

The Man Who Made It Safe To Take a Drink

By FRANK M. CHASE

THIS is the story of the man who made it safe to take a drink. He is Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine, who banished the common drinking cup from Kansas, the first state to legislate it out of business. He also originated the "Swat the fly" slogan, as well as the movement bearing its name, both of which have gone around the world.

Dr. Crumbine was born in Emlenton, Pennsylvania, September 17, 1862, and was educated at the Cincinnati College of Medicine and Surgery. He went to Kansas in 1885. For a location he chose the frontier settlement of Dodge City, then notorious throughout the West as probably the most lawless town on the whole long cattle trail from Texas to the Dakotas. The yip-yip-yippy of the cowboys was still heard there when the young physician hung but his sign, and Boot Hill—the special burying ground near the city for the men who died with their boots on—still received its victims. Crumbine, however, blessed with the sense to mind his own business, got along without trouble. Despite its trials, too, he came to enjoy the strenuous life of the region, developing a self-reliance and knowledge of Western ways that have stood him well in the battles that were to come. Meanwhile he prospered, marrying Miss Katherine Zuercher, of Springfield, Ohio, in 1890. He also became the health officer of his county, and in 1898 was appointed a member of the State Board of Health. On the death of the board's former secretary, Dr. U. B. Swan, in the summer of 1902, Crumbine was offered the position.

Salary Only \$1,200 Then

DR. CRUMBINE was not certain that it would be advisable to accept it, for the secretary's position was then small indeed. The salary was but \$1,200 a year, this being for part time services, the incumbent devoting the remainder of his time to private practice. Acceptance of the offer thus meant the abandonment of an established business at Dodge City and the starting of a new one at Topeka—a matter not to be decided offhand. After delaying his decision two years, however, and at the urgent solicitation of the board, he accepted the secretaryship, taking up its duties July 1, 1904.

On becoming secretary, he realized at once the hopeless inadequacy of the work of the State Board of Health. He had but one assistant, a stenographer, who, like himself, served only part of the time. Nor was the pitiful appropriation of \$2,000 a year the only reason for the lack of action. The real reason was that the statute books contained almost no laws concerning health, so that the secretary was practically powerless. Crumbine accordingly planned to obtain laws granting his office more authority, and in 1907 the legislature adopted several such measures. Among them were two proving very important, the food and drug law and the water and sewage law, both of which have been copied by numerous states.

Meanwhile, he went ahead with a great deal of new work without having specific legal authority. In 1905 he bought samples of many foods on sale in Topeka, and sent them to the University of Kansas for analysis. This investigation revealed astonishing cases of adulteration and use of preservatives, the findings helping materially toward obtaining some of the desired legislation. Later he kept numerous pens of dogs at his home, some of which he fed "embalmed beef" and meat preserved with benzoate of soda, comparing the results with those from the dogs receiving equal quantities of less questionable meats.

Posting the Public

IN THE same year he began to publish the monthly *Bulletin* of the Kansas State Board of Health, the purpose being to inform the public of the work of the secretary's office; and in the issue for January, 1906, printed the results of the food analyses. This caused a sensation, and headed Crumbine into his first big fight. It not only aroused the first state-wide interest in the board of health, but likewise the war dogs of the food interests affected. Influential business men waited on the governor, with the obvious intent of having Crumbine "fired."

But the secretary, backed by the governor and the results of his own investigations, stood his ground, and after a hard fight in which the hand of the "interests" was plainly seen, the legislature passed the food and drug law. As a result of this and other legislation, the secretary's office was put on a full-time basis and permitted to employ six food inspectors and a clerk, while the passage of the water and sewage bill enabled Dr. Crumbine to add an engineer, to be stationed at the state university, to enforce that law. The office force thus quickly increased from the secretary and his stenographer, both on part time, to nine persons on full time.

By passing the food and drug measure in 1907, the same year as the Federal food and drug act became law, Kansas assumed the lead among the states in tackling the false claims made for patent medicines.

