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THE CLAIMS OF THE MILITARY PHARMACIST.

THE citizen who enters the United States military service is required to surrender many of his civilian rights, not the least of which is the right to select his own pharmacist and medical attendant when ill. Willy nilly, the soldier must accept the medical service furnished by the government, and his refusal to accept treatment prescribed by the medical officer, or the medicine compounded by the military pharmacist is a punishable offense.

Governments can not, or at least should not, assume authority with respect to the lives of their citizens without accepting the corresponding obligations—the obligation in this case being to supply medical attendance and pharmaceutical service that shall be on a par with a fair average of that which is available to the civilian.

So far as surgical and medical attendance are concerned, the adequacy of the service provided by the government may be regarded as quite satisfactory, which is due to the fact that the rank and pay of the army surgeons and physicians are such as to justify men of the requisite ability and training in devoting themselves to the work.

When the pharmacist is reached, however, the conditions are the reverse of satisfactory. In his case the conditions under which he must work, and the rank and pay allotted, could not operate more effectually to drive good men out of the service and to prevent good men from entering it, if they had been devised for these specific purposes, and in military circles it is an open secret that, under existing conditions, it is practically impossible to secure desirable recruits for the Hospital Corps.

Every state and territorial division of the United States now has statutory

provisions requiring the appropriate qualification of those who compound and dispense drugs and medicines. The general government alone enjoys the questionable distinction of furnishing pharmaceutical service under such conditions as to render it next to impossible for men of the requisite ability to enter or remain in this line of work.

That the Army Hospital Corps still retains men of character and ability is due to the personal devotion of the men themselves, and to the oft repeated assurances that their acknowledged grievances would be properly adjusted.

Just where the responsibility for the long postponement of justice to these men should be placed, it is difficult for a civilian to determine, but circumstances seem to point to that section of the military establishment known as the "War Department General Staff," and is apparently due to the persistent refusal, or neglect of that body to heed the repeated recommendations of the Surgeon-General for changes that would permit the improvement of the personnel of the Hospital Corps. In his report to the Secretary of War for 1911, the Surgeon-General calls attention to the necessity for legislation to correct the evils complained of, and states that "complaints have continued to come from all quarters, that the recruits of the Hospital Corps do not furnish fit material" for the services they are expected to perform.

Military regulations may debar pharmacists in the service from criticising the acts of their superiors, but the writer not being subject to such regulations does not hesitate to say that whatever section of the military establishment is responsible for present conditions in the Army Hospital Corps, so far as pharmaceutical service is concerned, has been criminally negligent of the lives and welfare of the enlisted men who through illness or injury may need hospital treatment, and if these conditions are not improved within a reasonable length of time they will reach the proportions of a common scandal.

Both the American Medical and the American Pharmaceutical Associations have repeatedly expressed themselves in favor of legislation for the improvement of the personnel of the Hospital Corps, and if such amendments are much longer delayed it may be necessary for these associations to announce publicly that those who enlist in the army do so at the peril of their lives, in case of accident or illness.

In the last Congress there was presented a bill which has come to be known as the Hughes-Bacon Bill, designed to correct these conditions. The bill which is very brief in its terms is as follows:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled: That the Hospital Corps of the United States Army shall hereafter be known and designed as the Medical Corps, shall constitute the enlisted personnel of the Medical Corps now authorized by law, and shall consist of sergeants major, at seventy-five dollars per month; sergeants first class, at sixty-five dollars per month; sergeants, at thirty-six dollars per month; corporals, at twenty-four dollars per month; cooks, at thirty dollars per month; privates, first class, at twenty-one dollars per month; and privates, at sixteen dollars per month, with such increase for length of service and other allowances as are or may hereafter be established by law."

There is reason to believe that the medical officers of the Army approve the bill

in its essential features, and that its enactment in practically its present form would be agreeably received by them.

At the time this is written it is impossible to predict the fate of the measure, but in case of its having been defeated the A. Ph. A. and A. M. A. should exert themselves to secure its reintroduction into the next Congress and press persistently for its enactment.

This legislation is asked for not simply as a favor to the men of the Hospital Corps, but as a measure of elementary justice to every one in the military service, any one of whom may become the occupant of a hospital and subject to the ministrations of the pharmacists and other attendants provided therein.

J. H. BEAL.



WHEN SINNERS ENTICE.

A MONTH or so back the daily newspapers were filled with sensational accounts of the arrest of about 170 doctors, druggists and others for the alleged offense of mailing articles which the postal laws, by construction, make unmailable.

