

## NECESSITY FOR A NATIONAL QUARANTINE.

ALTHOUGH the Constitution of the United States authorizes the National Congress, in the same article which grants the power to protect the general public against the invasion of a foreign enemy, to guard the general welfare, seldom in the history of national legislation has this authority been exercised in providing ways and means for the defence of the nation against the enormous injuries which have been frequently caused by invasions of epidemic diseases. Neither have the legislative powers of the States ever been adequately or at all systematically put into operation in providing fully efficient local defences of this nature.

That the National Congress has authority to control quarantine the Supreme Court of the United States has virtually decided. In the case of the Morgan Steamship Company *versus* the Louisiana Board of Health (U. S. Reports, Vol. CXVIII., p. 455), Associate Justice Miller said, in delivering the opinion of the Court (May 10, 1886):

“It may be conceded that whenever Congress shall undertake to provide for the commercial cities of the United States a general system of quarantine, or shall confide the execution of the details of such a system to a National Board of Health or to local boards, as may be found expedient, all State laws on the subject will be abrogated, or at least so far as the two are inconsistent. But until this is done the laws of the State on the subject are valid.”

He further stated that “quarantine laws belong to that class of State legislation which, whether passed with intent to regulate commerce or not, must be admitted to have that effect, and which are until displaced valid or contravened by some legislation of Congress.”<sup>1</sup>

While our statesmen and law-makers have with more or less wisdom and constancy, by the enactment of national and local laws, guarded the personal liberties and material interests of the citizen; while they have established more or less adequate regulations for internal trade and foreign commerce, and have performed the public duty of providing defences against a common enemy, they yet have

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Armstrong, New York “Medical Journal,” September 24, 1892.

thus far, with singular neglect, failed to make any comprehensive provision against the ever-present danger to the *general welfare* from the ravages of epidemics brought to our shores from foreign lands.

I am aware that there are among distinguished sanitarians, even in this country, a few who more than question the power of any quarantine regulations that could be devised, however intelligently and thoroughly enforced, to protect efficiently the general public against foreign invasions of contagious and infectious diseases, and who are inclined to advocate the policy that the state should rather expend her energies and money in permanently removing local conditions which favor the development of epidemics and make their spread possible. But the only country where such a policy has been pursued with some measure of success is England, after fifteen or twenty years of expenditure of thirty millions of dollars a year (exclusive of and in addition to large expenditures made by the general government, for this large sum has been expended by local boards) within her compact, small territory, located as it is out of the main line of movement of the hordes of infecting emigrants constantly leaving all parts of Europe and outside the latitudes which favor the existence of yellow fever. After the United States of America shall have intelligently spent at least an equal sum in the persistent effort to improve the hygienic surroundings of the homes of a population already nearly twice as great as that of England, and scattered over a territory thirty-four times as extensive, we may reach a condition of public health in which it will be wise to abandon maritime quarantine and to rely mainly upon a perfect local hygiene.

Meanwhile, perceiving the enormous cost of destroying local conditions which foster epidemics by removing the filth among which they thrive, but appreciating the incalculable economic benefit which would certainly follow such a wise expenditure of hundreds of millions of the public money, I feel convinced that, in view of the danger which threatens the public health from abroad, there are only two courses between which we in this country must choose, namely: a practical abandonment of the public to a more or less individual and fruitless struggle with the agents of contagion wherever the movements of immigrants may chance to convey them; or an intelligent, constant, earnest, and vigorous effort to stop and destroy them at the ports of entry. While it is true that to remove the local conditions which favor the development and spread of diseases is to lessen greatly their harmfulness, it is none the less undeniable that

to destroy the infecting agent or to prevent its entrance into the country is by a single act to prevent the implantation of the seed and to render the harvest of death and destruction impossible, let the soil be never so fertile. Furthermore, the cost of preparing to wage a successful combat against the entrance and spread of disease among thousands of scattered villages, towns, and cities would be indefinitely greater than the cost of placing our ports in a nearly perfect state of defence against those diseases which are now subjected to quarantine. As an example of what it costs and of the time required to improve radically the hygienic condition of a single dirty city, I would point to what has recently been determined upon with regard to the city of Naples, which suffered so severely from cholera in the epidemic of 1884, namely, the demolition of seventeen thousand houses and sixty-two churches in the very heart of the city. This means the expenditure of over forty million dollars in a single sanitary work which cannot be completed in less than ten years; even then only a beginning will have been made of the radical removal of unsanitary conditions for which Naples is notorious.

