

J. WINTHROP TAYLOR, SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY (1878-79)

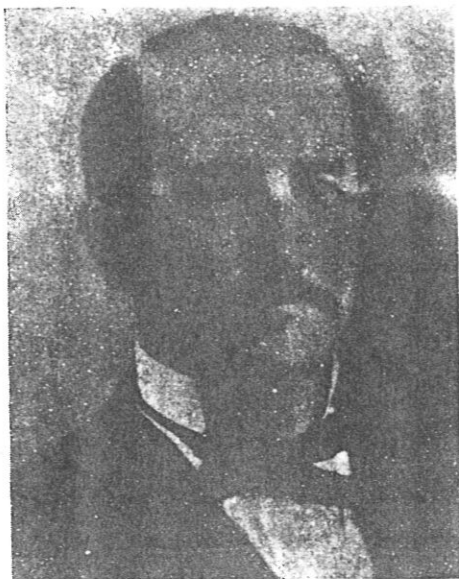
BY CAPTAIN LOUIS H. RODDIS, *Medical Corps, U. S. Navy*

THE tenth Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and the sixth to hold office as Surgeon General of the Navy was born in New York on August 19, 1817. He was appointed as an Assistant Surgeon in the Navy from New Jersey on March 7, 1838. He saw considerable sea service during the first years of his naval career, principally in the West Indies and Home Squadrons. He was commissioned a Surgeon on May 1, 1852. During the Civil War he was on the steam sloop *Pensacola*, of the west Gulf blockading squadron, from 1861 to 1863, and saw much of the arduous service connected with the capture of New Orleans under Farragut and the regaining of Naval control of the Mississippi River by the Union forces. The latter part of the Civil War he spent at the Naval Rendezvous, as it was called, at Boston. Subsequent duty included that of Fleet Surgeon of the North Pacific Squadron and at the Naval Hospital, Chelsea. He was appointed Surgeon General of the Navy on October 28, 1878, by President Rutherford B. Hayes, retiring from that office on August 19, 1879:

During the administration of this Surgeon General, for the first time, exact, uniform, and rigid physical standards were instituted for entrance to the Naval Academy. Medical Inspector Albert L. Gihon, then on duty at Annapolis, also made careful studies of the height and weight of midship-

men, and their rate of growth, and published extensive tables embodying the results of his observation.

The Naval Hospital Fund in 1878 showed a balance of \$47,746.25. The Chief of Bureau stated in his report



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that approximately \$100,000 a year was required for the maintenance of the naval hospitals. The following table is of interest as showing the naval hospitals in commission as of December 31, 1877, and the number of cases treated in them:

The naval hospital at Annapolis had been closed by the Act of Congress of May 4, 1878, and most of the furniture and equipment was transferred to other hospitals, though enough was retained

to reopen the hospital if necessary. This foresight proved its worth for it was soon needed and again placed in commission.

A first scientific study of the Navy ration was instituted during Surgeon General Taylor's regime. The ration on

May 21, 1877 it was directed that under detailed instructions to be prepared by the Surgeon General "hygrometric and endrometric observations" were to be made on ships of the Navy and the Surgeon General (Dr. Grier) states confidentially that "great benefits to the

U. S. NAVAL HOSPITALS IN COMMISSION ON DECEMBER 31, 1877

	Remain- ing sick December 31, 1876	Admitted in 1877	Dis- charged 1877	Died in 1877	Total treated in 1877	Remain- ing sick December 31, 1877	Percentage of deaths to number treated
Chelsea, Mass.	15	66	51	3	81	87	
Brooklyn, N.Y.	33	196	170	11	229	48	
Philadelphia, Pa.	20	98	81	11	118	26	
Washington, D.C.	9	130	119	7	139	13	
Norfolk, Va.	26	279	248	11	305	46	
Pensacola, Fla.	2	20	18		22	4	
Mare Island, Calif.	43	117	111	8	160	41	
Yokohama, Japan	7	68	69	1	75	5	
Total	155	974	867	52	1,129	210	.04

the steam frigate *Minnesota* 1st rate, was examined, chemical analysis carried out and comparisons with the rations of various European navies made. More fresh vegetables were recommended and it was stated "that this would lessen the sailor's desire for alcohol."

A development in naval hygiene which came into prominence about this time was the attention devoted to the study of air conditions in the ship and the relation of ship ventilation to disease. This was not exactly a new thing for naval surgeons had interested themselves in this problem from early times but in the period just after the Civil War our own Navy devoted a great amount of attention to it. In a General Order of the Secretary of the Navy of

Navy will doubtless result from these observations." Many of the older medical officers today remember the rather extensive observations on temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide content of the air required to be made at regular intervals.

An event of some importance was the wreck on November 4, 1877 of the *U.S.S. Huron* with the loss of 98 lives. This greatly raised the annual death rate for in that year the strength of the Navy was given as 8,609 and the total deaths from October 1, 1877 to October 1, 1878 as 197. The annual rate was therefore doubled by this disaster.

The Book of Instructions for Medical Officers, one of the forerunners of the present Manual of the Medical Department, had been prepared largely

during the administration of the two previous Surgeons General but was reprinted and distributed during Dr. Taylor's term of office.

An interesting General Order issued was No. 240 which designated rooms to be occupied by the various ward-room officers on board ship. It is quoted here as it, of course among others, designates the room of the senior medical officer.

General Order
No. 240

NAVY DEPARTMENT

Washington, November 23, 1878

Hereafter the state-rooms opening into the ward-room country of all vessels of the Navy shall be occupied by officers attached to the vessel, as follows:

On the starboard side, the forward-room shall be occupied by the senior line officer, and the next room by the navigator. All other rooms on the starboard side shall be occupied by line officers according to rank.

On the port side, the forward-room shall be occupied by the senior engineer

officer in charge of the engineers' department; the next room by the pay officer in charge of the pay department; the next room by the senior marine officer. All other rooms on the port side shall be occupied by officers entitled to quarters on the port side, according to rank.

R. W. THOMPSON
Secretary of the Navy

Dr. Taylor's tour of office was one of the shortest of any Surgeon General, being but 10 months and 2 days in length. There were at this time two Medical Inspectors on the Navy List named Taylor, one of whom John Y. Taylor was often confused with the Surgeon General, who adopted J. Winthrop as his usual signature, to distinguish him better from John Y. Taylor.

Surgeon J. B. Parker was Assistant Chief of Bureau and had also held this office during the greater part of the time that Dr. William Grier was Surgeon General.

Doctor Taylor's death occurred on January 19, 1880.

