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REPORT

OF THE

HALIFAX RELIEF EXPEDITION

December 6 to 15, 1917

BY

Hon. A. C. RATSHEKY, Commissioner-in-Charge

TO

SAMUEL WALKER McCALL

Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Printed by an order of the Council dated June 12, 1918



WRIGHT AND POTTER PRINTING COMPANY, STATE PRINTERS
32 DERNE STREET, BOSTON

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REPORT OF THE HALIFAX RELIEF EXPEDITION.

His Excellency SAMUEL W. McCALL, *Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State House, Boston, Massachusetts.*

YOUR EXCELLENCY:— I have the privilege to submit herewith a formal report on the Halifax Relief Expedition, of which you did me honor by placing me in charge, giving in detail the part the Commonwealth played in sending the Relief Expedition to Halifax, N. S.

The first news of the disaster was received at the State House at about 11 o'clock A.M. on December 6, 1917.

Immediately you sent a telegram to the Mayor of Halifax, offering the unlimited assistance of the Commonwealth, and called a meeting of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee, composed of one hundred men, representing all parts of the State, for 2.30 o'clock that afternoon, to take action relative to handling the relief work. Although short notice was given, the meeting was largely attended.

Up to that time no answer had come to your telegram. Henry B. Endicott, Executive Manager of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee, at your request, got into communication with the War and Navy Departments at Washington and learned that no news of the disaster had been received by them, and, as requested, wireless was dispatched along the coast, through the Navy, to the Mayor of Halifax, offering assistance from Massachusetts, but no reply was had that day.

Upon your request as to how soon and in what manner medical aid could be arranged, Colonel William A. Brooks, Acting Surgeon General of the Commonwealth, stated that if a special train could be had he would be able to dispatch a large corps of surgeons, doctors, nurses, and surgical and medical supplies in a few hours; and at your suggestion this plan was adopted by the committee, and James H. Hustis, receiver for the Boston

& Maine Railroad and a member of the committee, agreed to have a train ready by 10 o'clock that night. Mr. Endicott, acting for you, made all preparations for the train to proceed to Halifax, and at about 5.30 o'clock in the afternoon I received your commission to take full charge of the expedition, in accordance with the following letter from you to the Mayor of Halifax, N. S.:—

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, STATE HOUSE,
BOSTON, December 6, 1917.

To the Mayor, City of Halifax, N. S.

MY DEAR MR. MAYOR:— I am sending Hon. A. C. Ratschesky, of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee, immediately to your city, with a corps of our best State surgeons and nurses, in the belief that they may be of service to you in this hour of need. I need hardly say to you that we have the strongest affection for the people of your city, and that we are anxious to do everything possible for their assistance at this time. Kindly express to the people of your city the very deep sympathy of the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and assure them that we are ready to answer any call that they may need to make upon us. Immediately upon hearing of the terrible blow dealt Halifax I sent the following telegram to you:—

Understand your city in danger from explosion and conflagration. Reports only fragmentary. Massachusetts stands ready to go the limit in rendering every assistance you may be in need of. Wire me immediately.

Upon being informed that the wires were out of commission, through the good offices of the Federal government at Washington this further telegram was sent you by wireless:—

Since sending my telegram this morning offering unlimited assistance, an important meeting of citizens has been held and Massachusetts stands ready to offer aid in any way you can avail yourself of it. We are prepared to send forward immediately a special train with surgeons, nurses and other medical assistance, but await advices from you.

Won't you please call upon Mr. Ratschesky for every help that you need. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will stand back of Mr. Ratschesky in every way.

Respectfully yours,

SAMUEL W. McCALL,
Governor.

P. S. Realizing that time is of the utmost importance we have not waited for your answer but have dispatched the train.

At about 7 o'clock in the evening the American Red Cross asked permission to send five or six representatives of that body on our train, as otherwise they would be obliged to wait until 9 o'clock the next morning. To this I consented, without authority from you, knowing that it would meet with your hearty approval.

The train consisted of two Pullmans, one buffet car, one baggage car and an engine. Among the baggage were large quantities of surgical instruments, medicines, hospital supplies, blankets, sweaters, clothing, etc. Before leaving I had obtained letters or telegrams from a high official of each of the four railroads over which we were to travel to reach Halifax, giving the right of way for this special relief train.

The personnel of the expedition follows:—

SURGEONS AND DOCTORS (ALL MEMBERS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE GUARD).

Major Harold G. Giddings (in command).
 Major Edward A. Supple.
 Major Donald V. Baker (Surgeon in Chief).
 Major George W. Morse.
 Major Peter Owen Shea.
 Captain Edward F. Murphy (Adjutant).
 Captain Thomas F. Harrington (Physician in Chief).
 Captain John W. Dewis.
 Captain Robert G. Loring (Ophthalmologist).
 Captain DeWitt G. Wilcox.
 Captain Nathaniel N. Morse (Anæsthetist).
 Quartermasters Department, Captain Benjamin D. Hyde.
 Quartermasters Department, Captain Henry G. Lapham.

RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES.

John F. Moors, Chairman, Civilian Relief Committee (Metropolitan District).
 C. C. Carsten, Secretary, Civilian Relief Committee (Metropolitan District).
 Miss Katherine McMahan, Associate Director, Civilian Relief Committee (Metropolitan District).
 J. Prentice Murphy, Secretary, Children's Aid Society.
 Wm. H. Pear of the Boston Provident Association.
 Miss Marion Rowe of the Boston Associated Charities.

NURSES.

Miss Elizabeth Peden (in charge).
 Miss Charlotte Naismith.
 Miss Marion Nevens.
 Miss Mary A. Davidson.
 Miss Caroline E. Carlton.
 Miss Nellie P. Black.
 Miss Edith F. Perkins.
 Miss Elizabeth Choate.
 Miss Jessie McInness.
 Miss Florence B. McInness.

RAILROAD OFFICIALS.

G. V. Worthen, General Baggage Agent, Boston & Maine Railroad (going through to Halifax).
 M. L. Harris, General Passenger Agent, Maine Central Railroad (left train at Portland).
 E. F. S. Sturdee, General Agent, Canadian Pacific, Boston (through to Halifax).
 C. K. Howard, General Agent, Canadian Government Railways, Boston (through to Halifax).

