

See p. 171.

Reprinted from THE BULLETIN OF THE MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL FACULTY  
OF MARYLAND, Vol. XI, No. 8, May, 1919

## THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT IN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION, A. E. F.\*

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In considering this rather broad topic, it is felt that there can be submitted to you this evening only a brief résumé of some of the work done by us, of the Medical Corps in France during the period from July 1917 to March 1918. During this period of nine months the Medical Department of the Line of Communications existed as a separate organization, and it was my good fortune to be the Chief Surgeon of the command under Major Generals Blatchford and Kernan. In March of 1918 the office was consolidated along with other staff corps offices, and fell under the immediate control of the Chief Surgeon, A. E. F.

It has seemed to me worth while that I make a departure from the strictly medical aspects of our endeavor and try to put before you some of the problems of medical administration, met by us, the troubles we had to meet, the solutions we made and the failures which inured to us—quite as the usual result of trying to do big things. Able scientific minds will analyze and lay before you in time, the purely medical side of our history; and I shall endeavor to tell you in the main, of those things which came up for solution, to be met by common sense and the application of every day wits.

First of all let us look for a moment at the problem. We were sent 3000 miles from home, into a friendly country, to be sure, but depleted by three years of devastating war, backed and intensified by interruptions in its commerce, by the ever vigilant and altogether unscrupulous submarine. It was our job to figure out what we should need, to care for the sick and wounded of an enormous army, and distribute it in the proper places, when we should get it in France. No one knew how big the army was to be, and we simply figured that so many divisions of 28,000 men each, would need so many supplies, and so many officers, nurses and men of the Medical Department to look after their medical wants. The cables were worked overtime and America responded, whole heartedly and steadily to our demands.

The supply question, insofar as it related to things for medical use, is interesting enough to merit a short reference. The French gave us one port to begin with and for several months all our business was done through St. Nazaire, at the mouth of the river Loire. That town was no Arcadia and it was no pleasure party to sojourn there and hustle medical property off the docks, into railroad cars, which were to carry it up

\* Address delivered at the annual meeting of the Faculty, April 23, 1919.



to the lines. But we had some faithful officers and men at work and they pushed the task along. Cargo came off the ships in the utmost confusion, and the few men we had, worked incessantly to get the stuff segregated and shipped out—but we did get it done, and before long it was being collected by railroad, into our supply depot located at Cosne, a funny little mediaeval town, about 120 miles due south of Paris. The Depot force here sorted it out, issued it on requisitions and having begun about August 1, we were carrying on well by the first of October.

As I have said America responded well and generally speaking the supplies were well balanced and in good quantity. It often happened that we struck a dangerous ebb in the flow of stuff and were often compelled to beg of our good French friends, who helped us out, as did the Red Cross.

But we finally struck a real stride on what we called automatic supply, devised by our General Staff. This meant that on our side we figured out just what each division needed for one month. Then we estimated the ship tonnage necessary to carry that stuff to us and notified the people at home, how many divisions wanted supplies in France. The good people over here did the rest and we certainly had the business of troop supply going smoothly, six months after we began the game.

We put a big depot in, at a point near the front lines, called Iss-sur-Tille and thus helped the chap in the battle lines. It was not all easy sailing and if I did not feel that it would bore you, I might unfold a story of stray shipments, over-congested railroads, deficiencies in trucks, and battles with mud and sand, which would show how our Medical Officers were embarrassed at many turns.

One of our great problems was that of motor transportation. I need scarcely say that it was fearfully difficult to get it, in any thing like adequate amounts from the United States. Cargo space was so scarce and food and clothing so imperatively needed that we suffered from lack of ambulances and passenger cars, and especially from the absence of parks to set up and repair what we had.

Sanitation in France was a difficult nut to crack and looking back on it all, I am really amazed that we came out so well. One can't make a sanitary régime, at all worth while, unless one has appliances and material things to do it with. I may instance lumber as one of the many things we lacked and you will not have to stretch your imaginations very far to reach a general idea, of what the deficiency in this article implied. Housing, food preparation, bathing, and disposal of excreta were some of the things which one couldn't do, without lumber. Gradually the deficiency was supplied in this, as in other concerns, though there was never a time when we did not lack many essential things.



