OUR BELGIAN COLLEAGUES AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE POSITION OF BELGIAN DOCTORS AND PHARMACISTS.

By Professor C. JACOBS,
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BELGIUM, a blood-stained and ruined country in the horrors of despair, claims the help of her friends to whom her freely consented sacrifice has brought a ray of hope in the dreadful nightmare of the past three and a half months.

I raise my voice with a feeling of intense pity on behalf of thousands of our weeping brethren in their Calvary of suffering, but it is my pride to carry out this duty to my country. The first impulse of the Belgian medical world is to make an appeal to Great Britain, whose kindness has proved itself in such unbounded measure and with such tact and generosity. The German iron fist has closed upon our country; we have to witness the endless series of crimes that are committed in all our provinces, and we have to abide in silence. All the evils of war have been thrust upon us at the same time—a useless and cruel holocaust of human lives, a decimated, despairing, and starving population, ruined homes, and, far worse than all, our children—the only hope of our country—are being mown down by want and disease.

Our doctors have not been spared; they, too, are bearing a heavy share of the general suffering. And now long weeks, nay months, of trial stand before them, during which they know that they will have to bear a terrible burden. They will have to devote themselves untiringly, giving all their care and time, and even their lives, if need be, to the cause of their country; and yet many of them, victims of a barbarian foe, are homeless, deprived of their laboratories, instruments, and their medical stores. What will become of those that still remain of our people, threatened as they are by the grim havoc of war and by contagious disease, its constant follower?

In anticipation of these inevitable consequences it has become my duty, as the spokesman of my Belgian colleagues, to appeal to the medical and pharmaceutical world that an impulse of international fraternity may come to the aid of Belgian doctors and pharmacists. Is it realized what we in Belgium have suffered and are suffering? Duty, and duty only, has bound our doctors and pharmacists to their posts in the devastated localities; some of them are carrying on their profession in the ruined remains of destroyed buildings, whereas others have to improvise at haphazard any kind of shelter for their Samaritan work. Need I describe the manner in which they sustain themselves, and how they manage to nourish their wives and children?

I have witnessed such misery amongst them! Some have had to work as navvies in order to have a few pence in their pockets; others have told me that they had not seen bread for a fortnight, but had lived exclusively on potatoes. Others had a meagre bunch of straw laid on the bare ground as a bedstead; the only pair of boots owned by one of them was falling to pieces in tatters. Men I have seen were dressed in torn garments and their children were in rags. One of my colleagues had to live on wayside herbs for three days and three nights and his wife shared his fate! A professor of a university, bereft of everything, was, when I saw him, in dire want of a bed, and another of equal academic standard was wandering haggard over the countryside, searching in vain for a beloved family. And some of our ranks have been taken as hostages, others have been shot, and their widows and orphans have been left deprived of everything.

This description presents a genuine picture of the distress of the Belgian medical profession, but when these educated people are struck down by want they will never beg for charity; it must be brought to them. It is impossible to calculate how many of them are in this sore distress, and some have been so for days and weeks, but it is easy to see that the distress must be very widespread. Considering now the medical men only, Belgium contained 4,800 doctors; the number of localities that have been destroyed is roughly as follows:

Province of Brabant.—Jongherzeel, Merchtem, Capelle-aubois, Kotselaar, Wildouck, Cortenberg, Gelroode, Nieuwenrode,

Wavre, Eppegheem, Beyghem, Ottignies, Mousty, Louvain, Jodoigne, Linsemans.

Province of Limbourg.—Haalen, Lanacken, Tongres (partly).

Province of Liège.—Liège (partly), Moulant, Bermont, Visé, Micheroux, Batisse, Herve, Hermée, Milmont, Fiemalle, Francorchamps, Lincet, Huy, Seilles.

Province of Namur.—Namur (partly), Bierwart, Narille, Tamines, Faliselle, Andenne, Spontin, Evrehailles, Houx, Yvoir, Dinant, Bovinure, Anhage, Hartiere, Sommière, Walcourt, Mariembourg, Dourbes.

Province of Hainaut.—Charleroi (partly), Montignies, Morlanwelz, Gony-les-Piéton, Lobbes, Beaumont, Frameries (partly), Merbes, Jemappes, Quaregnon, Marchienne.

Province of Luxembourg.—Rossignol, Etalle, Ethe, Florenville, Virtey, Arlon, Neufchâteau, St. Hubert, Anthée.

The deserted province of Antwerp and both the provinces of Flanders have been battlefields since one month, with the great struggle raging round Dixmude, Nieuport, Courtrai, Middelkerke, Ostende. What remains of those places to-day?