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS.

A. J. Philpott, Boston Globe.
 R. W. Simpson, Associated Press.
 Roy Atkinson, Boston Post.
 Richard W. Sears, Boston American.
 J. V. Keating, Boston Herald.

We left Boston at 10 o'clock on the evening of the disaster, and at Portland, Me., and at each station from there on until we reached St. John, N. B., the next morning, we wired continuously to the Mayor of Halifax, without receiving an answer.

At McAdam Junction we tried to get news from Halifax, but the most we obtained were rumors, and the more we received the worse they sounded. After consulting with Major Giddings, I called a meeting of the doctors, nurses and Red Cross workers, and requested that they take an inventory of the supplies, to learn if there were anything else they might need in such an emergency as I believed existed in Halifax, although we knew nothing definite.

After leaving McAdam Junction we were besieged at every stop with requests for accommodations on our train for workers going to Halifax in various capacities. I instructed those in

charge of the train to fill every available space, giving doctors and nurses the preference. Upon our arrival at St. John I instructed Captains Hyde and Lapham of the Quartermasters Department to secure additional drugs and supplies. They commandeered the services of King Kelly, Esq., a prominent lawyer of the city of St. John, who was waiting at the depot to go to Halifax as a member of the St. John unit. With his assistance we obtained large quantities of all kinds of medical supplies.

That we might definitely know just what supplies we had, I had an inventory made of those on board the train, including those belonging to the medical unit and those brought by the Red Cross, all of which had been turned over to this unit for use and distribution, and found we had the following:—

- 564 fracture pillows.
- 1,000 pillows.
- 1,368 muslin bandages.
- 53 splint straps.
- 330 gauze compresses, 9 by 9 inches.
- 4,000 gauze compresses, 4 by 4 inches.
- 432 flannel bandages.
- 1,196 bandages, 3 inches.
- 2,694 gauze bandages.
- 2,700 gauze compresses.
- 1,200 gauze sponges.
- 1,000 4-tail bandages.
- 1,720 gauze rolls.
- 204 flannel bandages.
- 890 slings.
- 8 Standard oil heaters.
- 4 boxes lanterns, glass.
- 21 pairs cotton blankets.
- 36 gray heavy army blankets.
- 6 litters.
- 3 bedpans.
- 4 urinals.

Red Cross Supplies.

- 498 sweaters.
- 226 flannel pajamas.
- 333 convalescent gowns.
- 8,300 gauze compresses, 4 inches.
- 9,354 bandages, 1 inch.
- 1 crate gauze sponges.
- 378 triangular bandages.
- 1 box miscellaneous.

Medical Supplies.

- 50 tubes morphine sulphate, $\frac{1}{8}$ grain, hypodermic.
- 5 tubes atropine, $\frac{1}{15}$ grain.
- 100 salt solution tablets.
- 1,000 aspirin tablets.
- 500 calomel, $\frac{1}{15}$ -grain tablets.
- 500 cascara, 3-grain tablets.
- 9 pounds ether, $\frac{1}{4}$ -pound cans.
- 6 pounds ether, $\frac{1}{2}$ -pound cans.
- 10 gallons alcohol.
- $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon tincture iodine.
- 100 corrosive tablets.
- 1 pint carbolic acid, 95 per cent. solution.
- 1 quart boracic acid, 4 per cent. solution.

And we purchased the following to add to our supplies: —

- 10 gallons alcohol.
- 1 gallon tincture iodine.
- 5 pounds cotton.
- 5 pounds boric ointment.
- 30 pounds vaseline.
- 8 ounces tincture digitalis.
- 500 caps camphor in oil.
- 1 gallon aromatic spirits of ammonia.
- 1 gross assorted catgut in tubes.
- 11 skeins No. 1 white twisted silk.
- 8 ounces 4 per cent. cocaine.
- 4 ounces 1 per cent. atropine.
- 1 pint olive oil.
- 12 pairs dressing scissors.
- 12 pairs dressing forceps.
- 1 dozen 4-ounce tins.
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ dozen glass stoppered bottles (empty).
- 2 dozen rolls adhesive 7 by 36 inches.
- 4 dozen rolls adhesive 2 by 60 inches.
- 4 pints brandy.
- 1 gross safety pins.

While at St. John we received the first intimation of the awfulness of the disaster, together with the information that all telegraph and telephone wires were down and that no word had been received from Halifax, except in a roundabout way, — by relay, — of what had happened. I immediately

wired Mr. Endicott to forward at once a trainload of glass, putty and building materials of all kinds.

At St. John we encountered a heavy snowstorm, one of the severest of the winter, accompanied by a gale of terrible velocity. The snow was piling up and progress was difficult. We lost considerable time between St. John and Moncton. At this point, to insure getting through to Halifax, a large freight engine was attached to the train. Beyond Truro and Moncton the storm increased and was a veritable blizzard. We were also delayed several hours while our engine, which had broken down, was repaired. The climax was reached when we came up Folleigh Mountain, and the conductor in charge, C. H. Truman, accompanied by C. K. Howard, General Agent, Canadian Government Railways, stated that, as an enormous snowdrift lay across the track, it was impossible to proceed farther. I then showed them the telegram from the official of the railroad, in which orders were given for the right of way to the special train. I pleaded with them to do everything in their power known to railroad men to clear the track. Under general conditions no attempt would have been made to keep the train moving, but the need was tremendously urgent. The men realizing this, and knowing that every moment was precious, worked like Trojans. Within an hour, by hard shoveling, the use of steam and ramming, and amid great cheers from all on board, we went through the drift, which extended higher than the door of the baggage car. We succeeded in reaching Truro, and found another engine and crew waiting for the final haul to Halifax.

We reached Halifax about 3 o'clock in the morning of December 8, with about sixty-five passengers, which included those taken on board at Fredericton Junction for Halifax. On account of the destruction of the depot at Halifax we were obliged to make a detour around the city. This was accomplished on tracks which, fortunately, had been prepared to connect with the new deep-water terminus, then in process of construction.

