

THE
MONTREAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

VOL. XXX.

NOVEMBER, 1901.

No. 11.

Original Communications.

THE PRESENT EPIDEMIC OF SMALLPOX IN AMERICA.*

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Some time ago I was asked by your president to prepare a history of the present smallpox epidemic in Minnesota for this meeting. I promised so to do, not because I thought you would be interested in such a local condition, but because the history of this epidemic is in all probability the history of each and every epidemic in province or state of Canada or the United States during the past five years.

In March, 1899, a porter from a Great Northern Railway train was found ill with smallpox in St. Paul, after his return from the Pacific coast. His infection occurred at some point between St. Paul and the coast, probably at Seattle. At the time his case was diagnosed as smallpox, he remarked, "If such is the case, there is plenty more of the same thing in the place that I came from."

From exposures to this case, there followed thirty-one cases of smallpox in St. Paul, with but one death. The outbreak was well handled by the very efficient health commissioner of that city, Dr. J. Ohage. I did not see any of these cases.

In May, 1899, a gentleman, aged about fifty years, returned from California to his home at Worthington, Minnesota. On his way home he stopped in Nebraska for a few days. There was quite a little smallpox in that state at certain points during the winter of 1898 and 1899. This gentleman had after his return to Worthington an eruption so mild in type that no physician was called, I understand. I believe some parties thought he had chicken-pox. In due time the wife was taken ill.

* Read before the Canadian Medical Association, August 20, 1901.