

WAR DEPARTMENT :: OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

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CHAPLAIN'S DUTIES

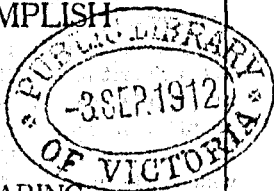
AND

**HOW BEST TO ACCOMPLISH
HIS WORK**

BY

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CHAPLAIN'S DUTIES AND HOW BEST TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK.

No chaplain who confines himself to the limitations of Army Regulations concerning his duties can hope to be a success. For while Army Regulations provide for certain fixed duties, they intentionally leave much to his common sense and good judgment. Hence the first important duty of a chaplain is to study each man individually. He should know every man of his regiment personally, and should endeavor to win his esteem and confidence. It is a good plan to try to learn something about each man's past life, about his home, his people, his former associations, his previous employment, and anything else which will help to form a correct opinion of his character. A man is ten times more easy to handle when he feels he is talking to someone who knows him well and who is his sympathetic friend. Therefore a chaplain, to be successful, must have a cheerful disposition, he should be charitable, sympathetic, kindly disposed, broadminded, friendly, lenient but firm, fearless, courageous, unselfish, and essentially a man of God. He should be first, last, and all the time, what he professes to be, a clergyman, and should leave the military end to those who have adopted that for their profession and life work.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

When the Government requests some church to send one or more of its ministers to the Army, it does not want these clergymen to take or fill the places of its officers. If regular officers

were needed, they would be taken from the Government's own excellent training college, West Point, from a military college, from the Organized Militia, or from among its regularly enlisted soldiers, but under no circumstances would it go to a theological seminary for them. No, the Government does not want officers; it wants clergymen, and only those of the best type, to become its chaplains in the different regiments, and to do those things, and only those things, which its regularly commissioned officers are neither trained nor supposed to do. Hence, the first duty of a chaplain in the Army is to be what he was employed to be, that is, a clergyman. His foremost occupation ought to be to instill religion into everyone with whom he comes in contact. He ought not alone to teach religion, but he ought so to live it that every move he makes will tend to diffuse it among his men. He should preach short but practical sermons, and should illustrate them in a way that will forcibly appeal to his audience. He should not make either himself or his religion a bore, but by a natural and pleasant manner make himself and his presence something to be desired. It is an excellent thing for a chaplain to take a leading part in promoting the enjoyment and the entertainment of the soldiers. By so doing he can become better acquainted with them and can entrench himself more securely into their confidence. But a chaplain should always remember that these are only a means to an end, and not an end in themselves.

CHAPEL BUILDINGS.

To my mind there is nothing that helps the chaplain's work so much as the presence in a post of a chapel. But the chapel ought to be no mere compromise, that is, a combination of school, library, recreation hall, and chapel. It should be a distinct building of distinctly ecclesiastical architecture, and it should be erected in that part of the post where it will be

most easily accessible to all persons living thereon. It ought also to be placed in a prominent position, so that it can easily be seen and recognized as a chapel, for then it would be a constant reminder to the soldiers that Christ has His place in their lives, and that they have spiritual as well as physical duties to perform. If more religion could be instilled into the lives of our soldiers there would be less need for hospitals and guardhouses; discipline would be more easily maintained; contentment would be far more general. It is a wonderful thing what an influence for good religion is among soldiers. They want to be religious and they are desirous of attending service, but they usually get so little encouragement, not alone from one another, but also from the lack of proper facilities and sufficient opportunities, and not the least from the fact that even the chaplains are often too much taken up with worldly pursuits, e. g., canteens, bakeries, etc., that the poor fellows frequently give up religion as an impossibility. And yet I am thoroughly convinced that many men who now stay away from church would go if they could attend in a building which would exude a religious atmosphere, and which would be entirely dissociated from secular pursuits and enjoyments. Such a chapel would, by its very presence there, be a constant though silent reminder to the men that there is a building set aside, as there is a day set aside, for the worship of Almighty God. This would help greatly, but more is needed. Sunday mornings, especially, ought not to be utilized for every little duty that can not be crowded into the week's work. No labor or official exercise, not even when done to afford pleasure or recreation for the soldiers or officers, ought to be sanctioned or permitted on Sunday mornings. Necessary duties ought to be actually reduced to a minimum, and everything possible should be done to let the men feel that Sunday is considered by the Army to be different from all other days of the week,

and that all these provisions are made to assist and encourage them to attend religious service.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES.

