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John Wyeth & Co.
1850

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John Wyeth.

TO THE FRIENDS

OF THE FIRM OF

JOHN WYETH AND BROTHER,

IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA AND ELSEWHERE.

1850

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TO THE FRIENDS
OF THE FIRM OF
JOHN WYETH AND BROTHER,

IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA AND ELSEWHERE.

Since my return, within the last few days, to Philadelphia, after an absence from my home of very nearly a year, I have felt it my duty to acquaint myself, as far as lay in my power, with the proceedings of the Court Martial which was ordered for the trial of Surgeon General Hammond. I have done so for the reason that one of the specifications upon which that officer was arraigned, directly affected the character for integrity and fair-dealing of the firm of druggists of which, since its formation, I have been the senior partner.

Of the full weight of the testimony submitted to the Court, I am of course unable to judge. I was not before it either in person or by counsel, and the printed arguments which I have seen of the Judge Advocate and of the counsel of Dr.

Hammond, however able they may be, supply but meagre statements of the evidence which was presented. It may be that hereafter the record of this case will be published. It will then perhaps be incumbent on me to answer in detail charges of which I shall, for the first time, have been fully informed.

My attention has been called to one matter which more than any other has given me pain. It is the intimation which was made by counsel to the court, that I had left the country in order to escape the service of a subpoena to testify on behalf of the government. Nothing can be more unjust or more untrue than this.

On the 23d of December, 1863, I sailed from New York for Arizona, by way of San Francisco, on the eve, as it has since turned out, of the ordering of the Hammond Court Martial. My errand was one simply of business. As far back as the preceding summer I had accepted the position of manager of an important expedition involving large interests, not only of my own, but of others. My destination, the object of my journey, and the day of my departure, I am well assured from letters and telegrams now before me, were all known to the heads of more than one of the Departments at Washington, and I have understood since my return that the success of my undertaking was in a great measure due to the kind suggestions of gentlemen high, not only in place, but in the deserved confidence of the government.

Before I had completed the preparations for my journey,

having learned that a commission, of which the late Governor Reeder of Kansas was the chief, was in session in Philadelphia, investigating charges against the conduct of the Medical Bureau, I addressed to that gentleman a letter under date the 3d of December, 1863, in which I mentioned that vague and unreliable rumors had reached me to the effect that the transactions of my firm with that Bureau had been made the subject of his unfriendly scrutiny, and I closed my letter with these words: "I have, therefore, Sir, taken the liberty of addressing you personally in order to enquire—

"1. Whether any charges affecting the integrity of myself or of my firm have been entertained by your commission; and

"2. If such be the case, to demand a specific statement of these charges in order that I may at once take such measures to rebut them before your commission as I may see fit—a privilege which I assume cannot be refused me."

To this I received a reply dated Easton, Penn'a, December 11th, 1863. The material part of this letter was as follows: "The Commission having performed its functions is dissolved, and for that reason, if for no other, your demand to appear before us to make up and try an issue to decide upon the integrity of yourself or your firm in such manner as you 'may see fit' cannot be complied with. In reply to your other question I have to say that no such 'charges affecting the integrity, &c., were entertained by the Commission.'"

It was, I am told, the report of this gentleman to the

Department of War which led to the preferment of charges against Doctor Hammond. It was after the receipt of his letter to myself that I made my final arrangements for leaving home, secure in the belief that no action of his commission would affect the integrity or standing of myself or of my firm.

I cannot now but regret that upon the publication of the charges against Doctor Hammond some one of my friends did not intercept me at San Francisco with a telegram, which would have enabled me to judge of the propriety of an immediate return to my home. In a short time after my arrival in that city I left it for a region of country which has but infrequent communication by mail or otherwise with the States.

It is not true as has been alleged that the first and only dealings of my firm with the Government were through Surgeon General Hammond. They commenced under his predecessor, Doctor C. A. Finley, a gentleman whose purity of character has, I believe, never been doubted.

The first requisition which we received was during his administration. It was for medical supplies for 80,000 men for four months, and embraced almost every article contained in what is known as the supply table.

I give in full the letter from the Surgeon General's office, which accompanied this requisition.

SURGEON-GENERAL'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,
September 21st, 1861.