The information contained in my "Report on Cholera in Europe and India" concerning the wide-spread, miserable hygienic conditions of the villages, towns, and cities of Egypt, France, Italy, Spain, and India shows conclusively the futility, at least for decades to come, of any hope of preventing the introduction, spread, and ravages among them of such a disease as cholera by purely local hygienic measures. With a faulty water supply and imperfect household and general drainage of most of our cities and towns, added to a filthy and unsanitary state of some parts of them and to a great lack of efficient local health organizations, I regret to be obliged to affirm that our own country is in almost as bad a condition. But the loss to the public occasioned by a single wide-spread epidemic of cholera, yellow fever, or small-pox is in the economic value of the lives destroyed and in the vast injuries to trade and commerce, far greater than would be the cost of the proper maintenance for many years of a perfect quarantine establishment at all of our ports. When one undertakes to estimate the loss to the country of the intrinsic value only of the lives destroyed by a wide-spread epidemic, the amount, though great, is insignificant when compared with the loss of incalculable millions of treasure due to the paralysis of industry and commerce.

The hundreds of thousands of European immigrants who annually reach our country, after starting from or passing through localities

infected with contagious diseases, frequently, in their persons or in their pestiferous clothing and effects, carry with them the active germs of these diseases. The herding of these immigrants into the miserably ventilated and unsanitary quarters usually provided for the steerage passengers on Atlantic steamships, the modern rapidity of ocean travel, and the great facility with which these swarms of people are soon distributed all over our country, combine to multiply the danger to the public health with which, under the incompleteness and the lax administration of our laws, this incessant influx ordinarily but now especially menaces our country.

In their enormous numbers, their poverty and their squalor, and in their frequent transport of all sorts of infections and contagions, these immigrants can be likened only to the Oriental pilgrims, in whose track pestilence has so frequently followed. It is, indeed, with the extremest rarity that small-pox or cholera has at any time been introduced into North America by travellers other than the immigrant class. To take the proper means to guard the ports of entry against the infected persons and baggage of all immigrants would probably keep cholera from our shores; to do the same with the addition of requiring compulsory vaccination—whether the person has been previously vaccinated or not—as an invariable condition precedent to the privilege of landing, would go far toward banishing small-pox from the land; and the importation of scarlet fever, diphtheria, and like diseases might likewise be prevented by adequate measures. The epidemics of yellow fever, typhus (or ship) fever, small-pox, and cholera which have raged from time to time in this country have always been imported. The past history of cholera and a study of its manner of spreading during the recent epidemic (in which its movement from east to west was unprecedentedly rapid) show that the chief, if not indeed the sole, conveyers of the infection were—as in all previous times—the persons and personal effects of immigrants, pilgrims, or large masses of soldiers.

Recognizing the enormous interest of the nation in the prevention of the incalculable injuries that follow the spread of a wide and devastating epidemic of any kind, and particularly of Asiatic cholera, I feel by many reasons impelled to advocate national supremacy in the control of quarantine as the only reliable means at the present time of safeguarding the general welfare. During the existence of cholera in Europe the transatlantic steamship companies, by carrying immigrants, not only expose the general welfare to great

danger, but they also make it necessary to place great burdens upon maritime commerce. It was almost exclusively the immigration traffic which last summer, as in the past, caused the serious danger and damage we experienced from cholera.

