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MEDALS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES¹

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY

FROM time to time endowments have been deposited with the academy in trust for general purposes of the academy and council or for aiding research by grants or for bestowing medals, in some cases with honoraria, upon outstanding American or foreign scientists. There are twenty of these funds, of which eleven are for conferring honors. Each of the honor funds is in the hands of a special committee, which recommends to the academy the recipient it has chosen for any given year. Some of these awards are in recognition of research in special fields, as for instance the Watson Medal for the promotion of astronomical research or the Agassiz Medal for contributions to oceanography.

The history of science has demonstrated that, throughout all recorded time, certain men of the high-

est intelligence have been dominated by ideas and by ideals of human betterment with quite secondary reference to material rewards. This is written not only in the history of science, but also in other realms of the human understanding and endeavor. May we not, however, claim for science that for some hundreds of years its results have been progressively cumulative, that it has not had to relinquish any territory over which it has once established dominion and that each conquest is a base for new advances. These are the two chief claims of science to be heard in our time. That the methods and the spirit of science can be applied to all kinds of human needs is also one of the beliefs that urges us on to its farther advancement.

Because scientific men have labored so, usually without thought of material reward, for the joy of accomplishment and for the good of humanity, the academy

¹ Presented after the dinner of the academy at the annual autumn meeting held at the University of Chicago on November 16, 17 and 18.

confers its medals for especially distinguished accomplishments in science.

This evening we bestow a medal, in memory of Marcellus Hartley, for eminence in the application of science to the public welfare, and the John J. Carty Medal and monetary award granted not oftener than once in every two years to an individual for noteworthy and distinguished accomplishment in any field of science coming within the scope of the charter of the academy.

The Committee on the Award of the Marcellus Hartley Gold Medal for eminence in the application of science to the public welfare this year decided to recognize the field of public health, but they were unable to distinguish between the merits of two outstanding servants of the public. Accordingly, they recommended a dual award: to Dr. Hugh Smith Cumming, surgeon general (retired) of the United States Public Health Service, and to Dr. F. F. Russell, of the Rockefeller Foundation. I wish that both might have been present together, but Dr. Cumming was absent in Europe at the time of our spring meeting in Washington when the medal was conferred on Dr. Russell, and the award to him has accordingly been deferred until this time.

To our great regret, the chairman of the Committee of Award, Dr. Harvey Cushing, is unable to be present. In his absence our distinguished fellow member, Dr. Ludvig Hektoen, director of the McCormick Institute for the Study of Infectious Diseases and chairman of the National Research Council, will state the reasons that governed the committee in its recommendations.

F. R. LILLIE

PRESENTATION OF THE PUBLIC WELFARE MEDAL TO DR. HUGH SMITH CUMMING

It is the purpose of the Marcellus Hartley Medal "to mark the appreciation of the National Academy of Sciences for eminent services to the public performed without a view to monetary gains and by methods which in the opinion of the academy are truly scientific." Of the 14 previous recipients of the Marcellus Hartley Medal for eminence in the application of science to the public welfare five have been physicians, four of whom spent their active years in governmental services, federal or municipal, and the fifth partly so. Again the medal is awarded to a physician long in the service of the government.

Hugh S. Cumming was born and educated in Virginia. He studied medicine at the University of Virginia, graduating in 1893. The following year he entered the U. S. Public Health Service as assistant surgeon. Promotions followed, and in 1920 he was appointed surgeon general, which position he held

under five successive presidents until January 31, 1936, when he was retired, at his own request, after forty-two years of service.

Dr. Cumming was well prepared to head the Public Health Service by the work and training of his previous assignments. While at Ellis Island he came face to face with the health problems of immigration on a large scale. In charge of quarantine at San Francisco and while in Japan, where he was next detailed, he was in intimate touch with certain diseases against which the United States always has maintained quarantine. After a tour of duty in the Pacific he carried out investigations of the pollution of tidal waters of Maryland and Virginia, of the Potomac watershed and of coastal waters of New Jersey, New York and Delaware. This work gave results of much importance to the understanding and prevention of the pollution of the waters of shellfish and resort areas and its dangers, sanitary as well as industrial.

During the world war Dr. Cumming served first as adviser in sanitation to the Navy; later he was in charge in Europe of activities of the Public Health Service in relation to sanitation, the return of troops and the resumption of trade. While serving as president of the Interallied Sanitary Commission to Poland in 1920 he was called home to be surgeon general.

Only brief mention can be made of some of the important advances in the Public Health Service under Dr. Cumming's leadership. I would recall first the reorganization and expansion of hospital facilities to meet the emergency of temporarily caring for ex-service men and women who were beneficiaries of the War Risk Insurance Bureau, now the Veterans' Administration, a difficult task carried out with expert judgment and foresight. By acquiring to federal control the last state-owned quarantine station in operation, the station at the port of New York, the national quarantine system was completed and unified. The examination by medical officers of the service of intending immigrants to this country prior to their departure from foreign ports was a measure of humanitarian and sanitary significance. An acute need was met by the erection of a hospital for leprosy at Carville, Louisiana, and needed improvements were assured by the provisions for new marine hospitals in various parts of the country. In the prompt control of several outbreaks of bubonic plague within our borders is a striking example of the benefits from the application of science to the prevention of epidemic disease. The creation of a division of mental hygiene, including medical services at penal and correctional institutions under federal control, recognized constructively the mental aspects of the public health. The addition to the corps of commissioned medical officers