

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS REFORM CLUB
APPOINTED TO COLLECT TESTIMONY
IN RELATION TO THE SPANISH-
AMERICAN WAR, 1898-1899**

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Report of the committee of the Massachusetts reform club appointed to collect testimony in relation to the Spanish-American war, 1898-1899 by Various

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VARIOUS

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REPORT

OF

THE COMMITTEE

OF THE

Massachusetts Reform Club

APPOINTED TO COLLECT TESTIMONY IN RELATION
TO THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

1898-1899

BOSTON

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

The Massachusetts Reform Club, at the meeting held Oct. 14, 1898, adopted the following resolution:—

Resolved, That the Massachusetts Reform Club shall appoint through its President a committee of five, to be known as the "War Investigation Committee," and to consist, if possible, of two military men, two lawyers, and one business man, and that such committee shall undertake the work, so far as possible, of collecting evidence regarding the conduct of military affairs during the recent war with Spain.

Resolved, That the Treasurer of the Club be authorized to pay to said committee, upon its written order, a sum not exceeding \$500 from the treasury of the Club.

This resolution was proposed in consequence of the prevalent feeling that there was to be an investigation by a Congressional Committee, independent of the investigation by the Commission appointed by the President. It was suggested that the Massachusetts Reform Club, a non-partisan organization, seeking improvements in all departments of the public service, might well undertake to collect testimony from participants in the war, while their experiences were fresh in mind, for submission to a Congressional Committee when it should be appointed.

The President of the Club appointed as the Club Committee Colonel Charles R. Codman, of Boston, formerly of the Forty-fifth Massachusetts Volunteers; Corporal James B. Gardner, of Boston, formerly of the Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers; and Messrs. Samuel Bowles, of Springfield; Robert S. Gorham, of Newton; and Charles Warren, of Dedham.

Colonel Codman was elected Chairman, and Mr. Warren Secretary of the Committee.

The Committee decided to confine its inquiries to members of the New England regiments and citizens of the New England States having knowledge of military affairs during the war. It accordingly prepared a circular (Appendix A), which was mailed to nearly seven hundred of the principal newspapers in New England, accompanied by a letter requesting the publication of the circular and asking that it be commented upon editorially. Many replies and editorial comments were received, nearly all of which were favorable to the investigation.

For the inquiry proposed a list of questions (Appendix B) was prepared, which was sent to the commissioned officers of most of the regiments from the New England States. A few of the regiments were omitted, as the Committee did not think it proper to send these questions to officers who were still in the service. The questions were also sent to some enlisted men, who, the Committee had been informed, could give valuable testimony; to many persons from whom letters concerning abuses and sufferings had appeared in the public press; to some of the nurses; and to a few others whose names had been suggested to the Committee. About eight hundred of these lists were distributed, and written replies have been received from about ten per cent. of that number.

As it now appears that no investigation by Congress of the conduct of the war is probable, the Committee has concluded that the publication of the important and significant portions of the testimony which it has collected is for the public interest. It is thought that this collection of selected testimony may have historical value, and it is hoped that it will prove useful in suggesting to both State and National authorities methods by which the military service of the country may be improved in preparation for future emergencies.

The Committee desires to emphasize, however, the point that it, at no time, attempted to carry on an independent investigation of its own. Its scope was simply, as a local

body, to collect testimony in aid of any future official investigation.

It has been deemed advisable to print the testimony without, as a rule, giving the names of the persons who made the statements. The original signed statements, many of them accompanied by affidavits, are, however, in the possession of the Committee, and will be held so long as there is a possibility of their being needed for any legitimate purpose.

The testimony submitted certainly suggests that there was inefficiency and incapacity, on the part of the commissary and medical departments, in furnishing to the soldiers of the nation proper nourishment and reasonable medical and sanitary care. It would seem also that the inexperience of many volunteer officers in the management of troops, and their consequent lack of appreciation of their powers and duties when exercising command, were causes of inconvenience and suffering; but it is evident that, however efficient regimental officers may be, unless the commissary and medical departments are composed, in all grades, of competent and humane persons, there will necessarily be great and needless suffering among enlisted men. The testimony should be read in the light of this consideration.

That there were instances of great devotion to duty on the part of many officers in these departments is not, and cannot be, doubted. It is confidently believed that there were very many such instances. But the remissness or inhumanity of a small number in these departments is likely to be more appalling in its results than any deficiencies in the other official classes of the service. The case of Boone, which has been presented in the testimony, would seem to illustrate this proposition.

The statements made by the witnesses as to the sanitary condition of the camps should be carefully read. There are many of these, and they do not disagree. That the most obvious sanitary arrangements were not made, at a

period when the subject of sanitary precautions is a matter of general interest and discussion, and when great advances have been made in the use of disinfectants and preventives, seems almost incredible. And yet, if the witnesses are to be believed, this is exactly what happened.

The Committee calls the especial attention of all officials, officers, and others interested in military affairs to the suggestions and recommendations made by various officers in their testimony as to means and methods of avoiding in the future the unnecessary evils and hardships of the past. It believes that much of their advice as to needed reforms will be found of great value. And it is this portion of the report which the Committee feels confident should be of permanent use.

Especial attention is called to suggestions made by officers on pages 21, 23, 26, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47.

CHARLES R. CODMAN,	} Committee.
<i>Chairman,</i>	
JAMES B. GARDNER,	
SAMUEL BOWLES,	
ROBERT S. GORHAM,	
CHARLES WARREN,	} Secretary.
<i>Secretary,</i>	