While a chaplain can not be expected successfully to hold services of denominations other than his own, he can always hold a general service at which all the members of the regiment might easily be present. He should preach such sermons as will be spiritually helpful to everyone, without discussing dogmatic or controversial doctrines which his own church may hold. But I have always found it more satisfactory to invite ministers of the different churches from the town nearest to the post. They are always willing to come, and the men are helped and encouraged by meeting and talking with a minister belonging to the church in which they received their early training. This helps in two ways: It makes the men realize that they have not gotten entirely away from religious influences, and it makes the ministers in near-by towns, where soldiers usually go for recreation, feel more kindly toward them and their weaknesses, for they realize that many are members or at least sons of members of their churches. I think the Government would make a wise and useful investment if it would allow \$5 a week to every post in this country, to be paid to the ministers of those churches in the near-by towns who have at least 50 members of their church in that post. Of course, this would not apply to the denomination to which the chaplain belongs, if there is one there. But no matter to what church a chaplain belongs he can, if he is the right kind of a man, do much good in a religious way for all in the command. He can perform marriage ceremonies, baptize, and hold funeral services, as required by Army Regulations, as well as many other duties which are properly a part of an Army chaplain's work. But a chaplain must neither be a narrow-minded man

nor a bigot if he hopes for success. He must avoid mixing up with the religious persuasions of his men. It is not his place to start or encourage arguments or discussions on religion. And least of all ought he to try to disturb their religious convictions. My experience is that I always have more backsliders from my own church than I can pull and keep in line; hence, I never have had the time, even if I had had the desire, to make converts from other religions. So the best rule is to do all your church requires of you for the men of your own church; do all you can to help spiritually, morally, and intellectually all in the regiment, no matter to what church they may belong, and, finally, call in the ministers of the other denominations to take care of the members of their own churches, and to do for them what you are unable to do. I think it is a good plan, and one that is generally followed in the Army, for the chaplain to hold the services of his own denomination on Sunday morning, and to have the general service in the evening himself, or to invite some other clergyman to conduct it.

POST EXCHANGE.

Though many chaplains seem to think so, and many, indeed, seem to be much attached to doing it, taking charge of a post exchange is not and never has been considered a proper duty of a chaplain. It has happened that some commanding officers, when temporarily in need of officers, according to Army Regulations 44, have utilized a chaplain for this work. But it is clearly stated that when the condition which has necessitated the employment of a chaplain on such an unusual duty has passed, he shall no longer be required to do it. Hence, when chaplains hold these positions for a length of time, it is evident that their so doing is not conforming to the intention of the War Department. For any commanding officer would gladly relieve a chaplain of this duty, after the emergency has passed, if

he were to have it called to his attention. So the only supposition that remains is, that these chaplains themselves like to do this work and do not want to be relieved. Now, as I have already said, the Government asked the authorities of this clergyman's church to send him into the Army to look after the spiritual, moral, and intellectual interests of the soldiers, and, for the life of me, I can not see how any of these three ends are either going to be aided or accomplished by the chaplain showing how well he can swell dividends by keeping up the prices on the soldiers' necessities to the highest point. Besides, it is very unbecoming in a man who has voluntarily chosen the life and work of the holiest and noblest profession to be busying himself with matters so entirely distinct therefrom. I am sure his church did not ordain him for such labors, nor has the Government employed him to perform them. In my seven years' experience I have never heard of a single case where the soldiers were helped either spiritually, morally, or intellectually by the fact that the chaplain is having money dealings with them; but I have quite often heard criticisms, which were neither complimentary nor edifying, about chaplains who run canteens. And the worst feature of the matter is, that the chaplain is spending all those hours tied to a place and position which keeps him away from planning and doing those very things which will be a real help to his men and a consolation to himself.

LIBRARIES.

