

## PLAGUE CONFERENCE.

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In accordance with request from a number of State boards of health, and under authority of section 7 of the act of Congress, approved July 1, 1902, a conference with regard to the plague situation was held in the office of the Surgeon-General of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service January 19, 1903.

It is proposed to publish the full proceedings of this Conference in a subsequent issue of the PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS. In this issue is published the address of the Chairman of the Conference and the resolutions which were passed, and two resolutions which were postponed for consideration at the annual conference.

The Conference held two sessions, one in the forenoon and the other in the afternoon of January 19, adjourning on the same date.

At 10.25 a. m. the Conference was called to order by its Chairman, Surgeon-General Walter Wyman, of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service, the roll was called and the following answered to their names: California, Dr. Mathew Gardner; Connecticut, Dr. C. A. Lindsley; Colorado, Dr. H. R. Bull; Delaware, Drs. C. W. Cooper and Alex. Lowber; District of Columbia, Dr. Wm. C. Woodward; Indian Territory, Dr. M. K. Thompson; Iowa, Dr. T. L. Kennedy; Indiana, Dr. J. N. Hurty; Louisiana, Dr. Arthur Nolte; Maine, Dr. Charles D. Smith; Maryland, Dr. John S. Fulton; Minnesota, Dr. H. M. Bracken; North Carolina, Dr. R. H. Lewis; New Jersey, Dr. Henry Mitchell; New York, Dr. Daniel Lewis; Pennsylvania, Dr. Benjamin Lee; Rhode Island, Dr. Gardner T. Swarts; South Carolina, Dr. T. Grange Simons; Tennessee, Dr. J. A. Albright; Vermont, Dr. H. D. Holton, and Virginia, Dr. P. A. Irving.

After discussion, it was resolved, upon motion of Dr. Fulton, of Maryland, seconded by Dr. Hurty, of Indiana, that the meeting should be open to press reporters.

Dr. Gardner T. Swarts, of Rhode Island, was elected secretary.

The Surgeon-General then welcomed the delegates present and made a statement of the plague situation in the United States and Mexico, as follows:

GENTLEMEN: It is with great pleasure that I greet you at this conference, which I have called at your request. The occasion is one of special interest, not only on account of the subject-matter which is to be brought before the conference, but also because it is the first conference held under the provisions of section 7 of the act of Congress approved July 1, 1902, and I sincerely trust it is to be the first of a number of conferences which we shall have from time to time to further

the interests of public-health work in the United States by mutual cooperation and encouragement.

The object of this conference is well set forth in the second of the two resolutions which were passed by the Conference of State and Provincial Boards of Health of North America at their meeting in New Haven, October 28 and 29, 1902, being a "joint conference for the purpose of eradicating plague from the United States," and the requests which have been received from certain boards of health in accordance with those resolutions are properly represented by the language of the request from the State board of health of Maine, under date of November 12, 1902, suggesting that "it is desirable that a conference be held between you (meaning the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service) and the various State boards of health in regard to the present danger from bubonic plague and how the danger may best be obviated."

Requests for conference have been received from and invitations extended to the following boards of health: State board of health of Colorado, State board of health of Connecticut, State board of health of Delaware, health officer, District of Columbia, State board of health of Indiana, Indian Territory medical association, State board of health of Iowa, State board of health of Louisiana, State board of health of California, State board of health of Maine, State board of health of Maryland, State board of health of Minnesota, State board of health of Mississippi, New York State department of health, North Carolina State board of health, Pennsylvania State board of health, Rhode Island State board of health, South Carolina State board of health, Tennessee State board of health, Vermont State board of health, Wisconsin State board of health, and the Kentucky State board of health. And we have with us in addition Dr. Irving, of the State board of health of Virginia, and Dr. Mitchell, of New Jersey. We are only too glad to have those gentlemen whose States did not formally make the request; we are very glad to have them all here.

The subject of the recent outbreak of plague in Mexico will be presently considered, but it is deemed best to consider first the situation as it exists in San Francisco.