It is a fact beyond dispute that cholera preys upon and breeds among those living in squalor and filth and closely follows their movements. It is exceptional even in Bengal, the home of cholera, that Englishmen there are attacked by the disease. It is true, also, in unsanitary localities in Southern and Eastern Europe, that the intelligent and well-to-do classes suffer greatly during a cholera epidemic. There is but little danger of the class of people who constitute the cabin passengers of the transatlantic steamer bringing with them, either in their persons or in their clothing, the infection of cholera.

The establishment of a policy of non-intercourse, *so far as immigration is concerned*, when Europe is suffering severely from a cholera epidemic would, in my opinion, constitute the best, and perhaps the only, means of safeguarding the United States from the ravages of this disease. I have repeatedly had occasion, in several publications, to point out the dangerous state of imperfection at several of the Atlantic quarantine stations known to my personal knowledge to exist. The ports of Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore would certainly, in their permanent establishments and in their limited corps of administration, be unable to cope successfully, for any long period, with an invasion of the immigrants allowed to come incessantly to our shores during cholera epidemics in Europe. Even the quarantine station at New York—the largest and the most completely equipped of all our quarantine stations—would, with the frequent arrival of transatlantic steamers carrying infected immigrants with pestiferous baggage, quickly reach the point of uncertain defence and would be overwhelmed, unless indeed the policy of long detention of travellers, ships, and cargoes were rigidly enforced—a policy which would involve tremendous financial losses to those engaged in maritime trade or associated, directly or indirectly, with maritime commerce. The capacity of the New York quarantine is reached for purposes of safe defence with the landing of, say, one thousand immigrants held for observation. We have already seen how soon, with an uninterrupted stream of immigrants from infected localities, the capacity of this, our most capacious quarantine station, has been strained to the utmost.

The placing of an embargo *on immigration only* would be the

most direct means of securing safety from cholera and would not be coupled with the impediments to trade involved in long detention of ships and cargoes or annoying restrictions upon the movements of those travellers little likely to introduce infection. It is needless to point out that with the ship's inhabitants limited to the crew and the cabin passengers, the quarantine station of New York could, in its present condition, be relied upon to guard the country against the introduction of cholera through that port. The present arrangements that have been temporarily made and placed in operation at the quarantine stations of Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore—imperfect as these stations are in permanent facilities—would also be in little or no danger of being overwhelmed by the exigencies of such a situation.

The inadequate permanent establishments at most of our maritime quarantine stations and the apparent impossibility (except perhaps when confronted with emergencies such as the recent emergency) of obtaining appropriations from local authorities of sufficient money to erect extensive and complete quarantine establishments in accordance with modern science and accurate knowledge of the nature, the mode of spreading, and the means of preventing cholera are further and, to my mind, incontrovertible reasons why the public cannot rely upon independent local quarantines for the defence of the whole country against the introduction of the common epidemics, much less of epidemics of cholera, which are the most dangerous of all and the most difficult to arrest. In this connection the question may be very pertinently asked: Why, then, should the direction, expense, and responsibility of a system of common defence against the inroads of foreign diseases, any more than against invasions of foreign foes, be assumed and borne by those municipalities or States that happen to have a maritime location? Why should the vast majority located inland be allowed to shift their responsibilities and obligations or be denied a voice in the direction of affairs which so closely concern them? The protection of the public health by maritime quarantine is a matter that interests not merely a narrow belt of sea-coast; it seriously concerns the whole of the vast territory between our shores. *Salus populi suprema lex.* This fundamental principle of the laws of ancient Rome should broadly underlie the legal code of every wisely-governed land. I am treating here, it must not be forgotten, of measures which affect many interests, which often violate personal liberty. Complaints are therefore inevitable.



The objections of any weight urged against maritime quarantine as a means of protecting the public health from preventable diseases imported by sea are only two: first, the alleged failures to keep out these diseases by this means; secondly, the alleged injury to maritime trade. In my opinion, the first objection finds a complete answer and explanation in the grossly imperfect state and the maladministration of the quarantine defences almost everywhere. This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the numerous facts which can be arrayed in support of this opinion. Those who wish to know the full truth concerning this matter may consult my "Report on Cholera in Europe and India" and other similar publications. It seems, therefore, absurd to argue against the capabilities of a thoroughly-equipped maritime quarantine, strictly and wisely administered, from the historic failures of those establishments which have been obviously deficient in the essential requirements of a maritime quarantine.

