.00. It is observed, in passing, that the farrier, who, under the direction of the veterinary surgeon, cares for sick mules and horses, now receives \$21.00, a higher rate than that now paid the Hospital Corps privates, first class, who, under the direction of the medical officer, cares for the sick soldier or officer. In addition to this, there are numerous ratings and qualifications by which the soldier in other branches may add from \$2.00 to \$9.00 per month to his pay, which are not obtainable and are not allowed to the Hospital Corps.

The sergeants of the Hospital Corps now actually receive less pay than any other non-commissioned officers of the same grade in any branch of the service. Their flat pay is \$30.00 per month, without the opportunity to qualify in marksmanship, gunnery, or so-called special ratings, as in other branches; these qualifications add from \$2.00 to \$9.00 per month to the flat pay of sergeants in all other branches. In the Signal and Coast Artillery Corps, the sergeant and second class electrician sergeant respectively, who may fairly be compared with the sergeants of the Hospital Corps, receive \$36.00 flat pay.

To obtain the position of sergeant in the Hospital Corps the soldier is required to qualify in a written examination in pharmacy, materia medica, care of sick, elementary hygiene, arithmetic, minor surgery and hygiene and is, in addition, examined orally in army regulations, nursing, practical pharmacy, clerical work, drill, minor surgery, including extraction of teeth. In other branches, an examination of relatively equal scope and difficulty is required only of sergeants and second class electrician sergeants of the Signal and Coast Artillery Corps, and their pay is \$36.00 as compared with \$30.00 of the Hospital Corps sergeants.

The duties of the Hospital Corps sergeants are arduous, confining and responsible. In the compounding of prescriptions, alone, he assumes a responsibility which merits adequate remuneration. In the pay increase of 1908 sergeants of infantry, cavalry and artillery received an increase of 65%, the sergeants of the Hospital Corps received an increase of 20%. It is proposed in accompanying Bill to pay the sergeants of the H. C. \$36.00, as in the case of Signal Corps sergeants and second class electrician sergeants. Considering the long hours of duty and nature of the work devolving upon them, it is believed that the proposed equalization is not only necessary, in the interests of the sick, but also just to the Corps.

The grade of sergeants major at \$75.00—corresponding to that of master signal electrician and master electrician—is created by this Bill, with the object of placing the Hospital Corps on a basis of equality with other branches and offering to the non-commissioned officers of this branch opportunities equal to those obtainable in others. This course is necessary if the Medical Department is to secure its quota of the best and most desirable soldiers. At the larger hospitals it is necessary, as there will be found five or six sergeants first class all receiving the same rate of pay, although the senior carries the responsibility for his juniors. The work of such a man requires highly technical training and considerable ability; such men will not at present enlist in the Hospital Corps because they realize the better opportunities open to them in other branches. The grade of pharmacist exists in the Navy and in the Marine Hospital Service at a far higher rate than that proposed for the Army. It may here be noted that the Army Signal Corps, in which the average rates of pay for co-existing grades are equal to those of the Hospital Corps, has 3.4% of the master signal electrician grade at \$75.00 per month. With a like proportion, the Hospital Corps should have 120 of such a grade; it is, however, proposed that there shall be but 30 sergeants major at \$75.00 per month.

An increase of \$15.00 per month (from \$50.00 to \$65.00) is proposed for the sergeants first class. The proposed rate equals that of the engineer in the coast artillery. What has been said about the qualifications, duties and responsibilities of the sergeants of the Hospital Corps applies with greater force to the sergeants first class. The latter are selected by competitive and searching examinations from the best qualified sergeants; they perform the duties of pharmacists, clerks, storekeepers, disciplinarians, anesthetists and are practically continually on duty and at work. The sick soldier is sick quite as much at night as during the day and it is the function of the sergeants first class and sergeants to nurse and supervise the nursing of the sick. The sergeants first class are practically the house surgeons, pharmacists and chief nurse combined, of our military hospitals.

Alone of all non-commissioned officers of the Army, the sergeants first class are

subject to re-examination professionally every three years. This fact alone compels these men to devote to study the majority of the few hours of spare time which others can devote to amusement. Under present conditions, the sergeants first class are all on the same level of pay; there is no reward for exceptional qualifications of merit. In this respect the Hospital Corps differs from any other branch of the Army and with a most unfavorable result.

The duties of the Hospital Corps in the field are even more arduous than in garrison. The work of driving an ambulance filled with sick is, for example, quite as important as driving a wagon loaded with forage. Yet the wagon driver receives \$40.00, if a civilian, and \$21.00 if a soldier; while the Hospital Corps private receives but \$16.00 or \$18.00.

In the Navy the first class Hospital apprentice corresponding to first class private Hospital Corps, receives \$33.00 as compared with \$18.00 in the Army. The rates of pay provided for in attached bill are those recommended by the Surgeon General of the Army in his last annual report to the Secretary of War and represent what must be considered as expert and authoritative opinion as to the degree of improvement necessary to better present conditions.

The privates of today are the non-commissioned officers of the future; it is a military axiom that good non-commissioned officers—men trained in their specific duties—are absolutely necessary for military efficiency. It follows that if the Hospital Corps cannot obtain good material for privates the quality of its non-commissioned officers will decline. The private soldier seeks and obtains his reward to non-commissioned rank—that of corporal, sergeant, etc., and without some improvement in the pay of those and other grades, it is evident that men competent to become non-commissioned officers will not enter the Hospital Corps.

The soldier, whether officer or enlisted man, has practically no voice in the selection of his nurse or pharmacist; the national government provides both and whether skilful or otherwise, the soldier must perforce be content. The function of the nurse and of the pharmacist are too responsible to be entrusted to men of a low order of intelligence or who lack appreciation of the responsibilities of their duties. It is a matter of official record in the War Department, as reported by numerous medical officers, whose interests are purely professional and humanitarian, that the morals and quality of the Hospital Corps is a progressively declining factor. The outcome is obvious and requires no comment.

Following the custom in all branches of the Army, it is proposed to change the designation Hospital Corps to Medical Corps. The Hospital Corps is the only branch in which the soldier belongs to one corps and the officer who immediately commands him to another. The present arrangement has nothing to commend it and much to criticise. It is unwieldy, administratively cumbersome and inhibits the development of that esprit de corps which is maintained in other branches.

The National Guard under certain conditions becomes an actual portion of the United States Army, and the above arguments apply with equal force to its members, hence the pharmacists of the whole country are deeply interested. This matter is a serious one for even during actual hostilities more men die in the United States Army from sickness than from the missiles of the enemy, which shows how very important is the promotion of the efficiency of the Hospital Corps.