It does not take a meteorologist to establish the fact that it is more than humid in France. Any garden variety of observer will agree, that that word of euphony does not meet the situation, and "wet" is reasonably the term of election. Mud is of course the corollary, and we got plenty of both at all times. It began at the base ports and carried on to and into, the trenches.

There is a certain psychology in making men stack up to sanitary pre-script. When a soldier is continually and hopelessly wet and muddy, without the means to dry out, it sounds rather flat to urge upon him that he hunt an added increment of wetness and muddiness, by "tapping the bog" for a hundred yards, to reach the place, where the calls of nature may be carried out in a centralized fashion. His primitive instinct gets the better of the academic inculcation. The result is obvious. Again you can't crowd men into an insufficient barrack, where air and floor space are both lamentably deficient and expect them to cough and sneeze into a handkerchief. Quite as impossible is the effort to enforce cleanliness of the body, when there are no bathing facilities and no means of getting, new, fresh clothes to substitute the old ones, which have done overtime work. But you can't have adequate clothing and bath houses always at hand, when an expanding army is operating 3000 miles from home and tonnage is as scarce as submarines can make it, so your vicious circle holds the boards.

I believe the spirit of the army is what carried us through, for the men did struggle against the forces, in conspiracy against them and by dint of their earnest efforts, they kept comparatively decent.

Lice have become an international celebrity during this war. Parlor conversations do not stagger and lapse, when a subject, so loathsome to our society of ten years ago, gets on to the tapis, under the euphemism of "cooties." This march of progress, or declension of nicety, justifies an aviator, fresh from a German prison camp, in showing his hero worshipping girl friends, his scars of insectuous voraciousness. Lice interest me also, and whether on a knight of the air or a mud crushing dough-boy, they constitute the basis for our greatest sanitary failure, greater even than the enforced overcrowding of our barracks during the winter season. I believe I learned one lesson from this war and that lesson urges the transfer of the amiable "cootie" to the exclusive care of the Medical Department, as a disinfection problem.

The A. E. F. was in error, I think, in confiding them to the Quartermaster Department and I feel satisfied that the Medical Department should assume the burden of disinfestation, and launder and sterilize all clothing requiring such special treatment. We failed to get our appliances to do this work and while we could boil underwear, olive drab outside



clothing could not be so readily cleaned up. Later on we got the necessary agencies to work and it was possible to clean the men promptly.

We had to persuade the General Staff in France to see our viewpoint and work on it in a number of instances. A great measure of practical education for everybody was carried forth in the days when so many new problems had to be met and when the armistice came, we knew our General Staff and I believe they knew us, and there was mutual esteem and due consideration on both sides. Surely we got fine results, at last largely, I think, because we had representation in the General Staff and responsibility, too.

The great big man who headed our force was always with us and General Pershing knew, and showed he knew, the kidney of his Medical Department. His great qualities of leadership took us into his following wholeheartedly, and to lighten his load and soften the rigor of the ultimate responsibility for two million men, which rested on him, was our task and our pleasure. I believe we felt quite sure that when we helped a poor unfortunate doughboy, we were indirectly helping the fine man and resolute leader, who gave inspiration to the expedition.

Taken by and large, I feel that we may congratulate ourselves on our general result in conserving the health of our men. We had 45,000 deaths from gunshot casualty and 22,000 from disease and that is a very creditable showing to put forward in statistics, comparative to those of other wars. What a record we might have had without our pneumonia scourge, is one of those things governed by the awful *if*. That blasting epidemic was a big blot on our scutcheon and in the light of facts which have come to my notice, I am pretty nearly convinced that the shelter of the sky is preferable to that of roofs, under prevalence of respiratory epidemics. The 1st Army Corps, with its billet in its hat, came out pretty nearly unscathed, while organizations under shelter got a full distribution of it, other conditions being, if anything, unfavorable to the 1st Corps. We have the mastery of practically all the devastating diseases which have followed armies and the respiratory group alone remains to mock our effort. Let us hope that the puissant intelligence of our splendid investigators and research men, will speedily lay this menace, along with yellow fever and enteric fever.