The chaplain is usually and properly utilized as post librarian. Here he can do much good in selecting the right kind of literature and by encouraging the soldiers to read regularly. The library can be made a sort of gathering place for the more literary minded among the men, and there the chaplain can frequently find opportunities of learning something of their special qualifications, so that he will be able to direct them to

such studies as might, in his judgment, be the most useful for their future. But every library should be fully equipped and maintained by the Government. Outside aid in this respect is pernicious, because it leaves us at the mercy of outsiders, for something which is just as important as any other tool for the proper training of good soldiers. If a library is necessary at all, and I believe that everyone with even the slightest knowledge of a soldier's need will say that it is, then why should we ask for charity in this particular line? To say the least, it is a sort of pauperizing the American soldier to put him at the mercy of charitably disposed persons for his brain food. Besides, oftentimes books selected by outsiders are not the most suitable. I consider that it would be a wise and useful investment were the Government to equip post libraries with books of a useful character, such as histories and encyclopedias, and the post exchange ought to be authorized to contribute a fixed sum each year for the purchase of suitable books of fiction, biography, travel, humor, etc., for the regimental library, which, when properly selected by the librarian, will form a library of wholesome literature, such as will create a love for healthy reading among the men as well as a distaste for that class of novel which only fires the imagination and tends to develop the animal passions. The library room should be comfortably fitted up, so that the men can come and read quietly, write letters, or make notes. The racks and shelves should be placed so that papers and magazines can easily be reached, read, and returned to their proper places. A library of this kind could easily be developed into an enlisted men's club.

POST SCHOOL.

One of the most fruitful sources for a chaplain to do good is in the post school for enlisted men. As the Army is constantly changing its enlisted personnel, it is advisable that each year the chaplain call together at least those men who

have joined since the last school term and give them an earnest and practical talk on the value and importance of an education in or out of the Army. My experience is that a large percentage of the men at present in the Army have had more or less schooling, but that their education has been cut short either through leaving home when young, or through being required to earn a living before their education was completed. They may be divided into three distinct classes—those who have received a fairly good education and wish to extend or refresh it, so as to fit themselves to fill higher positions either in the Army or in civil life at the expiration of their term of enlistment; those who have had hardly a smattering of education, but who, in their mature years, have a desire to get at least enough to learn to read and write and to add correctly; and those who have had little or no education, but who have no desire to get any. Now, when speaking to the soldiers about school, the chaplain should direct his remarks to those objections which just such men will naturally entertain about going to school. By explaining how important it is these days to be educated in order to obtain and hold any position worth having, and by telling them that no matter how little they know they can be taught something, many will be persuaded to make a new beginning. Besides, it is important to choose for teachers not only the best educated but also the most practical men in the regiment. It is also advisable that those selected to teach, whether they are noncommissioned officers or privates, should be men of such habits and character that they can be entirely respected and looked up to by the men. But the chaplain ought frequently to visit the school, and to speak to the different classes on interesting topics in such a way as to make his remarks supplementary to the subject matter in hand. He should see to it that the teachers are making their class work simple, clear, and interesting, and that the pupils are made to feel that they are men and not

mere school children. The school ought to be made more practical by adding a course in stenography, typewriting, and book-keeping, so that men can be trained for troop clerkships and other clerical duties which are useful in the Army. For this end the Government ought to supply each school with several typewriting machines and the necessary amount of paper and other utensils to carry on this work. I consider that this would be a useful investment, and one that would amply repay the Government by its practical results. At present we have to depend entirely on accidental enlistments for these important duties, whereas this school, with little added expense, could easily and properly be utilized for this important training.

ENTERTAINMENTS.

The soldiers' entertainments may be properly considered a part of a chaplain's work. For if there is not some attraction for the men in the post they will naturally go to town, where usually everything that tends to degrade them is supplied in abundance. By fostering entertainments, the chaplain will find that the men will rally round him, and that he will be able to influence them for good more easily. It is a good plan to have the soldiers give the entertainments themselves, for there is always a good number among them who have ability and experience, and who are willing and glad of an opportunity of displaying their talent before their comrades. Moving pictures are also an excellent means of entertainment, especially if the plays are properly selected. Above all things, a chaplain should not have shows for which admission is charged, because that makes him a professional theatrical manager and defeats the only object for which such shows are held. These shows are to entertain the soldiers who have no money and have nowhere else to go, but if they must pay to see them they would be excluded, and hence they would be as badly off as before. The post gymnasium ought to be fully equipped and

