

Simons (M.)



[PAPER H.]

*Report of the Committee on State Medicine and Public Hygiene — Manning Simons, M. D., Chairman, Charleston, S. C.*

The Report of the Committee on State Medicine and Public Hygiene must, of necessity, on this occasion, be limited to a history of the results of our work since the last session of the Association.

As you remember, we presented a report at the session of 1877, in which suggestions were made for the establishment of a State Board of Health, and a Sub-Committee was appointed to consider and report upon these suggestions.

This Sub-Committee reported to the Association a Memorial and a Bill, which they recommended should be presented under the authority and with the endorsement of this Association.

The Legislature was, soon after the adjournment of this Association, to meet in extra session. Our report, therefore, must be limited chiefly to the consideration of the history of this bill.

The Chairman of the Committee on State Medicine and Public Hygiene immediately sent copies of the Bill and Memorial, and of the address of the American Medical Association to the Governors of the several States, to the Executive of this State, indulging the hope and making the request that he would introduce some allusion to the subject in his message.

At the same time the Bill and Memorial were placed in good hands in the House and Senate, and were, in due time, presented at the extra session of the Legislature.

The Association had over-estimated their influence, weight and importance, believing that, as the represen-

tatives of the medical profession of the State of South Carolina, their recommendations and suggestions, on matters pertaining to medicine, were worthy of consideration.

The Bill was not mentioned in the message, but after having been favorably reported upon by the Committee on Medical Affairs, and passed in the House of Representatives, was stopped in the Senate, on grounds that were not given to the public.

Here the matter rested until the approach of the November Session of the Legislature, when the much respected President of this Association addressed a most interesting communication to the Executive, signed by himself and the Secretary, officially, asking his aid and assistance in this great work.

We believe that the communication reached its destination, but it bore no fruits.

The Legislature met, and the Bill was called up in the Senate, where it again met with opposition, and on this occasion, as before, from one of the Senators from Charleston.

The committee appointed by the Association to look after the Bill, and of which our President was chairman, were not idle, but by means of diligent inquiry, received information (which subsequently proved correct,) leading them to believe that the opposition originated with some of the members of the City Government of Charleston.

By means of the telegraph, the profession in the State were warned of the danger that was in this way threatened to the advance of sanitary science, and the injury that might accrue to the people of this State.

In Charleston, a joint meeting of the Medical Society of South Carolina, and of the profession at large, was held, to protest against the opposition to the Bill, and the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

“Whereas, the Bill entitled a Bill to re-charter the the State Medical Association, and establish a Board of

Health, and define its duties, has passed the House of Representatives, and been sent to the Senate, where, from some apparent misapprehension of its aims and purposes, it seems to have met with opposition; and, whereas its passage is deemed necessary by the medical profession of the State, for the purpose of improving the sanitary condition of our people; therefore, be it

“Resolved, that in the opinion of the medical profession of this city, the passage of this said Bill will largely conduce to the improvement of the sanitary condition of the State; that the profession do request the Senators from Charleston County to urge the passage of the said Bill.

“That a committee be appointed from the profession to proceed to Columbia, and urge the necessity of the passage of the Bill, upon our immediate representatives and the legislative body at large.

“That a copy of these resolutions be sent to each of the Senators, signed by the members of the profession.”

The committee appointed to present the resolutions to the Legislature, consisted of Drs. J. F. M. Geddings, H. D. Fraser, and Manning Simons.

This committee proceeded to Columbia, presented the resolutions to the Senators, and appeared before the Charleston delegation, to whom the Bill had been referred, and argued the question, dwelling upon the importance of the matter under consideration, for the benefit of the whole State; in this being joined by Drs. Taylor and Trezevant, of Columbia.

In the meantime, the Mayor of Charleston had written a letter to one of the Senators, and without the sanction of the Aldermen of the City in Council, appointed a committee to go to Columbia and oppose the medical profession of the State in their effort to obtain the passage of the Bill. We are induced to state that this committee was appointed without authority, for the following reasons, derived principally from the newspaper accounts of the succeeding meeting of the City Council.

