

EDITORIAL

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"THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PHARMACEUTICAL CORPS"—A TRUMPET CALL TO DUTY!

"And now comes the trumpet call to duty: the fearful, piercing cry of humanity in agony. No longer can we look on and shrug our shoulders and say 'This problem is not ours.' Our own flesh and blood is dedicated to the struggle and will pour out its rich wine of life and youth and of hope."

"Before our eyes millions are giving their all: their last measure of devotion; their last drop of blood. The world lies bleeding before us: a world thus far, that has touched us only as one touches the hem of a garment. But now no longer. Today, at desk, in kitchen and at bedside the call is here and we are facing the mud, the carrion, the terror, the infinite weariness and suffering of the battlefield. Our faces are turned toward those fields of France that are one vast Calvary."—Part of an editorial in the *Ladies Home Journal* for November 1917.

AMERICAN pharmacists desire to enlist in the service for humanity in a capacity wherein they can work most helpfully, but this is impossible under present conditions when there is no pharmaceutical organization in the Army. Without such provision the enlisted pharmacist can not serve efficiently, for his experience counts for little and his knowledge of the science and art of his profession has even less value, and still in civil life pharmacy is regarded as "the right arm of medicine."

The U. S. Government as well as the medical profession accept of the standards for materia medica prepared by pharmacists. In an editorial of a recent issue of the *Pharmaceutical Journal and Pharmacist* (Great Britain) these lines occur: "The United States has been uncommonly fortunate in the possession of a remarkable array of eminent pharmacists who have rendered signal service to the science of pharmacy and to the cause of pharmaceutical education and progress."

Every nation engaged in the War except England and the United States has pharmaceutical corps as part of their Army organization, and England has recently commissioned twenty-one pharmacists—a forward step prompted by the efficient service of the Australasian Pharmaceutical Corps.

That pharmaceutical service is not of a high standard in all of our camps at present is known to pharmacists in the cities near to these camps and therefore the fact need not be further impressed on our readers, most of whom have authentic information thereon from dependable sources. That the service in some of these dispensaries would not be lawful in civil life is also beyond dispute. A sworn statement recites that a dispenser in one of these camps was formerly a bartender, another a cigar salesman and another a bookkeeper. It might be contended that no pharmacist was available and still there are verified statements that there were graduate pharmacists in a camp where inexperienced men dispensed or directed the graduate pharmacist how he should dispense. Such testimony tends to sub-

stantiate the truth of reports relative to dispensing errors of antiseptic tablets of bichloride of mercury for phenacetin and normal salt solution tablets, morphine tablets for calomel tablets, and we have seen tablets of mercuric chloride from one of the important camps that were stocked in tin containers! When the people realize existing conditions they will resent such platitudes as "The needs of the soldiers can be provided for satisfactorily under the present organization." A preceding Surgeon-General openly stated that this work (dispensary) "*was one particular in which the Medical Department is unprepared to fulfill its responsibility to the Army and the nation.*"

We have no desire to render prejudiced judgment; the immensity of the undertaking must be considered together with the fact that there is no provision in our military organization for a pharmaceutical corps. But the health and life of our men deserve as early attention as possible. We all know how promptly the medical men responded to the call of duty and their action commands our highest commendation, but they were overburdened and hence duties had to be assigned to others and in some instances as related. The point is that an organized pharmaceutical service ought to be established, without unnecessary further delay, constituted of men who can take over a great deal of work that must now be done by the medical men and certainly can not be performed by inexperienced hands.

Surgeon-General George J. H. Evatt, of the British Army has aptly said "that the Medical Department existed for the individual benefit of the soldier, and if they failed in their duty to him they were not faithfully discharging their obligation."

The opinion prevails that Surgeon-General Gorgas does not favor the establishment of a pharmaceutical corps. We know that he is a man of unquestioned sincerity, actuated only by that which, *in his judgment*, he deems best for the Army, an executive of highest ability, fully conscious of the gravity of the situation that confronts us. He has undoubtedly advised with leading physicians and surgeons relative to the necessity of establishing a pharmaceutical corps in the U. S. Army. Whatever their views may be, we are persuaded that the majority of medical men desire the services of an organized efficient pharmaceutical corps.

