

SALMON

VETERANS' HOSPITAL #37,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

LK/LB.

Waukesha, Wisconsin,  
March 18, 1922.

Dr. Thomas W. Salmon,  
Medical Advisor,  
National Committee for Mental Hygiene,  
Larchmont, New York.

Dear Dr. Salmon:

Inasmuch as you have always manifested a friendly interest toward this hospital, I am going to tell you about an incident which has just closed and about which you have probably heard some incomplete reports.

Two patients who had been receiving salvarsan treatments died of pneumonia last week. Two deaths in one week are so unusual with us that the incident naturally excited some comment, and among our nervous patients some fear that someone might have been poisoned. The State Commander of the Legion has given the local post in the hospital, orders to report any grievance to him. They reported these deaths. He immediately called up the Governor and asked for an investigation and gave out to the associated press that three people had been poisoned and that he would see that the thing was not whitewashed as was our usual custom under such circumstances. We naturally got some publicity. Dr. Lorenz of Madison was called in to do an autopsy on one of the patients. He also investigated the records of all three patients, (A third one was a case of general paralysis of the <sup>brain</sup> who died several weeks previously). Dr. Lorenz found double pneumonia as the cause of death and no evidence whatever of salvarsan poison. He examined the records of all three cases, questioned the doctors who had been treating them, and expressed his approval of what had been done.

This man, Edward J. Barrett, State Commander of the American Legion seems to be the last word in pin headed fools. He is a doctor but has not practiced for about 18 years, although he served in the army. Personally he seems to be agreeable and he pretends he is trying to cooperate with us. He says it is a great mistake ever to have a Legion post established at this hospital, and that our patients are generally irresponsible and unreliable, although he admits he has encouraged them to send him reports. As a measure of his judgment and sincerity you may judge from the following:- He told me soon after arriving here that I ought to get rid of most of my subordinates. Dr. Heldt especially was no good. After allowing him to ramble about this for some time I told him that in my opinion Dr. Heldt was one of the best men in the country for this kind of work, and that the

National Committee had given \$10,000 per year in order to get him away from me. He said he did not care how much Dr. Heldt was offered, he knew that he was no good. He, by the way, never heard of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene. Dr. Barrett expressed confidence in me, but after what I told him, he has no doubt lost it by this time because of my defense of Dr. Heldt and some others about whom he knew nothing.

He asked about an old deteriorated chronic alcoholic who accosted him in the lobby. It was an outrage he thought that a diagnosis of chronic alcoholism should be made on this man. This was more evidence that things were wrong around here. He gave out reports in the newspapers about this building being a fire trap, and generally seemed to be in a malicious frame of mind. I intend to cooperate and be polite with this man and the Legion as far as possible in matters pertaining to the hospital, but when it comes to dispensing with valued employees and making diagnoses to confirm to his ignorance or malice, I draw the line. Before doing this I would be kicked out myself.

Very truly yours,

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Surgeon in Charge.