

EDITORIAL

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JUSTICE TO THE PHARMACIST.

UNDER the above caption an editorial appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (June 16, 1917). In the same number a letter from Mr. J. W. England is printed in which attention is called to the standing, or no standing, of the pharmacist in the Army and that there is no provision whatever for a pharmaceutical corps in the military organization.

The editorial referred to concludes as follows:

"To-day, as never before, victory in war goes to the nation that most effectively conserves the health of its fighting men. The physician is now of such military importance that the medical profession will be called on to make no inconsiderable sacrifices. It will materially lighten the arduous duties and responsibilities of the physician to have in the Army trained pharmacists who will be able to give intelligent coöperation. But it is imposing too great a strain on the patriotism of those whose special knowledge is obviously a large asset to the Army, to expect them to enlist as privates without any recognition of their national worth. Pharmacists should be given a rank commensurate with their importance, first because it is but simple justice to the pharmacists themselves, secondly, because the usefulness of the medical corps will be greatly augmented and, lastly, and most importance, because the efficiency of our Army demands it."

In the *Journal A. M. A.* for June 23, President Frederick J. Wulling expresses his appreciation for the timely editorial referred to, and *this* writing has as one of its objects, an acknowledgment of the consideration given and further to express pleasure and gratification for the evidence of coöperation in this endeavor on the part of the American Medical Association with the American Pharmaceutical Association.

Dr. S. Solis Cohen, in the Correspondence column of the *Journal A. M. A.* for June 23, p. 1934, endorses the editorial and letter referred to and suggests that physicians write the Medical Department of the Army in support of the movement. The following extract is taken from Dr. Cohen's letter:

"The importance of the pharmacist as first aid to physician and surgeon ought not to require emphasis. Not only is the technical skill and knowledge of the trained pharmacist required in the procurement and preparation of medicines, antiseptic solutions and the like, but also, with but slight intensive preparation, it could be made highly useful in the hospital wards and in the clinical and research laboratories.

"In order that this varied usefulness may be developed to the highest point, and thus contribute to the most efficient conduct of the war and to the best possible care of the sick and wounded, the type of men attracted to the pharmaceutical service of the Army and Navy should be high, and their merit should be adequately recognized by their commissioning as officers."

The American Medical Association at the last annual meeting, held in New York City a few weeks ago, endorsed the provision for a pharmaceutical corps in the Army, and that pharmacists in the service be given commissions.

Not only does justice demand that the professional services of pharmacists

be recognized but there is need of these services for those who enlist in the cause of their country. An anomalous condition obtains because the question of legal recognition of pharmacists by the government and every state, except in Army service, has long ago been settled. The adoption of the official standards is offered as unquestionable evidence, for only persons qualified by education and experience can use these intelligently and successfully; quite a number of states exact as prerequisite for pharmaceutical practice that persons so engaged must be graduates of colleges of pharmacy. A pharmacy law has been provided for the District of Columbia. On the other hand, enlisted men, who have had no previous pharmaceutical training, are being coached for hospital service in minor medical treatments, dispensing and preparation of medicines, etc., in a course extending over a period of three months. Colleges of pharmacy require of their students preliminary education, experience in drug stores over a period of more than three years, and not less than two years' attendance at school before a certificate of proficiency is given their students. An emergency exists; but in civic life, physicians require the services of pharmacists; why not in the Army, where the lives of many may be jeopardized? Every means of conserving health and life has a determinable value, so also the waste of talent and service is as reprehensible as waste of material.

If the present crisis had prompted the action of pharmacists then it might be considered as a selfish move, but for many years, in spite of discouragements, the American Pharmaceutical Association has continuously labored to secure justice for pharmacists, and now that there is urgent need, the efforts of the Association have been energized and supplemented. In the annual report for 1912 of the Surgeon-General to the Secretary of War, he made a strong plea for the increase and improvement of the status of the Army Hospital Corps.

Pharmacists are entitled to and should have representation on the Advisory Commission to the Committee on National Defense. The present maldistribution of functions in the Army should be corrected in justice to pharmacists, for better service of the physicians and of all enlisted in our country's cause. The best service possible is not too good for our soldiers.

"The Nation needs all men, but it needs each man, not in the field that will most please him, *but in the endeavor that will best serve the common good.*"

—From President Wilson's Proclamation.

E. G. E.

JUSTICE TO THE MEN IN THE MILITARY SERVICE DEMANDS BETTER PHARMACY.