It was while working on the adulterated food problem that, in the spring of 1906, he laid the foundation for the vigorous warfare against flies in which we are still engaged. Of course, we fought flies in those days,

but not so pointedly and persistently as now; we weren't then aware of the long list of sins that are now placed at the door—or more properly, the feet—of the fly. So, in preparing the copy for the April issue of the *Bulletin*, which was to be a special "fly" number, he planned, as usual, to emphasize the screening of homes to keep flies out, largely as a matter of personal comfort. But he was also thinking of the discovery, made during the Spanish-American War, that the fly carries disease, and, still interested in pure food, came to the conclusion that to protect it against flies is quite as important as to insure its freedom from adulterants. All these ideas were to be presented in the next *Bulletin*, so that for the time his thoughts were well seasoned with flies.

Origin of "Swat the Fly"

TOPEKA was then in the Western Baseball League, and while he was engaged in writing his "fly" issue the first game of the season occurred. Nearly everybody in town went to the opening game and Crumbine, a deep-dyed enthusiast for the sport, was there, of course. The teams were evenly matched, and in the last half of the eighth inning the score stood two to two. Topeka was at the bat, with one man out and one on third. Naturally the fans were an excited lot at this point, and many of them yelled, as the next batter stepped to the plate, "Sacrifice fly! Sacrifice fly!" At the first ball pitched, the batter struck—and missed. Then, during that lull which always accompanies disappointment in the bleachers, some stentorian voice boomed out, "Swat that ball!" Crumbine didn't see the next play, for he was engaged in pulling an old envelope from his pocket and jotted down the slogan destined to circle the globe: "Swat the fly."

For a day or two he forgot about the notation, but when the copy for the *Bulletin* was ready he placed it on the front page. This in itself, of course, did not make "Swat the fly" famous, but succeeding events brought it quickly into prominence. Annual clean-up campaigns were then being started in many places, and in connection with the one at Weir City, Kansas, a teacher had the idea of using the Boy Scout organization in this work. This idea he put in a letter to Dr. Crumbine. Crumbine instantly saw the value in the plan and could scarcely wait to write the teacher to compliment him on his vision. The teacher also had asked for suggestions concerning the kind of work which the boys might do. In answer the secretary suggested an anti-fly campaign, and sent the teacher a copy of the current *Bulletin*. He also wrote the teacher a long letter giving details for arranging such a project, and urging particularly that stable refuse piles, the special breeding places of flies, be removed from the town. The teacher acted immediately on all these suggestions. This was perhaps the first instance of Boy Scouts engaging in civic work.

From this beginning the clean-up and anti-fly campaigns spread apace and with them the slogan, except that "Swat the fly" traveled faster because of its brevity and epigrammatic form. Soon it was known from coast to coast, and then taken up across the seas.