The second objection is always a serious one for a people extensively engaged in maritime trade. But it is met, I think, by a due consideration in the light of present knowledge of the wide and essential difference between the requirements for proper treatment of the ship's cargo and the ship's inhabitants. It is the ship's inhabitants with their personal effects that almost invariably introduce the infectious germs into this country; the merchandise rarely or never conveys the contagion, with the exception of wool and rags, and possibly also some forms of edibles from districts or ports infected. There is no excuse in the treatment of ships with cholera, small-pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria aboard, to detain the cargoes in quarantine for a long period. With adequate facilities at hand the proper disinfection of the ship itself need not require her detention or that of the cargo longer than a few hours—an impediment to trade too insignificant to be taken into account when the paramount interests of the public health are considered. It is just the absence of facilities for handling the ship's inhabitants and treating them and their personal effects which has made it impossible to avoid great impositions upon the course of trade where quarantine must needs be enforced.

With regard to the detention at quarantine of those of the ship's inhabitants who are well, it need be prolonged but little beyond the period of incubation of the particular disease against which the quarantine is directed. If none of the immigrant classes are on board the detention may safely be much shorter. The inconvenience of this detention the travelling and immigrant classes alone suffer, the com-

mercial interests of the general public being but little disturbed thereby, if only the proper facilities are at hand. In the great majority of instances, however, it is among the immigrants only that actual cases of disease exist and in their apparel and baggage that infection lurks; and when we consider the advantages which the immigrant is about to receive, the necessary detention is but a small sacrifice for him to make for the benefit of the people among whom he seeks a home.

In view of the foregoing considerations, I would therefore uphold the following propositions:

A. *National supremacy in the control of quarantine is necessary.*

1. It is only in this way that the necessary protection against the importation of epidemic diseases in all our ports can be constantly secured.

2. It is the only practical mode by which uniformity of establishment and administration, regard being had to the modification required by difference of latitude and other circumstances, can be assured. Such necessary uniformity can be obtained by no other arrangement, for the reason that the National Government alone is able to defray the expense of complete quarantine establishments at every port, according to the requirements of each and without regard to the revenue derived from the shipping of any.

3. The benefits of quarantine inure to the welfare of the whole country; therefore it is just that money should be as freely expended when necessary at one port as at another, without respect to their relative commercial importance or to the amount of revenue collected in the shape of boarding and inspection fees, etc. It is manifestly unjust that the seaboard cities and States should be obliged to bear the entire expense of quarantine establishments whose most important function should be the protection of the inhabitants of every region of the vast territory of the United States.

4. A national quarantine, properly administered and conducted by trained officials accustomed to deal with contagious and infectious diseases, would tend to prevent panic, to allay undue anxiety, and to favor a reasonable sense of security.

5. Experience has shown that much needless alarm, as well as preventable danger, arises upon the appearance of an unfamiliar epidemic disease at quarantine stations; as when cholera has shown itself at New Orleans or New York or yellow fever in Philadelphia or Boston. A national quarantine would very greatly lessen the neces-



sity for vexatious temporary interstate quarantines, which so seriously disturb inland trade.

6. A national quarantine system, directed in such a manner as to meet fully the requirements of existing sanitary knowledge, would not adversely disturb any commercial interest. It would, on the contrary, do away with many of the embarrassments incident to maritime trade due to lack of proper facilities and to maladministration of existing local regulations, and would avoid the enforcement of measures which are unnecessary and are prompted by a state of panic due to ignorance of the best methods of prevention.

7. A national quarantine would not necessarily supersede any existing arrangements regarded by local authorities as expedient for their own protection. It would constitute another line of defence under exclusive control of the National Government; and it should be conducted wholly without extra cost to shipping, and should thus work no additional pecuniary hardship, even if the present fees were still to be exacted by the local authorities for the maintenance of their own establishments.

