

## CLAP ON...CLAP OFF?

OR  
THE DANGERS OF INDISCRETION

By Joe Terry

Oh, the excesses of youth. The errors and indiscretions of manhood. Do I need to clarify myself? Yes? Fine, then today's topic is venereal disease, or as it is known in modern circles, sexually transmitted disease. While some, like AIDS, are relatively new, the rest have been haunting humanity for centuries. "Nice" people didn't get them, "bad" people died from them, and the rest didn't talk about them.

As we are familiar with, patent and proprietary medicines were blatantly targeted towards those people whose diseases and disorders were beyond the ken of the medical practice of the day. Catarrh remedies, diabetes treatments, cancer cures; all had hundreds of shysters getting wealthy on promises and lies. The shameful diseases, gonorrhea, gleet, syphilis and strictures; they too had quacks that preyed upon the desperate.

The present dialog centers on two such treatments from Ohio. The first for discussion is Malydor Injection. For those collectors out there who have a familiarity with Malydor, you will immediately associate the city of Lancaster, Ohio with the medicine. But, the story starts in another Ohio town – Springfield. So let's travel back to the late 1870's, to the corner of Main and Center Streets. Standing there, let your gaze travel up the front of the building until your eyes catch sight of the gilt sign. Above your head, boldly emblazoned with the names "Montanus and Garwood", hangs the sign that tells you that you have reached your destination. French Garwood was the latter partner, filling prescriptions alongside Philip E. Montanus.

Within a few years the store was moved to the corner of Limestone and High. Here, Mr. Montanus concocted a formula that he felt would be a boon to mankind. That boon was Malydor, a name whose meaning, if there ever was any, has been lost to time. The Malydor Manufacturing Company first appeared in the city directories in 1883, at the same address as the drugstore. By 1886, the partnership had apparently soured, for the two men were operating different stores on different ends of Main Street. In 1887, Malydor was being manufactured at 438 W. Main.

It is not too surprising that the partnership fell to the wayside. Marketing such a product was hazardous business, and few men wished to be connected with it no matter how lucrative it proved to be. But where there was money to be made, there were men there to make it. But how much of a market was there for such a remedy, even if it performed as advertised?

That is a good question. I will answer it the best that I am able. To do so, I must go back to 1880. In that year, thousands of men participated in an event that spanned that

nation. Now pull your dirty minds from the gutter for a moment. The event was the national census. Since you were listed by your name, age, and occupation, each of these facts shows up on the many thousands of pages inscribed by various pollsters. Believe it or not, some naughty ladies were more than open about their jobs, listing themselves as prostitutes. Nearly 5000 nationwide did just that, including 266 in Ohio! If that many listed themselves openly, how many more were there secretly plying their trade?

In fact there were enough to keep an unhealthy supply of the diseases circulating among their clients, who in turn infected other "ladies". As a gentlemen, you could not seek professional help, at least not from a hometown doctor. Such an action would immediately betray your complaint for what it was, opening up your life to gossip and scandal. But nestled deep down in the small advertisements lining the sides of many newspapers were discrete little pronouncements for all kinds of products. Malydor was one such creation.

Philip Montanus may have actually believed his product worked. I find this doubtful. The most prevalent treatment was the use of mercury compounds, which while effective against the disease, also tended to kill the patient as well. There were other treatments, none of which worked. The main active ingredient in Malydor was acetinalid,

the great grand pappy of today's acetaminophen.

It gives a whole new meaning to take two pills and call me in the morning. And actually, the back of the Malydor trade cards mentions pills. For the most part however, this medicine was injected straight to the root of the problem. Go ahead and grimace; I work in a hospital and the thought makes me wince. In fact, Mr. Montanus applied for a trade mark, receiving it not for Malydor, but for the word "injection".

Regardless of inherent social stigmas surrounding VD cures, there were enough sufferers to provide a cash flow of lucrative proportions. But such a trade didn't allow the proprietor much in the way of societal opportunities. Operating a drugstore was acceptable, but operating a patent medicine scam was not. The cure for Mr. Montanus' ills



came in 1889, when he hired on a young druggist fresh from Baltimore, Maryland. His name was John Bellerman. Bellerman was immediately interested in his boss's business, and in a short time the two struck a deal. Montanus sold the business on one condition – that Bellerman take it else where. It was agreed and the deal struck. And his choice of community?

