

# THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

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VOL. XVI.]

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1837.

[NO. 11.]

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## PUBLIC HEALTH.—BOSTON BOARD OF HEALTH.

In consequence of the extreme difficulty of removing smallpox patients to the excellent hospital located at the Quarantine Ground, the past winter, on account of the harbor being closed with ice, it was thought expedient to establish one at some remote part of the city for the reception of this particular class of unfortunates. The Statute Law of the State requires that a building used for that purpose should not be nearer than one hundred rods to any habitation belonging to another town—and hence the committee to whom was referred the matter of selecting a site, found themselves considerably perplexed, as it was desirable on every account to seek a spot on the outer borders of the city, where there were the fewest dwellings. Under these circumstances, through their chairman, Alderman Wetmore, the following report was made to the City Council. Accompanying it, are several medical reports from the Consulting Physicians, which are on file for publication.

*Report.*—In compliance with an order of the City Council, the Committee have conferred with the Consulting Physicians, and have ascertained their opinion in relation to the subject of it. On communicating with them, they were found to be well acquainted with the present hospital at Rainsford Island, and with all the advantages and evils attending the transportation of the sick to it; and after due consideration of the subject they gave an opinion in writing, which the Committee hereto annex and ask leave to make a part of their report.

It will appear on examining this document, that the Consulting Physicians agree entirely with the Committee, in the sentiments, expressed in their former report, as to the difficulties attending the present hospital at certain seasons, and the necessity of providing another, and, in the opinion of the Committee, the reasons assigned by the Physicians are entirely satisfactory.

Their views and reasoning, however, seemed to be predicated on the supposition that the present system of laws for the removal and supervision of smallpox patients, was considered by the City Council to be judicious and proper, and necessary for the health and safety of the inhabitants, and therefore that it ought to be continued. And the Committee thought it to be within the scope of the powers and duties assigned them, to ask the attention of the Physicians to the whole subject of the present system, and to request their opinion of its policy and propriety. An answer received to a communication of the Committee,

on the subject, is also here annexed, and the Committee ask leave to make it part of their report.

The result of the deliberation of the Consulting Physicians, expressed unanimously, is, that the present system for the removal and seclusion of persons sick with the smallpox is not required for the health and safety of the community—that its operation is frequently cruel—that by it unnecessary alarm and confusion are frequently occasioned—and that it is attended with great and useless expense. They therefore recommend that the practice of removing from the City, persons affected with smallpox, should be discontinued after the first day of March next.

The Committee fully concur in the opinions expressed in the communication of the Physicians, and they think that any advice, on this subject, coming from those who from their profession are so well acquainted with it, ought at once to meet with deference and acquiescence.

In addition, however, to the reasons assigned by them, the Committee would remind the City Council that the Statute of the Commonwealth under which the present system was originally established, and has been continued to the present time, was passed in 1792, many years before vaccination was known or adopted in this country as a preventive of the smallpox. The law, therefore, possibly may have been necessary and proper at that time to prevent the spreading of a most loathsome contagious disease, in a community where almost every individual was liable to be infected, notwithstanding the apparent harshness and severity of some of its provisions. But now, when a sure preventive of this disease has been discovered, and has been adopted by a vast majority of the inhabitants, when all reasonable fear of its ever prevailing as an epidemic is done away, and when its yearly ravages have for a long time, indeed ever since the introduction of vaccination, been by far less than those of other contagious diseases which are every day occurring, and against which the law takes no precaution—a system which was fit for another state of society under different circumstances, has become not only harsh and cruel, but impolitic, unreasonable, and unwise.

The Physicians, among other reasons for the discontinuance of the present practice, state that the terrors of a general spreading of the smallpox would be thereby allayed, and the disease would be regarded with no more alarm than measles and other contagious diseases. And the Committee have been induced to examine the bills of mortality for several years past, in order to ascertain what has been the number of deaths occasioned by these two disorders.

They find that since the beginning of the year 1813 (beyond which time no regular record has been published), to the beginning of the present year, a period of twenty-four years, there have been recorded but thirty-five deaths by smallpox, while the deaths by measles during the same period have been no less than five hundred and seventy-three. The deaths by smallpox have in no year exceeded five, while the deaths by measles in one year amounted to one hundred and eighty-eight. And yet it has never been thought necessary to remove those suffering under the latter disease, from their homes to hospitals, or to se-

clude them from the attendance of those on whose care they have been accustomed to rely.

The Committee therefore agree with the Consulting Physicians as to the inutility and impolicy of the present practice of removal and seclusion of smallpox patients. They regret, however, that it is not in the power of the City Council to discontinue it. It exists under a law of the Commonwealth, which seems to leave but little discretion to the Council on the subject. The act of 1792, as re-enacted by the late revision of the Statutes, is imperative on the City Government to provide hospitals, and to remove to them persons sick with smallpox, when it can be done without endangering their lives. Whether, in the present state of public opinion on the subject, an application to the Legislature, for an alteration of the law, would be favorably received, is so extremely doubtful that the Committee do not deem it expedient now to propose it. They cannot but hope, however, that the alarm and dread of this disease, which have descended to us from other and distant times, will, at no very remote period, be no longer felt, and that it will be managed as diseases of similar character are. As the most certain mode of producing this result, the Committee think that the attention of the City Council and of the citizens should be imperatively drawn to the subject of vaccination. It was in 1802, that the Municipal Authorities first adopted any measures on the subject. The Board of Health then caused twenty-two persons to be vaccinated, and afterwards sent to a hospital and inoculated for the smallpox, "in order," as they say, "to remove all reasonable doubts of the utility or inutility of the kinpock or vaccine inoculation as a preventive against the smallpox;" and the experiment appears to have been quite successful in proving the value of vaccination. Afterwards, in 1816, the Assessors having certified that there were five thousand four hundred and fifty-three persons who had never been vaccinated nor had had the smallpox, a general vaccination took place under the direction of Committees of the several Wards. Since then the subject has been left very much to the discretion of the inhabitants; it is believed, however, that there are but few who have not been vaccinated. The present regulations of the public schools, by which no child can be admitted without being previously vaccinated, has undoubtedly had an extensively beneficial effect, and the instructors of all private schools should be earnestly advised to adopt the same. No person should hold any office under the City Government, unless he and his family have undergone the same operation. The inmates of the Houses of Correction, Reformation and Industry should be vaccinated on their admission. And vaccination ought to be performed on all citizens who may apply for it, at the expense of the city.

