

Augusta, Ga., Nov. 13th, 1883.

Dear Sir :

I wish to invite the attention of the Board of Health or Medical Society, with which you are connected, to the memorial proposed in the enclosed circular. Will thank you to communicate such early action as it may be pleased to take, as I have undertaken the preparation of said memorial, which will be presented by Senator Joseph E. Brown, of Georgia, who has manifested a satisfactory interest in the matter.

Yellow Fever is a perpetual menace to this country. Without enlarging upon the subject, I hope to be sustained by the united efforts of medical societies and sanitary bodies in the endeavor to stimulate further inquiry into its cause, and the conditions governing its origin, reproduction and spread.

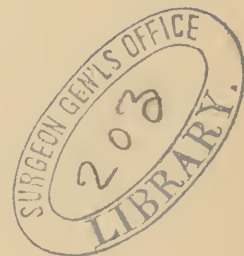
Very respectfully,

WM. H. DOUGHTY, M. D.,
603 Ellis Street.

[Extract from Gaillard's Medical Journal, September Number, 1883.]

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YELLOW FEVER.
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AN OPEN LETTER, BY W. H. DOUGHTY, M. D.



To E. S. GAILLARD, M. D., Editor GAILLARD'S MEDICAL JOURNAL, *New York* :

AUGUSTA, GA., August 25, 1883.

Dear Dr. : Your favor of the 18th inst., asking for the journal my further experience with the use of solvents for the false membranes in the treatment of diphtheria, was duly received. I regret my inability to comply at present; perhaps, I may do so in the future, as the results up to this time compare very favorably with any and all other modes of treatment.

In lieu thereof, I mail a manuscript containing a preamble and resolution relating to yellow fever, which was intended for presentation to the American Public Health Association, at Savannah, Ga., session of 1881. For some reason it met with no favor at the hands of the Executive Committee, and as far as I am informed, never reached the Association at that or their session of last year at Indianapolis.

I send the paper unaltered, leaving the reader to adapt it to the new audience—the profession at large; the object had in view is, I trust, made sufficiently clear.

If you approve it, give the paper a place in your valuable journal, and invite the action of such medical societies (city, State, or national,) in its support as may also do so.

Appealing thus through the medical press to the intelligence of the great body of the profession, it is hoped that even the public sentiment of the country may ultimately be brought to bear in aid of the desired legislation by Congress. At this moment all the resources of the country are expended to prevent the introduction of yellow fever by a merciless quarantine; are, indeed, restricted to this. Shall we accept this as a perpetual duty and the limit of our resources? Or, in imitation of the illustrious policy of France as against cholera, or whatever vitally threatens her industries, shall we so legislate as to invite a knowledge of the *causa causans*, and thus possibly make precise for its destruction and control what is at present left solely to empirical observation? I cannot believe that your readers will regard the measure suggested as superfluous, or that the intelligent American public, when once the subject is fairly presented, will withhold their sanction. The commerce of the country demands an energetic appeal to the spirit of philosophic inquiry into this subject, while humanity invokes relief, as well from the rigid quarantine that prolongs exposure to contagion, as from the disease itself. Shall the memorial be sent? and by whom?

With great respect, I am yours very truly,

W. H. DOUGHTY, M.D.

Doughty (W. H.)

To the American Public Health Association, Savannah, Georgia :

Mr. President: I ask leave to submit the following resolution, relative to yellow fever, for the favorable consideration of this Association :

Whereas, The insecurity to the public health from epidemic prevalence of yellow fever, is chiefly due to a total ignorance of the real cause of the disease, together with the circumstances and laws governing its generation, reproduction and spread, and *whereas,*

The portability of said cause conveys the idea of physical qualities, perhaps, tangibility and possible ultimate identity, by some means within the reach of science ; therefore, with a view to stimulate inquiry in this direction, and thereby subserve the commercial interests of the country and the welfare of its citizens,

Be it resolved, That the Congress of the United States be memorialized through the Secretary of this Association, to offer a premium of \$100,000, open to the world, for the discovery of the true cause (or germ) of yellow fever, or any certain means of effecting its prevention, destruction, or harmless modification, the same to be subjected to such practical tests, under the direction of Congress, as will determine its real merits and efficiency.