well lighted; there should be always on hand a practical instructor of athletics. The bowling alley and shooting gallery ought also to be kept in full swing. Basket ball is another game which is both scientific and entertaining, and which could usefully be encouraged by the chaplain. Besides, in season, the chaplain ought to be the moving spirit in encouraging football and baseball, for these virile sports beget a worthy emulation among the men and afford them excellent diversion from the regular military duties. In fact, nothing but foolish fastidiousness would prevent a chaplain from giving hearty and practical encouragement to the manly art of boxing and wrestling. These sciences are so conformable to the make-up of real soldiers that they ought to be fostered throughout the regiment. It is also a good idea to get the officers to give talks occasionally to the men on any personal experiences, especially those relating to battles or other interesting topics. These talks, however, should be brief, and if possible witty, and the evening could be filled out by a band concert or moving pictures.

VISITATION OF TROOPS.

Again, the chaplain ought to make a practice of visiting the men in their troops when they are off duty. For when the men have confidence in a chaplain they will not hesitate to ventilate their real or imaginary troubles before him. It is a good thing that some one should know what is disturbing their minds, otherwise it can not be remedied, and things will go from bad to worse. How often a whole troop is dissatisfied because men are laboring under some delusion, which a prudent chaplain can rectify in a few moments by a tactful explanation. When the men will "knock" in the presence of a chaplain, he needs no further proof that he enjoys their complete confidence. And a chaplain who does not possess the soldiers' confidence is a total failure, and he ought to set out at once to change his methods or his position. The chaplain can and ought to be an

intermediary between the officers and the soldiers. If he is a worthy chaplain, he will possess the entire confidence of the soldiers and the good will and respect of the officers, and hence he can successfully explain and adjust difficulties which must naturally arise where authority and discipline are paramount.

VISITATION OF HOSPITALS.

Visiting the sick is a very important work for the chaplain. He can do much good by making frequent visits to the hospital, by talking with each patient individually, and afterwards, if there are none too sick to be disturbed, by telling the patients in general the latest topics of the post. It is also a good thing to take over papers and magazines, and to lend the convalescent books from the regimental library. The hospital is a splendid place for a chaplain to become well acquainted with the men, for while convalescing there the soldiers usually have much time which hangs heavily, and they are delighted for any opportunity to vary the monotony. Hence a wise, prudent, and practical chaplain can tell them interesting stories and intersperse them with practical lessons. The men always remember the kindnesses shown to them in this way, and when they go back to their troops they bespeak the praises of the chaplain to their comrades.

It is very important to be cheerful and sympathetic when visiting the sick, for they are surrounded by gloomy sights, and their enforced inactivity makes them somewhat morose. It is a splendid occasion to tell a joke or to relate some amusing incident, and with the quickness of an electric flash the entire ward will become affected by the cheery atmosphere. But the chaplain ought to try to visit the dying as frequently as possible. When the soldiers are accustomed to seeing the chaplain in the hospital every day, they are not afraid they are going to die just because he comes and talks with them. He can do so much more by visiting them a little each day than if he

were to make long visits occasionally. It is a very useful thing for the chaplain to write letters to the relatives of those who are too sick to write home themselves. The sick man will very often request a chaplain to do this, but if he does not, he will always be gratified if the chaplain will offer his services. There are occasions when it is practical for a chaplain to get in communication with the sick man's people immediately—that is, when the doctors are pretty sure that he will not live for more than a few days. The chaplain should write a tactful letter telling the soldier's family about his serious illness, and by future letters, gently and gradually, break the shock which a cold telegram will announce in due course. It is always well to remember conversations with those men who are sick unto death, because their families, especially the mothers, will ask again and again for an account of his last moments and final words. But of all the sacred duties that a chaplain must perform, none are more so than the receiving and transmitting of trinkets and precious keepsakes to the persons designated by the dying man, with the accompanying sentiments of affection. The chaplain will enjoy many consolations in performing his sacred duties, but I doubt if anything will give him more satisfaction and consolation than his work among the sick and dying.

VISITATION OF THE GUARDHOUSE.