The *News and Courier* of February 13th, 1878, contains the following :

“Alderman Willis reported verbally from the ambassadors sent by the Mayor to the Court at Columbia, to protest against the proposed State Board of Health. He stated that the objections to that institution were, that it would take the management of the health affairs of this and other places out of the hands of their own people, leaving them entirely under the control of people from the middle country, up country, or anywhere the Legislature choose. He thought, however, that they had succeeded in pretty well killing the measure.”

“Alderman Bissell didn't understand the matter ; he had heard nothing of it until he saw it in the papers.”

“Alderman Cathcart also wanted to know about it. He had received no information, and had not been consulted. The Mayor had sent gentlemen to Columbia to say that he as part of the Council, wanted something, and had asked him nothing about it. He considered it was due to the board of Aldermen that they should have been called together and allowed an opportunity of saying whether or not they wished to be represented as desiring the defeat of this measure. They should have had a chance of consulting the professional gentlemen employed by the City, and drawing their own conclusions. The Mayor had plenty of time to call Council together and ask its opinion, before sending this committee of its members.”

“The Mayor said that he only received his information on the day he sent the committee, and had no time to convene Council.”

The action of the Mayor was confirmed, but only after opposition, and one of the aldermen, Mr. J. Adger Smyth, who was absent from this meeting, at the succeeding meeting recorded his vote in the negative.

So far as the statement is concerned, that the Mayor and Council had no information on the subject of the Bill, it must be remembered that the Bill has been

nearly a year before the Legislature. We believe that much of this opposition was carried on by those who had not even possessed themselves correctly, if at all, of the provisions of the Bill.

The object of the Mayor and his Committee was to have Charleston excepted and exempted from the provisions of the Bill, and if this were done, it is evident to you that the unity and uniformity so important to the success of the movement would have been destroyed, and its efficacy absolutely impaired.

Dr. Geddings returned to Columbia and met this committee in argument before the delegation from Charleston.

As a result of this discussion, the delegation expressed themselves, according to the publications in the newspapers, as entirely in favor of a State Board of Health, but opposed to the Bill recommended by this Association.

The matter was, therefore, referred to a Committee of *Three*, to draw a Bill. This Bill was published in the *Journal of Commerce* of March 4th, 1878, but was not, we believe, ever reported to the Legislature for action.

It was very defective, and did not touch the question, being drawn without apparently sufficient acquaintance with the subject, which requires, as you well know, special study. We give this Bill as it appeared in the newspaper, and also extract from the same source, as it forms part of the history of the Bill, a criticism which evidently emanated from the pen of one who fully understands and appreciates the importance of the subject of State Medicine and Public Hygiene.

“Be it enacted, &c.

“SECTION 1. That the charter of incorporation of the South Carolina Medical Association, granted by the Act of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, entitled ‘An Act to incorporate certain societies of South Carolina, and to amend certain charters

heretofore granted,' passed the 19th day of December, 1848, with the rights and privileges therein contained, be renewed and made of force, and continued for the space of fourteen years.

"SEC. 2. That the Governor shall appoint seven persons, who shall constitute a State Board of Health and Vital Statistics. The persons so appointed shall hold their offices for seven years, provided that the terms of office of the seven first appointed shall be so arranged that the term of one shall expire each year, and the vacancies occurring otherwise shall be filled by the Governor, but any one may be re-appointed.

"And provided, further, that there shall be at least three members of the South Carolina Medical Association on the said Board of Health, and said Board of Health so constituted shall be the adviser of the State on all questions involving the protection of the public health within its limits. And it shall be the duty of the said Board to make an annual report to the Legislature on all matters relating to its action.

"SEC. 3. That it shall be the duty of the State Board of Health, through its representatives, to investigate the cause, character, and means of preventing such epidemic and endemic diseases as the State is liable to suffer from; the influence of climate, localities, occupation, habits, drainage, scavengering, water supply, heating and ventilation, and shall make meteorological observations and inspections of the sanitary condition annually, or oftener if necessary, of all institutions provided as State charities, or supported at the public expense.