By the above resolution it is proposed to supplement the activity of the National and other boards of health, by opening the door of investigation to the world of workers and observers within and without the walks of science, adding such a stimulus in the proper line of inquiry as will confer upon the discoverer substantial profit along with merited honor and distinction. I know of no more appropriate body for such a suggestion to emanate from than the one that I have the honor to address, representing, as it does, the influence and authority of the great American public in all matters pertaining to the public health. Positive knowledge on all subjects pertaining to sanitary science, and on this one in particular, is the great desideratum. All measures of quarantine and of internal hygiene, at present in force, however judicious and forcible, are simply *defensive* in character, and altogether indirect ; and must of necessity remain so, as long as directed against an unseen, intangible, and unknown entity, protected by ignorance and clothed in mystery.

A philosophical inquiry into the nature of that cause, with the aid of the ever-increasing facilities of science for elucidating occult subjects, affords the satisfactory hope of our being able to devise both aggressive and defensive means. The sterility of past investigations need not become a cause of paralysis for the future ; much less may our inability to solve the abstruse problem find justification in an unwillingness to promote the inquiry. The problem is more pressing now than ever, because the railroad transportation of disease-germs has acquired equal dignity with their importation by ships, and thus the danger has been made co-equal with the railroad development of this section.

Within the realm of science there are many quiet workers of equal capacity and industry with those more distinguished, whose activity, awaiting opportunity, will be stimulated by the hope that the discovery of only a single additional feature (or link) in the character or quality of this poison or germ, or cause, of whatever nature or source, might reveal the secret of its prevention, destruction or material, modification, and thus place it in the power of sanitarians to disarm it as completely as vaccination does small-pox.

I shall make no attempt to indicate from what direction this light is likely to come ; when least expected, it will appear. The assurance is positive, however, that whoever enters this dark recess of nature and reveals the essential cause of this and other similar fevers, so far as to make it the subject of experimental study and demonstration, will have achieved an eminence equal to the greatest of his fellow-men, and be worthy of emoluments higher than the award proposed. I believe it not too much to hope that, as Koch, although unknown to fame at the time, cultivated under his eye in his microscopic garden, the bacillus anthracis, the germ of splenic fever in cattle, reaping a harvest of spores with which to demonstrate its tenacity for life and uniform power in the production of the disease, some one will also arise to solve this profound mystery. Indeed, it is already announced that Klebs has discovered the bacillus of typhoid fever, and it is expected that the natural history of this organism will throw much light on the prevention and treatment of this disease, one essentially of social origin.

I have thought the suggestion of sufficient importance to merit the attention of this Association. Perhaps, there may be those here who believe that a vigilant quarantine will confer practical immunity against the disease. It may be so, but even the most sanguine will scarcely desire to make it nugatory of the object sought in the above resolution, or dispose of it as superfluous. If there be any such present, they will suffer me to remind them and this Association that, even in the absence of the very efficient quarantine at present enforced, yellow fever has for years in succession spared the Atlantic and Gulf coasts ; thus warning us, that the apparent merit of our resources may be, after all, simply the caprice of the enemy. The danger consists in knowing too little on this subject, and there is no room to fear that the measure here presented and advocated would be barren of all good results. If, happily, it should be crowned with success, the light of knowledge thus acquired will give precision and force to your acts. At present they are altogether empirical, valuable or valueless, only as they be confirmed or set aside by future investigation. At any rate, in the words of a distinguished foreign physician, "We may rest assured that the more we know of our enemy, the more successfully we shall be able to combat him." Respectfully submitted,

AUGUSTA, GA., November 26, 1881.

WM. H. DOUGHTY, M. D.