By the adoption of these and any other measures for the extension of vaccination which may occur to the wisdom of the City Council, the Committee believe that the smallpox will in this city, in a very short time, be confined to a few isolated cases among those persons who wilfully neglect the means held out to them for protection against it.

In the mean time, while acting under our present system, as the City Council are not obliged to remove the sick when such removal cannot be

made without endangering life, we trust that the Consulting Physicians will at no time advise it, if thereby from nervous excitement, or any other cause, the disease will probably be exasperated and increased.

Entertaining the foregoing views, therefore, the Committee do not now deem it expedient to provide another hospital for smallpox and other contagious diseases; and they would suggest an additional reason in the extreme difficulty, if not impossibility, of finding a suitable place for one. Such an establishment must necessarily be within the limits of the city, and not within one hundred rods of any dwelling in a neighboring town, without the consent of the inhabitants of such town. The Committee, after an attentive examination, have not been able to discover any place to which strong, if not insurmountable, objections have not been raised. And they ask to be discharged from any further consideration on the subject.

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The Consulting Physicians of the City of Boston have been called on by a Committee of the City Council to say, whether, in their opinion, it is necessary to provide a place for the residence of those who are affected with the smallpox and other contagious diseases in the winter season. Having carefully considered the subject, they ask leave to offer their opinion, as follows:—

“That it is highly necessary to provide a place, in, or near to the city, to which those affected with smallpox and other contagious diseases, in the winter, may be conveniently and safely removed.”

The reasons which have led them to form this opinion are the following:—

I. They believe that cases of contagious disease may occur, in which it would be dangerous to life to remove the patient in a boat or vessel, as now practised.

II. That obstructions in the harbor may prevent the removal of infected patients so early, after the appearance of the disease, as to avoid their communicating it to others.

III. That an insular situation: may sometimes prevent the administration of those aids, which severe diseases might require.

IV. That an apprehension of being removed in the manner done at present, may operate as a temptation to physicians and patients to conceal the existence of a contagious disorder.

On the other part, there appears to be no serious objections to establishing a place for persons affected with contagious disorders in or near the city.

All such diseases emanate their contagious influence to a very limited extent; generally not beyond the air immediately surrounding the infected person.

As one proof of this, may be advanced the fact of a smallpox hospital having existed a considerable number of years, within two miles of Boston, without having communicated, or having been suspected to communicate, the contagion to the city.

As to the place proper for such an establishment, this Board is of opinion, that any place in or near the city, which can be as much insu-

lated as the State Prison at Charlestown, or the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, would be perfectly safe, if precautions were taken to disinfect those who had occasion to communicate with the establishment.

By order of the Board of Consulting Physicians,

JOHN C. WARREN.

Boston, February 1, 1837.

#### OPIUM IN RHEUMATISM.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

SIR,—Dr. Webb's dissertation, in your Journal of the 5th inst., recommends the use of opium in Rheumatism; and the author quotes a passage from the Med.-Chirur. Review, in which is described Dr. Cazenave's use of this article in rheumatism and his mode of using it. I send you the following in corroboration of Dr. W.'s statements.

In February last I was in Providence, and Dr. Mauran, of that city, stated to me his use of opium in rheumatism, saying that he began its use about eight years since, in consequence of the recommendation above referred to in the Med.-Chirur. Review. He then promised to send me a statement of his experience, in writing. This he did, under date of March 28th, 1837. I send you the communication from him, and leave it to you to publish it, if you think proper. I will only add, to those who do not know Dr. Mauran, that he is a gentleman of science and in extensive practice, and that his statements are worthy of full confidence. I mean that he fully believes all he states. We all know that the same remedy succeeds in the hands of one man better than in those of another. Generally this is to be attributed to more full and free use of an article by one who has faith in it, than by one who is apprehensive of evil from it.

Yours respectfully,

A. B.

Boston, April 8th, 1837.

#### *Extract from Dr. Mauran's Letter.*

You may recollect, when I last had the pleasure of meeting you, that some remarks were made upon the treatment of Rheumatism with Opium. I am induced, from the success attendant for a series of years upon this novel mode of treatment, to give you a very brief and familiar statement of my observations.

In Johnson's Medico-Chirur. Review, in 1828, you will find the short article on rheumatism to which I then very briefly alluded, and which formed the basis of a series of practice in relation to that heretofore, with me, and I presume most others, very formidable disease. I generally hesitate largely in adopting *new* things from the Journals, without "I know my man," and probably this hint of Cazenave might have passed by me, "unhonored and unsung," but for a *fortuitous* circumstance. I say fortuitous, not that my then patient was sorely afflicted (protractedly) under our most popular mode of treatment, with rheumatism, and was now cured; but that the *successful* adaptation of Cazenave's plan to *his* case, has been exceedingly advantageous to all others who