8. The ability of the National Government by an existing act of Congress to come to the aid of local quarantine authorities in answer to the appeal of the Executive of any State in time of grave danger implies a function of very narrow scope and uncertain application. Appeals of this kind are likely to be deferred until the emergency is extreme and the aid obtained from the Government is therefore likely to be rendered too late to accomplish its most important purpose, namely, the prevention of an invasion.

B. *A national organization would secure advantages not attainable by independent local quarantine establishments, however complete.*

Among many other advantages the following may be enumerated:

1. Suitably-arranged and commodious buildings for the housing of ships' inhabitants and for the care of the sick, etc., provided with necessary furniture and appliances, at all ports.

2. An efficient corps of trained officials and assistants always on duty and an able corps of sanitary engineers and of police.

3. The practicability of the concentration of force, money, and attention at any threatened port without loss of time.

4. Officials under the control of the National Government and free from local, political, and commercial influences of rival ports.

5. The objects of quarantine would be furthered by full and reliable consular reports and sanitary inspection of emigrants at ports of

embarkation, functions properly belonging to officials of the General Government.

The organization of a supreme national quarantine system in the United States should require:

1. That the whole matter be placed under an appropriate department of the General Government, with a central bureau of control constituted by the ablest sanitary experts in the country and established at Washington.

2. A sufficient corps of medical officers and assistants, with nurses, sanitary police, laundrymen, engineers, and officers and crews for boarding tugs, organized at every station. Among the requirements for the medical service should be a speaking knowledge of at least two modern European languages besides English—say of German and Italian. In view of the frequent and systematic attempts to falsify the ship's log for the purpose of concealing the existence of infectious disease during the voyage, the health-officers should be able when necessary to go among the passengers and themselves closely question them, without the mediation of an interpreter. The establishment of one or more schools and laboratories for sanitary instruction and research for all persons connected with this service would be an advantage. In addition to the men on duty at the respective stations there should be a sufficient number of medical and other officials, fully trained in quarantine duties and familiar with contagious diseases, unattached and available for immediate auxiliary service at any threatened port. The service should be permanent, the pay ample, employment and promotion should depend on fitness shown by searching examinations, and there should be a uniform and comparative military rank in order to develop and maintain a strong *esprit de corps*.

3. The erection of necessary hospital and other buildings, wharves, disinfecting apparatus, wash-houses, *latrines*, etc., in suitable localities, when possible, upon islands at or near the entrances to harbors and at some distance from the main channel.

4. These stations should be organized and fully equipped at every port of entry on the coast, in such manner as to meet the requirements of each port in the measure of its commerce and immigration and of the special diseases to which it is most exposed.

5. The cost of the establishment and maintenance of the national quarantine should be provided for by appropriation from the National Treasury, and not by fees exacted from vessels.

It must be remembered, however, that the danger from immigrants would not be entirely banished though the quarantine of the coast of the United States were perfect; for the way through the British provinces and through Mexico would still be open to these travellers. In the absence of efficient quarantine inspection in the St. Lawrence River and in Nova Scotia, the attempt to protect ourselves thoroughly from importations of epidemics would necessitate the doubtful and difficult expedient of a land quarantine along our northern frontier. The attempt to exclude these objectionable and, at this time, particularly dangerous, classes from entrance through our Atlantic ports when they come immediately from Europe, coupled with the determination to admit them *via* North and South America—as I understand is proposed by Senator Chandler's committee—would certainly be fraught with great danger to the public health as well as productive of unfair advantages in favor of Canadian, Mexican, and West Indian ports and steamship lines, not to mention discrimination in favor of Canadian and Mexican railways. The diversion to those countries of swarms of European immigrants who are destined to some point in the United States would be the inevitable result of such incomplete legislation. The health of the country would probably be as much jeopardized ultimately as if the great masses of immigration were still allowed to come direct and pass through our own maritime ports. Universal experience proves that land quarantines are always more difficult of effective enforcement than the maritime. If indeed the object of this proposed discrimination be to favor the Chicago Fair, by all means admit *citizens* of North and South America who can show proper passports; but if we are to adopt the very best means of escaping a devastating epidemic of cholera next year, the exclusion of European emigrants must be general and rigid. The more efficient plan would be to have the same precautions taken at the ports in the British provinces and Mexico as would be practised in the United States; but this course could be secured only through treaty or international agreement, which our local authorities are not competent to make.

