

CUSA17/119.24

(Letter to London Times, Jan. 15, 1915, p 9,d)

INOCULATION AGAINST TYPHOID

- 0 -

An Appeal to Soldiers.

(undated)

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir: - May I through your columns issue this appeal to our soldiers? In this grave crisis all are anxious to render the greatest possible service to our country. You are leaving your homes and occupations in defense of principles for which your fathers fought and died. It is your bounden duty to keep yourselves in as perfect a state of health as is consistent with the hardships and exposure incidental to every campaign. In war it is not alone the enemy in the field who is to be considered; your worst foes have always been those of your camp - the diseases that have proved more fatal than powder and shot. Could the deaths in the wars of the 19th century be counted, we should find that more than one half had been from preventable diseases, such as typhus fever, cholera, malaria, dysentery, and enteric. To take but one instance - in the South African War the bacilli of disease killed nearly twice as many as did the bullets of the Boers. Malaria and cholera are not likely to attack you, typhus possibly, dysentery very probably. Among preventable diseases, enteric has been the most terrible foe. More soldiers died of it in South Africa than of wounds. Enteric is a slow, lingering, disabling disease, every death from which is a reproach to the nation. Fortunately sanitary science has made it comparatively rare in this country, but it is not always possible in camps to take all the necessary precautions and we know that at present the disease prevails extensively in parts of northwest France and in Belgium.

[Typhoid]

Of late years there has been introduced a method of protection by vaccination against it, in the efficiency of which those who have studied the question have confidence. The inoculation is followed by slight illness, rarely by anything more serious. Among the 22,434 Canadians vaccinated at the Valcartier Camp only twenty-two had symptoms other than the usual malaise, and headache (Colonel Hodgetts). Properly inoculated, you possess a reasonable guarantee of protection against one of your most serious foes. I have two questions to ask: -

- (1) Will you believe the statement of misguided cranks who are playing into the enemy's hands by purveying their misleading literature, or will you hearken to men who have devoted their lives to the service of humanity, and who have no wish in the matter other than your good?
- (2) Against a transient indisposition will you put in the balance the chance of protracting a costly illness, possibly an untimely death?

Yours faithfully,

William Osler, Regius Professor of  
Medicine, Oxford.