

cal men have sufficient means to enable them to devote their entire time to such a study. Consequently the reaching of the desired end is postponed if not prevented.—*C. A. H.*

LaGrippe or Influenza

During January the newspapers gave information that influenza was again epidemic in some parts of Europe. If that is so it will appear in this country very shortly, without doubt, but probably in a milder form than in 1918.

The writer was a hospital intern when the grip struck this country early in 1890. It traveled through the community with some speed and caused many deaths, especially among the very young and the very old. There were many cases of pneumonia complicating the grip. Many died of heart complications. At the old Ward's Island Homeopathic Hospital quite a number of the patients died very abruptly of heart conditions.

The Ward's Island Homeopathic Hospital had about 450 beds. It was a charity hospital belonging to the City of New York, and the patients were the poor and the derelict of that great community. Many of them had little resisting power because of their physical condition due to poverty or dissipation.

When the influenza came in the fall of 1918 the writer was a hospital intern once more. He was an officer of the Medical Corps of the Army, stationed at the Base Hospital in Camp Meade, Maryland. All the patients were soldiers, picked men who were physically in the full powers of early manhood.

Camp Meade was one of the great army training camps. During the influenza epidemic the average daily census was 43,500 men. Of that number 11,400 had influenza, and about 3,000 of these developed pneumonia. Of the pneumonia cases approximately 800 died. Every case that died had been diagnosed pneumonia beforehand, and of the many that came to autopsy that diagnosis was confirmed. Just one man of the 800 who died, died unexpectedly and abruptly. Autopsy showed an old heart lesion. In every other case death was expected for from 24 to 48 hours beforehand. That was one outstanding difference between the two epidemics as the writer saw them. At Camp Meade, with the exception noted, no heart complications were found at autopsy.

The great mystery about epidemic grip or influenza—and undoubtedly the two epidemics were of the same disease—is the speed with which it affects a community. It is like a conflagration, licking up everything inflammable in its track and burning itself out. At the Camp Meade Base Hospital the first cases were sent

in September 21, about thirty. The numbers each day increased rapidly until on September 27 some nine hundred and sixty were admitted. New cases then became fewer each day and there were none at all after the middle of October.

The Camp Meade death rate from uncomplicated influenza was nil. Someone writing in the *Medical Record* in 1919 said that there was no authentic autopsy report the country over of a death from uncomplicated influenza. There probably was none. The influenza-pneumonia death rate was 26 per cent at Camp Meade, and that corresponds very closely to the average pneumonia death rate at any time in the big hospitals throughout the United States.

An individual case of influenza is not more mysterious than the individual case of any disease. Of itself it is not deadly. Even when complicated by pneumonia the percentage of deaths is no greater than in pneumonia from other causes and in non-epidemic times. The mystery is in the speed with which it travels. In 1918 this was brought home to us because of the vast number of cases in the great army camps. In civil communities it did not travel quite so rapidly because the people were not in quite such close contact.

Since 1890 grip or influenza has been more or less present at all times, and in 1900 this country experienced quite a general but mild epidemic. If the disease reappears this year in epidemic form it will probably be mild, less extensive, and travel less rapidly than in 1918. Such epidemics as that of 1918 come only two or three times in a century.—*W. S. M.*

The Liquor Question

A recent editorial in the JOURNAL has been the cause of so much comment by our readers that we have felt it best to publish some of the communications. We feel that everyone is entitled to an opinion on this subject and regret that we cannot give space to all the expressions of opinion that we have received.

The writer of this editorial believes that the country will, in later years, be better off for prohibition but does not agree with the way that it was put in force, nor does he approve of all the restrictions that have been made. A poll made by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows a very small number of physicians who believe that it would be impossible to practice medicine without whiskey. A very large majority believes that there is little call for wines or beer for medicinal use. Opposition to the use of all alcoholic beverages was greater in the country than in the cities; in other words, the city doctor finds more