Harmony in provisions of law relating to quarantine in the United States, in Canada, and in Mexico seems indispensable for the full protection of our extensive northern and southern frontiers, and our National Government should be strongly urged to obtain proper conventions with the Canadian authorities relating to such an important matter of common interest and with the Mexican government.

In conclusion, I would especially invite the attention of our national

legislators to the following facts and suggestions: While cholera appears to have nearly died out in northwestern Europe, it seems to be still lingering in epidemic form in the southeastern portion of that continent. From reliable information, in part from reports of the United States consuls to the Department of State at Washington, it is certain that a great portion of the immigration to this country from southern Russia and southeastern Europe, as well as from central and northern Russia, Poland, and Germany, embarks at Hamburg, Antwerp, and Havre; much of that which proceeds from southern Russia and Hungary passes through Switzerland and across France to take ship at Havre; while not a little goes by ship from Odessa to Marseilles, thence by rail also to Havre for transportation to America. These facts would seem to indicate a necessity for the continuance at the present time of the embargo on immigration, at least so long as we have any news of the existence of cholera in southeastern Europe.

It is a well-known fact that in the past, whenever cholera has obtained a foothold in Europe, it has never disappeared from that continent in less than from three to ten years. While the cold of winter has usually been sufficient apparently to exterminate the disease in most parts of Europe, it yet has always remained dormant in other portions of the continent which have less severe climates, to reappear with renewed virulence at the approach of the next warm season. We have no reason to believe that this visitation of Europe by cholera will prove an exception in this respect to the rule which heretofore has had no exception. The mode of assault of a nation by cholera may be compared somewhat to the attack of the rattlesnake, which usually sounds a note of warning before striking his fatal blow. The history of cholera epidemics shows that threatened peoples, as a rule, receive ample warning of danger. We have received our warning. Let it be followed by the enactment of such national legislation this winter as will render our defences doubly secure against the danger of an invasion next summer.

EDWARD O. SHAKESPEARE.

## WHAT IS A NOVEL ?

My answer can only be a statement of opinion, which I make with much deference to the prejudices of my brethren. Whether it will be of interest to general readers I do not know; but the question I propose is in itself more or less vital as regards novel-writing. No one will deny that truism. Before going to work it is important to know what one means to do. I pretend, however, to no special gift for solving problems in general or this one in particular. To give "the result of one's experience," as the common phrase puts it, is by no means so easy as it sounds. An intelligent man mostly knows what he means by his own words, but it does not follow that he can convey that meaning to others. Almost all discussion and much misunderstanding may fairly be said to be based upon the difference between the definitions of common terms as understood by the two parties. In the exact sciences there is no such thing as discussion; there is the theorem and its demonstration, there is the problem and its solution, from which solution and demonstration there is no appeal. That is because, in mathematics, every word is defined before it is used and is almost meaningless until it has been defined.

It has been remarked by a very great authority concerning the affairs of men that "there is no end of the making of books," and to judge from appearances the statement is even more true to-day than when it was first made. Especially of the making of novels there is no end, in these times of latter-day literature. No doubt many wise and good persons and many excellent critics devoutly wish that there might be; but they are not at present strong enough to stand against us, the army of fiction-makers, because we are many, and most of us do not know how to do anything else, and have grown gray in doing this particular kind of work, and are dependent upon it for bread as well as butter; and lastly and chiefly, because we are heavily backed, as a body, by the capital of the publisher, of which we desire to obtain for ourselves as much as possible. Therefore novels will continue to be written, perhaps for a long time to come. There is a demand for them and there is profit in producing them. Who shall pre-