I deny that enteric fever was a real menace to us in spite of the impeachment lodged in the intemperate head lines of a Washington newspaper of recent issue. You all know that to our present attitude of mind, it takes but a few cases of typhoid to get the ax of the central authority into action, but the wielding of the ax does not indicate anything, but the stiffening of the forces which we command and which we know to be sovereign. Over and far beyond the sanitation of places, our prophylactic work still minimizes enteric fever.



You know what our record has been in the matter of one of the great scourges of armies, venereal disease. Young men reporting from the civil population to army camps have carried a venereal rate as high as 175 per thousand. Did we not have full justification for the chuckle which we emitted when our rate was hammered down to 30 per thousand!—and this with a bunch of “single men in barracks,” who were nowhere near to being “plaster saints.” Two of your fellow townsmen, Colonels Hugh Young and George Walker contributed everything to this result, but while Baltimore might claim them in the genesis, they were ours in the time of real fruition, at least insofar as the military business went. They would not stand for an omission of the name of Colonel E. L. Keyes, of New York, from this particular galaxy of real husky workers and Colonel Keyes must go into the token of appreciation, as a full partner.

Alcohol got a black eye in the A. E. F. early in the history of that Odyssey and why and how our men kept out of it, I don't pretend to know, in any degree of entirety. Whether it be due to the light alcoholic content of the wines of France is questionable. Spirits could be had for a small consideration, both in France and England, and a full bottle was by no means beyond the limit of a youngster, with a month's pay in his clothes and a thirst for a man sized drink in his fauces.

Again it seems hardly possible that the widely prohibited area at home, sending out young men, who knew nothing about alcohol, could have been entirely responsible for our clean slate. The consciousness that there was a job to be done—and done effectively—may have conspired to the result, and I by no means think it convicts me of a mollycoddle, mawkish sentimentality, when I say that I believe the idea that mother and the girls at home didn't expect a fellow to tread the primrose path of dalliance was a factor of moment. This young army of ours carried the benignity of mother's face with them in goodly numbers, and there is no question that it was a well diffused and a substantial reason for decent living.

Rigorous discipline did its share, and our uplift, social organizations did theirs, in that they put diverting and entertaining influences before our young exiles. Personally, I am a real enthusiast on the work done by our Y. M. C. A. I saw that work in Northeastern France during the trying winter of 1917-18 and those chaps who put up their recreation tents out in the wind, and rain and mud of that inhospitable area, were real crusaders and had the spirit of the missionary with them to a beautiful finish. I think they will someday get the grateful recognition which now, in the epoch of iconoclastic criticism, not confined to any one class in its manifestation, is denied them.

All these things were factors doubtless, but whatever may have been



the impulsions, the behavior of our men was truly wonderful and it is my proud boast, as an American, that in seventeen months, whether in Paris, Tours, or along the lines in France, or in the hospitable, drink inviting atmosphere of London, I know I did not see a half dozen drunken American soldiers!

That is a contrast picture to some others I might paint, and God knows it was, and is, inspiring. The thought that it was my privilege to see this, makes me forget the nights when I had to go to bed to get warm and the days when there was no American radiator, to purr its friendly warmth off in the corner.

I believe it will not be questioned that the Medical Department in France came out of this war with the hall-mark of sound quality and excellent service stamped on it. To do big things successfully must rest with the human-factor put to the work, and in our personnel we found our most potent agent for good.

For thirty years it has been a matter of pride to me that I could claim fellowship with the guild of medicine and surgery, but it remained to this war, to cap my fabric with an admiration for that fellowship, which is quite a dogma in my list of things that I know to be right and appropriate. I had seen the brotherhood tested and it rang true, but I had seen the day of small things only, and did not know the full story of the consecration, as I do now.

To our doctors, our nurses and our fine enlisted men, I make the obeisance they deserve, and you will give me the privilege of telling you why I lift my hat.

