

## REPORT OF THE PHYSICIAN OF THE MARINE HOSPITAL.

MARINE HOSPITAL,

January 1, 1851.

*To the Honorable**the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore :*

GENTLEMEN :

I have, in compliance with the provisions of the ordinance under which I hold my appointment, the honor of submitting the following report, in relation to the affairs of the Quarantine department and Marine Hospital now under my charge.

Since my last annual report, I am happy to inform the Mayor and Council that the same prosperity which characterized the affairs of those different departments, still attends them now.

Perhaps most of the members of the City Council are not aware that the ordinance creating the office which I now hold, blended the duties of the health officer with those of the Marine Hospital Physician. Under the old system, the vessels entering our port during the quarantine seasons, were boarded by the former officer at the Lazaretto, and such cases, as were deemed by him contagious, were transferred to the charge of the resident physician to the Marine Hospital. The health officer never prescribing or attending to any of the cases, and the physician to the Marine Hospital never compelled to leave his post for the purpose of inspecting the cases on ship board.

This system still continues in all the seaports in the Union. Baltimore the third commercial city of the Union, under her present system, imposes upon the physician to the Marine Hospital, so styled by the ordinance of 1849, the combined duties of the Health officer and the Marine Hospital Physician. Such were the state of affairs when I received the appointment; and when I entered upon the discharge of my duties every thing was necessarily in confusion. I found a new system to be put in motion—the provisions of a new ordinance to be carried out. Having the experience of no predecessor by which I could be guided in the discharge of the new duties upon which I was entering. Laboring under all these disadvantages, without even the services of a single assistant, it was with much difficulty that I could satisfactorily to myself, arrange the affairs of the various departments under my charge, in order to establish upon a permanent basis, a system which heretofore had not been practised in this city, and has never been adopted by any other. It is therefore with increased pleasure that I am now able to report the still increasing prosperity of the institution.

My duties as Health officer commenced on the 1st of May, and terminated on the last of October. I have boarded 179 ships, 191 brigs and 463 schooners—paid to the city Register \$2,756 for permit dues. I have examined 7,335 emigrants, and so free have they been from disease, that I have found necessary only to send four cases out of the whole number thus laboring under typhoid fever of the mildest type.

Shortly after entering upon my duties, several improvements occurred to me, whilst inspecting the different emigrant ships, which in my opinion, if adopted would materially add to the comfort and health of the passengers. These suggestions, whenever the occasion offered, were freely imparted to the masters of the vessels, and from the above result, and greater care they bestow upon the emigrants, I am decidedly of opinion that so few of those vessels arrive at our port, as formerly, freighted with those contagious diseases that proved so fatal to many of our citizens. During the first year I was in office, I was compelled to send from the emigrant ships a large number of cases of small pox, of the most virulent character, and many cases of typhoid of the most dangerous type; and obliged to detain many of the vessels at Quarantine until they had been thoroughly purified by disinfecting agents. But for the last year, so free from disease have been the emigrants, and so well ventilated the vessels, that I have not found it necessary to detain them a single hour at the quarantine ground.

The present Marine Hospital was designed by those who first established it as an asylum for those unfortunate beings, who leaving shores less hospitable than our own, after undergoing the fatigues perhaps of a long and tempestuous voyage, contracting diseases of the most dangerous character, were thrown upon ours friendless and helpless. Appropriations from the city were made from year to year to defray the expenses of the institution. Since however, its affairs have been under my management, I have not only made the quarantine fees support that department but also defray the expenses of the Hospital without drawing upon the city treasurer, although nearly all the cases that have been admitted into the hospital have been pauper patients sent from the city.

From the 1st of January 1850, to the 1st 1851, I have treated 164 cases of small pox, most of them of the most virulent kind. The majority of these cases, indeed, I may say the whole of them, occurring among those whose constitutions have been shattered and broken down by dissipation and disease, and who when admitted into the hospital were suffering in its last stages—most of them having received no medical treatment before they came under my hands, and many of them sent to the hospital in open conveyances, were in such a state that I found they required from me the greatest care and attention, several of them dying after being in the hospital a few hours.