SIR:—

By direction of the Surgeon-General, I forward to you the accompanying Requisition of Assistant Surgeon C. R. Alexander, Medical Purveyor at St. Louis, Mo., for 80,000 men, for four months, ending December 31st, 1861, who wishes that Mr. Wyeth, of Philadelphia, may be directed to furnish the articles.

I have the honor to be,

By order.

Very respectfully,

Your obed't serv't.,

L. A. EDWARDS,

SURGEON R. S. SATTERLEE, U. S. A.,

Surgeon, U. S. A.

110 Grand Street, N. Y.

Before the retirement of Doctor Finley we filled a number of heavy orders received through Surgeon R. S. Satterlee, on requisitions from the Surgeons in charge at Washington, Louisville, St. Louis, and Cairo. I may particularly specify one of these. It was for the medical outfit of the celebrated Burnside Expedition, and bore date the 11th of January, 1862.

I have seen an official report made to Surgeon R. S. Satterlee, U. S. A., the Medical Purveyor at New York, by Doctor J. H. Thompson, the Brigade Surgeon at Roanoke Island, acknowledging the receipt of the stores for this Expedition, from which I make the following extract:

I would here remark that the stores were most carefully packed, and I do not believe there is more than one bottle broken out of the entire invoice.

“So far as my judgment goes, Messrs. Wyeth & Brother are entitled to great credit for the promptness and exceeding good order in which they put up their supplies.”

This report bears date the 7th of March, 1862, a month

before Doctor Hammond's appointment. It was doubtless on file with others of a like commendatory character at the time of that gentleman's accession to office, and I have always attributed the continuance of patronage to my house under his administration to our high standing with his predecessor more than to any other cause.

When I first pressed upon Dr. Hammond our claims to a share of the requisitions issued for medical supplies, I especially called his attention to the many official reports which had been received by his department, in which our firm was favorably mentioned.

I cannot but express in this conjunction the conviction that we were indebted for our share of the government patronage, under both Doctors Finley and Hammond, to the conscientious and thorough manner in which we executed the orders we received. Our long familiarity with every detail of the drug business, our relations to the great manufacturing chemists of Philadelphia, and the extensive and well-appointed laboratories of which we were the owners, certainly afforded us more than ordinary facilities for filling the large requisitions which were sent us. The many letters full of encouragement and commendation which, from time to time, we received from officers connected with the Medical Department, as well in the field as in the hospital branch of the service, and which we have carefully preserved, are to us sufficient evidence that we did not over-estimate our ability to comply with the demands which were made upon us.

Our entire business intercourse with the Government, under the administrations of the two Surgeons General, was characterized, on both sides, by the highest degree of confidence and kind feeling. I recall but a single exception, which grew out of the misconduct of a subordinate official.

In the beginning of my acquaintance with this person, I had been led by his professions of friendship, and by the disposition which he evinced to aid our firm, to form an undeserved estimate of his character. Inducements which subsequently he cautiously held out to me, and which I felt convinced were of an improper kind, as well as complaints connected with his dealings with other firms, which reached me from more than one quarter, forced upon me the belief that he was unworthy of the trust which was reposed in him by the Government.

It was in the early part of November, 1862, that I submitted to my legal adviser and to a personal friend, a gentleman of high position in the medical schools of Philadelphia, certain facts connected with his behaviour which had been brought to my knowledge. Their advice only confirmed me in the resolution which I had already formed, of refusing, in very plain and unmistakeable terms, to receive any orders for medical supplies through his office. I believe that my own sense of self-respect and my duty to the government left open to me no other course. I may add that both of the gentlemen who advised me in this matter have pressed upon me the freest use of their names in this connection.

My refusal to have any dealings through this person, leading, as it did, to a great loss of patronage to my firm, excited remark, and I was soon obliged, in obedience to a call made upon me by the Medical Inspector General, to submit to that officer a frank statement of the causes which had influenced my action. To the enmity which my exposure of his misconduct naturally engendered, I attribute the malignant fabrications of which he was the author, and which, I am now convinced, were at the bottom of the annoyance and misrepresentation to which, during my absence, my firm has been subjected.

