

## Postscript

By Dr. Henry Bauer

Many wise people have asked the question: "Why write the history of the Minnesota Department of Health?" My reply is: "How can one who doesn't know the past understand the present, and certainly, if one doesn't understand the present how can one predict the future?"

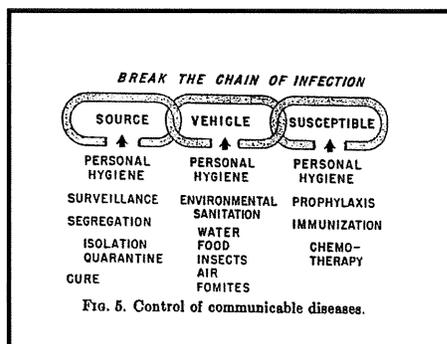
Perhaps the quote from Lucretius on "Life and Death," as modified by Mr. W. H. Mallock, may help.

"No single thing abides; but all things flow.  
Fragment to fragment clings – the things thus grow  
Until we know and name them. By degrees  
They melt, and are no more the things we know."<sup>1500</sup>

This may seem unrelated to prevention, control, and treatments of disease, but it applies to the story of poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, typhoid, salmonellosis, brucellosis, smallpox, diphtheria and others. As this history has shown, it is possible to eradicate disease, often by degrees.

There are three chains to the process of disease eradication: source, vehicle and susceptibility. Where does the disease come from? How does it get from one place to another? Who is susceptible to contracting the disease and suffering the ill effects?

The model for breaking the chain of transmission and eliminating disease applies today, as it did in the early 1950s, as it did in the beginning of our Minnesota State Health Department, and as it has throughout human history. Before the prevention and control procedure can be implemented, we must know the cause of the disease.



In the history in these pages, we have read about how the fragments of knowledge cling and grow until we know the course and mode of transmission. Once that is determined, we move forward. "By degrees they melt, and are no more the things we know."

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<sup>1500</sup> W.H. Mallock, *Lucretius on Life and Death* in the metre of Omar Khayyam to which are appended parallel passages from the original, (Adams and Charles Black: London, 1901), p. 15.