

Contributed and Selected

THE ARMY HOSPITAL CORPS.

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Surgeon General Gorgas, in his annual report to the Secretary of War, recently published, earnestly urges an improvement in the conditions of the Army Hospital Corps. He again calls attention to the difficulty in securing desirable men for this important corps, and points out the fact that other branches of the service offer superior inducements. Dr. Gorgas refers to bills that have been introduced in Congress looking to the improvement of the efficiency of the Hospital Corps and which were drafted in accord with the recommendations of his office,—evidently meaning the Hughes-Bacon bills. But these “have not received the approval of the War Department.” And this is the gist of the difficulty which our committee met with in urging the passage of these bills—their failure to secure the approval of the War Department,—which blocked our efforts completely. We were informed that the War Department had under consideration remedial legislation for the Hospital Corps. Secretary Garrison informed President Beringer that “should conditions in the Hospital Corps ever become so unsatisfactory, and such as to indicate that an improvement can be brought about only by an increase in pay of the members, the necessary increase will be recommended.” Judging from the following paragraphs, quoted from the Surgeon-General’s report, this time has arrived:—

“Attention has been repeatedly called to the deficiency in the number of Hospital Corps authorized for service, and recommendation made for an increase. On April 29, 1914, the Secretary of War authorized an addition of 1,500 men, making a total of 5,012 for the corps. May 9, 1914, authority was granted for the appointment of sixty additional sergeants. To date, 543 men in excess of the number previously allowed (3,512), have been re-enlisted in, enlisted for, or transferred from the line, to the Hospital Corps. The greater number of these men were used in the organization of new mobile units and field vacancies in the Second Division and with organizations on duty on the Mexican border.

“The class of men secured for the Hospital Corps, have by no means been satisfactory. During the excitement attending a possibility of active service in a campaign beyond the limits of the United States, a greater proportion of desirable men presented themselves for enlistment, and the commanding officer of one of the new organizations reported that he was receiving better men than had been serving with the detachment at his post. With passage of the incentive, the quality again deteriorated. A commanding officer of a post in commenting on his detachment expressed himself as follows: ‘The sergeant is efficient and energetic, but the Hospital Corps men, with the exception of the sergeant, are

the riff-raff of the Army—and I am not putting it too strongly. In two or three cases they are not only woefully inefficient but are not clean personally. I have directed the surgeon to make a special report in the case and will give him any help he needs from our own troops. I really think that these men were transferred to rid some other command of worthless men, an almost criminal procedure when one considers how badly good Hospital Corps men are needed.’

“In each annual report of the Surgeon General for the past two or three years, attention has been invited to the inferior character of a considerable proportion of the men who are accepted for the Hospital Corps. And the reason for this has been pointed out, viz., the inferior inducements offered by the Hospital Corps in comparison with the opportunities offered by other branches of the service. Bills have been introduced in Congress for improvement in this respect along the lines recommended by this office, but these have not received the approval of the War Department. It is earnestly recommended either that this disapproval be reconsidered or else that other inducements be made by means of special ratings or in any other way whereby service in the Hospital Corps can be made sufficiently attractive to secure a desirable class of men.”

The Surgeon General presents the bright as well as the dark side of the picture, as shown by the following instances of heroism displayed by members of what is sometimes termed a “non-combatant branch” of the Army:—

“Fortunately, however, all the men secured, even under the present unfavorable condition, are not undesirable men and a number of individual cases have occurred during the year where enlisted men of the Hospital Corps have rendered efficient and distinguished service. In October, 1913, a train carrying a band and two companies of Coast Artillery Corps, left the track and crashed through a wooden bridge near Buckatunna, Miss., and as a result, seventeen men were killed and nearly one hundred more or less seriously injured. Sergt. Halbert M. Beasley, Hospital Corps, although he was himself injured, worked unceasingly in rendering first aid and assisting in the removal of the wounded. For this he was awarded a certificate of merit. On March 25, 1914, Pvt. First Class Thomas Mosely, Hospital Corps, was awarded a certificate of merit for distinguished gallantry in action against hostile Moros while private, Hospital Corps, when he bandaged a wounded officer, in the face of a heavy fire from the Moro trenches, and carried him to a place of safety at the risk of his own life. This at Bagsak Mountain, Jolo, P. I., June 11, 1913.”

