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THE

POLICY OF RESTRICTIVE MEASURES,

OR

QUARANTINE,

AS APPLIED TO

CHOLERA AND CATTLE PLAGUE.

BY

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QUARANTINE.

The opinion, that Government interference and restrictions are expedient and necessary upon the entrance into the country, from foreign countries, of persons suffering from, or supposed to be affected by, an epidemic disease, or on the importation of cattle under similar circumstances, seems, at the present time, to be taken for granted almost universally.

It is not so much to enforce my own views on the subject, as to call attention to the fact that there was a time, not far distant, when this opinion was disputed by very high authorities, that I ask your attention for a few minutes to-day.

We are told now, by authorities of weight, that protection against disease is precisely the same in principle, whether applied to the landing of animals affected with cattle plague or that of men suffering from yellow fever or from cholera; that foreign countries have always recognised the necessity of such precautions even more than we have; that whether we look to the Continent of Europe or to the Australian Colonies, we find, not only the action of the Governments, but the popular feeling strongly in favour of repressive measures. Last spring, we are reminded, an International Congress was held at Vienna for the purpose of drawing up a uniform code of regulations to be put in force in the event of the cattle plague being imported into any of the States who were signatories of the Convention. All the important European States, it is added, were represented; and the various representatives, consisting of nearly thirty veterinary surgeons and administrative officers of the different Governments, were unanimous as to the leading principles which should regulate the action of the several States. They were agreed that the cattle plague is propagated solely by contagion, except in the district of Russia, of which it is a native;

and that the only known means of arresting its spread is the immediate slaughter and burial of the affected animals.

Again, it is said that, unfortunately, live animals cannot be imported, like grains of wheat, without injury to themselves, their fellow-voyagers, and the natives of the country to which they are sent. Animals herded together in confined spaces, with insufficient ventilation and drainage, breed disease as surely as men do under similar circumstances. Foot and mouth disease and pleuro-pneumonia amongst cattle have a history similar to that of cholera and typhus amongst men. Most true all this indeed. But then it is added, it has therefore been found necessary to establish a vigorous inspection of animals imported into Great Britain from foreign countries.

Such are the views, briefly stated, of the advocates of restrictive measures, and as recently called forth by the cattle plague and foot and mouth disease.

Now, first, in the opinion of the advocates themselves of restrictive measures, are they successful? It is affirmed that the regulations applied to imported foreign stock have been *remarkably successful;* for, although an infected beast is occasionally landed, the infection is prevented from spreading by the immediate slaughter of the whole cargo.

And let us refer to the official report of the Veterinary Department acting under orders of the Privy Council, and what do we find?

> "That nothing short of stopping all markets, fairs, exhibitions and sales of all animals, and putting severe restrictions on their movements, would eradicate the disease, even for a time."

It is added, that the attempt would necessitate the appointment of qualified veterinary surgeons to every district, would entail considerable expense, and would afford no security against further outbreaks. The department are further of opinion that these stringent measures, although submitted to for the purpose of, as the phrase is, "stamping out" the cattle

plague, would not be borne in the case of a disease so rarely fatal as foot and mouth disease.

So that the practical experience of those most qualified to form an opinion from it does not, as regards the foot and mouth disease at least, recommend the system.

Now, turn for a few minutes to the views that prevailed, not indeed without dispute, but amongst high authorities, some twenty or twenty-five years ago.

The principle on which restrictive measures are founded may be stated thus:—That the various epidemic diseases that have at different times desolated the earth are communicable by contact with persons affected, or by contact with things touched by persons affected, and that these epidemic diseases can be prevented by prevention of the contact. But evidence given and experience supplied in years immediately preceding that time, by medical and scientific men, went to show that prevention by sanitary measures, not by restrictions or quarantine regulations, was what should be aimed at. Evidence from all quarters was impartially collected by the London Board of Health. There was the unanimous judgment of the Academy of Medicine in Paris as to the fallacy of the opinions regarding the contagious nature of various epidemics, and as to the impossibility of preventing them except by sanitary measures. The College of Physicians at New Orleans, the heart of the yellow fever, had reported to the same effect. France, as between herself and Algiers, had gone so far as to abolish all quarantine regulations.

In 1865 cholera prevailed in Egypt, also in Turkey and in Italy, and we find the Privy Council of that day issuing such orders as the following:—

"The Lords of the Council are desirous to refrain from any such interference with the interest of trade as would result from the institution of measures of quarantine, doubting whether the most rigorous enforcement of such measures would afford any positive security against the importation of cholera."