Each of those localities has its doctors and pharmacists, and at least 1,000 of the doctors are now absolutely poverty-stricken, and 2,000 to 3,500 doctors are suffering cruelly through this war. We had 1,800 pharmacists all over the country, and at least 300 of them are unable to earn their living, and all of them, with very few exceptions, are deprived of the most necessary trading stock. I daresay that my estimate is below reality.

Consider the immense suffering that our medical brethren have gone through and are still going through. Their pathetic and lamentable distress should unite all in the desire to relieve it. These practitioners have given a lesson to the world of unfaltering energy, but now their breaking courage will have to be kept up. In this emergency I call on the medical profession of England to rally to our help. It will be for us a great debt of honour and of eternal gratitude.

IN AID OF OUR BELGIAN COLLEAGUES.

To the Editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,—The committee whose formation has already been announced in your columns is desirous of starting an immediate attempt to help the Belgian medical practitioners and pharmacists whose plight is so movingly represented by Professor Jacobs, as the delegate from a Belgian committee having similar aims.

The committee has made all preliminary inquiries, and has come to the conclusion that the most practical step which it can take at once is the dispatch to Belgium in portable form of packets of medical and pharmaceutical material. These packets will be made up by Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome, and Co. in accordance with an approved list, and will be conveyed to Belgium upon advice received from the American Ambassador and Mr. L. Hoover, the Belgian Minister, the manager of Messrs. Harrods, Limited, and Major Gordon, who has already done such good work as a medium for practical assistance between this country and Belgium.

The committee has already received promises of a certain number of subscriptions which justify it in making an experimental consignment, but it appeals to the medical and pharmaceutical professions in this country for funds to enable the Belgian medical practitioners and pharmacists to carry on their work effectually so soon as military and political circumstances permit.

We appeal also for surgical instruments; many of these, though not of the latest patterns, will be extremely valuable. The following are especially required: Scissors, dressing and artery forceps, scalpels, syringes, and midwifery forceps. The instruments should be sent at once to the Master of the Apothecaries' Society, Apothecaries' Hall, Blackfriars, London, E.C., and any small adjustments required in them will be made.

Further, we want money to help the refugee Belgian doctors and pharmacists in this country, most of whom have nothing in this world left to them.

The intention is that the work of the committee shall develop, as the conditions of Belgium permit, and that the work shall be associated with corresponding efforts in Great Britain and Ireland, in the United States and other countries which are neutrals or allies in the war.

Subscriptions should be sent to the honorary treasurer, Dr. H. A. Des Vœux, 14, Buckingham Gate, London. S. W.

and cheques should be crossed Lloyd's Bank, Limited.—
We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

RICKMAN J. GODLEE (*Chairman*).

THOMAS BARLOW,

President of the Royal College of Physicians of London.

W. WATSON CHEYNE,

President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

MEREDITH TOWNSEND,

Master of the Apothecaries' Society.

W. J. WOOLCOCK,

Secretary and Registrar of the Pharmaceutical Society.

H. A. DES VOEUX (*Honorary Treasurer*).

DAWSON WILLIAMS,

Editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL.

S. SQUIRE SPRIGGE (*Honorary Secretary*).

Editor of the *Lancet*.

November 18th.

MEDICAL HOSPITALITY FOR BELGIAN MEDICAL REFUGEES.

Many communications have been received at the central office of the Association from members of the medical profession who are anxious to provide hospitality for Belgian medical men and their families at present in this country, and these offers have been referred to the War Refugees Committee at Aldwych, of which the President is H.R.H. the Duchess of Vendôme, the Chairman H.R.H. Princess Christian, and the Honorary Treasurer, Viscount Gladstone. As complaints were received that these offers had either not been dealt with or had been dealt with very slowly, the Medical Secretary offered to the War Refugees Committee the use of the office of the Association as a clearing house, collecting through the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL the names of medical men wishing to offer hospitality, inquiring as to the nature and extent of the offers made, and transmitting the particulars to the War Refugees Committee. Lord Gladstone, in expressing his warm appreciation of the offer, welcomed the co-operation of the Association, and explained that the magnitude and novelty of the task imposed on the Committee had at first been overwhelming, and it was only recently that it had been possible to organize the office machinery so as adequately to meet not only the daily flood of fresh work but the arrears. He stated that up to the middle of last week over 50,000 persons had been allocated from the central office to various places throughout the country, and that the daily average of arrivals had gradually dropped from well over 1,000 to between 200 and 350. He freely recognized the appropriateness of the offer of hospitality to medical men by medical men, and said he would be pleased to make use of any offers the Association transmitted to him, in his turn placing before it any case he thought suitable for its services. He was, however, very anxious that it should be made plain that refugees of all classes come very irregularly; for example, the Committee might have a dozen doctors or lawyers on their hands one day and no more for a fortnight. Want of appreciation of this fact had led to disappointment. Medical men, or the wives of medical men, who are prepared to offer hospitality to Belgian medical men and their families, are invited to write to the Medical Secretary stating what hospitality they are prepared to give, and any such offers will be dealt with as promptly as possible. Offers from London would be particularly appreciated. It should be clearly understood that offers to take one or two members of a family are of little use. The refugees themselves greatly prefer to be dealt with as families and not as individuals, and this has been adopted as the general policy of the War Refugees Committee.

