

"The second section of the bill provides for a commission to be composed of the Secretary of War, the General commanding the army, the Adjutant-General, the Surgeon-General, and three women appointed by the President. In my opinion this would be a very cumbersome and unmilitary way of managing a small corps of female nurses. The Surgeon-General of the army has control of hospitals and of the Hospital Corps of the army, and he should be entrusted with the general supervision of the corps of female nurses which this bill proposes to establish. With the assistance of a Superintendent of Women Nurses, provided for in Section 3, he certainly would have no difficulty in securing competent trained nurses and in directing all matters relating to their rights, duties and status.

"The provision in Section 3 that the Superintendent of Women Nurses shall be a woman graduated from a general hospital training school does not seem to be necessary. The Superintendent should be a woman of executive ability, having a thorough knowledge of medicine and of modern methods of caring for the sick and of the qualifications of a trained female nurse; but it is not essential that she should herself be a graduate of a training school. The more liberal education possessed by a graduate in medicine would seem to be desirable for a Superintendent of Women Nurses in the army.

"With reference to the salaries provided in Section 6, I would simply say that if the chief of nurses at a general or post hospital receives \$85 per month, the head-nurse \$50 and assistant nurses \$40 per month, together with subsistence, uniform and laundry, it will be necessary to increase the pay of hospital stewards, acting hospital stewards and privates of the Hospital Corps to in some degree correspond with these salaries. A hospital steward now receives \$45 per month, an acting hospital steward \$25 per month, a private of the Hospital Corps \$18 per month.

"I beg leave to call attention to the fact that the provision that the female nurses shall have subsistence, uniform and laundry, will involve a considerable expense, and that enlisted men of the Hospital Corps and other enlisted men of the army are required to pay for their own laundry. If free laundry is provided for by law without any restriction, the nurses will themselves be the only judges as to the number of summer dresses, etc., that shall be sent to the laundry.

"Nursing in our post hospitals has heretofore been done by privates of the Hospital Corps, who, as a rule, have received special training for six months in a school of instruction established for this purpose. We must continue to depend to a considerable extent upon the members of the Hospital Corps for the care of our sick in the

field and in hospitals. A large majority of cases occurring in the army will not require the services of a trained female nurse. Men suffering from diarrhoea, intermittent fever, slight injuries of various kinds, etc., certainly do not require such trained assistance. I should regret to see the members of the Hospital Corps degraded to the position of attendants upon the female nurses and looked upon as unfit for responsibility in the care of the sick. These men are trained not only to take care of their comrades when sick in hospital, but to accompany them to the battle-field and render first aid to the wounded. With proper training they are entirely competent, as has been proved by our experience before the war, to nurse serious cases of disease and injury. The mortality from typhoid fever in our military post hospitals for a series of years, although all the nursing was done by members of the Hospital Corps, has been less than in the civil hospitals in the country. Nevertheless, I recognize the value of the services of trained female nurses and favour legislation which may enable us to secure the services of a sufficient number of such nurses, having a salary which will induce those having proper training and experience to enter the service. I would remark, however, that the payment of salaries proposed will in my opinion make it necessary to increase the salary of hospital stewards to at least \$100 per month, of pharmacists to \$75 per month, of acting hospital stewards to \$50 per month, and of privates of the Hospital Corps to \$30 per month in order that there may not be an evident disparity between the pay of trained female nurses and of members of the Hospital Corps as now organized.

"It will be noted that the last clause of Section 5 prescribes that ward masters and Hospital Corps men who have heretofore been subject to rules and regulations prescribed by the Secretary of War and the Surgeon-General of the army are made subject to rules and regulations prescribed by the proposed commission. I also call attention to the fact that the selection of female nurses is now being made with very satisfactory results by Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee who is under contract as an acting assistant surgeon and receives but \$1,800 per annum, while the bill under consideration provides for a superintendent of nurses at \$3,000 per year and an assistant superintendent at \$2,000.

"Very respectfully,

"GEO. M. STERNBERG,
"Surgeon-General, U.S.A."

We entirely sympathize with American nurses in their desire to have as a Superintendent one of their own profession. We regret that this reasonable aspiration is not meeting with support from the Surgeon-General.

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