“On April 21, 1914, Pvt. First Class Edward W. Morrison, Hospital Corps, was awarded a certificate of merit for meritorious conduct in rendering first aid to wounded comrades under fire of hostile Moros at Mamaya Peak, P. I., December 15, 1913.”

As showing the need for medical knowledge and skill of no mean order and as an instance of the heavy responsibilities assumed by the military pharmacists is the following:—

“On March 6, 1914, a private of the Signal Corps detachment at Nulato, Alaska, presented evidence of an appendiceal abscess. No medical officer was present with this small detachment, but Sergt. First Class Richard A. Wood, Hospital Corps, diagnosed the case and communicated by telegraph with the surgeon at Fort Gibbon, about 250 miles distant. The surgeon started, but the distance had to be traveled by dog team and at least four days would be required for the trip. Two days later Sergt. Wood communicated with the surgeon by telegraph and stated the urgency of the symptoms and the condition of the patient. The condition of the soldier was so urgent as to demand immediate

operative interference and Sergt. Wood was authorized to proceed. On the same day the sergeant opened and drained the abscess under a local anesthesia. When the surgeon arrived the patient was in good condition. The surgeon reports that in his belief Sergt. Wood, by performing a prompt drainage of the abscess, greatly facilitated the patient's recovery and probably saved his life."

The authorized strength of the Hospital Corps is as follows:—

Sergeants, first class.....	300
Sergeants	422
Corporals	50
Privates, first class, and privates.....	4,240
Total	5,012

There were in the service June 30, 1914:—

Sergeants, first class.....	300
Sergeants	399
Corporals	41
Acting Cooks	180
Privates, first class, and privates.....	3,135
Total	4,055

The new committee on Status of Pharmacists in the Government Service, to be appointed by President Mayo, should lose no time in getting in touch with the War Department with a view to learning at the outset whether the Department will approve of a bill drafted along the lines of the Hughes-Bacon Bill—and if such approval is withheld then a strong effort should be put forth to discover what the objections of the Department really are and how they may be overcome. It is futile to enter upon another campaign at the coming session of Congress until these facts are determined.

A SYMPOSIUM ON THE PHARMACEUTICAL SYLLABUS.

(Continued from last month.)

BOSTON, MASS.

The Pharmaceutical Syllabus was first considered at a meeting held at Niagara Falls in June, 1906, and plans for its preparation were worked out by a Committee consisting of Willis G. Gregory of Buffalo, Henry H. Rusby of New York City, and Henry L. Taylor of Albany. This Committee soon decided to give the proposed publication a national character, by inviting the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy and the American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties each to appoint representatives on the Committee. This invitation was formally accepted by each of the organizations in September, 1906, and the membership was thus increased to five members, who soon afterward appointed sixteen other members from boards of pharmacy and faculties of colleges of pharmacy. The number of members has been twenty-one since 1906, with but few temporary vacancies. In 1910, after the issue of the first edition, the American Pharmaceutical Association adopted a by-law providing for representation on the Committee and the method of appointment of members was changed so that each of the three organizations represented appoint seven of the twenty-one members on the Committee. Since its organization, the Committee has included representatives from many of the leading colleges of pharmacy in the United States and from many of the state boards of pharmacy.

The expenses of the Committee have been paid from annual appropriations of twenty-five dollars from each of the three parent organizations and from the receipts from the sale of the second edition. No member of the Committee has been paid anything for his work, which has been very considerable in several cases.

The need of an outline of the standard course in pharmacy is generally conceded and it was strikingly shown, when the Committee began an inquiry into the courses given by colleges of pharmacy throughout the country, by the differences in subject-matter, length of courses and methods of teaching that were reported. Members of the Committee had great