I do not know that I can better close this brief statement to my friends than by formally referring them to those officers through whom the dealings of my firm with the Government were principally conducted, and who, therefore, had the best means of forming a correct judgment of the fidelity with which we discharged the duties assigned us.

Surgeon J. M. Cuyler, U. S. A.,	Medical Inspector U. S. Army.
“ E. P. Vollum, U. S. A.,	“ “ “ “
“ R. H. Coolidge, U. S. A.,	“ “ “ “
“ J. R. LeConte, U. S. A.,	“ “ “ “
“ R. O. Abbott, U. S. A.,	Medical Director “ “
“ J. Letterman, U. S. A.,	“ “ “ “
Surgeon R. S. Satterlee, U. S. A.,	Medical Purveyor, New York.
“ R. Murray, U. S. A.,	“ “ Philadelphia.
“ J. P. Taggart,	“ “ Cairo, Ill.

Surgeon C. C. Cox, U. S. A., Medical Purveyor, Baltimore.

“ J. H. Thompson, U. S. A., “ “ Burnside Expedition.

“ R. H. Alexander, U. S. A., “ “ Army of Potomac.

“ C. T. Alexander, U. S. A., “ “ St. Louis, Mo.

“ D. L. Magruder, U. S. A., “ “ Louisville, Ky.

“ A. P. Meylert, U. S. A., “ “ “

“ H. N. Rittenhouse, Medical Storekeeper, U. S. Army, and Acting
Medical Purveyor at Cincinnati, Ohio.

Surgeon John Neil, in charge of Hospital at Broad and Cherry Sts. Philad'a.

“ I. I. Hayes, “ Satterlee Hospital, West Philadelphia.

“ J. Hopkinson, “ Mower “ Chestnut Hill.

“ W. Camac, “ Officers' “ Philadelphia.

“ W. Thompson, U. S. A., in charge Douglass Hosp'l, Washington, D. C.

“ A. K. Smith, U. S. A., “ U. S. Army Laboratory, Philad'a.

Professor J. M. Maisch, Chemist-in-Chief. “ “ “

Surgeon J. Janvier Woodward, U. S. A., Medical Museum, Washington, D. C.

“ J. H. Brinton, U. S. A., “ “ “

“ John Black, Officers' Hospital, Philadelphia.

“ Robert E. Rogers, Satterlee Hospital, West Philadelphia.

“ Edward Hartshorne, McClellan Hospital, Germantown.

“ E. A. Page, Satterlee Hospital, West Philadelphia.

“ R. A. F. Penrose, “ “ “

“ Isaac Hutchinson, “ “ “

“ W. F. Atlee, “ “ “

“ S. Weir Mitchell, Christian Street Hospital, Philadelphia.

“ G. R. Morehouse, “ “ “ “

“ Burpee, Summit House Hospital, Philadelphia.

“ Strann, Chester Hospital.

“ Bournonville, Fifth and Buttonwood Streets Hospital, Philad'a.

Victor Zoeller, (formerly) Medical Storekeeper at Philadelphia.

Many of these gentlemen had opportunities of knowing the heavy labor and responsibility which were attendant upon furnishing large amounts, of medical supplies, on requisitions, the receipts of which could not be anticipated, and which the exigencies of the service required should be filled with the greatest promptitude. The requisition for supplies, for 80,000 men, for four months, to which I have already referred, may be cited as an illustration, not only of the trying demands that were sometimes made upon our resources, but of the completeness of our business arrangements, at the very outset of our transactions with the government. Within five days after the receipt of this requisition, our firm had provided and placed in readiness for transportation, all the supplies for which it called.

The fear that in the pressure to which we were occasionally subjected, some oversight might occur, led us to request those officers of the Medical Corps with whom we were brought in contact, to frankly advise us of all grounds of complaint which might arise. To this request, often and earnestly made by us, we added the assurance of our readiness to replace all articles which should be found defective in quality, or deficient in quantity. The complaints reported to us were but few in number, and these were promptly remedied. They referred to some articles which we had furnished for hospital use, the value of which, I am sure, did not exceed one hundred dollars.

JOHN WYETH.

PHILADELPHIA, *December 5th*, 1864.

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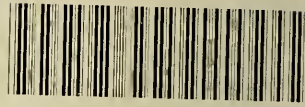


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