The official military medical supply lists in use at the start of the war were developed by medical officers in the regular armed forces of the United States and reflected the military’s needs as seen by practitioners of regular (orthodox or allopathic) medicine. In 1862, the Union Army liberalized its practices to address the needs of its many physicians who had only recently left civilian practice for the military. But the standard supply tables still fell short in terms of overall selection. Below, a trade journal defends the supply table against its many critics and then two months later reports on the recent order by Surgeon General William Hammond of the Union Army, a progressive allopath, to remove certain drugs from the supply table on the grounds that they were being misused by surgeons.

“Army Hospital Supplies”

We cannot see the justice of the strictures which army surgeons often make against the Medical Department in relation to the furnishing of medical and hospital supplies. The supply table is certainly sufficiently full for all practical purposes. It was prepared by a Committee of eminent physicians and pharmaceutists, and embraces a more liberal supply of articles and drugs than is furnished to any army in the world. Much of the fault of not having a supply depends upon the negligence of the medical officers themselves, who do not promptly and properly order them.

“An Order of Surgeon-General Hammond”

In the last issue of the CIRCULAR we published an order of Surgeon-General Hammond, excluding Calomel and Tartar Emetic from the army medical Supply Table, on the ground that its use has been indiscriminate, and too often unnecessary and mischievous. This interdict has produced, as might have been expected, a great commotion among the medical hosts both in and out of the army. The anti-mineral-poison doctors, who have been indulging for years in a hullabaloo against these and like potent remedies simply because, so far as we could understand them, they were taken from the mineral kingdom, are in ecstasies at this seeming compliment to their medical sagacity; while the old fogies or conservatives, who took their first lessons in the treatment of diseases long years ago, consider the order as a radical and presumptuous innovation upon custom and science, that the experience of many generations has sanctioned and sanctified. There is another class of practitioners, who care but little for what was done by the fathers, and who respect still less the “herb,” the “water,” and all other interlopers in the domain of medicine, that think they see prodigious medical progress in the Surgeon-General; and this rescript they look upon as one of its manifestations.