We landed at Rockingham Junction, which is six miles from the terminus. Mr. Howard and I had remained up all night. We got out of the train, but, as none of the officials connected

with the affairs of the city were near, we returned and were obliged to wait about three hours for the snowplough to clear the line to the terminus. We aroused all who had retired and ordered an early breakfast.

We arrived at the terminus about 7 o'clock. Mr. Howard and I left the train, and, as well as we could, proceeded up the main road to the building which had been taken by the Canadian Government Railways for temporary headquarters. It was our good fortune to find there C. A. Hayes, General Manager of the Canadian Government Railways, — the first man we met in Halifax, and to whom I showed your letter to the Mayor. He was so affected that tears streamed down his cheeks. He arose and greeted me with: "Just like the people of good old Massachusetts. I am proud of them. I was born in that State, having formerly been a resident of West Springfield," and added that anything he or his railroad could do was at our service. I asked him for the service of Mr. Howard during my stay in Halifax, which he gladly granted. He gave us the use of his temporary wires, which had been connected with City Hall, and informed us that the private car of Sir Robert L. Borden, Premier of Canada, was on the tracks very near to ours.

Accompanied by Mr. Hayes we went back to the road, near our car, and Mr. Hayes dispatched a message to the Premier, with the suggestion that members of the relief party from Massachusetts would be very glad to call upon him in his car as soon as possible. His answer came most informally. He joined us in person in a very few minutes, expressing to us in appropriate words his profound appreciation of the quick action on the part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and stating that this was the first relief to arrive in Halifax. He asked us to join him in proceeding to City Hall in order to present your letter to the Mayor and to learn what disposition we should make of our party and supplies. I requested Mr. John F. Moors of the Red Cross, Major Giddings of the medical unit, Mr. Hayes, General Manager of the Canadian Government Railways, and Mr. Howard to accompany us.

The conveyance that we took, we were informed, had been used day and night in carrying the wounded to hospitals,

and the dead to the morgue. The young man driver had lost all the members of his family, consisting of his wife and four children. It was a gruesome start. Débris had not been removed from the streets, and after a great deal of difficulty we arrived, at about 9 o'clock, at City Hall, which is located in the center of the city. An awful sight presented itself, — buildings shattered on all sides; chaos apparent; no order existed.

We were ushered into the office of the Mayor and introduced by Premier Borden to His Honor Governor McCullum Grant of Nova Scotia, General Benson, Military Commandant of the District, Admiral Chambers, Naval Commandant of the District, Colonel McKelvie Bell, Military Medical Officer, Chief Justice Harris of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, Chairman R. T. MacIlreith and members of the temporary relief committee.

The Mayor's secretary informed us that the Mayor was out of the city, and that Colonel McKelvie Bell and his committee were in full charge of the medical relief of the entire city. In this room, which was about 12 by 20, were assembled men and women trying to organize different departments of relief, while the other rooms were filled to their utmost capacity with people pleading for doctors, nurses, food and clothing for themselves and members of their family. Everything was in a turmoil, and apparently the first necessity was organization.

In conference with Premier Borden, Colonel Bell, Major Giddings, Mr. Moors, Mr. Hayes and Judge Harris, we decided that organization was our first duty, but it was necessary to broach the subject very carefully, as the situation was delicate and we did not wish to appear as intruders. We suggested that a building away from City Hall should be secured for headquarters for the relief committee, and as a result the City Club house, centrally located, was selected.

The above-named conference committee then proceeded to the City Club, where they held a conference with other citizens in relation to the appointing of committees and to properly organizing for relief work. From the time of the conference I was requested to join in the organization of different committees, to run the departments of the city and for relief. The immediate need was a Transportation Committee, on

account of the large number of people coming to the city for relief work and the arrival of great quantities of food, clothing and supplies which were being forwarded from all parts of Canada and the United States; a Committee on Supplies, to take charge of supplies of all kinds coming into the city, divided into food and clothing; a Finance Committee, to take charge of all moneys that were being sent in from all parts of the world; a Committee on Construction, to take charge of buildings that were partially destroyed, that either had to be demolished or that could be temporarily repaired, and to get building supplies and labor from Canada and the United States; a Relief Committee, in which the members of the Red Cross, headed by Mr. Moors, took an active part, and to which they, with their experience, were particularly adapted; a Housing Committee, to care for those whose homes had been entirely destroyed or which could not be repaired, and whose efforts must be directed to caring for the large number of people entering the city from Canada and the United States; a Medical Department, to divide up the work of the surgeons, doctors, nurses and assistants; a Warehouse Department, to properly sort, store and distribute all the supplies being rushed into the city.

We then found that there was a great demand for doctors and nurses, which demand was partly filled by sending the members of our unit to different quarters of the city, with instructions to leave addresses so that all members of the unit could be readily gathered together that night, my opinion being that the greatest good could be done in keeping the unit working together and in establishing a hospital at the earliest possible moment.

Major Giddings and Colonel McKelvie Bell, acting at my request, in company with leading doctors of the city, found a large building near the center of the city known as the Bellevue Building and used as the Officers Club house. The building was turned over to us in very bad condition, — not a door or window remaining whole, and water and ice on the floor of every room. Apparently, under ordinary circumstances, it would have been impossible to have put it into shape for a long time. But by 12.30 o'clock, on the first day of our

arrival, Major Giddings with his quartermasters, ably assisted by about fifty of the crew of the United States training ship "Old Colony," who had arrived under an officer in charge with orders to report to me for service in any way required, together with a company of Canadian soldiers, ordered by General Benson, immediately set to work cleaning the rooms, covering the windows with paper and boards, as best they could, washing floors and woodwork, and removing all furniture to the upper part of the building. By 6 o'clock that night we had installed an operating room and had fitted up wards with one hundred beds and medical supplies taken from our relief train. On account of the urgency of the situation we received about sixty patients at 9 o'clock that night, and by noon the next day after our arrival the fully equipped American Bellevue Hospital, flying the American flag, was caring for one hundred patients and in full running order. This hospital received the worst cases from the different hospitals, which had become so overcrowded that proper attention could not be given them. This was especially true of the Military Camp Hill Hospital, which ordinarily could care for only three hundred patients but which was now caring for approximately sixteen hundred. Such equipment as was required in the nature of bedside tables, rubber sheets, dishes and silverware was furnished from the British Medical Stores Depot. The British authorities also furnished us with cooks, kitchen detail, and, from their commissary, supplied the hospital with food. They also detailed us a corps of trained clerks and orderlies.