An axiom of Democracy says: "The whole people is wiser than any group or man in it. Its judgment is safer, surer." The question of the right pharmaceutical service is a broad one, it is not of an individual case or opinion but one to be asked of thousands of physicians, of tens of thousands of parents and sons, "Should the best that is in pharmacy and pharmacists be made available?" "The nation depends upon the proper utilization of every available talent." "It is just as reprehensible to waste talent as material." The people rightfully expect Congress to provide the means and organization and that the Medical Department adopt modern and effective methods for restoring the injured as well as for the conservation of the health and lives of our soldiers. Neither Congress nor the Medical

Department can afford to disappoint them, and we have confidence in their purpose and ability. It is difficult to displace precedent, but the United States can not remain satisfied with our present system when they are made acquainted with the more efficient services rendered by the foreign pharmaceutical corps.

The following question is relevant: "Would the Medical Department of the Army be more or less efficient with an organized corps of trained pharmacists than under the present system?" Other nations have answered the question by an extension of this service, and the Senator from Rhone, Mons. P. Cazenove testifies to the efficiency of the French Pharmaceutical Corps by saying "That they have contributed eminent service to the country and gained the love and respect of the citizens of France."

Surgeon-General Gorgas recently said, as quoted by the *New York Times* (italics are ours):

"Line officers have had no hesitation in *ignoring* the sanitary recommendations of Medical officers of lower rank. The men of the Medical Corps should get higher rank, *rank commensurate with the importance of the positions they hold.*"

The Surgeon-General should turn his eyes on Pharmacy, a neglected branch of the Army Medical Service to which his remarks apply with equal force.

The Surgeon-General should visualize the possibilities of pharmacy as "the right arm of medicine" and while the services to be rendered are in some respects decidedly different than in civil practice, the relation obtains and there is relative possibility of coöperation. There is absolutely no reason why the breach between the professions should be widened when it is only by close coöperation that both are of the highest service for humanity, and this service is momentous for conserving health and life.

Why rank for pharmacists is necessary for best service to the men in arms need not be discussed at length. The first point is, the life of the Army demands efficient pharmaceutical service for it is an essential of its medical branch; much of the work that burdens this department can be assumed by pharmacists, otherwise the time is not far distant when the supply of medical men will be utterly inadequate for the needs of soldiers and civilians. Rank carries with it authority and respect, without it counsel with physicians and surgeons and other officers is impossible or at least impracticable. Lieut. W. A. Poucher of the British Medical Corps has noted the changed conditions now existing where commissioned pharmaceutical officers have been installed: "Where heretofore there were no consultations with the medical men, there now are to the supreme satisfaction of the latter, and this inspires confidence with the patients which had been absent before." Without rank our pharmacists could not coöperate with those of the foreign armies.

There is another point of importance, qualified pharmacists are men of ability and can secure positions in other departments of the service or qualify as officers.

It is unreasonable to expect that they would not prefer positions of rank or larger pay, hence many have already assumed other duties. This is of serious significance for it has to that extent depleted the ranks of qualified pharmacists, whereas if conditions were different their preference would have been for pharmaceutical service.

Pharmacists have endeavored to impress the importance of a pharmaceutical corps on the Surgeon-General; they are now importuning Congress. The Committee on Military Affairs of the House gave representative pharmacists from nearly every state a respectful hearing on March 19, and the members of the Committee were deeply interested in the presentation. It is not a question of selfish promotion and it is a matter of such evident necessity that some pharmacists are perhaps not as patient as they should be. In the meantime, now, every pharmacist in the country should deem it his duty and privilege to impress the utility of pharmaceutical service on the people so that they will join in the movement, by expressing their honest convictions to their Congressmen and Senators. It is the trumpet call to duty and opportunity of service, for the number of those who are sick and wounded is many, many times larger than those who are killed in action, and the service does not end here for the conservation of health is paramount.

"This problem is ours, our own flesh and blood is dedicated to the struggle." Pharmacy has a mission and pharmacists desire to be of service; they will not have pharmacy discredited, because they know pharmacy in the Army can not be ignored without sacrifice of life and health of our soldiers.