The guardhouse is a splendid place for a chaplain to accomplish much good. There he will meet men who are serving different periods of punishment for offenses ranging from minor breaches of discipline to crimes more or less serious. There are some men who never stop to think of the consequences of their conduct until they find themselves in the guardhouse, where they are removed entirely from the scenes of temptation and are unable to gratify their appetite for further indulgence. These men can oftentimes be completely reformed if the chaplain will only have a private talk with them and give them a

pledge or whatever help they may need to make a fresh and better start. I have known men whose cases seemed almost entirely hopeless come out of the guardhouse after a short detention and with a little help and advice become most exemplary soldiers during the remainder of their enlistment. If there are any general prisoners confined in the post it is very important to prepare those poor, unfortunate creatures for their difficult future by advising and encouraging them to go out and meet the world like brave men and to amend the past by avoiding future mistakes. It is advisable also to try and get these men employment when their time has expired or to arrange to get them to go back to their homes and live again among their own people. Though the money allowed by the Government to a discharged prisoner is usually insufficient to pay his car fare home, still the chaplain can often, by a little sacrifice and in different ways, devise a means to get a railroad ticket for a deserving case. It should be remembered that these men are being turned back upon civil society severely handicapped by their former training from competing with others for a livelihood, and whatever a chaplain does to make their future lot more tolerable is indeed a Christ-like charity.

CHAPLAINS ON GENERAL STAFF.

Under no circumstances would a chaplain in charge or a chaplain under any other title on the General Staff be a good thing. No chaplain who is not on the spot knows exactly what to do in any post. No general rules can or ought to be laid down for any chaplain to follow. Each one must do the best he knows how, taking into consideration the peculiar circumstances and conditions of his regiment or post. No two chaplains are alike, and no two will work alike. Each must confine himself to his own regiment and work under instructions from and in harmony with his commanding officer. If, however, there are two chaplains of different denominations at one post

they should work together in all entertainments, etc., and each can take full charge of the religious services of his own church. To put a chaplain on the General Staff would be disastrous to the corps. It would cause religious friction, would interfere with regimental autonomy, and through outside interference would naturally displease commanding officers. The present system is excellent. Each chaplain is responsible to his own commanding officer, who knows him well, and all are directly under the Secretary of War. Everything favors no change, and the only argument for disturbing the present satisfactory condition is the ambition of some chaplains to get more rank and authority. I am utterly opposed to increasing the rank of chaplains. There is not a clergyman in the Army to-day who is not getting more material recompense for his services than he would have had he remained in civil life. And as for rank, any chaplain who needs rank to make his work a success may at once be classed as a distinct failure. The more rank chaplains get, or, in other words, the more military they become, the less they remain what they were ordained to be and what the Government has employed them to be. My motto is, "let well enough alone." There is no limit to the good the right kind of a chaplain can do. But, on the other hand, it is absolutely impossible to gauge or measure the harm that can be wrought to religion, morality, and military discipline by one tactless and inefficient chaplain. Hence, I would suggest there be devised a means to rid the Army very promptly of men of this latter class. I really think, for the above reason, that it would be better for all concerned if chaplains were not commissioned at all, but engaged under contract for a certain period, which could be renewed for another fixed term if he is suitable, or summarily canceled if he is not satisfactory.

UNIFORM.

The chaplain's uniform is at present sufficiently military, and to change it would not be good, unless it were to be made

more clerical. If we are calling for distinct buildings of purely ecclesiastical architecture for our chapels to serve as signposts of religion, why should the chaplain, who is supposed to be the very personification of religion, desire to hide his profession behind a purely military uniform?

CHAPLAINS' HOUSES.

I consider another important and useful move would be to erect a house alongside the post chapel to be used as a rectory, so that the chaplain can easily be found and reached. Soldiers have a strong antipathy to going along the officers' line, especially when they want to speak to the chaplain. The chaplain should desire to be situated where he can be the most easily reached by the enlisted men.

A CHAPLAIN'S FLAG.

A practical reform would be the adoption by the War Department of a chaplain's flag. When in the field, especially when the troops are crowded together as they necessarily must be, it is very difficult for the soldiers to know which is the chapel tent or where services are to be held. There should be a special tent with a flag flying constantly over it, which could be used as a chapel and office for the chaplains during field service. This tent should be centrally located, but should be as far apart from the other tents as space will allow. I would suggest as a suitable flag for the chaplains blue background with a white cross.

CONCLUSION.

Unquestionably there must be many other useful suggestions as to how best to accomplish the work of an Army chaplain, and these will, no doubt, be presented by others from time to time, but the above are a few that during my seven years' experience have appeared to me to be both very practical and essentially important.

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