

The National Board of Health.

RICHMOND, VA., Nov. 19.—At the opening of the session of the sixth annual public health association, at which one hundred members were present, besides many members of the medical fraternity from abroad and local physicians and citizens, the proceedings opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Peterkin. Dr. Harris introduced Gov. Holliday as the presiding officer of the evening. The governor extended in behalf of the city a cordial welcome, and said there had never been a time when the health of the body and mind was not needed to wrestle successfully with the aims and objects of life. He alluded to the convention as an audience of special culture, and spoke of the association as one of vital importance to the public health. It is, he said, of perpetual application, and goes throughout every department of life, and penetrates every pursuit. Public health has a vast deal to do with public morals, and immorality is the most fatal blow struck at the public health. One of the great and beneficial objects of this association is to investigate the causes, and, if possible, find remedies. This alone would justify such a convention as the present, to provide a remedy for the dreadful plague that but yesterday swept the fairest portion of our land is a noble work, worthy of such men. In conclusion the governor said: But, gentlemen, beyond the immediate objects of society, other ends will be attained by your gathering. Coming from every section of our common country, bringing your learning and culture, your experience and earnestness, you will imbibe that gentleness and affection which are the very genius of unity, and when you go to your homes you will carry with you that feeling of fellowship that is stronger than political and sectional bonds. Here in this beautiful city—where the suffering of warfare was endured that will be never known until the great future, when all hearts will be revealed; here where prayers were offered that need not be blotted even by the tears of the recording angel—here you have come together from the north, the south, the east and the west, as one brotherhood, to show by your words and deeds how peace hath its victories no less renowned than war, and how we can, by the divine instincts of our nature, make our republic one, and what she ought to be, the mother of a mighty race.

Prof. Cable, of the university of Virginia, followed the governor, introducing the president of the association, Dr. Eliah Harris, of New York, whose annual address had been announced as the leading feature of the evening's exercises. He paid an eloquent tribute to Dr. Harris as a life-long and self-devoted to sanitary studies, and indorsed the testimony of a most competent judge, who had described Harris as a leading sanitary authority in all that relates to vital statistics and lessons they deduce.

Dr. Harris, after a brief introduction, in which he recognized the laudable object contemplated by this movement, suggested the following modifications as practicable: 1. That each state board of health should be entitled to one seat in the executive committee of the association; that members be elected by this association and hold office for one year. 2. That members of state boards of health be ex-officio members of the association. 3. That members of the executive committee, annually elected by the association, should equal the total number of members ex-officio. This committee to be henceforth designated as the counsel of the American Public Health association. Fourth, that for the purpose of shaping expert investigation and scientific investigation of the same, and for further encouraging continued researches, there should be appropriate committee of all sections differing from the plan designed in the original construction of the standing committees. Fifth, the maintenance in each state and territory of a system of periodical reports, weekly, monthly and yearly, of all epidemic and other prevalent diseases, supervised by the state board of health; and where there are no such boards, by members of the association designated for that purpose; all studies and reports to be a method of a yielding conquerable result. Sixth, studies of meteorological and atmospheric conditions with reference to epidemiology and health. Seventh, the maintenance of a commission for the study of and consultation in regard to biological and anthropological investigations, including contributions from the census, and other national and state systems of registering. Eighth, the introduction of a clause in the constitution of this association to provide for editorial and supervisory duty, in publication and diffusion of sanitary information. Ninth, a formal recognition of both national and international obligations in the work of this association by means of correspondence with state, national, and international sanitary authorities, and especially to conduce to researches that are already in progress in Europe in regard to pestilential diseases and their contagion.

After a brief recitation of the nature and extent of the epidemic, Dr. Harris disclaimed any intention of offering a theory or expecting to work miracles, expressing his belief, however, that scientific investigation will assert a mastery over the scourge, an opinion in which the recent volume of evidence now gathered informed him. The gentlemen present had come to investigate and judge on the evidences present, without regard to any previous theory. He anticipated free and frank expression of views, and alluded to the fact that the movement was approved by eminent jurists and legislators, whose object it was to determine state and city obligation, as applied to the suppression of the cause of pestilence.

Surgeon general Woodworth and Dr. Steiner followed in addresses relative to the objects of the association, and its claims upon the people for sympathy and aid, after which Dr. Benis recited touching incidents of heroism and self-abnegation that came under his personal observation during the prevalence of the epidemic. The association then adjourned until to-morrow, when the report of the commission will be presented.

RICHMOND, Nov. 20.—In the public health association session to-day an invitation was received from the governor of Tennessee to hold the next meeting at Nashville. It was referred to the executive committee.

The president read a report of the yellow fever commission.

Dr. Cochran read a report on fever, as observed at Grenada, showing the infectious character of the disease.

Drs. Howard and Benis read similar reports affecting the cause of the epidemic at Baton Rouge, on or near the Mississippi river.

At the evening session a resolution was reported from the executive committee for the appointment of a committee of seven, to whom all propositions of action by the general government shall be referred without debate for their report to the executive committee.

NEW YORK, Nov. 20.—The report of the yellow fever commission, composed of Drs. Benis, Cochran and Howard, who, together with Col. T. S. Hardee, sanitary engineer, have been investigating the epidemic in all the fever-stricken cities in the southern states, say that a sufficient amount of testimony has been taken to justify the statement that the first cases in New Orleans, about the month of June, were brought to that city by conveyances as yet unknown. That their investigations and maps show that the fever invariably tends to range itself in groups. Cases are in marked contrast, with a tendency to the malarial fever, to occur in separate, disconnected cases. They say, in respect to the sanitary condition of towns visited: We have to report the same character of neglect and violation of the laws of health common to all or nearly all inland towns of the United States. These are, neglect of drainage, inattention to deposits, filth and refuse animal and vegetable matter, and inattention to the purity of drinking water. They unanimously agreed in stating the following facts in regard to their investigations up to the present time, reserving the right to introduce at any subsequent time such antagonistic facts as may be discovered: 1. We have not in a solitary instance found a case of yellow fever which we could justifiably consider as of native origin or even indigenous to its locality. 2. In respect to most of the various towns which we visited, and which were points of the epidemic, the prevalence of testimony showing importation was direct and convincing in its character. 3. Transmission of yellow fever between points separated by any considerable distances appeared to be wholly due to human intercourse. In some instances the poison was carried in clothing, or about the person, of people going from the infected districts. In other instances it was conveyed in cotton bagging or other goods of the same description. 4. The weight of testimony is very pronounced against the further use of disinfectants. Physicians in infected towns, almost without exception, state they are useless agents to arrest the spread of yellow fever, while some of them are firm believers that their vapors are seriously prejudicial to the sick. 5. Personal prophylaxes, by means of drugs or other therapeutic means, has proved a constant failure. A respectable number of physicians think the use of small doses of quinine is of some use in prevention, but quarantine established with such a degree of surveillance and vigor that non-intercourse is the result has effectually, without exception, protected its subjects from the attack of yellow fever.