On the day of our arrival we were entertained by Premier Sir Robert Borden at the Halifax Club, where the Premier made arrangements for the housing of the doctors of the unit, the Red Cross people, the newspaper men and myself. The club ordinarily has no sleeping facilities, and I am told that it is the first time in its history that beds have been set up. The nurses were quartered at private homes near the hospital, four of them being entertained at Government House, which is the Governor's private residence.

In order to give you a report on the medical aspect of the mission on which you sent me I am herewith including in my report to you the report of one of my assistants, Major Harold

G. Giddings, to the Acting Surgeon General. I wish also to note that the following nurses, in addition to those who came with us, worked with our unit, and to whom great credit is due:—

Miss Phillips.	Mrs. Davidson.
Miss Chambers.	Mrs. Brock.
Mrs. Leonard Tilley.	Mrs. McIntyre.
Mrs. Allison.	Miss Harrington.
Mrs. Bowman.	Miss Donville.

Major Giddings in his report says:—

We took formal possession of the Bellevue Military Hospital on the morning of December 9. That afternoon the hospital was officially visited by Sir Robert Borden, Premier of Canada. After his inspection His Excellency issued the following statement: "This afternoon I visited the hospital established at Bellevue by the Massachusetts hospital unit. They took possession yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock, and within a few hours had every arrangement made for receiving patients, of whom nearly seventy-five are now being accommodated. All the arrangements were wonderfully planned considering the shortness of the time and difficulties that had to be overcome. The hospital is a triumph of organizing ability."

On the evening of December 9 the commanding officer attended by request a meeting of Red Cross representatives, — Lieutenant-Colonel F. McKelvie Bell, Mr. Ratshesky and representatives of the Boston Red Cross unit, which with the independent contingent of Dr. E. A. Codman had reached Halifax that morning. Dr. Codman was also present at this conference. That day a Medical Relief Committee had been appointed, with Lieutenant-Colonel F. McK. Bell as chairman. Among other things discussed at the meeting were ways and means of best caring for the sick and wounded of the city. As a result of observations made on the 8th by various members of this unit, who had visited many people in their homes, we were able to suggest the mapping of the city into districts, with the recommendation that a house-to-house canvass be made, first, by the social worker, who would report as to whether medical or surgical help was needed, the case then to

be seen by a doctor or nurse. This suggestion was made because our doctors found that large numbers of injured people requiring surgical aid had sought the shelter of buildings near the devastated area, where they were content to stay. So dazed were they by the disaster that they did not realize that help would come to them for the asking. Also, the members of our staff had found that many people could not leave their places of refuge for dressings because they had literally lost all their clothing.

Another observation made by our doctors was that contagious diseases would be likely to make an early appearance, due to the complete destruction of toilet facilities, the huddling together of large numbers in small quarters and the general physical demoralization. Because of these conditions we recommended the immediate establishment of a contagious hospital. That our surmise of early contagion was correct was proved by the fact that on December 12 three cases of throat infection, cultures of which immediately were made, were proved to be diphtheritic.

Our suggestions, as above indicated, were both accepted, the house-to-house canvass being made by members of the United States medical units, which went to the aid of the city between the time of their arrival in the city and the establishment of their respective hospitals. While doing this work their headquarters were at City Hall.

The morning of December 10 saw the Stars and Stripes flying over the hospital, the first time they had appeared in the city following the disaster. The flag was secured for us by Mr. Ratshesky. It is fitting here to record an incident in connection with the flag. It was brought to our attention that at the Camp Hill Hospital there was a woman from Lowell, Mass., Miss Martha Manter, so far as we know, with one exception, the only Massachusetts person injured in the disaster. Captain Harrington, whose home was formerly in Lowell, obtained permission to have Miss Manter transferred to Bellevue. After a good deal of effort the transfer was officially made. A laundry sleigh was commandeered, as all ambulances were engaged. As the patient was removed from the sleigh and carried into the hospital she broke down and cried.

When she finally gained control of herself, Captain Harrington, who thought perhaps the jarring of the sleigh had caused her pain, asked her what was the matter. Her reply was, "The sight of the American flag was too much for me, and I could not control myself. It looked so good to me."

On this same day we received an official visit from Samuel Wolcott and Dr. W. E. Ladd, the respective civil and medical heads of the Massachusetts Red Cross unit, who were establishing a hospital and were anxious to learn how we had proceeded. We supplied them with copies of all our orders, which they very much appreciated, and explained to them in detail the workings of our hospital, of which they made a complete inspection.

On the afternoon of December 11 the volume of work had become so great that additional nurses were required. We notified medical headquarters of this fact and they detailed to us the following ladies, all from St. John, and all, with one exception, graduate nurses: Miss Chambers of St. Luke's Hospital, New York; Miss Phillips, V.A.D., two years, England; Miss Donville, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island; Miss Harrington, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island; Mrs. Tilley, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal; Mrs. Allison, Newton Hospital; Newton; Mrs. Bowman, Waltham Hospital, Waltham; Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Brock, Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal; and Mrs. McIntyre, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts. These ladies remained with us until we surrendered control of the hospital, and did very valuable work.

A pleasing incident occurring this same day was a request from Colonel Bell that the commanding officer personally visit at Government House, the official residence of the Lieutenant-Governor, the son of Admiral Charles E. Kingsmill, who had been injured at the time of the explosion. The lad was more or less cut about the face, but fortunately was not seriously injured, and was taken to Ottawa the next afternoon by his father.

Another pleasant occurrence on the 11th was the arrival of Mrs. Wendell Barrett from Boston, who brought a considerable quantity of clothing for distribution, and certain needed hospital supplies, the gift of Mrs. Charles D. Sias of Boston.

Mrs. Barrett was met at the train by Dr. Dewis, who brought her and Mrs. Archibald, a prominent Halifax lady, to the hospital, where we were able to offer certain suggestions toward the accomplishment of the work they had in mind.

