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U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION,

No. 93.

CIRCULAR

ADDRESSED TO THE

BRANCHES AND AID SOCIETIES

TRIBUTARY TO THE

U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION.

JULY 4, 1865.

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U. S. Sanitary Commission,
CENTRAL OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, D. C., July 4, 1865.

TO THE BRANCHES AND AID SOCIETIES TRIBUTARY TO THE
SANITARY COMMISSION:

In a circular (No. 90) issued from this office May 15, last, you were called on to continue your labors in collecting and providing supplies up to the present date. For the alacrity you have shown in complying with this request, under circumstances so unfavorable to zeal, we tender you special thanks. Your continued support has enabled us to extend a generous assistance to our armies gathered at Washington and Louisville, and elsewhere, before being finally mustered out of service. When you have forwarded to our Receiving Depots such supplies as you may now have in hand, we hope to find our storehouses sufficiently recruited to meet all remaining wants of the service. In the Eastern Department our work of supply is substantially done, with the exception of a limited service still required in the Department of Washington.

In the Western Department it may continue, on a very diminished scale, a couple of months longer. In Texas and the Department of the Gulf the supply service may possibly last all summer. But, by economy of our stores in hand, we feel authorized to say that after collecting what is already in existence we shall be able to meet all just demands made upon us. We, therefore, in accordance with our promise, notify our Branches that their labors in collecting

supplies for us may finally cease with this date. We shall make no further requisitions upon them, except in regard to supplies already in their hands.

We hope our Branches will use all diligence in forwarding to our Receiving Depots, through the accustomed channels, whatever stores may reach them from their Aid Societies, or any they have in hand.

All balances in cash left in the Branch treasuries, after settling up their local affairs, will be forwarded to Geo. T. Strong, Esq., Treasurer of the U. S. Sanitary Commission.

So far as any of our Branches are engaged in other portions of our work than in collecting and forwarding supplies, their labors will continue so long as those of the Commission itself last. But the supply work is over, and the characteristic labors of the women of the land, in furnishing hospital clothing and comforts for sick and wounded soldiers, are completed. Henceforward, during the few months of existence still allotted to the Sanitary Commission to complete its work of collecting the pensions and back pay of the soldiers, in which it already has one hundred and twenty-seven offices established, to make up its scientific record and close up its widely-extended affairs, there will be no probable necessity for addressing the women of the country, and this circular may be our last opportunity, until the final Report of the Commission is made, of expressing the gratitude of the Board for their patient, humane, and laborious devotion to our common work.

For more than four years the U. S. Sanitary Commission has depended on its Branches, mainly directed and controlled by women, for keeping alive the interest in its work in all the villages and homes of the country: for establishing and banding together the Soldiers' Aid Societies which in thousands have sprung up and united their strength in our service.

By correspondence and by actual visitation, as well as by a system of canvassing, you, at the centres of influence, have maintained your hold upon the homes of the land, and kept your storehouses and ours full of their contributions.

By what systematic and business-like devotion of your time and talents you have been able to accomplish this we have been studious and admiring observers. Your volunteer work has had all the regularity of paid labor. In a sense of responsibility, in system, in patient persistency, in attention to wearisome details, in a victory over the fickleness which commonly besets the work of volunteers, you have rivalled the discipline, the patience, and the courage, of soldiers in the field—soldiers enlisted for the war. Not seldom, indeed, your labors, continued through frosts and heats, and without intermission, for years, have broken down your health. But your ranks have always been kept full—and full, too, of the best, most capable, and noble women in the country. Nor do we suppose that you, who have controlled and inspired our Branches, and with whom it has been our happiness to be brought into personal contact, are, because acting in a larger sphere, more worthy of our thanks and respect than the women who have maintained our village Soldiers' Aid Societies. Indeed, the ever-cheering burden of your communications to us has been the praise and love inspired in you by the devoted patriotism, the self-sacrificing zeal, of the Aid Societies, and of their individual contributors. Through you we have heard the same glowing and tear-moving tales of the sacrifices made by humble homes and hands in behalf of our work, which we so often hear from their comrades, of *privates* in the field, who, throughout the war, have often won the laurels their officers have worn, and have been animated by motives of pure patriotism, unmingled with hope of pro-

motion, or desire for recognition or praise, to give their blood and their lives for the country of their hearts.

To you, and through you to the Soldiers' Aid Societies, and through them to each and every contributor to our supplies—to every woman who has sewed a seam or knitted a stocking in the service of the Sanitary Commission—we now return our most sincere and hearty thanks—thanks which are not ours only, but those of the Camps, the Hospitals, the Transports, the Prisons, the Pickets, and the Lines; where your love and labor have sent comfort, protection, relief, and sometimes life itself. It is not too much to say, that the Army of women at home has fully matched in patriotism and in sacrifices the Army of men in the field. The mothers, sisters, wives and daughters of America have been worthy of the sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who were fighting their battles. After having contributed their living treasures to the war, what wonder they sent so freely after them all else that they had! And this precious sympathy between the fire-sides and the camp-fires—between the bayonet and the needle, the tanned cheek and the pale face—has kept the Nation one; has carried the Homes into the Ranks, and kept the Ranks in the Homes, until a sentiment of oneness, of irresistible unanimity—in which domestic and social, civil and religious, political and military, elements entered, qualifying, strengthening, enriching, and sanctifying all—has at last conquered all obstacles, and given us an overwhelming, a profound, and a permanent victory.

It has been our precious privilege to be your almoners; to manage and distribute the stores you have created and given us for the soldiers and sailors. We have tried to do our duty impartially, diligently, wisely. For the means of carrying on this vast work which has grown up in our hands, keeping pace with the growing immensity of the war, and

which we are now about to lay down, after giving the American public an account of our stewardship, we are chiefly indebted to the money created by the Fairs, which the American women inaugurated and conducted, and to the supplies collected by you under our organization. To you, then, is finally due the largest part of whatever gratitude belongs to the Sanitary Commission. It is as it should be. The soldier will return to his home to thank his own wife, mother, sister, daughter, for so tenderly looking after him in camp and field, in hospital and prison; and thus it will be seen, that it is the homes of the country which have wrought out this great salvation, and that the men and the women of America have an equal part in its glory and its joy.

Invoking the blessing of God upon you all, we are gratefully and proudly your fellow-laborers.

H. W. BELLOWS, *President.*
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