AN AMERICAN COMMITTEE.

A committee has been formed in New York under the auspices of *American Medicine* for the collection of a fund for the relief of doctors in Belgium. The committee includes the names of Dr. W. S. Bainbridge, Dr. S. Ely Jelliffe, Dr. W. H. Porter, Dr. Parker Syme, of New York, and Dr. Charles E. de M. Sajous, of Philadelphia. It will work in co-operation with the Belgian Relief Committee.

THE WAR.

SURGICAL EXPERIENCES OF THE PRESENT WAR.

DISCUSSION AT THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

A discussion on surgical experiences of the present war was opened on Monday, November 16th, at a meeting of the Medical Society of London. The President, Sir JOHN BLAND-SUTTON, was in the chair, and the hall of the society was crowded.

The subject was introduced by Sir WATSON CHEYNE, who is at present serving as Consulting Surgeon at the Royal Naval Hospital, Chatham, in an extremely interesting address, a full report of which is published at page 865 et seq.

At the conclusion of the address, the CHAIRMAN called on Sir Alfred Keogh, K.C.B., Acting Director-General, Army Medical Service, and Surgeon-General W. M. Russell, Deputy Director-General. Sir ALFRED KEOGH said that the Army Medical Department desired further information as to the value of antitetanic serum and practical advice that would be of use on the battlefield and in the trenches in respect of the treatment of wounds at the very beginning, and also, since very little could be done actually in the trenches, advice was needed as to hospital treatment in its early stages. Surgeon-General RUSSELL endorsed Sir Alfred Keogh's remarks, and hoped that an authoritative pronouncement would be made by those who were so competent to give it.

Sir RICKMAN GODLEE said that he agreed with every word of Sir Watson Cheyne's address from beginning to end. As Sir Watson Cheyne had suggested, he also might now be looked upon as an old fogey, but he believed that soon someone would rediscover the principle upon which Lord Lister worked, and that antiseptic surgery would come back to its own. It had been one of the saddest experiences of this war to learn from those who had been at the front that practically all wounds were septic. The profession wished to know what attempts were made, if any at all were made, to disinfect wounds—not probably in the trenches, but as soon as the patients reached the field hospitals. He had always feared, since the enthusiasm for aseptic surgery had become so pronounced, lest nothing should be done in the way of attempting to purify wounds, only the skin being cleansed—a measure which in itself, as Sir Watson Cheyne had said, was absolutely hopeless. If surgeons had forgotten all that Lister taught, he yet supposed that some of them still read their Bibles. Lord Lister used to say that if he ever wrote a book, which he never did, he would have put as motto on his title-page the verse from the Psalms:

My wounds stink and are corrupt: because of my foolishness.

Mr. ARTHUR EDMUNDS described wounds he had seen in two of the naval hospitals—Chatham and Plymouth. It was difficult to make any general statement, because the wounds of the men who reached those hospitals were of medium severity. Those of great severity and the more trifling remained on the other side of the Channel. The way in which men supported their wounds might sometimes mislead the surgeon: thus, a man who gave the impression of having little the matter with him was found to have a severe comminuted fracture of the elbow-joint. Although there had been the greatest fortitude in bearing wounds, and surgeons had been able to appreciate the meaning of the *moral* of the navy and army, he had come across one or two interesting neurotic affections. A marine was buried in a trench by the force of an exploding shell. When he came to himself in the field hospital he was found to be deaf and dumb. It was suspected that the dumbness was functional; the ears were examined, and the man was easily persuaded that he could both speak and hear. He returned to duty a few days later. The nature of the wounds had not afforded any great surprises, but it was noteworthy that in some instances of wounds by German rifles there was evidence of the turning of the bullet. In one case a bullet turned sideways, and the whole forearm was ripped up in a manner that suggested an explosive bullet. In another case a bullet reduced the head of the tibia to a mass of small fragments. It had