We may first concern ourselves with the physicians and surgeons who came to us from their comfortable office and home surroundings in America—in most cases voluntarily, and with no reservations. Leaving their homes and the handsome incomes which were theirs, they went into surroundings and habits of life, new to them in all respects, save their bedside work, and carrying discomfort and inconvenience every hour of every day. In ninety cases out of a hundred financial loss was their steady portion. I watched many a Base Hospital unit, staffed by the Nestors, and the younger men, and I saw the grossly inadequate provision for comfort, and the heart breaking enforcement of professional idleness, which fell to their lot in the poorly arranged school houses and public buildings which depleted France, out of her slender store, managed to scare up for us as hospitals. The daily routine was for months the trying one of inactivity and if Satan looked for a setting to dole out his mischief for idle hands, this was the chance of his ancient life. It needed resolution and stern devotion to a cause, to stand up under the mud, the cold and the change of station, which oft times changed like the gambler's luck, in that



it got worse. Laboratory and surgical specialists bossed a gang of men on the docks, getting the precious equipment of the unit on to freight cars, and the hand which normally handled the fine adjustment screw of a microscope at home, hustled the box of drugs on the wharf at our Gethsemane, the port of St. Nazaire.

The great men who went out as the directors, in our hospital units had a multifarious task. Theirs was the fate to sustain the established high morale and harmonize and keep asperities under control. It would have been entirely millennial had there been no asperities under such conditions of living but men like Fred Washburn of Boston, Charles Peck and Charles Gibson of New York, Angus McLean of Detroit, R. T. Miller of Pittsburgh, J. M. Flint of New Haven, and your own splendid John Finney, carried along the current of the sporting blood and cemented the morale. These men are but samples of the real human stuff at the top.

It happened, I am sorry to say, that unfortunate "misfits" among regular officers were occasionally detailed to command some of our people, but sooner or later we got the rectification by appropriate orders, and it was the exception.

The officer personnel of these units was so admirable that it is entirely pleasant to think of them in the retrospect. The dominating idea was service to America, to the unit and to the poor chap, who made appeal in his hour of misfortune to the skill of the doctor and the great heart which he knew to underlie and galvanize that skill.

How much those fine doctors did to exalt the morale of our fighting forces can only be known to one who has heard the soldier man talk about it, and it has been my privilege in many places, to hear him tell of the uplift which came to him, when he realized that the best of America's medical profession, awaited him in a Base Hospital.

To be sure it might be that the flooring in the rude barrack buildings, used as hospital wards, would show cracks of a half inch between boards and the cry for linoleum to cover those cracks was met from my office, by the sad and unavailing news, that the *S.S. Raven*, Plymouth to Cherbourg, had been sunk in the English Channel with 70,000 square yards of linoleum, destined for us. This didn't help, but it did in some measure explain, why the Carrel-Dakin solution froze in the wards at pitiful old Bazoilles-sur-Meuse, another Gethsemane, known to your Hopkins Unit, and where coal was \$70 a ton and rare at that.

I do not wish to convey the impression that it was only in these units that our doctor men were shining lights. There was much excellence all along the lines and first class medical talent functioned at many small camp hospitals and with detached units. Of course we got some goats among the sheep and I have always deplored the fact that the first officer



dismissed by General Court Martial in the A. E. F. for drunkenness was a Medical Officer. But these delinquents were notably the exceptions and one may never hope to find a more altruistic, self-sacrificing, devoted set of men than the Medical Officers who carried the burden in the Lines of Communications, during my identification with it. And they were the fellows, fresh from civil life, who bore the brunt and did the chores in cheerful coöperation with the handful of Regular Medical Officers who were available for duty abroad.

Just here it is fitting that I say that we went along as a very happy family in France and England without any internecine strife, based on contention between the man from civil life and his professional brother who had made the service his life calling. I may again refer to the fact that we had some Regular Officers who failed in their work and brought discords, just as we had a sprinkling of non-adaptables among our Medical Reserve Corps men, but I believe the vast majority of the Regulars and the M. R. C. will agree with me, that long before the War Department merged everything into the Medical Corps, U. S. Army, by official fiat, our working agreement and unification had been accomplished and our seal might in all reason have carried the legend "E Pluribus Unum." It is my thorough conviction that practically every thinking, efficient man who comes back from France, carries in his heart a sense of close affiliation with the old Medical Corps and is imbued with a keen desire to help us solve our problems in the future.

