

San Francisco Wins Victory In Its Battle With Influenza

SAN FRANCISCO fought the Spanish influenza to a standstill. The victory was officially announced at noon yesterday and was greeted by the ringing of bells and the blowing of whistles. San Francisco at once threw away its gauze masks and everybody was glad.

The victory over the epidemic in San Francisco was won by the courage of the City Board of Health and the willing co-operation of the people themselves.

Schools, churches, theatres, moving picture houses, dancing halls, were all closed at the first appearance of the invader. Thousands of men and women voluntarily put on the gauze masks recommended by physicians. Afterward the Board of Supervisors, by ordinance, compelled the universal use of the masks.

The people of San Francisco obeyed every mandate of the Board of Health willingly and with promptness. There was no quibbling over the orders. No one sought the aid of the courts to set aside any of the regulations imposed by the Board of Health.

The epidemic hurt the city sorely. Hundreds of lives were taken. But there remains the consolation that hundreds of other lives were saved by the cheerful obedience of the people of the entire city to the rules laid down for combatting the epidemic.

Other cities which did not go to the length of the measures taken by San Francisco have not fared so well. Our sister city of Los Angeles was and is still sorely stricken. In that city the number of new cases reported daily still mounts into the hundreds. The official report from Los Angeles shows a total of 1,118 cases in the first week of the epidemic, between October 5 and 12. In the week between November 9 and 16 there were 3,964 cases—in the sixth week of the epidemic. On November 19 the new cases reported numbered 812. Los Angeles did not require the use of the gauze mask. Schools, churches and theatres were closed but afterwards reopened.

The Los Angeles "Examiner," in a vigorous editorial, comments on the methods used by

the two cities in combatting the epidemic in which it said of San Francisco:

Bankers, merchants, professional men—most everybody, in fact—donned the masks cheerfully. Dr. J. Woods Hutchinson, who had been through the severe Boston epidemic, where the disease started in the United States, had strongly advocated the general use of the mask and the San Francisco Board of Health thought the advice good. The effect of the mask was marked. New cases promptly decreased in number and the death rate went down. San Francisco had less than a dozen new cases on Monday and only several deaths—the disease was negligible. On Saturday last the theatres reopened and the city is normal.

Dr. Hutchinson came here and urged the general use of the "flu mask." Was he heeded? On the contrary, he was not only unheeded, but this eminent medical man, who had an unusual experience in Boston, was grossly insulted, charged with having a private, selfish reason for his advice. The recent exhibition in the council chamber when this happened will live long as one of the most grotesque exhibitions of offensive manners and bovine ignorance the city has ever witnessed.

Let the honest medical authorities—not the doctrinaires—investigate the course of the disease in San Francisco from the start to the finish and likewise the experience of Los Angeles. The layman has held his peace on this subject because he knew nothing of it and realized its delicacy, but now he has a right to know and, in justice to the two cities, the truth should be established. Give us the facts and figures, accurately, so we may be guided in the future. The disease and its attendant circumstances have cost this city millions and the truth now should be recorded so that the most effective manner of battling with the disease henceforth may be known. The simple question to determine is: Is it better to mask or not to mask? The two cities offer the two examples. What do their respective experiences prove?

THE MASKED MARVEL

