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Carey, Matthew, 1760-1839.

A Desultory Account of the Yellow Fever.

[ Philadelphia, 1793. ] 12 pp.

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DESULTORY ACCOUNT of the  
YELLOW FEVER, prevail-  
ent in PHILADELPHIA, and of the  
present State of the City. By M.  
CAREY.

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Philadelphia, Octob. 16, 1793.

It is not my intention to enter into a complete history of the disorder that has for above two months past prevailed in our city. That will, I presume, be done in some time hence, by persons who have more means of information, and are more competent. All I propose, is, to give a slight sketch, to satisfy curiosity in the mean time.

Mrs. Parkinson, who appears to have been the first patient in this disorder, was seized the 3d of August, and died on the 7th. It is not yet reduced to any certainty, whether the disease originated in the city, or was imported from the West-Indies—Rush is of the former opinion.—Several other gentlemen of the faculty believe that it was brought from the West-Indies, which is the most probable.

From its first appearance, till towards the close of August, the dangerous enemy we had in the city was hardly known. The deaths of several persons were incessantly announced in the papers, and read with unconcern usual on such occasions. All was apathy and indifference. This has been the cause of subsequent distresses; for, had the public attention been early awakened, and decisive measures acted to prevent the spreading of the disorder, and separate the infected from the sound, it is prob-

hable that before now we should have been free from this calamity.

At length, the alarm spread through the city. The destructive nature of the disease was generally known, and many persons, aware of the danger and determined to escape it if possible, removed with their families to different parts of the country. Numbers of our most useful and respectable citizens who remained in the city, were hurried into eternity, and their families left to deplore the irreparable loss.

The terror now became universal. The migrations to the country were very great—and about the middle of September, it is supposed that 12 or 15,000 of the inhabitants of Philadelphia had deserted the city.

About this time the alarm spread through the neighbouring states. The 12th of September, the inhabitants of New-York had a meeting, and passed several resolves, to prevent the introduction of the disorder among them. One was, that no person from hence should be received into their city, until after an absence of fourteen days from Philadelphia, and even then, not without the examination of a physician, and proof of having enjoyed good health in the interim.—A general fast was appointed for the 20th, to implore the protection of the Almighty against the disorder. The 23d they appointed a night watch of ten citizens in each ward, to guard against such Philadelphians as might evade their vigilance by day. Public resentment was denounced against any persons harbouring strangers without giving due notice to the committee appointed to watch over the public health. The 13th appeared a proclamation from Governor Clinton, ordering all vessels from Philadelphia to perform quarantine.

The Governor of Maryland published a proclamation, the 12th, which not only ordered all vessels from Philadelphia to perform quarantine, but subjected all passengers by land to the examination

of health officers appointed for the purpose. On the 14th, the citizens of Baltimore passed sundry resolves to prevent the entrance of passengers till after being seven days absent from Philadelphia, and being examined by the health officer. The 30th they resolved that any persons from Baltimore, who should visit such as were performing quarantine, should be themselves subject to it. The 3d of October they appointed as a day of fast in the same manner as the citizens of New-York had done.

The Governor of Virginia issued a proclamation, ordering vessels from Philadelphia to perform quarantine, the 17th; and the Governor of Massachusetts published one, which, like that of Maryland, extended to vessels and to passengers by land and water.

The inhabitants of Chester-town in Maryland, of Havre-de-grace, of Trenton, of Reading, and various other places, published resolves similar to those of Baltimore and New-York.

It is a subject of deep regret, that the dread of this disorder had so far extinguished the feelings of humanity, that in none of these proclamations or resolutions, except those of Chester-town, is there to be discovered a single provision for the ease or accommodation of the unfortunate fugitives from Philadelphia, whether sound or afflicted.

The real distress of Philadelphia has been, and is very great. But, as if it were not enough, the magnifying tongue of rumour was every where busy. The horrors of the visitation—the contagiousness of the disorder—and the inevitable death attending all who took it, or approached the infected, were painted in the most frightful colour—and, as usual, the greater the distance from the scene of action, the more terrific were the accounts. The plague, for such it was termed, was not sufficient. Famine, owing to the total detention of our markets, was going to unite its arrows with those of

the pestilence, and lay totally waste the once-flourishing city of Philadelphia.

To account for most of these extravagant stories, is not difficult. The alarming fears of some, the credulity of others, and the disposition to exaggeration of many†, afford a rational source to which

\* *The following appeared in the Norfolk paper about the middle of September :*

Extract of a letter from Philadelphia, to a gentleman in Norfolk, Sept. 9.

"Half the inhabitants of this city have already fled to different parts, on account of the pestilential disorder that prevails here. The few citizens who remained in this place, die in abundance, so fast that they drag them away, like dead beasts, and put ten or fifteen or more in a hole together. All the stores are shut up. I am afraid this city will be ruined: for nobody will come near it hereafter. I am this day removing my family from this fatal place." Hundreds of letters as utterly and scandalously false as this, have been dispatched to different parts of the United States.