E. G. E.

THE HEARING ON THE EDMONDS BILL.

On March 18, pharmacists from all over the country assembled at the New Southern Hotel, Baltimore, for a discussion of the Edmonds Bill and to plan for submitting arguments before the Committee on Military Affairs of the House, at Washington, Tuesday, March 19, at 10.30 A.M.

The large gathering of representatives in attendance from every section of the country speaks for the deep interest that pharmacists have in the establishment of a Pharmaceutical Corps. The greater number of the state pharmaceutical associations as well as the national organizations connected with the drug trade were represented, and also a majority of the schools of pharmacy holding membership in the American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties. There was a free discussion of the Edmonds Bill and also of the arguments in support of a pharmaceutical corps in the U. S. Army. S. L. Hilton, chairman of the A. Ph. A. Committee on the Status of Pharmacists in the Government Service, presided and R. P. Fischelis, secretary of the National Pharmaceutical Service Association was nominated secretary of the meeting.

A committee was appointed to present amendments that would be acceptable for the Edmonds Bill, in case the Committee on Military Affairs would request that changes be made, or if objections were interposed to any of the provisions of this measure. The main change advocated in the draft was to make the ranking officer in the Pharmaceutical Corps a colonel instead of a major, with majors, captains, lieutenants and other officers to correspond to the various branches of the service.

The other modifications related chiefly to phraseology and that various acts provided for in the bill and requiring the approval of the Surgeon-General, should also in addition have the sanction of the Secretary of War.

As speakers at the hearing, Dr. Frederick J. Wulling was named to offer the arguments for the establishment and needs of a pharmaceutical corps in detail. Dr. J. Madison Taylor, of Philadelphia, was selected for voicing the subject from the side of the medical profession. E. G. Eberle was asked to prepare argument showing the need of and the protection afforded by this proposal and also point out some of the unsatisfactory conditions existing at this time in the dispensaries of a number of the camps. Caswell A. Mayo was named to inform the members of the Committee relative to the pharmaceutical corps in foreign armies. To Samuel C. Henry was assigned the duty of an analytical survey of the Edmonds Bill. Prof. Charles E. Caspari was charged with the presentation of the work of pharmacists in compiling standards for the materia medica employed by physicians in their practice. W. L. Crouse was delegated to represent the manufacturers and combat the report that they are not in favor of the establishment of a pharmaceutical corps. The committee for preparing amendments to the Edmonds Bill was named as follows: Joseph W. England, E. C. Brokmeyer, W. L. Crouse, J. A. Koch and R. P. Fischelis.

At Washington the delegates who had met on the previous day in Baltimore were joined by quite a number of others, including a large delegation from New York. Not only was Congressman Edmonds impressed by this large attendance but the Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, the Honorable S. Hubert Dent acknowledged the evident coöperative spirit on the part of pharmacists.

The meeting was called to order at the hour set for the hearing and was to have adjourned promptly at twelve o'clock. The interest of the members of the Committee, however, prompted them to freely interrogate the first speaker, Dr. Frederick J. Wulling, so that the larger part of the time assigned for the hearing was taken up by him in presenting his case and in answering questions propounded by members of the Committee.

Dr. Wulling was followed in his remarks by Dr. J. Madison Taylor, who introduced strong and forceful arguments from the physician's standpoint as to why a pharmaceutical corps should be established, stressing the importance of qualified service for this organization.

The time allotted had passed but the Chairman of the Committee as well as the members were so concerned in the subject that they consented that the other speakers briefly state their points, and all of them were permitted at a later day to add to their arguments such statements that it was impossible for them to submit for the want of time.

It was clearly evident that the Committee was impressed and, while there is no certainty as to what their conclusions will be, every one in attendance was highly gratified over the consideration given to the subject and the courtesies which had been extended by the Committee and Congressman Edmonds.

There has been progress, the message should be carried to the people, such help counts for much, and it stands to reason that every citizen who has a son in the service will readily coöperate, if advised relative to the purpose of the Edmonds bill. Do your duty as citizen and pharmacist.

E. G. E.