In 1890, Lancaster, Ohio acquired both Bellerman and Malydor. Both probably kept low profiles for a while. This didn't keep him from doing a brisk business, and soon advertisements sprung up in newspapers around the country. He did his homework, and bought space in papers with a large circulation, or those in towns with a definite need for his product. His medicine was touted as close to home as Sandusky, Ohio, and as far away as Galveston, Texas. As was noted by Dr. L. Duncan Bulkey *"Syphilis is everywhere seen to be a disease more especially belonging to communities, and flourishing most luxuriantly wherever there is crowding or massing together of individuals..."*

Malydor first came in square round

edged bottle, with four indented panels. Later versions (see previous page) were flask shaped. Unlike many such products, where discretion was key, Bellerman's trade cards skirted on the edge of impropriety. The front told the story; a desolate parrot (a gentleman), the cavorting cats (prostitutes), the brothel, and the sun (Malydor) rising above it all.

In the Victorian age, if it had actually worked it would have been worth a hundred times its cost. But the fact was, until the advent of antibiotics, there was no way of eliminating the disease.

The medical community knew this. There were a number of treatises written upon the subject, including some by such Ohio physicians as G.C. Blackman, H.G. Blaine, and John M. Scudder. They all knew the treatments were as bad as the disease, and that there was little hope for the sufferer. But hope is what a patent medicine dangled in front of the patient.

John Bellerman knew this, and exploited it as best he was able. Acetinalid would relieve some pain, but it would never affect the disease itself. From his home and headquarters at 210 S. Maple Street, he sent out plain brown packages via the mail, and crates of the bottles to his more lucrative locations. It is hard to say what folks thought of him, and whether or not he cared. Even then, he didn't have too long to worry about it, for he died prior to 1910. It was not yet the end. His widow, Ida, carried on the business into the 1920's, possibly up to the time of her death on September 29, 1925. Malydor's originator, Mr. Montanus, moved up through society, becoming president of the Springfield Machine Tool Company, and eventually entering politics. He died in 1932.

Returning to the 1880s, we can find another VD cure gaining a foothold in the medicine market. It too owed its existence to a druggist, located in a city where one might more readily expect it



to come from. Jason S. Evans had a drug store on the corner of Fifth and Walnut in Cincinnati in 1881. Here, he came up with his own version of a salvation to indiscretion. He was perhaps braver or more intrepid than his competitors, for he named his creation "Big G". This was a not-so-subtle reference to gonorrhea. Evidence suggests he was selling it as early as 1884.

It caught on with a needy public, for only two years later the Evans Chemical Company was formed. "Big G" was registered as a trade mark on April 14, 1887, confirming the sales potential of the compound. The firm itself was made up of relatives and friends, including A.H. Evans as president, Benjamin Evans as vice president and Jason serving as treasurer. C.L. Doughty, a book keeper, served as secretary and W.C. Bacchus was foreman.

Like all such firms, their listed location varied over the years, from 76 Johnson Bldg their first year, to 49 W. Pearl in 1890. Two years later they were at 100 Walnut and in 1895 were at 230 Walnut. The firm remained in that location until 1925, when they were listed on the second floor at 105 E. Pearl.

Overall, "Big G" was more widely distributed and sold in greater volume than was

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which still stands as a major Alexandria tourist attraction. Robert and Henry Downham by now were responsible for the daily operations of the liquor business. By 1915 they had moved the company to 1229 King Street.

In 1918, Henry Downham died at age 50, leaving a grieving mother and father. In 1920 National Prohibition closed down E.E. Downham & Co. forever. Downham himself died a year later at his Washington Street home, age 82. His obituary in the local newspaper stated that his "long life of usefulness entitled him to the esteem and affection" of all Alexandria citizens.

