

In May, 1897, scarlet fever made its appearance in the town. Then, and previously, we had a happy-go-lucky style of handling contagious diseases, and, consequently, it surprised no one that the month of June found matters getting worse.

That all the cases reported were confined to one ward, led to the manifest conclusion that the contagion came through the ward school. The Board discussed the advisability of closing this school, but the step was not taken, partly because we were at a loss to deal with the children that thus would be let loose on the streets, and partly because the proximity of the holiday season inspired the hope that somehow or other the sunlight of July and August would relieve the Board of any further anxiety and responsibility. Nor were we disappointed. But in the meantime diphtheria was cropping up in different parts of the town in a manner at once alarming and puzzling.

The many "sore-throat" cases that developed in sympathetic neighborhoods finally convinced the Board that the methods in vogue were either of no avail or were loosely carried out. It was also believed that many mild cases had occurred during the summer and spring that were not reported to the Board, and that some cases had occurred that were not even suspected as diphtheria until paralysis had set in.

Before the end of September it became more and more manifest that the town was simply full of the contagion, and that the time was come when rigorous action was an absolute necessity. After careful consideration as to the best means for overcoming the epidemic, we appointed assistant sanitary inspectors for the schools, and the following measures were adopted:

The sanitary inspectors daily visited the schools and obtained from the teachers a list of the absentees. The houses of the said absentees were at once visited to find the cause of the scholars' absence, and if there was any suspicion of sore throat, the family was advised (or instructed) to call in the family physician. The sanitary inspector at once put a notice in the school, temporarily keeping the children of such family from school until the case was decided. In nearly all cases this was done by the physician taking a swab from the patient's throat and sending it to Toronto for analysis, and the case was acted upon according to the reply telegraphed. If the reply came back "Diphtheria," the house was at once placarded and all precautionary measures possible adopted to prevent contagion. In all cases when the physician thought a case of diphtheria had recovered, a swab was taken from the patient's throat and sent to Toronto, and no case was declared free until such word was telegraphed to that effect.