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Hygiene
20 1907

INTERNATIONAL SANITARY POLICE.

REPORT

PRESENTED BY

The Mexican Delegation

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1 (PARAGRAPH A)

OF THE

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME.



MEXICO

A. CARRANZA Y COMP. IMPRESORES

CALLEJÓN DE CINCUENTA Y SIETE NÚM. 7.

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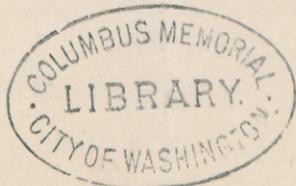
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The facilities of communication between men, whether by land or by sea, have resulted in the greatest benefits to humanity; but as there is no benefit which is not accompanied by its corresponding evil, the same can be said with respect to the facilities which are afforded by steamship and railroad transportation.

In moving from one place to another, men carry with them the diseases from which they may be suffering. The international Sanitary Police has displayed the greatest care, sometimes to a very exaggerated degree, in its endeavours to prevent transmissible acute diseases from being brought into the ports or frontier cities, or in more exact terms, it has endeavoured to put every obstacle in the way of the transmission of those diseases, by detaining those persons who are sick or suspected of suffering from those diseases, in the ships by which they have been transported or in special lazarettes. But as regards transmissible chronic diseases, no notice has been taken of them by the legislators before the present time, and nevertheless it is as necessary to protect ourselves from the acute transmissible diseases as from those which have a slow development and are therefore denominated chronic.

In these days, when the Asiatic immigration encounters such great difficulties in its efforts to penetrate the United States of America, its current has been turned towards the countries of Latin America. In Mexico we receive every month one or two steamers in the port of Salina Cruz, some with Chinese and others with Japanese immigrants.

Our Sanitary Code provides that only those persons will be allowed to enter the Republic with the character of immigrants, when they are in possession of certificates which prove their perfectly healthy conditions, issued by the competent authority in the place of departure and

vised by the Mexican Consul. Under Art. 49 of that same Code, certificates which have been issued two months previously to the date on which the immigrant reaches our shores will be considered null and void.

This measure was found insufficient in practice because the immigrants might have started from their own countries with the diseases in a state of incubation and reach our ports with them already developed. It is to be noted that our situation lends itself greatly to the transmission of disease, because the ships do not touch at any port on their voyage but come directly from the Asiatic ports to ours on the Pacific. In view of this, orders have been given with respect to Chinese immigrants, which may be briefly summed up as follows:—

The immigrants must come provided with certificates of health issued by a physician in the port of departure and vided by the Mexican Consul in that port, or in his defect, by the United States consul.

Asiatic immigrants can only be allowed to land in the port of Salina Cruz, if they are more than ten in number; but when their number does not exceed ten, they are allowed to land in the ports of Acapulco, Mazatlan, Guaymas, Tampico, Veracruz or Coatzacoalcos.

Every ship which transports immigrants is received in accordance with the provisions of the Sanitary Code, the Maritime Sanitary Regulations, and the Special Ruling which may be issued by the Supreme Board of Health in each case and in view of the circumstances.

If there are none of these special circumstances present, the healthy immigrants are at once allowed to land and are directly taken, over a special wharf, to the lazarette which is dedicated to them.

In this lazarette they are made to bathe, their clothing and baggage are disinfected, and they are kept under observation for a period of *ten days*.

If at the end of that period no disease has made its appearance amongst them, they are permitted to leave but also required to report to the Delegate of the Supreme Board of Health, the point to which each immigrant proposes to travel.

Up to the present, these measures have been sufficient to keep us free from cholera, bubonic plague and yellow fever; but they have not prevented the introduction into the country, which has actually taken place, of persons suffering from beri-beri. As this disease was entirely unknown in Mexico, and on the other hand, the persons who were suffering from it in its first stages when it was not as easy to recognize the

symptoms which render it so visible in a more advanced stage, several cases presented themselves in Salina Cruz, Tehuantepec and Sta. Lucrecia, which were confined to the immigrants themselves. As soon as the Sanitary Authorities discovered these cases, they immediately required that the patients should be reshipped to their own country and gave orders that no person suffering from beri-beri should be allowed to land.

Trachoma was a disease that in Mexico was only known to oculists, and it must have been so rare that a knowledge of it had not reached the generality of the medical public, and still less, the laity. A distinguished ophthalmologist of Mexico, Dr. Lorenzo Chavez, had occasion to observe last year a small epidemic of trachoma in one of the Government schools, and called attention to the danger of its propagation. This fact led the Sanitary Authorities to fix their attention on the possibility of trachoma being introduced by the Asiatic immigrants, and on the danger of that disease spreading through the country. The Sanitary Delegates in the ports having been warned, they commenced to note the number of persons suffering from trachoma who reached the Republic, and naturally it was found that those arriving in the Pacific ports were more numerous than those who arrived by the Gulf ports. In one steamer, the number of persons suffering from trachoma was found to be 220.

The Supreme Board of Health then asked the Department of the Interior to prohibit the landing of such immigrants and they were therefore returned to China, and a ministerial declaration was obtained to the effect that immigrants suffering from this disease would not be allowed to land in any of the Gulf or Pacific ports of this Republic.

In order to prevent the introduction of any of the above diseases, a careful inspection is made of the immigrants before they embark in the port of Hong Kong, which is that from which the Chinese immigration generally proceeds.

For this purpose a physician has been sent to that port with the character of Delegate of the Supreme Board of Health, and commissioned to prevent the embarkation of all emigrants who may be suffering from bubonic plague, cholera and other acute transmissible disease.

We are now studying a law which will prevent the landing in our ports of persons suffering from tuberculosis, scrofula, malaria (acute for the moment) beri-beri, trachoma, and other transmissible chronic diseases. It is likewise proposed to prohibit the landing of the insane, aged, idiotic children, those whose constitution is much debilitated by any previous disease or by organic weakness; the lame, one armed,

humpbacks or deformed who may be unable to work; und of all those who may become a public charge.

We have hopes that if the Legislature will enact a law, which we now have under study, we will not only keep ourselves free from the diseases which hitherto have been unknown to us, but also protect our neighbours from those diseases by not admitting them into our territory.

I invite the Honourable Delegates to this Congress to suggest similar measures to those we have already adopted, to their respective Governments, or such as will soon form part of our Sanitary Legislation.

If all the nations of America would form a close alliance in order to prevent the introduction of the sick or incapacitated for work throughout the vast extent of our continent, we would contribute in a very efficacious manner to the improvement of the hygienic and social conditions of our respective nations.

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