I. POLIOMYELITIS EPIDEMIC, 1947–48

On a Saturday morning in October, 1947, an Auckland school-girl, running from her home to a waiting car to commence a trip to the country, was noticed to stagger to one side as if giddy. She denied feeling ill, but when her temperature was taken it was 104° F.

This girl was the first victim of the epidemic of poliomyelitis with which this paper is concerned. The correct diagnosis in her case was not established until several weeks had passed. The earliest cases to be notified were reported towards the end of the third week in November. By the end of the year 87 cases, and by the end of March 142 cases, had occurred in the Central Auckland district.

The earliest cases were scattered widely. The first, as mentioned above, lived in Auckland City (onset, 25th October). The next was at Papakura, nineteen miles to the south (10th November). As early as 19th November, when the outbreak in the city was just getting under way, a farmer in a remote valley near Hunua, some thirty miles to the south-east, experienced the commencing symptoms of an attack.

In Auckland itself there was nothing to indicate spread from any particular focus. This is well shown on the spot maps (see Fig. I, pages 62, 63), on which the first 5, 10, 20, and 50 cases have been plotted. The first 10 cases affected seven different residential areas, and the first seven children attended four different schools. Even when two patients were drawn from the same school, they were usually found to have been in different standards and had had no traceable contact with each other.

Efforts to clarify the situation by detailed studies of the movements of cases and those with whom they had been in contact were not very helpful. Quite often one was rewarded by tracing a relationship, sometimes between widely separated cases ; but
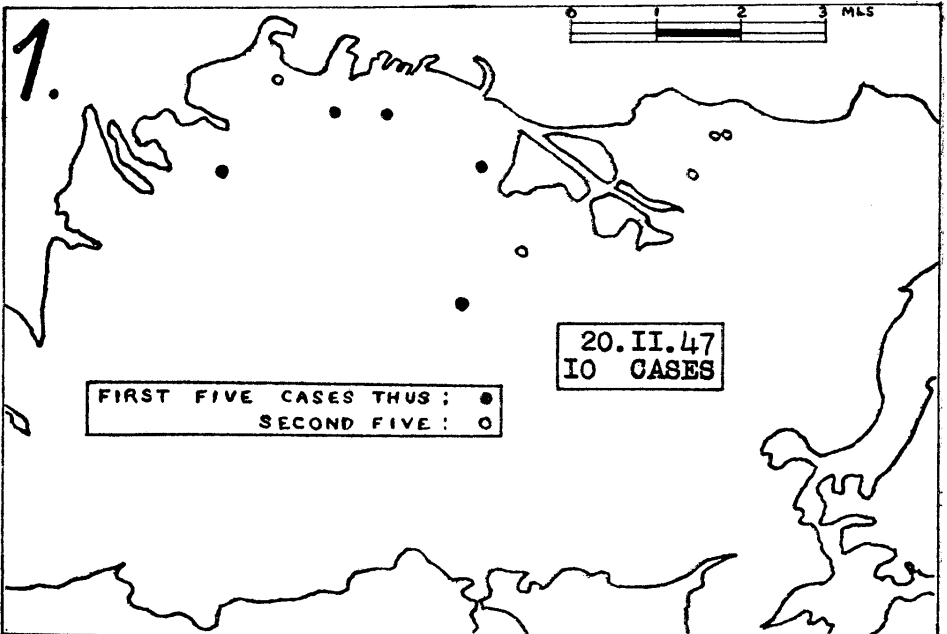

FIG. I.—SPOT MAPS TO SHOW DEVELOPMENT OF EPIDEMIC IN AUCKLAND : (1) 10 CASES, 20TH NOVEMBER ; (2) 20 CASES, 1ST DECEMBER ; (3) 50 CASES, 17TH DECEMBER.

N.B.—Dates refer to onset.