No reference to our work in France could be reasonably proper without comment on the nurses, who blazed trails and killed lions with us, quite up in the wilderness. I recall that when I left the L. O. C. there were over 4000 of them in my area and any ordinary man may fittingly balk at a dispensation of Providence, which gives unto him, the supervision of 4000 women. This figure grew to 9000 and over, in December, 1918, when I left France for home, and the gracious bachelor who at present adorns the office of the Chief Surgeon, A. E. F., has had a merry quota of femininity under his aegis.

But this body of women were bent on doing a great work and they were so busy doing it that they had no time to worry a Chief Surgeon. I do not think America sent any more resolute spirits to France than she sent in the personnel of the Army Nurse Corps. Their training had taught them the cogent need for discipline and control and their eagerness to soften the rigors of suffering, gave them the inspiration to fight it out to a finish and surmount the untoward conditions under which they had to live and work. The cold, raw early morning and the premature winter night in France, with creature comforts and normal hospital equipment and facilities at a minimum, put no blight on the service rendered the sick man



in our hospitals. With mobile hospitals and surgical teams the only limit set by our nurses to their progress to the front, was that imposed by military necessity. They worked in rubber boots and a Chief Nurse told me the lingerie of many of these ladies often bore unmistakable ear marks of having been originally issued as pajamas for the sterner sex, sick in hospitals. But our nurse got her sufficient panegyric from the plain soldier man, who was the great beneficiary of her *tactus eruditus*. A trip through any hospital in France showed the youth of the nation bearing the smile of content, coddled by a bustling young woman, who in most cases envied him his wounds and in all instances cherished his best interests as her first and foremost concern.

These women did much for international comity and many a Tommy or Poilu carried back to his home a grateful recollection of just how much America was willing to do for her Allies, because an Army Nurse had helped him in his crisis of life.

While I am on the subject of the Army Nurse, I cannot forbear a brief reference to a matter which is as unpleasant and revolting, as it is insistent that measures be taken to lay it as one smites the serpent. I hesitate to mention a report which is so malevolently and viciously false, and which should perhaps be consigned to the waste basket, which all decent minds must keep in this time of flagrant gossip. However, I deem it a duty to deny with all the vehemence I can summon up, the outrageous lie that special maternity hospitals are apportioned in this country for unfortunate women, who have been among our nurses in France.

The story even reached me in France, from America, in December, 1917, and it has come to me from several gossip peddlers since my return to this country. I grieve to say that in every instance women were the agencies of diffusion. I know so well how free we were from just this thing, when I had daily access to all the records in France and England, and the perpetuation of the slanderous story over here, prompted me to hunt up the record in the Surgeon General's Office, where every such case must of necessity finally rest. Now please note the emphatic denial made by those records when I tell you that there are just twelve such cases to be found. Only 12 among 11,000 women, living under conditions during nearly two years, of detachment from their ordinary environment have shown the frailty, which is so ruthlessly and ungenerously charged to them. Of course this must die, like all lies must die in time, but those women did so much for America in her hour of need, they did it so nobly and without stint, and it is only a meager requital to them, that some one, apprised of the truth should proclaim it, and come out openly in their defence. I deny the wretched story and all my running mates in the L. O. C. will share the scorn I feel for the contemptible spirit which spreads



it. "Be thou as chaste as ice, yet thou shalt not escape calumny" was written centuries ago.

Let me touch for a moment on the Medical Department enlisted men who put their impress on our work. Without them we could have done nothing of the things we did and surely we had a fine collection of splendid youngsters to do the countless things a soldier in the Department must do. I think I know why we got so many unusual men and it lies in the fact that voluntary enlistment in the Medical Department insured an early arrival on the other side. I got together forty lawyers, clerks, secretaries, and students for the initial office and supply service and took them with me from New York on July 2, 1917. I like to refer to those chaps as the forty immortals, and they were but the type of the men who came to us in our base hospital and other units. Later on, the apportionments given the Medical Department at large from the selective draft were not of such good quality, but we had the fine leaven of our organized units to sustain the burden. It is a source of gratification that so many of them received commissions in France. The eight hour law did not hold with them and the arrival of the convoy of sick and wounded meant that everything but work—plenty of it—was off the cards.