IT must be admitted that under present conditions there is no great need for trained pharmacists in the Army; the same affirmation is applicable as an argument that the Service, as now constituted, is neither adequate nor efficient—

the pivotal points of modern warfare are science and efficiency. The soldier is entitled to the best available medical and surgical attention, and this is impossible without the best pharmaceutical service.

With the exception of England, all the more important countries engaged in the European war, prior to the entrance of the United States, provided for pharmaceutical corps in their army organizations. England is giving the matter serious consideration, while Australia has already established a pharmaceutical corps, Canada has not perfected such organization.

It must be admitted that at the battle front, compactness and portability are of greatest importance, but even here where tablets and a very limited range of medicaments can only be employed, there is need for men who have knowledge of what they are administering and dispensing. Caution, alone, is not sufficient protection against error—the resultant responsibility that develops from the knowledge of medicines is a more effective safe-guard. In the *British Pharmaceutical Journal* of June 2, 1917, occurs the following statement which is applicable: "We have already had to report several cases of fatal poisonings in military and quasi-military hospitals, in which unqualified dispensers were employed; and considering the number of pharmacists in the Army and Navy, there seems to the *mere civilian* no valid reason why their professional services should not be utilized more fully and effectively." It is fair to assume that at the front the occurrence of such accidents are far more frequent than in the hospitals, nor can the errors be as readily detected while the conflict is going on.

A liberal allowance must be made for seeming dereliction by the War Department in not taking up the matter of establishing a pharmaceutical corps, without awaiting the agitation of pharmacists and medical men. The officials must endeavor to avoid mistakes of commission as well as omission. The importance of our demands should be impressed by facts and sound arguments, and these must largely be authenticated by pharmacists with coöperation of *all* concerned in securing the best pharmaceutical service for the Army, therefore the helpfulness of medical men is of great value in asserting our claims. The points to be stressed, however, are that pharmacists must *show* the necessity for a pharmaceutical corps and outline a plan for its organization. The rendition of this assistance and information devolves on pharmacists and the sincerity of their purpose must be persistently reinforced by staying qualities; "effervescence" has no place in this important matter.

It is hardly necessary to say that the proposition is destined to failure, if no other service is to be rendered than at present, or even if additional functions or duties are to be added. Pharmacy should have first consideration in the organization of a pharmaceutical corps. The assumption of part of the work of physicians and of nurses is practicable in a degree, but within the province of pharmacy, or at least closely related, there are possibilities for chemical, clinical, biological,

dietetic, Roentgen-ray, toxicological and other scientific work—this includes, of course, soil and water analyses. There may also come the necessity for limited pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturing, aside from dispensing, and surely, knowledge of drugs and chemicals and how to properly keep them has more than economic value. Perhaps most of those who enlist would require special instruction, according to grades or rank, but such provision obtains in all divisions of the Army and Navy and is now provided for physicians and surgeons in training them for active service. Locally, Army hospitals are established and laboratories of schools of pharmacy can, if necessary, be utilized for research work, in fact, the Government has already tentatively accepted the facilities of several schools, including their drug gardens.

The statement of Chairman S. L. Hilton bears repetition: "We must work together." While the opportunities may come in a different way in different localities, success will only be achieved by "working together" and presenting an unbroken front, unswerving in our determination for a cause we know to be just, that will make possible a service, not attainable under present conditions, and reflect credit on pharmacy.

The great objective points in this movement are, to show that pharmacy has a mission, and is of invaluable service to the Army, whether on a war or peace footing; to provide a proper system for organization of a pharmaceutical corps and to effect its establishment. All sections of the American Pharmaceutical Association and also the Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties should have papers on the subject based on these related viewpoints—not the least in importance a schedule for the organization of a pharmaceutical corps of the Army and a systematic listing of the work therein by pharmacists in the several ranks that may be provided. There is no place for day-dreams in this important project which means so much for pharmacy. The tests that should be applied are those determining the feasibility, practicability and possible efficiency of such an organization. A paper by Mr. J. W. England on the subject was read before Pennsylvania Pharmaceutical Association, and is printed in this issue of the JOURNAL.

There is at present no provision for a pharmaceutical corps in the Army and such establishment requires the favorable action of Congress. Some missionary work has been done in the furtherance of the measure. Several years ago, and at different times, bills have been on the calendar of Congress for such enactment, while they met with favor, delay for one reason or another, and perhaps opposition, resulted in failure, but now is a most opportune time. As President Wulling says, "It is the psychological moment;" at any rate the provision is needed for conserving the life and health of those enlisted in the country's cause. The consummation will require much energetic coördinated coöperative work. Are you sufficiently interested? If so, "do your bit."

E. G. E.