

Quarantine laws : translation of a report, by MM. Magendie, Louis, and Londe (reporter), to the French National Academy of Medicine, on a work by James Gillkrest, M.D., Inspector-General of Army Hospitals, entitled Is yellow fever contagious or not.

Contributors

Magendie, François, 1783-1855.
Louis, P. C. A. 1787-1872.
Londe, Charles, 1795-1862.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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QUARANTINE LAWS.

TRANSLATION of a REPORT, by MM. MAGENDIE, LOUIS, and LONDE (Reporter), to the FRENCH NATIONAL ACADEMY of MEDICINE, on a WORK by JAMES GILLKREST, M.D., INSPECTOR-GENERAL of ARMY HOSPITALS, entitled,—
“Is Yellow Fever Contagious or Not.”

DR. LONDE'S ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ACADEMY.

“You have charged MM. MAGENDIE, LOUIS, and myself, to render an account of a work by DR. JAMES GILLKREST, Inspector-General of Army Hospitals, in the service of Great Britain; which is entitled, *‘Is Yellow Fever Contagious or Not?’*”

“The history of Yellow Fever is treated by M. Gillkrest with an erudition which it would be difficult to find equally complete elsewhere. After mentioning observers and monographers, describers of Yellow Fever, beginning with Hippocrates, who speaks of a fever characterized by yellowness of skin, and black vomit, M. Gillkrest arrives at these conclusions:

1st. That the Yellow Fever of America, and that observed in the south-west of Europe, especially in Spain, are identical; an identity acknowledged by all authors, with the exception perhaps of our colleague M. Rochoux.

2ndly. That this disease existed in the Antilles before 1793, and in the Spanish Peninsula before 1764.

M. Gillkrest next relates a great number of facts, establishing:—

1st. That Yellow Fever, or at least its pathognomonic symptoms, have shown themselves at very remote points of the globe, and that they appear to be then developed uniformly under accidental or local conditions, so strongly marked as to exclude all idea of importation in the true meaning of that word.

2ndly. That sporadic cases of Yellow Fever present themselves, in ordinary years, in the localities where this disease has prevailed in an epidemic form. M. Gillkrest considers that this second inference is established by a certificate by the Medical Officers, who, on the 13th of April, 1829, at Gibraltar, declared, —after having read with the greatest care 39 cases extracted from the records of the Civil Hospital,—that the symptoms detailed in these cases were perfectly identical with those observed in the epidemic which prevailed in that garrison in the latter part of the year 1828.

“Having established these fundamental points, M. Gillkrest arrives at the grand question, contagion.

“The Author establishes, by numerous well-selected and incontrovertible proofs, that Yellow Fever is not contagious under any circumstances, not even in the case of crowding, in this disease, whether of the dead or of the living; that the removal of individuals from the influence of the local causes which produce this affection is the fittest means of preventing its extension; and, lastly, that the cordons, called sanitary, and quarantine measures, far from arresting Yellow Fever, on the contrary, favour its extension by confining the population within the influence of the local causes which give it birth.

“Such, Gentlemen, is the work on which we have to report. M. Gillkrest, in crowning services which do him honour, and which on more than one occasion have been extended to our fellow-countrymen, brings to bear upon the question of contagion in Yellow Fever, (a question so intimately connected with the most important interests of mankind,) the fruits of a long experience, as was done formerly by our intrepid and ever to be regretted Chervin.

“This communication of M. Gillkrest, which has already received the full approval of the General Board of Health in London, has reached us most opportunely at the moment when

a Congress is assembled to suggest, no doubt, important modifications in our sanitary laws ; consequently, Gentlemen, your Committee has the honour to propose :—

“ 1stly. To thank the honourable M. Gillkrest for his interesting communication.

“ 2ndly. To transmit his work to M. The Minister of Commerce, in order that in conjunction with the numerous documents on this subject, already in possession of the Administration, this work may aid in placing beyond a doubt the inutility of Quarantine, as applied to arrivals from countries where Yellow Fever prevails.

“ These Resolutions were put to the vote, and adopted by the Academy.”

Bulletin of the National Academy of Medicine,
Vol. 17, No. 2. 31 Oct., 1851. III. p. 39.

*The above copy supplied on the authority of the Acting
Committee of the Metropolitan Sanitary Association.*

Here then, we have, in the above proceedings of the National Academy of Medicine of Paris,—(a Body not to be excelled in wisdom by any other in the world, and always close examiners of such subjects, absolute proofs to be everywhere relied upon,)—1st, that the Yellow Fever is not of a contagious nature ; that is, that it is not communicable from the sick labouring under it, to the healthy, either directly, or indirectly through the medium of clothes, bedding, &c.—That, secondly, all quarantines or segregations of the sick are absolutely a great deal worse than useless ; and that, thirdly, superadding all the afflictions of quarantine, to the deplorable symptoms peculiar to the Yellow Fever, being unjustifiable, should not be permitted by Legislators.

*No. 1 St. Albans place
Regent St.*

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