If the soldier going over the top was doing his bit, the chap who helped get his poor dismembered body out of the ruck, and into a neatly sheeted bed, was doing his, with even consecration. The enlisted man of our Department has the love and affection of those who worked with him and personally I count many of them my warm and esteemed friends, who stir my emotions when I see them, in the afterglow.

In closing let me say a word about our Allies. We met much kindness from both the French and English. In our very early days we begged the French for hospitals and they dispossessed their own people to help us. I have a clear vision of an interview between two French officers at Bordeaux in August, 1917. The one holding on to his hospital of 2500 beds, like a lioness over her cub, and the other ruthlessly and implacably urging the dictum of the Service de Sante, in Paris, that the place was "pour les Americains, tout a fait et immediatement."

The French were good to us and so patient to our insistence.

It was my privilege to serve for five months among the English on their own heath and I came away from them sure that they are the kindest, most helpful people I ever met outside my own land, which by no means holds more of good will than they do. The setting there was one to harass a Chief Surgeon when in May, 1918, we began to pour thousands of troops through England and to recover some of our sad, pitiful wreckage from the British lines in Flanders, through Southampton.

The needs of our department in the face of this new found policy were



beyond calculation. We had little material and only a few places worthy of being dignified as hospitals, but we had the stalwart good will of a lot of big hearted Englishmen, who not only listened, but acted, and would not say nay to the need of the stranger within their gates. Hospitality which goes beyond giving you dinners and gives you beautiful hospital buildings for your sick, is hospitality indeed, and in less than three months we had 7000 beds going in places, which were real hospital finds. Further than this, the open door was ours into any British hospital and our men met only kindness and skill. I learned to admire British efficiency as I saw men tucked away in our hospitals at Dartford and Portsmouth who, less than forty-eight hours previously had fallen in the mud of "no man's land" in Flanders, under German shellfire. That was English evacuation of wounded in its highest expression, and it was a masterful system. We Americans owe a great deal to many Englishmen, and to none is our debt more substantial than that we owe to those rare gentlemen, Lieut. General Sir John Goodwin, Director General, Army Medical Service, and Major General F. G. Bond, Director of Quartering, at the British War Office. If these gentlemen did not tire of begging Americans, it was because they had an infinity of patience and a boundlessness of the good heart.

I would gladly dwell at length on the hospitality for American Medical Officers which was ours at the charming home of the ever delightful Oslers, in Oxford. Sir William and his gracious lady were ever ready to receive and help their former compatriots and they knew the details of our hospitals, because they went to them and through them. It was encouraging to go about with the keen and inspiring presence of the beloved "Chief" to point out that the most important place in the hospital was the laboratory! Personally, I elect the kitchen, but I did not tell him so.

And now, gentlemen, let me close my rather rambling, very unscientific and quite commonplace bit of narration by expressing the hope that when again our beloved America knows the hour of stress and calls upon her manhood and womanhood to get into the fray, she may find every where as knightly and queenly a response as came to her from the medical and nursing professions in this war. Many of our good people rest in the soil of foreign lands. The casualty reports for the entire A. E. F. to March 31, 1919, show:

*Medical Officers*

Killed in action . . . . .	46
Died of Wounds . . . . .	22
Died of Disease . . . . .	102



*Nurses*

Died of disease and accident . . . . . 109

*Enlisted Men*

Killed in action . . . . . 382  
 Died of wounds . . . . . 247  
 Died of disease . . . . . 1500

To the shades of these and to those who abide in the two professions,  
 we of the permanent corps may say with full hearts:

I have eaten your bread and salt,  
 I have drunk your water and wine,  
 The deaths that ye died, I have watched beside,  
 And the lives that ye lived were mine.

*Honor Roll*

According to the best information obtainable 176 doctors belonging to  
 the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland received commissions  
 as follows:

Brigadier Generals . . . . .	2
Colonels . . . . .	4
Lieutenant Colonels . . . . .	10
Majors . . . . .	33
Captains . . . . .	36
First Lieutenants . . . . .	20
Rank unknown . . . . .	71
Total . . . . .	176

This does not include a considerable number of physicians outside the  
 society who served with the colors.