The accounts were featured under "scare heads," and in literary character reached the most approved yellow style of reportorial art. That is, they asserted few facts directly, but many by innuendo and suggestion, as for example, when it was set forth in general terms that the articles mailed were intended for immoral purposes, leaving the reader to imagine them to consist of various heinous and unmentionable agents, when as a matter of fact, in many cases at least, the articles consisted of syringes, which like hundreds of other things might or might not be used improperly. So also there was a conspicuous absence of the mention of extenuating circumstances, as for instance, that the sale of these articles would have been legal if made over the counter, and that the offense consisted not in selling the things, but in sending them by mail.

While every reputable member of pharmacy and medicine must rejoice when the fakirs in the ranks of either are run to earth, there were some features connected with the alleged exposé that did not just look right to the man who favors the square deal, as well in law enforcement as elsewhere.

In various ways the published accounts show that efforts were made, not so much to discover evidence of habitual violation of the law, as to persuade or cajole the victim into violating it. For example, we are informed that after numerous vain attempts to persuade a physician to furnish what was wanted, "then the caller in apparent despair began to weep copiously," after which profuse lachrymation we are permitted to infer that the physician succumbed, though the nature of the article supplied is not stated.

And again, "In another case the inspectors worked for months before they obtained evidence upon which a conviction would be possible."

Since it is alleged that the work was undertaken to "break up a common practice," and since the only evidence necessary would have been to have the parties supply the illegal articles by mail, why were such strenuous exertions required, and why should it have taken the inspectors "months" to obtain such evidence?

It is related with evident glee that many of the persons trapped were "respectable physicians," or other persons highly respected in their respective com-

munities, and yet we are asked to believe that these people were intentional and habitual law breakers, because after "months of effort," "copious weeping," and the use of false and fraudulent letters they were persuaded into the technical violation of a postal law which perhaps they had never heard of, and would not have understood if they had read it.

It is admitted in the published accounts that in order to obtain the desired evidence it was necessary to use letters subscribed with false signatures and filled with falsehoods—truly a fine way to preserve the sanctity of the mail sack, and by those whose supposed duty it is to guard it!

As a fair question, how many average druggists or physicians, not regularly doing a mail order business, would be likely to know of the existence of such a law, or would have been able to interpret it correctly if it had been read to them?

While it is true that ignorance of the law excuses no one (except, of course, judges and lawyers), nevertheless most people will have some sympathy for the man who is trapped into the violation of a regulation he never heard of.

The officers of the Ohio State Pharmaceutical Association feeling that injustice had been done, in some instances at least, called a special meeting of its members for a consideration of the subject, and as a result of the meeting the Council of that Association has adopted the following preamble and resolutions:

"WHEREAS, The United States Postal Laws regulating the transmission of drugs, compounded medicines and medical appliances are so indefinite in their provisions as to render it difficult or impossible to determine the character of substances which may be lawfully transmitted by mail; and

"WHEREAS, Many useful and necessary drugs, medicines and medical appliances are of such a nature that they can also be used for improper purposes when in the hands of the criminally inclined; and

"WHEREAS, Druggists innocent of any evil intent have been arrested and fined for technical violation of the said postal laws; therefore be it

"Resolved, That the druggists of the State of Ohio request of the Federal Congress that it make such a revision of the Postal Laws as will make clear and definite the character of drugs, medicines and medical appliances that may be lawfully transmitted by mail; and be it further

"Resolved, That when the articles are such as have a proper and legitimate use in medicine, druggists should not be held criminally liable for sending such articles by mail unless it be shown that such articles were mailed with guilty intent; and be it also further

"Resolved, That in all prosecutions for the violation of such laws the accused shall be permitted to show in defense that such articles were mailed in good faith to be used for legitimate purposes only, and without any reason to believe that they were to be used for immoral or other improper purposes."

Doubtless many of the men arrested, possibly a majority, were intentional violators of the law and no sympathy need be wasted upon them, but it is difficult to consider the raid as a whole without coming to the conclusion that the dragnet also included some who were entirely innocent of intentional wrong doing, and who were the victims of a "frame up" entirely unworthy of those entitled to call themselves officers of the United States Government.

Said the Duchess to Alice in Wonderland, "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it." The story of the raid by the postoffice authorities has two morals—

1. Post up in the law as well as in the Pharmacopœia.
2. When sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

J. H. BEAL.