During Prohibition, with liquor banned, his son Robert turned to a new business as a clothier, hatter and haberdasher to the town. Robert's enterprise does not appear to have succeeded and several years later he was recorded working as a clerk in another store. In 1936 the Lee-Fendall house was sold to John L. Lewis, the famous head of the United Mine Workers. In 1937 E.E.'s wife, Sarah, died of the complications of old age at 92, still living at the family's Washington Street address.

#### North and South United

No evidence exists that Shawhan and

Downham ever met, but their lives bear similarities. Both got their start during the tumult of the Civil War. Both found prosperity in the whiskey trade in the post-war period. Both became recognized and respected figures in their respective communities. Both businesses they built by dint of hard work and dedication were killed by National Prohibition. Finally, both whiskey men have left us with a legacy of collectable items to remember them and their remarkable stories.

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**Reference Notes:** Material on George Shawhan was drawn principally from a family Internet site that contains informative articles by Ronald Shawhan and Robert Francis. The site also contains several of the illustrations that appear here. The shot glass photo is courtesy of Robin Preston of *pre-pro.com*. Information about E.E. Downham was gathered from a number of sources, using the Internet and the Alexandria, Virginia Public Library. The pictures of Downham and his Washington Street home are courtesy of the Library. The pictures of the Belle Haven Rye bottle and corkscrew are through the courtesy of Dr. Richard Lilienthal. Portions of this article previously have appeared in the *Ohio Swirl* and the *Potomac Pontil*.

#### The Dating Game: C.L. Flaccus Glass Co., by the Bottle Research Group Continued from page 40.

1907-1908 *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in all Lines: The Buyers Guide*. Thomas Publishing Co., New York.

1909 *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines: A Classified Reference Book for Buyer and Sellers*. Thomas Publishing, New York.

1912 *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines: A Classified Reference Book for Buyer and Sellers*. Thomas Publishing, New York.

1914 *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines: A Classified Reference Book for Buyer and Sellers*. Thomas Publishing, New York.

1915 *Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines: A Classified Reference Book for Buyer and Sellers*. Thomas Publishing, New York.

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1917 *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers and First Hands in All Lines*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Thomas Publishing Co., New York.

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1969 *Fruit Jars*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, Camden, New Jersey.

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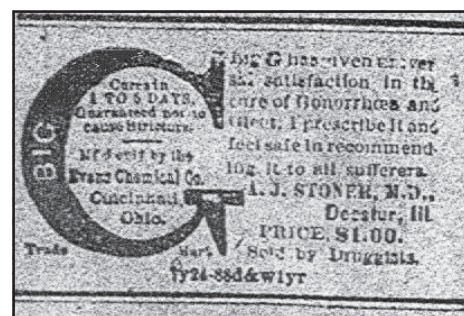
#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> This did not include C.L. Flaccus, who most certainly made his own glassware.

#### Clap On...Clap Off? or The Dangers of Indiscretion

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Malydor. Evidence to suggest this includes the sheer number of Evans Chemical Company bottles that can be found in dumps and privies. In general, they come in two styles, the earliest bearing the trade mark, and the latter having it removed. The trade mark was the selling point, in its simplicity and its reference. Newspaper ads could be found in a wider variety of newspapers, but like Malydor, they were restricted to the tiny side margins, often fighting for space with similar products.

The Evans Chemical Company lost its incorporation status in 1930, and the author's information doesn't extend past that date. It is possible that it continued on, as many such remedies were still being marketed to an unsuspecting market. The FDA began weeding them out, and individual states began banning them altogether. The state of Maryland passed regulations outlawing venereal remedies in the thirties and forties, but it was penicillin and sulfa drugs that actually finished them off.

Like all patent medicines, the trick was to convince the buyer of its worth. Had the public been better informed, nary a drop would have been sold. But ignorance was bliss, especially for the manufacturers. Venereal disease still remains active today, despite the effective treatments of modern science. It remains, like in the Victorian period, a social disease, and those who have it do not wish that fact to be known. In the past, it has killed many famous people; artists, thinkers and leaders. But while they have died, the products that preyed on them; or, at least their bottles, live on.