On the morning of the 12th there came to the hospital a sailor from the Norwegian boat concerned in the collision. He walked lame and one eye was injured. Examination failed to disclose any serious trouble, but for the purpose of observation it was decided to keep him in the hospital twenty-four hours. Late that afternoon, during the confusion incidental to the inspection of the hospital by the Rhode Island contingent, to whom the plant was to be turned over that evening, Johnson was observed limping toward the stairway from the top floor. He was sent back to his ward by our medical officer. Later in the evening he offered \$25 to one of our volunteer nurses if she would allow him to go home. She informed Captain Lapham of this, who then placed a guard over the man and immediately notified the provost marshal of the man's actions, with the result that his arrest was ordered, and the man is now in custody awaiting the result of the inquiry. On being searched a letter written in German, badly incriminating the man, was found on his person, also many notes concerning the catastrophe.

On the morning of December 12, after a conference with Mr. Ratshesky, it seemed that the situation as regards medical aid was so well in hand that our unit might with propriety withdraw. In addition to the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Red Cross divisions, already referred to, there had arrived in the city a large number of doctors and nurses from Maine, prepared to establish a hospital. Other doctors had come independently, and altogether there was an abundance of professional help at hand.

After this conference we held another, attended by Colonel Potter, Medical Department and Staff Officer from Ottawa, Colonel F. McK. Bell and Major Garry DeN. Hough, commanding the Rhode Island division of the Red Cross. At this latter conference both Colonel Potter and Colonel Bell agreed that even without the aid of Massachusetts there were doctors enough to cope with the situation. Major Hough also expressed

his willingness to take over the command of Bellevue. That this arrangement might be official, I sent the following letter to Colonel Bell:—

BELLEVUE MILITARY HOSPITAL,
HALIFAX, N. S., December 12, 1917.

Lieutenant-Colonel F. McKELVIE BELL.

The medical unit of the Massachusetts State Guard came to Halifax at the time of the disaster as a relief expedition to help until the relief work could be thoroughly organized and until sufficient surgical help had been obtained to take care of the situation.

Since there are at the present time sufficient civilian doctors and nurses in the city to cope with the situation, and because of the serious conditions in Massachusetts requiring the presence of the unit there, the commanding officer of the Massachusetts State Guard unit respectfully requests permission to withdraw from Bellevue Military Hospital and to transfer said hospital to the Rhode Island Red Cross division, which has signified its willingness to take over the work of the hospital.

Since the above was dictated, I am in receipt of a telegram from Colonel Brooks stating: "It is very important that you and others of the State Guard unit return as soon as Mr. Ratschky is willing, and you can get proper accommodations."

HAROLD G. GIDDINGS,
Major, M. C., M. S. G., Commanding.

Very shortly afterward there came the following reply from Colonel Bell:—

HALIFAX, N. S., December 12, 1917.

Major H. G. GIDDINGS, *M. C., M. S. G., Officer commanding Bellevue Hospital, Halifax.*

SIR:—I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your communication of December 12, 1917, informing me that it is necessary for your unit to return at the earliest possible date to take up your military work in Massachusetts.

As the Rhode Island Red Cross division will be able to replace your unit at Bellevue Hospital, it will be quite satisfactory for your unit to transfer the hospital to them on the 12th instant.

Permit me to assure you and the other members of your unit that the city of Halifax is profoundly grateful for the valuable assistance which you have rendered during this crisis. Would you kindly convey to Colonel Brooks our heartfelt thanks for sending us a unit which was most capable and efficient in every branch of the medical work, and whose organization was perfect. It is with great regret that we see your unit leaving us, but we realize that the emergency is now over, and your services are needed at home.

Again thanking you on behalf of the Medical Relief Committee and the Department of Militia and Defence for your excellent services, I have the honor to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,
 F. McK. BELL, *Lieutenant-Colonel,*
Assistant Director Medical Services, Medical District No. 6.

In reply to this letter from Colonel Bell I sent the following, with a copy of my report to you dated December 10. The report was forwarded with the letter, at Colonel Bell's request.

BELLEVUE MILITARY HOSPITAL,
 HALIFAX, N. S., December 12, 1917.

Colonel McK. BELL, *Church of England Institute, Halifax, N. S.*

MY DEAR COLONEL BELL: — I am enclosing a copy of my initial report to Colonel Brooks. I wish also to take this opportunity to express to you, on behalf of the Massachusetts State Guard medical unit, the profound thanks of each and every member of the organization for the many courtesies and very great help which you have extended. Had you not come to our aid as you did when we arrived here ready for work, it would have been quite impossible for us to have accomplished our modest contribution in relief work. I would make special mention of the services rendered, if I may so term them, by Captain Barrett. His tireless energy, his thorough knowledge of military hospital organization, and his unflinching courtesy were indeed a bright spot.

I would also take this occasion to acknowledge with deep thanks your very courteous letter authorizing me to hand the command of the hospital to the Rhode Island division of the Red Cross.

With sincere regards, believe me,

Most cordially yours,

HAROLD G. GIDDINGS,
Major, M. C., M. S. G.

P. S. I am very sure that Colonel Brooks would sanction in any way that you see fit the use of the enclosed report.

Arrangements were then made between Major Hough and your representative for the transfer of the hospital to the Rhode Island contingent at 7 o'clock that evening. During the afternoon the doctors and nurses from Rhode Island visited Bellevue, and we pointed out to them its organization and plan of operation. At 7 that evening the transfer was formally made.

On the afternoon of the 12th there came a request from Mr. Ratschesky that the commanding officer visit Miss Helen Graham, daughter of George E. Graham, General Manager of the Dominion & Atlantic Railways. Miss Graham had a septic hand, which had been neglected, the result of being cut by flying glass at the time of the explosion. It was necessary to open the hand, and that she might have suitable care after our unit left Halifax, we were able to have her admitted to the Red Cross Hospital under Dr. W. E. Ladd of Boston.