I have paid to the city treasurer \$241 50 collected from the hospital, together with the amount due by the city, nine hundred and eighty-four dollars (\$984,) making the revenue from the hospital twelve hundred and thirty-four dollars. (\$1,234.) The expenses both for the quarantine department and the Marine Hospital amount only to \$2,979. The expenses of last year amounted to \$3,983, a difference of \$1,004.

There have been admitted 170 cases in the Marine Hospital, suffering under the following diseases:

	Admitted.	Cured.	Died.
Small Pox, - - -	164	135	29
Typhus Fever, - - -	6	5	1
	170	143	27

It has been a matter of much surprise to me that the small pox should have been so prevalent in our city during the last year, especially when we take into consideration the fact, that no cases have been introduced from any foreign port. During the last year 164 cases of small pox have been admitted into the hospital and treated by me, and upon examining the weekly returns of the board of health, the number of deaths in the city have amounted to 145, which added to the number that have come under my treatment, and allowing the mortality to be the same as here, upwards of one thousand cases of this loathsome disease have occurred in our city during the last year. This extraordinary increase, is no doubt owing to much spurious matter in circulation, but more particularly to a large number of the population neglecting to be re-vaccinated. From all the cases that have been examined and treated by me, and as far as I can collect from those stated in the medical works, my mind has certainly come to the conviction that the protecting influence of vaccination upon the human system gradually diminishes until at length it completely wears out, rendering it indispensably necessary that it should be again introduced into it.

I have also discovered that many who after having undergone the vaccine disease, that their systems were more or less liable to its impressions after re-vaccination at different periods of their lives, and no doubt would be susceptible to the contagion of small pox.

I would urgently recommend to those who have been vaccinated in infancy, a period less likely to produce a permanent effect upon the system, in order that they may add to their security, to be again

re-vaccinated, for I can with the utmost confidence declare from the experience that I have had not only in this but in foreign countries that the practice of re-vaccination, is both a safe and necessary precaution against the contagion of small pox.

Since I have been the physician of this hospital, 130 cases of varioloid have been admitted, and upon examining each patient, I found that 110 had been vaccinated in childhood without having been re-vaccinated. This fact strongly confirms the opinion which I have already advanced, that the operation of engrafting the cow pox upon a child is less likely to produce a lasting effect upon the constitution, than when it is performed at a late period in life.—Twelve had been vaccinated when they were eight years old,—six at different periods later in life, three had been re-vaccinated, and one had the small pox previously.

From these numerical statements compiled from the records of the hospital under my charge during the brief period of two years, it will be perceived that vaccination does not in every instance prove an infallible protection. Many no doubt consider that after undergoing the process of vaccination, they should ever be exempt from the contagion of small pox. No doubt that complete protection is the general rule, and when exceptions occur, many deem it not possessing those protecting virtues its advocates claim for it, and would therefore, endeavor to depreciate the value of re-vaccination, and thus lull the public mind into a careless security; but they should remember that if in every instance it does not prove an impenetrable cegis against the contagion of small pox, that disease itself is not an absolute guarantee of its own return. Vaccination then is the only means by which we can hope to eradicate from our city, or at least confine within very narrow limits this most loathsome pestilence, Small Pox, and vaccination seldom go hand in hand, for the former is sure to disappear under the protecting influence of the latter. In some countries the law requires all persons who are candidates for offices, either of trust or profit, to show before receiving the appointment, a certificate of vaccination, and in these countries small pox has nearly disappeared. When we contemplate the beautiful fact, that this disease communicated from one of the brutes to mankind, proves I may almost say, a universal safe-guard against the contagion of small pox, we cannot only feel grateful to that divine wisdom, who has so ordained it, but must also do homage to the man whose far seeing intellect first discovered this certainly, one of the most interesting facts in the medical science, and one that has conferred upon mankind the most inestimable blessing.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBT. T. SPENCE,

*Physician to Marine Hospital.*