CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MEDICAL CORPS OF THE ARMY TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

By COLONEL EDGAR ERSKINE HUME

Dr. William Henry Welch was a long-time friend and constant user of the Army Medical Library. Billings, its great librarian, had selected Welch for his professorship at Johns Hopkins. Not long before his last illness Dr. Welch was in the library and, in the course of one of his delightful conversations, said: "I have been asked on more than one occasion what have been the really great contributions of this country to medical knowledge. I have given the subject some thought and believe that four should be named: (1) The discovery of anesthesia; (2) the discovery of insect transmission of disease; (3) the development of the modern public health laboratory, in all that the term implies; and (4) the Army Medical Library and its Index Catalogue."

"Popsy," as he was affectionately called, was more apt to utter words of wisdom than to write them. The Librarian was so struck by this pronouncement that he reduced it to writing immediately after Dr. Welch had left. I bear witness, for I was the Librarian.

What is "the modern public health laboratory"? I assume that Dr. Welch meant not a mere building with a miscellaneous collection of apparatus, but the concept of the sum of the knowledge of chemical, physical and biological procedures which have added to our scientific knowledge or which aid in the maintenance of health of individuals and communities. In
Editor's Summary

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