

CORRESPONDENCE.

WAR CORRESPONDENCE.

BY LIEUT.-COL. NICHOLAS SENN, U. S. VOLS.,

CHIEF SURGEON SIXTH ARMY CORPS.

CHICKAMAUGA, GA., June 22, 1898.

CAMP GEORGE H. THOMAS.

From early dawn until taps, Camp Thomas is the scene of a busy, active life. It is the gathering point of the largest army concentrated in one place since the War of the Rebellion. It is at the present time the temporary home of 45,000 men representing almost every State in the Union. Many of the regiments are short of their quota, and recruits to the number of 500 on an average arrive daily to complete the organization of the regiments now in camp. The commander of the whole army in camp is Major General John R. Brooke, General in Chief in charge of the Department of the Lakes. He came here from Chicago with his entire staff. He enjoys the reputation of being a strict disciplinarian who does everything through the legitimate military channels. The greatest sources of confusion and consternation to the officers of the volunteers from civil life are these mysterious military channels which extend from the General's tent to the heads of the many departments in Washington. One of the blue books in constant use by officers, high and low, young and old, is the U. S. Army Regulations, 1895. The thousands of questions asked the professional soldier daily by his less informed volunteer officer are answered more often than otherwise by "Study the Regulations, *Study the Regulations*, STUDY THE REGULATIONS." Such advice, as a rule, is more easy to give than to follow with any expectation of approval at headquarters. The experience here has satisfied me more than ever that the National Guard officers need more thorough training in executive, clerical work, so essential in the efficient management of troops at home and in the field. One of the common sights in camp is to see an officer hide himself away under a solitary tree and pore over a work on tactics or the much feared "Regulations." If this war does nothing else but demonstrate to our people and to the legislators, State and National, the necessity of a well-organized militia it will have accomplished a great deal. If we had in this country, as we ought to have, a well organized, well equipped militia force of 200,000 men, we would have been in possession of all the Spanish islands and Spain itself, if we wanted it, long ago. As it is, it takes two millions a day and the hardest kind of work to bring our volunteers into fighting trim. The officers of the regular army have reason to be thankful to Spain for having given them a chance to fight. They have been looking a long time anxiously for such an opportunity. They are the recognized salt of the army. The Government has fully recognized their claims. Nearly every day the newspapers bring columns of names of lucky officers who have been advanced in rank, in fact it seems almost impossible for any one of them to escape promotion of some kind. This is probably as it should be, but occasionally such promotions lead to giddy heights. To make a lieutenant-colonel out of a second lieutenant of very limited practical experience is a transition of doubtful propriety and often followed by the most detrimental results, both to the over-ambitious officer and the over-confiding troops placed under his charge. Officers thus honored by promotion and assigned to the army of volunteers are, as a rule, more anxious to change the shoulder straps than to add the V. to the U. S. on the collar of the blouse. On the whole, the regular army officers are perfect gentlemen and great favorites in the camp, and the feeling between them and the officers from civil life is of a most cordial nature.

The First Army Corps under General Brooke is nearly completed. The Third Army Corps under command of Major-General Wade is nearing completion. The Sixth Army Corps is

soon to be organized under Major-General James H. Wilson. General Wilson gained an enviable reputation during the late war as a dashing cavalry officer and will undoubtedly make a creditable record during the present war if it lasts long enough to bring his army into the field. Lieut.-Colonel Hartsuff, an experienced medical officer of the regular army, is Surgeon-in-Chief of the army gathered here, and as such is attached to the staff of General Brooke. Lieut.-Colonel Van Hoff is Chief Surgeon of the Third Army Corps, and has worked incessantly in completing the organization of the medical department under his supervision. He is regarded as one of the ablest executive officers of the medical service, and is known as a warm friend of the medical officers of the National Guard. He has from the very beginning taken a deep and active interest in the work of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. Every medical officer of the Third Army Corps should consider it a great privilege to serve under Lieut.-Colonel Van Hoff. The medical department of the First Army Corps is in charge of Lieut.-Colonel Heidekoper of New York, a hard-working, conscientious officer. Major Kimball of Marion, Ind., and Ma-