The general character of the wounds treated at the hospital is of interest. They were very largely injuries of the face caused by flying glass, and included many injuries to the eyes. In fact, there were more of these than of any others. The explanation of this is as follows. Two explosions occurred; one was a comparatively minor affair, but was sufficiently severe to bring people to their windows to see what had happened; then came the terrific explosion which razed the city and created so much havoc. It was at this time that so many people were injured by the glass.

A number of cases of insanity were reported following the disaster, but at Bellevue we had only one such. This was a woman who finally created so much disturbance that it became necessary to transfer her to the Hospital for Insane across the harbor, at Dartmouth. Cases of mild shell shock, while not officially appearing on the hospital records, were not infrequent. This type of case was well illustrated by a stenographer who came to work at the hospital. At the time of the accident she was but a short distance beyond the more severely affected district. After working part of the morning of the 12th (the explosion having occurred on the 6th) she was in such a nervous state, trembling, occasionally crying and utterly unable to concentrate or to manipulate the typewriter, that it became necessary to send her home and to bed.

There were certain bright spots in all the suffering which we saw at Bellevue. Social workers, mostly from the Red Cross, were constantly coming to the hospital, distributing dainties to the children and clothing to all who needed it; and the need was surely very great.

During our first twenty-four hours in the hospital there came

to us many people who were but slightly injured but who had no homes. Of course all such were taken in, accorded every attention, and kept at the hospital until the Housing Committee had made arrangements to supply them with clothing and with accommodations.

One patient we had in the hospital was a little girl of four years who was the only existing member of her family, and who could not understand why her calls for "Grannie" were unheeded.

Another pathetic instance was the following. A little child of about three years had had both eyes removed. When she recovered from the ether she clapped her hands and gleefully remarked to the nurse, "Oh, Nursie, it's night, isn't it?"

Also among our patients was Corporal Combeau of the Canadian Army, who at the time of the disaster was corporal of the guard at one of the piers. When he saw the munition ship in flames he turned out the guard. As the guard came down the pier the explosion occurred, and every man except Combeau was killed. He himself was blown in a cloud of débris a distance of fully one-half mile. When he came to us we found that he had a fracture of the right thigh, and a ragged piece of steel was embedded in his left shin; in addition, there was a lacerated wound of the left elbow.

The work of no individual member of the unit stands out pre-eminently. Perhaps the one surgeon whose services were of the most help was Captain Loring. This was because of the great number of eye injuries, already referred to. Captain Loring was called upon to do work not only at Bellevue but at the Military Hospital, the Halifax Infirmary and at Camp Hill Hospital, where he saw, at the request of Lieutenant-Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts, Miss Bertha Ferguson, an American girl of Boston. Dr. Loring's presence was most urgently needed when we arrived, and his work received much favorable comment.

Arrangements had been made for the care of the hospital at night by one medical and one surgical officer. The work was done voluntarily throughout our time of occupation by Dr. Harrington and Dr. Shea.

On the afternoon before we left Halifax, Major Baker, Cap-

tain Nathaniel Morse and Captain Lapham assumed the role of Santa Claus and carried to the children in the hospital a generous contribution of toys.

The day of December 13 was given over to visiting various parts of the city and in general getting ready for our departure for home on the morning of the 14th. Up to this time several members of the party had not had the opportunity to see the devastated area. Through the courtesy of the provost marshal of the city, Major Edward Mooney, a most charming and genial officer, we were supplied with automobiles and drivers to take us through the district, which was, of course, a trip of the greatest interest. That evening His Honor Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. F. McCullum Grant, of the Province of Nova Scotia, gave to our party a delightful and informal dinner, which was in the nature of an official recognition of the work the unit had done. Lacking other means of conveyance to the Governor's home, the doctors were carried in one of the new automobile trucks, the gift of our State, which that day had reached Halifax from Boston.

In addition to the members of our own party there were present at the dinner General Benson, commanding the Military District of Halifax, Admiral Chambers, representing the Naval Forces there, Colonel F. McKelvie Bell, from the Medical Department of the Dominion, the Hon. R. T. MacIlreith, Chairman of the Halifax Relief Committee, Mr. John F. Moors, of the American Red Cross, and Colonel Edmund Billings, who had arrived at Halifax on the "Calvin Austin" the night before. Speeches were made by all of the above-mentioned guests, and in addition Captain Harrington and your representative were called upon. The occasion, at which cordiality was the keynote, was a most delightful one. Besides the speaking already alluded to, a toast was proposed by His Honor the Governor to "The President and the King," and both the British and the American national anthems were sung. Thus the event assumed certain international significance. In fact, Governor Grant during the course of his remarks expressed what we all felt, namely, that, lamentable as the disaster was, it had undoubtedly furthered the cordial relations between Canada and the United States.

At the dinner Mr. MacIlreith read the following letter, which he afterwards presented to the commanding officer of the unit:—

HALIFAX, N. S., December 13, 1917.

H. G. GIDDINGS, *Major, Medical Corps, State of Massachusetts, Halifax, N. S.*

DEAR MAJOR GIDDINGS:—At a meeting of the Executive of the Relief Committee, held this afternoon, it was the earnest desire of all the members that before the Medical Corps of the State of Massachusetts took its departure from Halifax a formal minute should be placed on our records, which in the future will be the basis of the official history of the Halifax disaster, expressing the committee's deep appreciation of the prompt and humane action of the authorities in Boston in dispatching your corps to Halifax, and of the professional efficiency and noble spirit which you and all members of your unit have exhibited since coming to our stricken city. We shall always bear you in grateful remembrance, and wish you a safe journey home.

Yours truly,

R. T. MACILREITH,
Chairman, Relief Committee.

Major Giddings concludes his report with the following summary of the work done by the unit:—

Total out-patients treated,	167
Visits in homes,	53
Hours spent in advisory capacity,	23
Combined surgical and medical service:—	
Total house admissions,	75
Total operations done (exclusive of eye service),	10
Total discharges,	17
Total ethers,	46
Total ether used (pounds),	3½
Total cases turned over to Rhode Island unit,	58
Eye service, Dr. Loring:—	
Total cases seen at Bellevue,	27
Total cases seen at Cogswell Street Military Hospital,	85
Total cases seen at Halifax Infirmary,	10
	— 122
Total operations at Bellevue,	18
Total operations at Cogswell Street Military Hospital,	15
Total operations at Halifax Infirmary,	2
	— 35

In addition to these, 68 others were admitted, of whom no clinical records were kept.