At the date of the meeting of the conference in New Haven, October 28, 1902, an inspection under the auspices of this Service was being made of places outside of San Francisco to ascertain, if possible, whether any such places were infected with bubonic plague. I had received a report from but one locality at that time, and was, therefore, unable to make any statement to the conference. I will read here a letter addressed to Surgeon Glennan, who, until a short time ago, was chief sanitary officer of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service in Cuba, having been the chief quarantine officer of that island and detailed on General Wood's staff during the American occupation. I ordered Surgeon Glennan to Washington for the special duty which is outlined in the following letter:

"WASHINGTON, D. C., October 4, 1902."

"SIR: Referring to Bureau letter of this date detailing you as inspector of the quarantine and Marine-Hospital stations on the Pacific coast, you are further directed and informed as follows:

"As soon as possible after your inspection at San Diego, you will call upon his excellency, Henry T. Gage, governor of California, and present the following matter for his consideration, viz, that there have been reported to the Bureau 18 deaths from bubonic plague in San Francisco during the months of August (9) and September (9), and that

from the reports received during these months and prior thereto, there are indications that 3 of the cases within the present year may have been brought into San Francisco from other places. This and the increased number of cases reported in San Francisco make it desirable that a careful inquiry be made with regard to several localities.

"From former expressions, the Bureau feels assured that the governor will approve of this measure, and may designate a representative to cooperate with a Bureau representative in making these inquiries.

"After consultation with the governor you will report to the Bureau as to any arrangements which may be effected.

"In the opinion of the Bureau, this inquiry should be conducted in a deliberate and thorough manner, without haste or agitation, and the findings should be fortified by bacteriological examination. Furthermore, the inquiry should be so conducted that in the possible event of affirmative findings, nothing done during the inquiry would prove an embarrassment in the prolonged measures of extirpation which would be necessary; for it should be remembered that in the eradication of the disease the measures relating thereto, while they need not be of a character to disturb business or cause excitement among the people, must be very thorough, continuous, and of probable long duration.

"Respectfully,

WALTER WYMAN,  
*Surgeon-General.*

"Surg. A. H. GLENNAN."

I gave him, also, with this letter, a list of the places possibly infected.

An arrangement was effected, in accordance with the above instructions, by which Dr. Gardner, chief surgeon of the Southern Pacific Railroad, who, so far as could be ascertained by the Bureau, had taken no attitude antagonistic to the recognition of plague and its eradication, together with Surgeon Glennan, should inspect the places named. Reports have been received of the investigations made at Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, San Jose, Sacramento, Davisville, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield, where no plague was found.

These inspections are to be renewed from time to time as practicable. They had not yet been completed when I left Washington for New Orleans to attend the meeting of the American Public Health Association, and while there I determined to personally visit San Francisco to become acquainted, from personal observation, with the state of affairs.

I arrived in San Francisco on Wednesday, December 17, and, Governor Gage being in the city, I called first upon him as the chief officer of the State board of health. The same afternoon I called upon Dr. Williamson, the president of the city board of health, at his office, and met there, by his call, Dr. O'Brien, the city physician, and Dr. Buckley, a member of the city board. The same afternoon, accompanied by Dr. Glennan and Dr. Currie, I inspected the laboratory of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service, and at night paid a visit to Chinatown with a representative of Governor Gage, the governor having offered this courtesy to me, which I accepted.

The following morning, December 18, with Dr. Tabor and Dr. Glennan, I again visited the laboratory of the Service, and, after another inspection thereof, went, with Dr. Currie, who has been making the bacteriological examinations, and Mr. Wong, the Chinese interpreter of the Service, and made a still closer inspection of Chinatown, visiting the worst places.

On Friday afternoon I visited the Governor-elect, Dr. Pardee, and in

the afternoon called upon Mayor Schmitz at his office, but was unable to see him and made an appointment for the following morning.

Had an interview with Mayor Schmitz on Saturday morning, and in the afternoon called upon Dr. Williamson, president of the city board of health, who sent for other members of the board, with whom I discussed the situation. The same afternoon I visited the Chinese Six Companies, had a conference with them concerning the situation, and at night received calls from Dr. Williamson and members of the city board of health, and one or two other members of the profession. I left San Francisco on Monday, December 22.