Aboard a through train to the Southwest one day

HEALTH

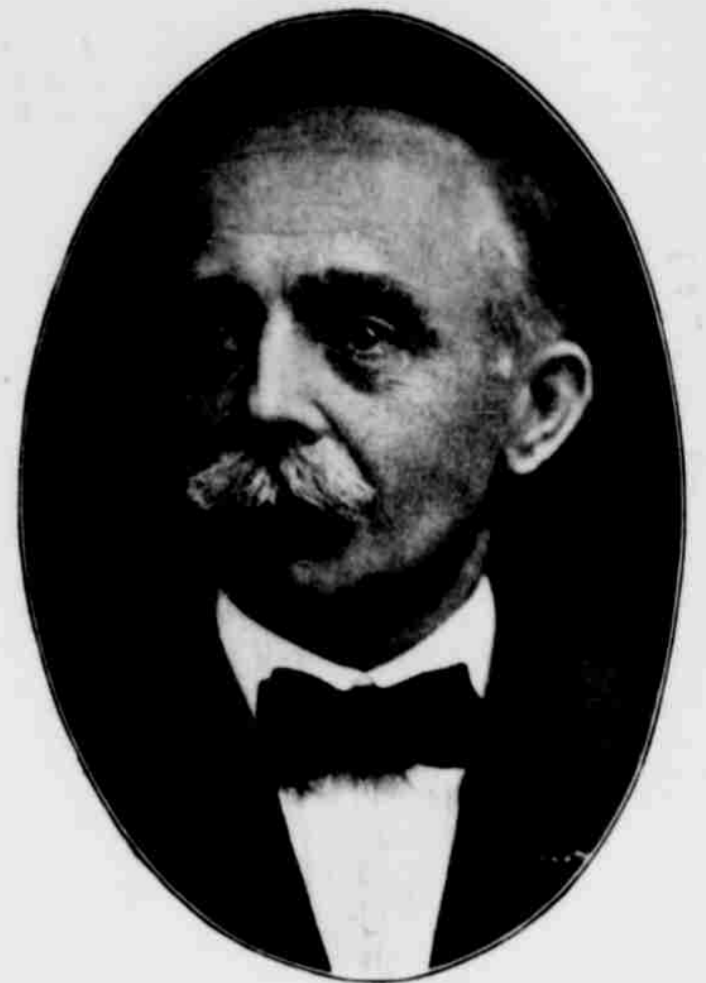
By DR. S. J. CRUMBINE

HEALTH is a state of physical, mental and moral equilibrium, a normal functioning of body, mind and soul. It is the state when work is a pleasure, when the world looks good and beautiful, and the battle of life seems worth while. Health is the antithesis of disease, degeneracy and crime.

The laws of health are as inexorable as the law of gravitation, as exacting as eternal justice, as relentless as fate, and their violation is the beginning and cause of all disease, suffering and sin.

Health is the most desirable of earthly blessings. When finally lost it cannot be purchased by uncounted millions, restored by the alienist, nor returned by the pulpit.

Health is that state of happiness, faith and love whose prototype was the first man—Adam; whose ideal is the Christ.



DR. S. J. CRUMBINE,
Secretary Kansas State Board of Health

in 1908, Dr. Crumbine noticed two persons obviously suffering from tuberculosis in its later stages, drinking from the cup at the water fountain, while shortly afterward their fellow travelers—men, women and children—used the same cup. Dr. Crumbine had just been studying the methods of disease transmission and, as he watched the foregoing procedure, became deeply concerned over the danger involved. The instinct to investigate then arising, he strolled casually through the train, on which he found 11 persons who were obviously tubercular. Here, he saw, was a situation challenging his attention; for, inasmuch as every train bound for the Southwest passed through Kansas for several hundred miles and each was probably carrying one or more tubercular persons, the drinking cups on these trains were a potent means of seeding the state with tuberculosis.

He Proved It by Evidence

PLACING his facts and observations and conclusions before the State Board of Health at its next meeting, he asked that it issue an order abolishing the common drinking cup on railroad trains, in schools and in all public places. But those were the days of tremendous railroad influence and the board, while previously giving Crumbine excellent support, balked at this request.

The secretary, now faced with the necessity of proving the wisdom of his stand to the board, set out for evidence that would convince the most skeptical. At the state university he obtained the services of a bacteriologist who, under Crumbine's direction, took cultures from all the drinking cups on trains running into the old union station at Kansas City during one week. The results showed that a great variety of diseases was being passed around by this medium, some of the worst known to science among them.

So conclusive was this evidence that Dr. Crumbine did not wait for a meeting of the board, but mailed copies of the report to the managers of all railroads operating in Kansas, asking them whether they would agree to abide by a board of health order, if issued, prohibiting the use of common drinking cups on trains and in other public places. In every case where the matter was referred to the medical departments of the railroads, there was hearty agreement. This won the battle for Crumbine, and at the next meeting of the board the order was issued. This became effective September 1, 1909, since which Federal and state laws, as well as public opinion, have rapidly removed one of our national terrors—the common drinking cup.

Drives Out the Common Towel

THAT other arch-spreader of disease, the common towel, was the next to receive his attention. Here the method of attack was similar to that on the public drinking cup, the material adhering to the towels gathered in the public places of six Kansas towns being analyzed at his direction. Twenty-five per cent of the towels examined were found to be contaminated with fecal material, their hazard to health thus being enormous. This evidence convinced the members of the State Board of Health of the danger lurking in the common towel, and they at once decreed that its use "in hotels, railway trains, railway stations, public and private schools" should cease, the order taking effect September 1, 1911.

Dr. Crumbine's work toward the control of tuberculosis has not only placed Kansas among the foremost states for intelligent handling of the disease, but has also established him as a leading authority on it. He organized the Kansas Tuberculosis Association, serving as its first president. He is now a director of the National Tuberculosis Association, and has served a number of other important organizations in various high capacities. Early in the summer of 1921 he was elected secretary of the National Health Council, a super-organization of nearly a dozen national health agencies, his selection for this position being a notable compliment to his ability and standing among public health workers.

The work of Dr. Crumbine has been distinctly of the kind that sets the world ahead.