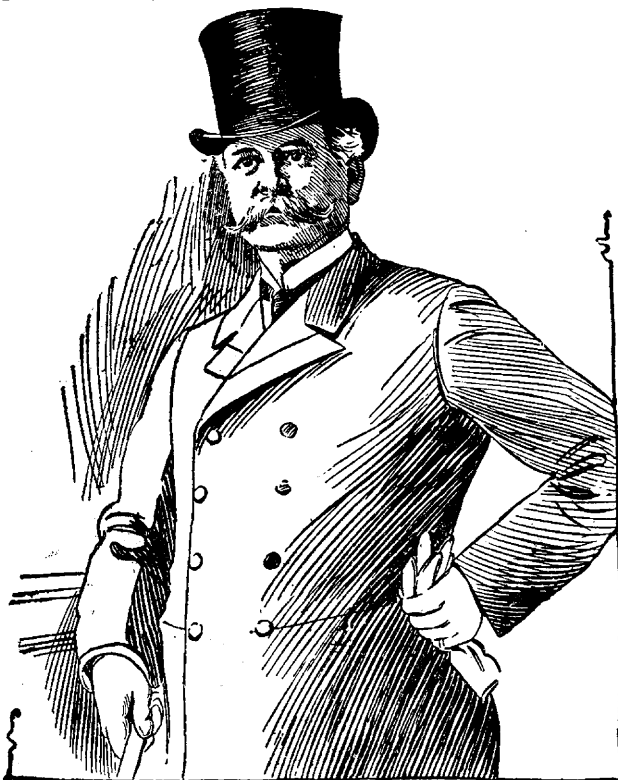


Major-General John R. Brooke.

General in Chief in charge of the Department of the Lakes.

Major Woodbury of New York, have reported here and are awaiting with the writer the formation of the Sixth Army Corps. At present my time is profitably occupied by consultations in the camp and by performing operations in the Leiter General Hospital and the St. Vincent's Hospital, Chattanooga. The evenings are occupied by giving lectures on first aid to the Hospital corps. St. Vincent's Hospital has been used as a temporary hospital for the troops until the Leiter Hospital was in condition to receive patients. The abandonment of regimental hospitals meets with the same opposition here as elsewhere, but the wisdom of such a course must be apparent to all who have had experience in the field. Major E. C. Carter, U. S. A., is now in charge of the Leiter General Hospital. He is one of the busiest men in the camp. He is in every way admirably adapted for the position he now occupies. He is straining every nerve to improve and equip the building for the accommodation of from 300 to 500 patients. He has the hearty co-operation of the Surgeon-General and Colonel Hartsuff

in pushing the work. About thirty patients are at present in the hospital and in less than two weeks the number of patients will exceed one hundred. Hospital furniture and supplies are arriving every day, and in the course of two weeks the hospital will be fully equipped. The value of this hospital to our sick soldiers can not be overestimated. Mrs. Leiter will have the respect and sincere gratitude of every one of the inmates and of hundreds yet to come. Chickamauga is a quiet little country hamlet where our patients can enjoy to the fullest extent what they are so much in need of, rest and quietude. Six trained nurses have been sent by the Surgeon-General and are now on duty. With the increase in the number of patients more will be sent. A corner room in the tower on the second story has been set aside as an operating room and is now undergoing the necessary repairs to adapt it for this purpose. The first operation performed in this hospital was for empyema following pneumonia. Two additional cases await a similar operation during the course of the week.



Major-General James H. Wilson.

CRAWFISH SPRINGS.

One of the great attractions near the National Park and adjacent to the Leiter General Hospital is the famous Crawfish Springs. At the end of a large basin and at the base of a rock a large volume of water, as clear as a crystal, is poured out with considerable force. This spring yields 62,000,000 gallons of water in twenty-four hours. The temperature of the water is 56 degrees F., summer and winter alike. The dam a little below the springs, utilized to furnish water power for the hotel, has been removed for the reason that it interfered with the supply of water, deviating it evidently through subterranean channels in another direction. As soon as the property was transferred to Mrs. Leiter for Government use I had the basin cleaned out of moss and dirt by a detail of soldiers furnished by the Fifth Illinois Infantry. The sides of the hill around the basin were ditched a few feet above the level of the water for the purpose of draining the surface water to a safe distance below the springs. The Hospital is supplied with water from this spring. Besides, hundreds of barrels of water are brought daily into the camp by mule teams. The water is wholesome and palatable.

The following is the result of a chemical analysis made by a competent chemist:

ANALYSIS OF CRAWFISH SPRINGS WATER.