In my opinion, the resolutions of the State and provincial boards of health at New Haven have been productive of good, and I found a generally expressed desire to have the demands of the situation fully met. Governor Gage announced his intention of standing by his statement, but offered to assist in any way possible in the elimination of the disease which prevailed in Chinatown. A more important assurance was that given by Dr. Pardee, who seemed to fully realize the gravity of the situation and expressed his determination to leave nothing undone in the matter of giving aid and support to the necessary measures. Mayor Schmitz admitted to me in the presence of a witness that the disease was plague, and though he pointed out that he was not in harmony with his city board of health, he would nevertheless do everything possible to rid Chinatown of the disease and would give his best efforts in that direction.

The city board of health, who deserve a great deal of credit for the work which they have done under trying circumstances, were informed that in all possible ways the Service would assist them, that it was understood that the work going on in Chinatown was practically their (the city board's) work, and that while Governor Gage had offered, in illustration of his desire to assist in the elimination of the disease from Chinatown, the services of two inspectors to aid in that work, they were declined, inasmuch as it was deemed unnecessary in view of the inspectors already employed by the city board and the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service; and I also informed the city board that in case of difficulty being experienced in obtaining means or persons for the prosecution of the work in Chinatown, assistance would be rendered them by this Service.

I asked Dr. Williamson, the then president of the city board, his opinion as to the amount of plague which might be existing in Chinatown, and he expressed the opinion that it was not great. Of course, we both agreed that nevertheless it exists, and that careful and persistent inspection and sanitation would be requisite for an indefinite period, extending over possibly one or two years.

As to the appearance of Chinatown, itself, as observed during my two inspections, it was evident to myself that the great work which had been carried on there under Dr. Joseph H. White, now assistant surgeon-general, had been of permanent value, and it was evident, too, that the city board of health had been at work in Chinatown in the meantime. I tried to impress upon all concerned that the work of attending to plague in Chinatown is properly the work of the city board of health, and that this Service would aid both in a substantial manner and with counsel and advice. The activity of the State board in Chinatown, San Francisco, does not appear to be necessary unless there should be laxity on the part of the city board.

With regard to the present status, since my visit to San Francisco, the new governor, Dr. Pardee, has been installed, Dr. Williamson's term as president of the city board of health has expired, and the mayor has appointed a new man in his place, Dr. Stinson; a temporary chairman has been elected, but a new president has not been chosen. It remains to be seen what the attitude of the city board of health under the new regime will be, but if the mayor has an influence over his new appointees, and maintains the attitude toward the plague in Chinatown which he plainly expressed to me, I see no reason why the work should not be successfully pursued.

In the meantime, from newspapers which have been sent me, I learn that the city council has appropriated money for the destruction of rats, and has also authorized the appointment by the board of health of an additional physician for duty in Chinatown, the city board of health then undertaking the sanitary surveillance of Chinatown and inspection of the sick, assisted at present by Assistant Surgeon Currie, in charge of the laboratory of the Service in San Francisco, who, with Mr. Wong, the Chinese interpreter, makes inspections twice a day of Chinatown, and similar inspection is made by another detailed officer of the Service, Assistant Surgeon Lloyd.

Surgeon Glennan is the representative of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service both for the State of California and city of San Francisco. With regard to the present status and review of the situation, I have received the following from Surgeon Glennan :

[Telegram.]

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., *January 17, 1908.*

Surgeon-General WYMAN, *Washington, D. C.*: Eighty-seven cases have occurred in Chinatown, 6 sickened in other parts of the city, none proven to have originated in the country. Total, 6 whites, 4 Japanese, and 83 Chinese [since March, 1900]. Last case outside of Chinatown October 31. As man's personal habits were bad, possible Chinatown origin, but could not trace connection.

GLENNAN.

I have also received the following from Surgeon Glennan, being a report upon the infection of rats by Assistant Surgeon Currie:

“PUBLIC HEALTH AND MARINE-HOSPITAL SERVICE,  
OFFICE OF MEDICAL OFFICER IN COMMAND,  
UNITED STATES PLAGUE LABORATORY, 641 MERCHANT STREET,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., *December 26, 1902.*”

“SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report on the Chinatown rats examined in this laboratory between November 8 and December 21, 1902, inclusive: Number of rats caught alive, 343; number of rats found dead, 22; total number of rats examined, 365. Number of rats, among those caught alive, infected with pest, 4; number of rats, among those found dead, infected with pest, 11.

“Per cent of pest rats among those caught alive, 1.1+. Per cent of pest rats among those found dead, 50.