At 9 A.M., December 14, the unit left Halifax for home. The return was punctuated by two events worthy of record. As a mark of appreciation the following Canadian officials came to the station to pay their respects as the train passed through St. John: Sir William Pugsley, the Governor of New Brunswick, Mayor John Hayes of that city, Sir Leonard and Mrs. Tilley, and the Hon. H. Hazen, Commander for the Railways in the Dominion. Unfortunately, because the train was so delayed, these personages could not wait for our arrival and had left the station when we reached their city. But their spirit of welcome was felt and was none the less appreciated because they had been forced to leave.

During the last morning of the return journey the members of the unit met in the dining car, where they formed themselves into a group to be known as the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Associates. The association took birth spontaneously and shows in a certain degree the spirit of good fellowship and mutual effort at helping one another in the performance of our common task which were in evidence throughout the entire trip.

We were welcomed in Boston by a reception committee which had provided automobiles to take us to the Algonquin Club, where we were delightfully entertained by the Acting Chief Surgeon and presented to His Excellency Governor McCall. At the close of the luncheon the party broke up and returned to their respective homes, each feeling profoundly grateful for the privilege which had been accorded him to help unfortunate Halifax.

Too much praise cannot be given those at home who joined with you in backing up this expedition in the raising by subscription, made payable to Robert Winsor, treasurer of the Halifax Relief Committee, of about \$700,000; and by forwarding supplies as fast as they could be gathered, under the able leadership of Henry B. Endicott, Executive Manager of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee, and his large corps of volunteer assistants. Whatever supplies were needed were dispatched by special train, regular train and two relief steamships, and consisted of all kinds of building material, supplies, food, clothing, shoes, ten (two and three ton) motor trucks,

thousands of blankets and bedding, a large wrecking crew fully equipped with necessary machinery, and a score of glaziers with enormous quantities of glass, etc.

Great thanks should be given the Hon. Edmund Billings, Collector of the Port of Boston, in whose charge was the relief Steamship "Calvin Austin," carrying a large cargo of supplies. Great thanks are also due to Mr. John F. O'Connell of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee, who was in charge of the relief Steamship "Northland" and its large cargo of supplies, and who did such faithful work in getting supplies forwarded in the two steamships within a few days of the disaster; also to the captain and crew of the above-mentioned steamships for their faithful services.

All this work was going on for about ten days, during which period your Relief Committee was in Halifax, being aided from the beginning by Premier Borden, Governor Grant, General Benson, Admiral Chambers and Colonel McKelvie Bell, and to whom the Massachusetts unit of the Halifax Relief Committee will be forever grateful for their untiring efforts, loyalty and assistance.

Gradually order and regulation began to appear, immediate wants having been cared for. The personnel of the committees having been selected with great care, with the assistance of your representatives work proceeded until such time as we felt that the citizens of Halifax were able to carry on the work. The American Hospital was turned over to another unit and we gradually withdrew from the committee, leaving the citizens in charge.

The evening before our departure Governor Grant entertained at dinner our entire Massachusetts unit at the Government House. He was assisted by General Benson, Admiral Chambers, Colonel McKelvie Bell and Chairman R. T. MacIlreith of the Relief Committee.

All voiced the sentiments of the people of Halifax in praise and gratitude for what Massachusetts had done, — first on the scene of a great catastrophe, going only when its citizens were able to cope with the situation, — and presented the following resolutions, passed by the Halifax Committee, representing all its citizens and published in all its papers: —

That the heartfelt thanks of the citizens of Halifax, as represented by this Executive Committee, be telegraphed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for their overwhelming sympathy, most generous gifts of relief supplies, the sorely needed services of doctors and nurses and hospital units, and especially for the thought of accompanying said gifts with the services of A. C. Ratshesky, whose generous and expert advice have greatly helped to solve many of our problems, and whose sympathetic activity and tact will, we trust, soon assist us to bring comparative order out of the chaos resulting from the terrible loss of life, crippling of the living and terrible devastation of our city.

To which, that night, I had the honor of replying in the following message to the citizens of Halifax:—

GENTLEMEN:—The resolution passed by your committee at its session yesterday afternoon so appealed to me that I felt before leaving the city of Halifax I should make the statement how glad I am that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been of assistance to you in helping in this disaster befalling your city. In my letter of introduction, His Excellency Governor McCall of Massachusetts instructed me to do anything and everything that was possible to alleviate the suffering and distress in the different departments in which I have gained experience in the crises in other cities.

It is fair to state that the different committees that I have come in contact with are so organized that after a few days they will be in fairly perfect running order, and will be able to handle the large volume of affairs that will come before them. While it may from time to time appear as if the overlapping of work does exist, it will not take long to unravel each case as it comes up, and make possible co-operation by each committee through the executive.

I wish to state that the men who have charge of the committee have shown that interest and willingness which augur well for the success of the work. They have been willing to listen to suggestions and have applied themselves in such a way as to bring to the situation that business judgment which must prevail to bring about a satisfactory result.

I wish to thank Premier Borden, Governor Grant, General Benson, Mayor Martin and all members of the general committees and citizens for the great assistance which they have afforded in the creating of organization.

I wish to acknowledge the fine co-operation of Colonel McKelvie Bell and his department in the ready and hearty assistance afforded the medical men of Massachusetts, culminating in the establishment and maintenance of Bellevue Hospital. I am quite sure that Major Giddings and his staff of doctors and nurses are deeply grateful to him for all the attention and thought that he has given, and if the hospital has proved the success which has been set for it by all who have been close to its

work, I feel that Colonel Bell and his staff should participate in any praise that is given.

I wish to extend thanks to the officials of the railway and telegraph companies for their co-operation and assistance to the Massachusetts unit, and for the magnificent service that they performed, although greatly hampered in their operations.

I also wish to thank Mr. A. S. Busby, Chief Inspector of Customs, and Mr. A. S. Mitchell, Collector of Customs for the Port of Halifax, for the extreme courtesies extended to the Massachusetts unit relative to customs.