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|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Bicarbonate of lime. | 0.6753 |
| Bicarbonate of magnesia | 0.4544 |
| Sodium chlorid. | 0.856 |
| Potassium chlorid. | 0.048 |
| Silica. | 0.0537 |
| Free ammonia. | 0.0029 |
| Albuminoid ammonia. | 0.0025 |
| Oxygen absorbed. | 0.031 |

The presence of free ammonia and albuminoid of ammonia, although small in quantity, led us to suspicion the presence of organic matter which might possibly prove to be a source of danger. For the purpose of testing the water still further as to its fitness for hospital and camp use, samples were sent at three different times to the professor of chemistry in the Chattanooga Medical College. Dr. H. Berlin made a very careful chemic analysis and bacteriologic examination with the result that he pronounced the water free from dangerous organic matter and pathogenic microbes. The only microbe which he was able to cultivate was the colon bacillus, and the presence of this microbe could be readily accounted for by the blocking of the sewer pipe, an evil which was promptly removed. The springs would furnish an ample water-supply for the whole army if the Government would only erect a pumping station near it, a project which is now under serious consideration. With such an improvement Camp George H. Thomas would be one of the most salubrious camping places in the United States for a large army. The intake now is some distance below the springs where the flow of water is impeded by a dam two miles and a half below the springs. Above the dam is a narrow beautiful lake two miles and a half in length, extending to near the springs, which is leased by the Chickamauga Fishing Club.

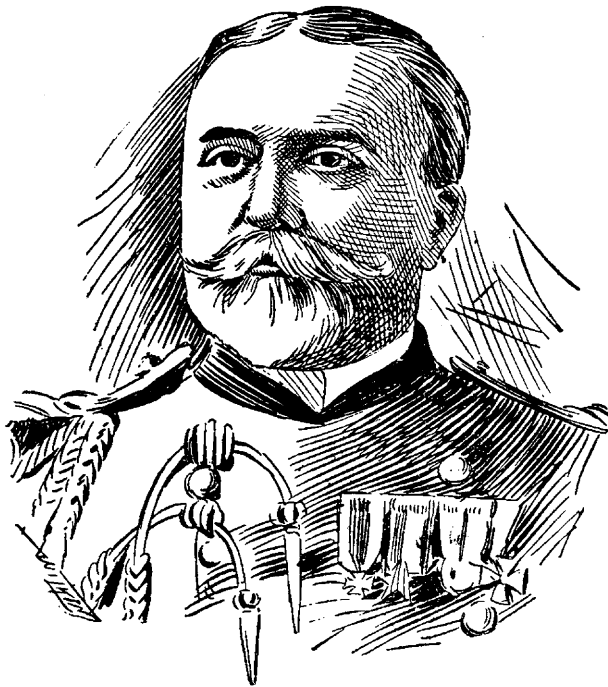
CHATTANOOGA MEDICAL SOCIETY.

This medical society meets twice every month, on the first and third Friday. At the last meeting the subject selected by the committee was "The Modern Treatment of Gunshot Wounds in Military Practice." The writer was invited to open the discussion. After a brief résumé of the character of wounds inflicted by the modern bullet, the treatment was considered in detail. Special stress was placed upon the inutility of the ordinary and Nélaton's probe in locating and finding bullets lodged in the body. Attention was called to the value of the X ray as a substitute for the probe in making a reliable diagnosis. The use of the bullet probe on the battlefield was condemned and the advice given that bullet wounds should be hermetically sealed with the first aid package, which should contain an antiseptic powder composed of boracic acid and salicylic acid (4:1), and no exploration made until the patient reaches the field hospital, where all facilities for aseptic surgery and the necessary instruments for diagnosis and operation should be at hand. A new bullet probe and bullet forceps devised by the writer were exhibited and their manner of use explained. The balance of the paper treated of gunshot wounds of the extremities, cranium, chest and abdomen. For want of time consideration of the last subject, "Gunshot Wounds of the Abdomen," was postponed until the next meeting. Invitations to attend the meeting were sent to the military surgeons in camp, consequently the attendance was large and the discussion became general and proved of interest to all present. Considering that Chattanooga has only 40,000 inhabitants and that the average attendance at these meetings on ordinary occasions is never less than from thirty-five to forty, is the surest indications that our colleagues in this city take an active interest in the scientific work of the profession.

AMUSEMENTS.

