38.

No. 331.

IN ASSEMBLY,

June 22, 1832.

[SECOND MEETING.]

Andrew Dickson

REPORT

Of the committee on medical subjects, on so much of the Governor's messags as relates to the Asiatic Cholera.

Mr. Milledoler, from the committee on medical subjects, to which was referred so much of the Governor's message as relates to the public health,

REPORTED:

That from all the facts which have come to their knowledge, they have concluded that the malignant epidemic which is prevailing in the neighboring province of Lower Canada, is essentially the same pestilence, which, originating in Asia, in its progress westward, has lately pervaded the continent of Europe, and which is generally called Asiatic or spasmodic cholera.

This disease your committee would represent as of a very alarming nature, acting destructively upon the human body, and in many instances meeting men as fire meets the stubble.

In all probability it has been brought over to America by emigrants lately arrived from Europe. Among these it has as yet mostly occurred, and upon them acted with the greatest severity. It is however by no means confined to the emigrants, but has spread among the natives of those districts in which it has been introduced, selecting its first victims from among such as are most exposed to its influence, and least able to resist its action.

It was supposed before its arrival, that should it reach our continent, it would perhaps be so modified by locality and habits, as to assume a milder form, and to be of less extensive range. We regret to state, that thus far this expectation has not been realized.—From the latest official report of the medical authorities of Montreal, it would appear that the disease is more extensive in that city in proportion to the number of inhabitants than it was in Paris, where it prevailed more extensively than in other European cities.

Although there is likely to exist some difference of opinion among medical men as to the causes of its production, and the means by which it is spread, it is considered that a detailed discussion of this part of the subject would at present be not only inexpedient, but exceedingly ill-timed and injudicious. It is sufficient to observe, that by some, it is supposed to be propagated by contagion; and that others would ascribe its prevalence to a peculiar condition of, or a morbid something existing in, the atmosphere—a cause so far inscrutable as to elude our senses, and not capable of demonstration by any known forms of chemical investigation, but proved to exist from its obvious and peculiarly malignant effects.

Your committee are of opinion that under present circumstances it is prudent not to base our conduct in reference to this pestilence upon fanciful speculation or vague and exclusive theory, but to admit that both the causes mentioned exert an influence, and to take our measures accordingly. Your committee do therefore highly approve of those measures which have been officially recommended by the medical profession, and adopted by the civil authorities of some of our cities, for the purpose of disinfecting and purifying the atmosphere, and would recommend to the supervising officers of all our towns and villages to resort to the same appropriate means, in order to secure themselves, and those under their care, from the unmitigated influence of this destructive disease.

The committee would also state, that there is reason to believe that the epidemic cholera may be spread by contagion. That it may be contracted by a near approach to the persons of those laboring under the disease, and also of those who have been exposed to the infected atmosphere, but in whom the disease may not be developed; and also that articles of merchandize, dress, &c. which have been subjected to the same exposure are capable of conveying the poison, and exciting the disease, particularly in those in

whom, from any cause, there may exist a predisposition. If this opinion is correct or probable, it is all-important that the intercourse between healthy localities and the infected districts should be restricted.

The medical committee would therefore recommend the immediate passage of an act by the Legislature, conferring such powers upon our municipal officers as shall enable them to enforce strict quarantine regulations upon our frontiers and other parts of the State, and to continue them in operation so long as circumstances may require. It is also recommended to our fellow-citizens to aid the magistracy in carrying out such measures as may be adopted for their comfort and protection.

Finally, the committee would enjoin upon all to exercise prudence, and not to yield to an undue timidity, or to be agitated by unnecessary alarm, but to continue their confidence in that Almighty power which has heretofore preserved our land, and can protect us from this threatening calamity.

All which is respectfully submitted.

PHILIP E. MILLEDOLER, *Ch'n, &c.*