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THE YELLOW FEVER
AND THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION.

WHAT SHALL WE EXPECT FROM THE INVESTIGATION?

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The following circular has been sent broadcast over the country; and, taking it in connection with the previous history of the doings of the Association, I am led to make the inquiry above stated:

CIRCULAR.

Investigating the Epidemic.

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION.

"NEW YORK, October 21.—The sixth annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, will be held at Richmond, Va., November 19th to 23rd, and the Association now invokes contributions from sanitary officers, physicians, naturalists, public men and other citizens, concerning the present yellow fever epidemic, upon any subject or events in the epidemic that may add to the knowledge of its cause and means of prevention. State and municipal boards of health and public-spirited citizens, who have become concerned in the practical measures against yellow fever and other dangers to public health; physicians, naturalists, civil engineers and other scientific contributors to works for the public welfare, are cordially invited to attend and assist at this conference."

I have no wish to be captious, nor to undervalue what any man, or set of men, may do toward solving the mysteries, or

overcoming the dangers, of such an epidemic as we have just been subjected to, in our Southern country; nor do I propose, on the other hand, through fear of any man or set of men, to shut my eyes and withhold my pen from facts, which may vitiate the data and render void the conclusions which are to be presented, with quite a show of authority, to the profession and people of the country.

It is the duty, no less than the privilege, of those who essay to teach their fellows upon any subject, especially upon a subject of vital importance, like that now before the public, to gather facts faithfully and without prejudice, and to report them correctly.

It should suffice that, in times past and in benighted countries, facts were ignored or made subject to the caprices of fancy or the ignoble purposes of sects and clans, and that their authors and advocates were refused recognition, and meeds of praise when fully won.

But at this time, and in this country, the ignoring of facts, or their subjection to sectarian ends, or the casting out of fellowship, of those who choose to diverge from the beaten track of schools and parties, especially where public interests are at stake and any particle of information and any investigator may be of service, is not only unwise, but criminal.

Now in regard to the American Public Health Association, I desire to mention a little history.

At its meeting in New York, in 1873, the Executive Committee, through whose hands all applications for membership must come, threw out the names of Dr. T. S. Verdi and Dr. D. W. Bliss of Washington City.

Upon inquiry it appeared, that both of these physicians were members of the Board of Health of the District of Columbia, and especially active in the study and application

of Sanitary Science; and further, that they were gentlemen of the highest standing in their own community.

And it further appeared that Dr. Verdi was refused membership because, in the use of medicines, *he preferred the Homœopathic method*; and Dr. Bliss, because *he would not refuse to act on the Board of Health with Dr. Verdi!*

A familiarity with Sanitary Science and the necessary devotion to its interests, on the part of either gentleman, were not questioned, as, indeed, they could not be.

And now, forsooth—"physicians, naturalists, civil engineers, and other scientific contributors to works for the public welfare, are cordially invited to attend and assist at this conference."!!

So says the circular of this same American Public Health Association.

What does this mean? Has the Association seen its error and changed its programme, since the New York meeting?

Or is the invitation a sarcasm and a fraud?

But it is elsewhere announced that, while the American Public Health Association is in session at Richmond, a report will be made by a Commission, organized by Surgeon Woodworth, on the present epidemic. And it is expected that such report, with whatever recommendations the Association may choose to add, will be submitted to the next United States Congress, with a request that it be printed at public expense.

In order to show the character of such reports and the amount of public good to be expected from such an expenditure, I must notice briefly a similar report, making a large volume, issued in 1875.

After the cholera had scourged Nashville and some other cities and towns in the South-west, in the Summer of 1873, Congress was induced to order an inquiry, as to the *causes* of

the epidemic, and the labor of gathering up facts, on the field, was performed chiefly by Dr. Ely McClellan, an Assistant Surgeon in the army.

Surgeon Woodworth collated the various reports and contributions, making a volume of over one thousand pages.

Referring to that portly book one may see a discussion, not of the *causes* of the epidemic, alone, but also of the pathology and treatment, as viewed strictly from a partizan standpoint.

Not a single mention is made of the treatment which was most successful in that epidemic, as in every former cholera epidemic in this country, THE HOMŒOPATHIC. Drs. McClellan and Woodworth cannot say that they had no reliable statements of the homœopathic treatment. Speaking for myself alone I will say that, they had a detailed statement from me, of sixty-two cases treated, in a period of three weeks, with but one death.

I filled up the blanks furnished me, giving the name, and particulars of attack and treatment and the result in each of those cases.

And I challenge a comparison of my treatment and results with those furnished in any returns which came into their hands.

Reports of treatment, from men in Nashville and vicinity, who had not a quarter of the number of cases attended by me, and showing no such success, were gathered up and published in the book, while not a word was said of my cases, the remedies employed, nor the results attained.

In the volume are valuable papers on the history and modes of spread of the cholera and a most complete Bibliography by Dr. John S. Billings.

I speak of my own returns, not because they are superior to those made by others employing the same mode of treat-

ment, but because I can speak of them knowingly and positively.

Now, I repeat the question with which I started—*what shall we expect from the investigation*, conducted by Dr. Woodworth's Commission and endorsed by the American Public Health Association?

Since writing the above I have received notice of the appointment of a Special Commission, to gather up facts and figures regarding the yellow fever, from homœopathic sources, not consulted by the Woodworth Commission. Dr. W. H. Holcombe, of New Orleans, Chairman of the Special Commission, is a physician of rare attainments and of long experience in yellow fever. Whatever data are presented by him will be worthy the consideration of Congress and the confidence of the people.

What the people of this age and country desire, is not the aggrandizement of a set of army surgeons, nor of any sect or school of medical men; but such a knowledge of the yellow fever and of Asiatic cholera, and other destructive epidemic diseases, as may enable them to prevent their visitations, or overcome their attacks, by any means, orthodox or heterodox, new or old, in the hands of physician, nurse, or friend.

Since the grocer-boy and afterward philanthropist, John Howard, and not a titled and arrogant Doctor of Medicine, inaugurated the great prison-reform of the world; and since the gentle Florence Nightingale, and not an epauletted Surgeon-general, led the greatest of all improvements in the sanitary arrangements of army life; and since our own Miss Dix, and not a titled medical Superintendent, revolutionized the management of Asylums for the insane, every worker among sanitary facts, whether titled or untitled, "regular or

irregular," man or woman, must have a recognition and a voice in the health and life saving efforts of the public.

The arrogance and exclusiveness, hitherto displayed by army Surgeons and the American Public Health Association, are not in keeping with the beneficent and scientific character of the work proposed, nor at all calculated to inspire confidence in what they may say or do.

When they enter the arena where stricken humanity struggles with the pestilence, laying aside all prejudice and all sectarian hatreds, ready to gather facts from all experiences, new or old and to render praise, where praise is due, to this preventive measure or that, this remedy or that, then will their coming be hailed with joy and their efforts be crowned with some degree of success.