The civilian soldier finds it difficult to satisfy his mind and body with what is required of him in camp life. But a few weeks ago he was a professional man, a clerk, teacher, or left.

the school, workshop and plow, and now it is hard for him to imagine that he should not be kept busy from sunrise to sunset. He is only too anxious to drill in sunshine or rain, and considers it a privilege to do guard duty, where his power and military significance can be made to appear at greatest advantage. He finds it difficult to occupy his many leisure hours in a profitable manner. To the credit of our soldiers it must be said that evidences of intemperance are rarely seen in camp. Temperance canteens are common and are better patronized than those in which beer is sold. I have not seen an intoxicated soldier since I arrived in camp. The more common amusements of the soldiers during the heat of the day, between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M., between drill hours, consists in reading, writing letters, playing cards, and the college boys are bound to play base- or football. The chaplains make themselves useful not only in caring for the spiritual welfare of their soldiers, but they also look after their intellectual interests. They extemporize reading rooms and supply them with writing and reading material. These reading tents are very



Major-General Joseph C. Breckinridge.

popular, and when the men are off duty they are always crowded. The many regimental bands furnish excellent music, which does so much in cheering up and amusing the soldiers. Two theaters have sprung up in the camp, mushroom-like. Performances are given in the afternoon and evening. The admission fee is twenty-five cents, box seats fifty cents. I have been told by those who have been in the habit of attending that the plays are good and that the patrons are made to feel that they have received their money's worth.

RED CROSS ASSOCIATION.

The Medical Department during the present war is in a condition fairly well prepared to supply the sick and wounded with the necessary instruments, medicines and food. There will be only a very limited field of usefulness for the Red Cross Association to fill in defects here and there as occasion and circumstances may require. The work of the Red Cross Association is, however, recognized by the War Department, as becomes evident from a circular letter received a few days ago from the Surgeon-General:

SURGEON-GENERAL'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON, June 9, 1898.

Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Senn, Chief Surgeon, U. S. Volunteers, Sixth Army Corps, Chickamauga Park, Ga.

Sir:—The Secretary of War has approved the following

proposition made by the American National Red Cross Association, and the chief surgeons of Army corps and divisions will co-operate with the authorized agents of this Association for the purposes indicated:

"We can put any desired amount of hospital supplies—ice, malted milk, condensed milk, Mellin's food, etc., into any of the volunteer camps in a few hours. Will you be kind enough to bring this letter to the attention of Secretary Alger and ask him if there is any objection to our appointing a Red Cross representative to report to the commanding officer and the chief surgeon in every camp, confer with them as to their immediate needs and, if anything of any kind is wanting, open there a Red Cross station and send in the supplies. We can do this, not in a few weeks or a few days, but in a few hours, and can furnish any quantity of any desired luxury or delicacy for hospital use. We hereby tender our aid and put our organization at the War Department's service for co-operation in the field."

Very respectfully,

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

It was prudent and wise that the Surgeon-General and the Secretary of War granted this modest request. Dr. Gill of New York represents the Red Cross Association here. He arrived a few days ago and intends to erect a frame building near the general headquarters as a storehouse for the supplies. He possesses excellent executive abilities combined with modesty, which will ensure him a wide avenue of usefulness and the hearty appreciation of the medical officers. In my next communication I will speak of the hospital corps, its organization and scope of work in actual warfare.

Belladonna Poisoning Simulating Puerperal Insanity.

NEW YORK CITY, June 25, 1898.

Mrs. G., 26 years old, was delivered last January of an anencephalous male child. Labor was short and natural. Two days after, to prevent the secretion of milk with the consequent painful distention of the breasts, a belladonna plaster was applied to each gland in addition to the usual bandage compression. The nipples were not covered by the plasters. In about twelve hours I was hurriedly called to my patient and found her condition as follows: Flushed face, pulse 100 and good; temperature 100.5 degrees and quite actively delirious. She sang, whistled, laughed, cried and made futile attempts to get out of bed and house. Finding no appreciable cause for the combined disturbance of body and mind, puerperal insanity suggested itself as the most probable diagnosis.

The second visit was made sixteen hours after the first; the woman's condition was found to be much worse, namely: Her delirium was intensely maniacal in spite of the fact that she received large and frequent doses of chloral and bromid. However, at this visit new features were added to the old clinical picture which at once removed the diagnosis of insanity and established one of belladonna poisoning. The patient's lips, tongue, mouth and throat were dry, the pupils fully dilated and the secretion, as urine, was almost totally suppressed.

The belladonna plasters were quickly removed and the breasts washed with soap and water. The breasts were examined for a scratch or an abrasion which could serve as an avenue for absorption, but as none was found the drug evidently found its way into the system through the unbroken skin.

All the symptoms disappeared within ten hours of the removal of the cause excepting the pupillary dilatation, which lasted thirty-six hours.

It may be interesting to add that the very same condition was produced in the same patient four days later by the application of one plaster only and the removal of which resulted in the removal of the trouble.

The points of interest in this report appear to be these: 1. The remarkable susceptibility of this woman to the influence of belladonna. 2. The minimum amount of the drug which produced the symptoms of poisoning. 3. The possibility of mistaking that condition for acute insanity when it occurred in