“Respectfully,

DONALD H. CURRIE,  
*Assistant Surgeon.*

“By direction of Surg. A. H. Glennan.  
“The SURGEON-GENERAL.”

I wired Dr. Glennan to find out what the attitude of the city board was—the new board—and for information, and have received the following:

SAN FRANCISCO, *January 13, 1903.*

Surgeon-General WYMAN, *Washington*: First meeting of the new city board of health, tie vote for presidency between Ward and Bulkley. Stinson nominated Ward, informs me Ward probably be elected next Wednesday. Noncommittal upon other points. Will commence second inspection outside places this week.

GLENNAN.

As to the reports of inspection of the outside places, of course we have made but one inspection, and that is not sufficient. We shall continue a round of inspections of outside places to find, if possible, any plague, but so far, outside of Chinatown, we have not found any. (a.)

I believe that is about the sum and substance of what I have to say to you, gentlemen, except to renew my sense of pleasure of having you with us in this matter, and trust that in the multitude of counsel there will be wisdom, of course.

#### RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE CONFERENCE.

##### I.

The presence of plague in California is established beyond debate by—

1. The investigations of Kellogg of the San Francisco board of health, Ryfkegal for the California State board of health, and Kinyoun for the United States Marine-Hospital Service.

2. By the later investigations of Pillsbury for the State board of health, and by those of J. White, M. White, Flint, Currie, Carmichael, Blue, and Glennan for the United States Marine-Hospital Service.

3. By the findings of Flexner, Barker, and Novy, composing a special committee acting under Federal authority.

4. By the findings of independent and disinterested investigators (supplied with materials from autopsies made at San Francisco, and working in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Ann Arbor).

5. By the occurrence of a case of human plague in Ann Arbor due to an accident in the manufacture of Haffkine's prophylactic fluid with a culture of plague bacillus obtained in California.

6. By the autopsy records of 90 cases of plague, now in the possession of the United States Marine-Hospital Service and of the San Francisco board of health, and published in part in the *Occidental-Medical Times* of San Francisco.

##### II.

The presence of plague in any community where proper restrictions are not taken to prevent its spread is an injury to the best interests of that community. Such injury is in any case avoidable by the proper cooperation of all interest involved, commercial, professional, and gov-

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*a* Then followed a statement with regard to Mexico, the principal features of which are to be found in the PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS of January 16, 1903, pages 72 *et seq.* This statement will appear in the full proceedings to be printed hereafter.

ernmental. This conference regards the habitual publication of the actual facts relative to infectious disease and preventive procedures as the surest route to popular confidence, and is one of the means best adapted to minimize the injury liable to result from the presence of such diseases.

### III.

The present danger to California and to the United States lies primarily in the persistence, during nearly three years, of a definite nidus of plague infection in that part of San Francisco known as Chinatown; but the gravity of this circumstance is greatly increased by the gross neglect of official duty by the State board of health of California and the obstructive influence of the recent governor of California, by the failure of the city government of San Francisco to support its city board of health, and by the obstacles opposed to the operations of the United States Public Health Service.

### IV.

The Conference will consider the safety of the country sufficiently assured as soon as satisfied that a competent city board of health of San Francisco, and a competent State board of health, in cooperation with the United States Public Health Service, will proceed under definite, harmonious, and effective laws and ordinances; that they are provided with ample funds, and that they are jointly and severally in the free exercise of their lawful powers.

### V.

The Conference expresses its conviction that the United States Public Health Service has deserved well of the State of California and of the country, and that it would go far toward the restoration of popular confidence if the United States Public Health officials were admitted to the same relations with the State board of health as have been steadily maintained with the city board of health of San Francisco.

The praise of this Conference and the gratitude of the city of San Francisco are due to Drs. John M. Williamson, Vincent P. Buckley, W. B. Lewitt, Rudolph W. Baum, Louis Bazett, and Dr. McCarthy of the city board of health of San Francisco. These men possess the unreserved confidence of the executive health officers of the country.

### VI.

Resolved, That the Surgeon-General of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service be requested to inform the various State boards of health at least two weeks before the annual meeting of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service and the State boards of health to what extent the sanitary recommendations this day made to control and prevent the existence of plague in California have been carried out, to the end that they may then be prepared to take further action that may be necessary to accomplish the end desired.