Then what were the precautions recommended by the same Privy Council? Not an attempt to cut off all communication between the crews and passengers of vessels arriving and the people on shore, but the cleansing of sewers and drains, the removal of foul ditches, the trapping of house drains and sinks, improved water-supply, the prompt removal of all animal and vegetable refuse, the prevention of overcrowding in ships and lodging-houses, the cleansing, scraping, and limewashing the walls of houses, increased hospital accommodation, ample ventilation by means of the great natural disinfectant, pure air, abundantly and uninterruptedly supplied.

Happily, there is not much fear of the so-called importation of cholera now, although its daily progress towards this country was confidently predicted last year; and, very recently, we have been alarmed by the news of a new route from Persia, by which contagions current there will infallibly become current in Europe.

Without going further into the question of the so-called importation of disease, it may be remarked that the *importation of epidemics by some ship* has always been a leading idea with the advocates of quarantine, and as strongly contested by their opponents; as regards cattle, a recent official report goes so far as to assert that the importation of foot and mouth disease from abroad is, as the Scotch say, *not proven.*

The great alarm now is for cattle. All our stock is to be destroyed by the importation of infected cattle from abroad, and, owing to the high price of meat, so interesting is everything bearing on the subject, that such a telegraphic announcement as the following, in one of the ordinary channels of information (I mean a newspaper) is looked upon as of great importance:—

"THE CATTLE PLAGUE.

"The latest news received by Her Majesty's Government is from Hamburg, to the following effect: 'Two cows and one ox died in a

field near Hamburg, and were burnt and buried on the spot with 11 others killed, having shown symptoms of cattle plague.' "

Now, supposing it to have been established at the period before mentioned, to the satisfaction of many of our leading statesmen, and of scientific and medical men, that quarantine regulations, as applied to human beings, were, besides being ineffectual, positively mischievous, not only from their oppressive and vexatious interference with trade, but from their diverting attention from sanitary precautions and from scientific investigation into the causes of disease; may it not be possible, that in expecting, by Government regulations and prohibitions on the importation, landing, and conveyance of cattle from one country to another, and from one part of a country to another part, to do away with the cattle plague and foot and mouth disease, we are pursuing an equally unwise course, nay, more, that we are doing positive harm, and by our restrictions, and by the constant impending fear of other restrictions, are driving away that capital from the trade which, if allowed its natural flow, would, in course of time, go far to remedy the evils complained of.

For, to put the matter no higher than one of self-interest, is it not the interest of the dealer in cattle, whether grazier, exporter, or importer, to obtain the best price he can for his beasts? This, in the long run, he most certainly will not do if they reach the consumer in an imperfect condition. But, you will say, if we could wait, there might be something in the argument; but whilst we are waiting for the course of time our whole stock may be destroyed. But, let me ask, what have Government, on their own showing, and taking their own time, been able to do? According to the words of a Cabinet minister not long ago, and the official report of veterinary surgeons, the cattle plague cannot be "stamped out," and nothing short of measures the country is not likely to submit to have any chance of being efficacious in doing away with foot and mouth disease.

If, indeed, by a few simple regulations for the prevention of overcrowding, both on shipboard and by railway, and by a few other simple sanitary measures, Government can, without penal enactments—for, if I may offer an opinion here upon such a topic, I should say that of penal enactments we have of late had enough and to spare,—if Government can take care of the health of the brute creatures as it does for the health of men, why, as a matter of humanity, that might be good; but let them avoid, I should say, as far as possible, vexatious interference with trade or with individual liberty.

For my own part, I believe the remedy really is to be found in patient scientific investigation into the causes of the disease, in increased attention, on the part of all concerned, to their stock, to their purchases, and to the transport by land as well as by sea; not in Government prohibitions, restrictions, inspections, or penal enactments.

NOTE.—On the reading of this short paper at the Plymouth Congress, an interesting discussion ensued, more than one of the speakers expressing a decided opinion as to the inexpediency of quarantine under all circumstances. As to cattle, a gentleman of, as I understand, great experience, declared his opinion that at least the system of "knocking them on the head" was a most unscientific proceeding, and that he had himself cured instead of killing.

It may be worth remarking here, how confidently, in the daily records of the progress of cattle plague, the old doctrines of contagion are asserted, while at the same time facts are recorded apparently at variance with such doctrines—*e.g.* "It is quite possible, or even likely, that the disease may have been conveyed to cattle on shore by the persons employed in the slaughtering on board. No exact way in which this could have happened has at present been traced out, and it is said the slaughterers were disinfected on the completion of their work."

Contra.—"Of the 56 carcases (floated out to sea) 55 have been found at places *where no cattle plague has since occurred.*"