

## Cholera Epidemics in Chicago

By J. Seymour Carrey  
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In his book of reminiscences, Charles B. George, an old-time conductor on the Chicago and North-western railway, whom old residents will remember ran the "Waukegan accommodation" for many years, relates that "away back in 1866, when the cholera was raging in Chicago, I ran one of the largest funeral trains going from Chicago to Rosehill and Calvary that was ever known. I had thirty passenger cars, containing over 2,000 people, and one freight car, in which were the dead bodies of forty persons who had died on the previous day." That must have been either in the month of August or September, as it was in those months that the epidemic was at its height.

Persons whose memory reaches back to the year 1866 will recall the terror and dismay of the people of Chicago, especially in the early fall months of that year, by reason of its prevalence. Many persons who could do so left the city and took up their abode in parts of the country free from the pestilence. Vigorous measures were taken by the authorities to prevent the disease from spreading. Health officers were sent to all incoming trains to ascertain whether persons were suffering from symptoms of the dreaded disease and every case found was taken to improvised hospitals for treatment. Such cases as were found were among arriving emigrants and in the poor quarters of the city. During that year the total number of deaths from cholera in Chicago was 1,062.

### Employed in Pharmacy

At that time I was in the employ of Bliss and Sharp, who conducted the largest drug store in the city, their store being situated on Lake street, few doors west of Clark street at the old number of 144. Sylvester B. Bliss, the senior member of that firm, lived in Evanston in the later years of his life and died there in 1890. His widow and other members of the family are residents of Evanston at the present time. My duties during the period of the cholera visitation was the preparation and compounding of the great variety of tinctures, elixirs, ointments, powders, etc., required for prescriptions. There was a vastly increased demand, of course, at such a time for medicines commonly used in the treatment of bowel troubles, which was what cholera essentially required. Almost all the doctors prescribed medicines, the principal ingredients of which were opium in some form (usually laudanum), rhubarb, capsicum and camphor. Tinctures of these were made up in the laboratory in large quantities, and of laudanum alone I remember that I made up on frequent occasions as much as five gallons at a time, and considering that but a few drops of this powerful medicine constitute a dose, one can imagine the quantities used at that time. It has been said that there are three great medicines as the principal basis of all curative substances, which are opium (in its various forms, such as laudanum, morphine, paregoric, etc.), chincona bark (mostly in the form of quinine), and mercury (largely in the form of calomel).

### Get Foreign Formula

Earlier in the season when the first rumors of the epidemic were received the enterprising firm whom I have mentioned sent to Constantinople (where the cholera is always prevalent) to procure a formula from the American college of that city which could be recommended to

physicians here and buyers over the counter. Small two-ounce vials labeled "cholera mixture" were prepared from this formula in great quantities, each one having printed the ingredients on the label, which, as I remember, usually contained in suitable proportions laudanum, rhubarb, capsicum and camphor. In fact, nearly all the doctors' prescriptions contained these ingredients in some form.

Drug stores, of course, provide facilities for procuring necessary medicines night or day by means of a special call bell, but in a time like this the clerks and proprietors were on duty constantly, no matter what the danger was from contagion, and bravely these men performed their duties. The doctors were unable to write their prescriptions fast enough to answer the calls and abbreviated their prescriptions by simply writing "mixture No. 1" or 2 or 3, as had been agreed by previous arrangement. The medicines thus supplied were doubtless effectual in a large majority of cases, and together with the sanitary regulations vigorously carried out, the epidemic was got under control, and when the late fall months arrived the worst was over. In fact, it was considered as completely stamped out. Since that year there has been no cholera in Chicago.

### Soldiers Suffered

The city had suffered far more severely in previous epidemics of cholera, however. Readers who are familiar with the history of the Black Hawk war in 1832 will remember the terrible mortality among General Winfield Scott's army, arriving by lake from Buffalo. Eighty-eight soldiers in this force died on the way or after reaching Chicago. Fort Dearborn was abandoned by the garrison and the men made themselves shelter beyond the inclosure. There were so many deaths that the bodies were buried without coffins and their remains have frequently been found since that time when street excavations have exposed them. During all the horrors of the situation the commanding general never wearied in his ministrations to the suffering men. "In many a campaign did this fine old hero distinguish himself," writes Stevens, "but in none did he win more fame than in this."

### LONDON DOCTOR URGES FAT MEN TO WEAR CORSETS

Men with a paunch should wear corsets. That was the advice Dr. Leonard Williams gave the British Peace Nursery and Midwifery conference. His reason is based upon health principles. "Aboriginal man," said Dr. Williams, "certainly was a four-footed animal. The abdominal construction was intended for that posture. Since human being began to walk on their hind legs the position of abdominal organs had been thrown out of gear. "People who take plenty of outdoor exercise and athletes might get on very well without corsets, but persons who live a sedentary life require some kind of support as given by corsets." Dr. Williams said people who wore tight collars prevented proper draining of their brains and thereby suffered bad tempers. "Since women gave up wearing tight collars they have become sweeter tempered," he said.

### War Trophies All Gone


So many requests have come to the Federal Reserve bank of Chicago,

as well as that of other districts, for some kind of a German trophy to place in public parks or elsewhere in towns that have been particularly successful in putting over their quotas in the Victory loan that the Chicago bank felt it ought to issue a statement to the effect that there are no such trophies in the possession of the bank for such distribution.

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