"SEC. 4. The Board shall meet at some point in the State once in three months, and as much oftener as they may deem expedient.

"SEC. 5. The Board shall elect a chairman and secretary from their own number.

"SEC. 6. It shall be the duty of the Health Physician, and also of the Clerk of the local Board of

Health in any township, city and village in this State, at least once in each year, to report to the State Board of Health their proceedings and such other facts required, in blanks, and in accordance with instructions received from said State Board. They shall also make special reports whenever required by the State Board of Health to do so."—*Journal of Commerce*, March 4th, 1878.

This Bill was unsatisfactory to the medical profession, it may be presumed, from the following criticism, which appeared in the *News and Courier*, March 7th, 1878.

We are prompted to give this extract, as it may, perhaps, have had some effect in causing the Bill to be withheld, and it certainly forms a part of the history of the matter that we have under consideration :

*"Messrs. Simonton, Campbell, and Buist, Sub-Committee of the Charleston Delegation on the Health Bill :*

"GENTLEMEN—The Health Bill proposed by your Committee, as published in the *Journal of Commerce*, of the 4th inst., is practically worthless. It must have been prepared after very imperfect consideration, and with but little regard to the vital interests of the people you claim to represent, or else you must be profoundly ignorant of what should constitute the duties and functions of a health board. We call upon you to take more interest in this matter, and to seek counsel of those informed upon this subject. This much you owe to your constituents.

"The Charleston delegation, that created your Committee, allowed themselves to be influenced by a Committee purporting to represent the City Council. This Committee, as has been shown, had no proper credentials, and were not entitled to even a hearing, except as private individuals.

"You have it in your power, by an intelligent and earnest action, to undo a wrong that has been committed.

“The futility of your proposed Bill is such that no member of the South Carolina Medical Association could, with any self-respect, serve on the Board you would create. The medical profession have less to gain by the establishment of a proper Health Board than have the people at large, and if the Legislature determines to enact the farce which your Committee seriously suggests, we hope that all the appointments will be made outside of their ranks.” “QUARIN.”

Some of the objections to this Bill may be simply stated as follows :

1st. The appointment of the Board.

The object of this Association was to remove sanitation for the future from all political influences and patronage, and whilst, for the present, we would be willing to yield this point, the Association does not know that our future rulers could so command our confidence.

2nd. The Bill mentions the representatives of the State Board of Health. It makes no provision for the appointment of such representatives, and consequently a Board so constituted would have no representatives, and without the power to create them, could have none.

3rd. The Bill requires that the Health Physician, and also the Clerk of the local Boards of Health, in any township, city and village, should report their proceedings to the State Board, etc.

There are only three or four local Boards of Health in the whole State, and the majority of these scarcely in working order. As the State Board, constituted by this Bill, has no power to create and appoint local Boards, its existence would not be productive of any material improvement or advance on the present condition of affairs.

4th. There is no provision in the Bill for the registration of vital statistics.

It is manifest to you that such a Bill would be of no use, and it is just as well that it was never pre-

sented, because it would have been necessary to change it materially before any good could be worked out under its provisions.

In connection with this subject, it is our duty to report to you that one of the towns of this State was visited during the last summer with an epidemic of malignant Yellow Fever.

We think that the disease may, without doubt, on this occasion, be traced to importation, and we take the opportunity to call your attention to the defective system of Quarantine in this State, and to repeat our statement made in our report last session, that it exists only in name.

This failure results from the small appropriation made by the Legislature to carry on this important institution.

The appropriation was only two thousand dollars for the four stations, and we are informed that this amount was last year reduced to one thousand dollars!

Your Committee feel that this Association can do no more in this matter, at present, than indulge the hope that the next Legislature will undergo such changes that the delegates may perceive, appreciate, and act upon this important subject.

Charleston, S. C., March, 1878.