The newspapers and their staffs have our sincere thanks for their kindness and attention.

What Massachusetts has done is symbolic of what it stands for, — not only to help its own citizens but to help all those who may need assistance, — and when the word came that Halifax was in distress, she could not do otherwise than help. The hearts of her people have gone out to your citizens, not only in her generous supply of clothing, food and money, but, better than all, in that fine sentiment of affection for the people of your city that will bring about a strengthened friendship that will last for generations to come.

I am proud of what my State has done. I am also proud of what your citizens have done, and sincerely trust, when your city is once more established on more normal lines, that Halifax will be a bigger and better city.

God bless you in your endeavors.

I have authorized the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee to enter my personal subscription for the sum of \$1,000.

Yours very truly,

A. C. RATSHESKY.

When it is considered that in this terrible catastrophe eighteen hundred lives were lost, ten thousand people were in need of medical attendance (thousands of them severely injured), twenty-five hundred homes were entirely destroyed, together with many churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, public buildings, factories and warehouses (not a building, practically, escaping without some damage, all glass in the greater part of the city being shattered), a loss of above \$30,000,000, — your vision and foresight in realizing the importance of acting quickly meant everything to Halifax. Your instructions to me to “go the limit” were carried out to the letter, and the Massachusetts relief train was the first to enter the devastated city. The results are almost incredible. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts can well feel proud of its achievement.

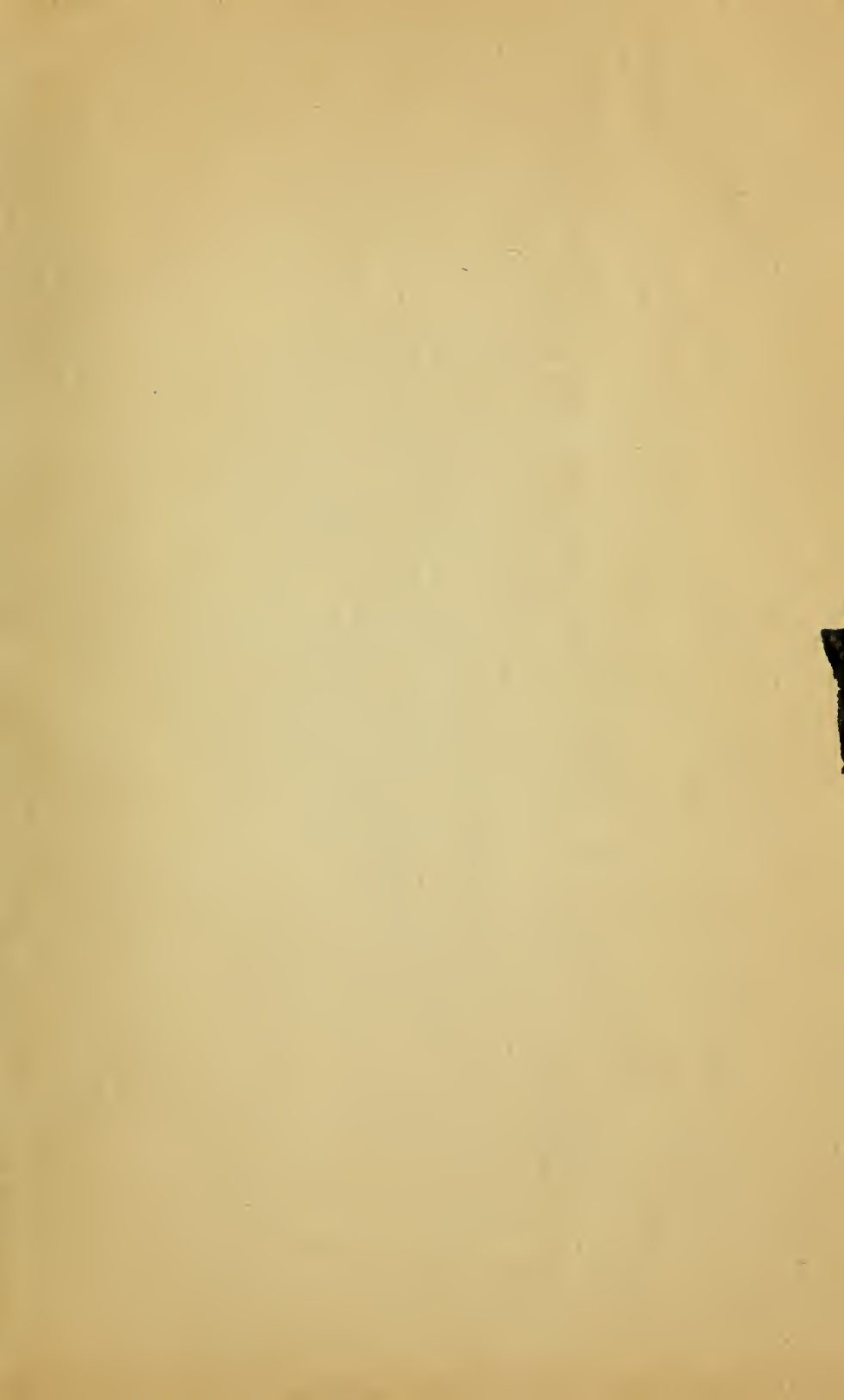
We shall always be very grateful to you for the privilege given us to do our part in alleviating the intense suffering which followed in the wake of the catastrophe. We were proud to be the standard bearers on the errand of mercy, and the fact that (quoting from your letter of December 6) "the Commonwealth of Massachusetts stood back of us in every way" spurred us on to do the best that within us lay.

I cannot refrain at this time from commending to the people of Massachusetts, through you, the entire unit of the relief party, — the great service and devotion to the work in which they so cheerfully enlisted; the representatives of railroads; the trainmen who rescued us from long delay by their willingness to help, at great discomfort to themselves; representatives of the press; and last, but not least, the magnificent spirit exhibited by all the people in Halifax, who realized that your Relief Committee came as brothers and sisters to help them in relieving those who were so sorely stricken.

Respectfully submitted,

A. C. RATSHEKY,

Commissioner-in-Charge, Halifax Relief Expedition.



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