

**THE BELGIAN DOCTORS' AND PHARMACISTS' RELIEF FUND****AN APPEAL****TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL  
AND PHARMACEUTICAL PROFESSIONS**

*In 1914, by resisting Germany, **Belgium saved you** from starvation and ruin.*

*In 1915 you honourably responded to an appeal by subscribing a fund for your Belgian colleagues in their distress.*

*During 1915, 1916, and 1917 this money was sent in instalments to Brussels—at first £800 per month, later £400. The Fund is now exhausted, all but £700.*

***In 1918 will you leave your Belgian colleagues to starve?***

**Subscriptions may be sent to the Honorary Treasurer, Dr. H. A. DES VŒUX,  
14, Buckingham Gate, London, S.W. 1.**

In a letter which we printed last week, Sir Rickman Godlee asked our readers to come to the help of the Belgian doctors and pharmacists in Belgium, who are in urgent need of relief. In order to clear up certain misconceptions which we believe have stood in the way of the second appeal, we may tell very briefly the history of the Belgian Doctors' and Pharmacists' Relief Fund.

The Fund was started at the close of 1914, and the liberal response to the first appeal by the Executive Committee was adequate to the needs of that time. Nearly £20,000 was raised before the end of 1916. This sum was contributed almost entirely by members of the medical and pharmaceutical professions, and included generous donations from the Dominions and India, and from the United States. At first some money was spent in relieving immediate distress among the Belgian doctors and pharmacists who were refugees in this country, and in putting them in the way of making a fresh start in life. These needs were met without difficulty, and for a long while the assistance to the refugees over here has been a trivial charge upon the Fund. The real work of the Fund has been on behalf of the Belgian doctors and pharmacists remaining in Belgium and trying to carry on their work under the brutal heel of German military occupation. This does not appear to be generally understood. Indeed, there would seem to be a mistaken idea among some medical men that the Relief Fund is being frittered away in doles to refugees in this country. The facts are very different.

In 1916 the Committee of the Fund learnt from Mr. Herbert Hoover—at that time Director of the Commission for Relief in Belgium—that it would be possible to supply the Belgian doctors and pharmacists remaining in their own country with material assistance in money and drugs, and he undertook that any subsidies entrusted to him should be forwarded to safe hands for wise and proper distribution. Accordingly the Committee began to send every month £800 to a representative committee of Belgian doctors and pharmacists sitting in Brussels. This went on until

the close of 1917, but in January last the monthly remittances had to be reduced to £400, with every prospect of a standstill at an early date. Just at the time when the Fund was compelled to halve its monthly remittance news came from the Commission for Relief in Belgium through Mr. W. B. Poland, who had succeeded Mr. Hoover, that the need for money and moral support had become even more acute than before. "If the supporters of your Fund knew how much actual suffering they had allayed, and how much potential moral and physical suffering they had prevented, they would not cease to continue their support, many as are the claims now made upon them."

A second appeal was made to enable the work of the Fund to be continued, but the result has been disappointing. Individual support has been prompt and generous, but there has been no general response, and the executive committee of the Fund finds itself to-day just about where it was at the beginning of the year before the second appeal was issued. There is enough money to pay one more monthly sum of £400; after that the subsidies must cease unless further help is forthcoming on a large scale. Sir Rickman Godlee, as chairman of the Fund, put the gist of the matter last week in two sentences: "Do British doctors and pharmacists really know (1) that money is urgently needed, (2) that it goes to Belgium, and not to doctors and pharmacists in this country, and (3) that it really reaches the Belgians and is not pocketed by the Germans? If they did they would surely never allow these remittances to be stopped."

It is a commonplace that no time could be less propitious than the present for any kind of charitable appeal, however worthy of support. Nevertheless, it must be looked upon as a debt of honour to continue regular and substantial aid to our unfortunate colleagues in Belgium. Therefore, together with the *Lancet* and the *Pharmaceutical Journal and Pharmacist*, we are this week supporting the appeal for the Belgian Doctors' and Pharmacists' Relief Fund with all the emphasis that springs from conviction.