† In a New-York paper of September 14, was given the following accurate statement: "Information by a gentleman from Philadelphia. Friday morning, the fever still continued with great violence. About one hundred were buried on Thursday. This gentleman says, he rode from one end of the city to the other, on Thursday afternoon, in order to view the situation of the place. He rode by four or five of the burying places, and saw, as well as he could count them standing on his carriage, as many as sixty graves open to receive the dead that evening! He supposes, by the best information, that the Potter's Field, and other burying grounds would receive as many more! While riding a square and a half, he saw 10 or 12 corpses carried by negroes! some few people walking after two of them. They bury them all in the evening, or early in the morning—and then by Negroes."

we may trace the reports. For the honour of human nature, I will not allow myself to suppose that any of them originated in selfish and interested views.

But it is time our fellow citizens throughout the United States should know as nearly as possible the real state of our city. The mortality which has raged, has carried off to this day about 3000 persons. About 23,000 people have left the city, and above 30,000 remain behind. These, notwithstanding the terrors of the country people, find plentiful markets: Beef is sold for 7d — mutton 5d — veal 7d. — butter 1s. 6d. 1s. 8d. and 2s. per lb — and in general all other articles in proportion. Business is not entirely at a stand. Many stores are still open; and even now not many more than half our houses are deserted. The banks have not ceased discounting a single day since the commencement of the disorder.

Among the most revolting circumstances attending this scourge, is the cruelty exercised against some who were, and many who were only supposed to be infected. Two or three persons, travelling in the stages to New-York, being taken sick, were compelled by their fellow passengers to leave the stage, with their baggage. When on the road, wearied and distressed, they could procure no relief, no shelter — but absolutely perished with sickness and hunger. On the Lancaster road, a similar instance occurred. At Milford, in Delaware, a woman is said to have been tamed and feathered for coming with a quantity of goods, brought from Philadelphia. But this, I hope, is merely fabricated. In this city, there have been very many instances, in which as soon as a person was seized with the fever, he was immediately abandoned by friends and the nearest relations, and resigned to the care of perhaps a single negro. This has been the case with persons of great affluence. And there are not wanting cases of persons so totally deserted, as to be without a human being to lend them a

drink of water. Parents have deserted their children—children their parents—Husbands their wives—and wives their husbands. It is probably not exaggeration to suppose that a fourth or a fifth of the whole of the persons who have died, have been sacrificed through the consternation of those who ought to have taken care of them. Since the early terrors have been dispelled, these desertions have become rare.

But from this melancholy and distressing part of the picture, I turn to one which affords consolation, and sets human nature in a more respectable point of light. Amidst the general terror and distress, a number of patriotic citizens associated, about the 14th of September, to furnish every aid in their power to the afflicted. They formed themselves into various committees—borrowed money of the bank of North America—and afforded liberal assistance to all in want. Of these men it may be fairly said, that their services are above all price. But for their humane interposition, the mortality would have been infinitely more extensive; as there have been various instances of their taking dead bodies from houses totally deserted, which would otherwise have remained in a state of putrefaction, spread the pestilential effluvia in every direction, and caused a dreadful havock. And although where every man has behaved meritoriously, it is an invidious task to particularize any; yet the merits of some have been so supereminent, that I should hold myself criminal, were I to pass them over in silence. Of these, Stephen Girard, who has voluntarily and gratuitously undertaken to be one of the managers of the hospital at Bushhill, stands most conspicuous. He has acted “as a father, is constantly in the rooms, encouraging the sick, handing them whatever they stand in need of, covering them, wiping the sweat off their brows,” and performing many offices of kindness to them, at which nice feelings, in any other circumstance, would revolt. Peter Helm,

his coadjutor, divides with him, the honours of this laudable and dangerous office.

Matthew Clarkson, Mayor of the city, has never deserted his post, like other magistrates, but erected a standard for the benevolent citizens to rally round. Caleb Lownes, to whom Philadelphia stands principally indebted for so many salutary reforms in her prison—Israel Israel, Thomas Wilbur, James Ker, Samuel Bengé, James Sharfwood, Henry de Forest, Thomas Savery, with many others, have by their disinterested humanity, merited the unceasing gratitude of their fellow citizens.

Nor is the merit of humanity at this awful crisis, confined to citizens of Philadelphia. The 30th of September, there was a meeting of the inhabitants of Gloucester County, in New-Jersey, where a subscription was opened, and a sum of money raised, with which they purchased a quantity of fowls, butter, &c. which they dispatched to the relief of the poor at Bush-hill. The New-York common council have made the very liberal contribution of 5000 dollars. At Salem, Darby, Trenton, Burlington, Lancaster, Germantown, Kingessing, Providence, Montgomery, Wilmington, Pottgrove and various other places, liberal subscriptions have been entered into for the same humane purpose as that in Gloucester County. From present appearances, it is likely that the subscriptions will cover all the expences of the sick, and likewise support the poor during the hardships of the present times. At Woodbury, in Jersey, in a public meeting, a motion was made to stop all communication with Philadelphia,

‡ *It is with great concern I mention, that of the Committee no less than four have fallen sacrifices to their benevolent exertions—Andrew Adgate, Jonathan Dickinson Sargent, Daniel O'Fly, and Joseph Inskip, all excellent and much regretted members of society.*



Philadelphia, and only four persons rose to support it. At Elizabeth Town and Springfield in New-Jersey, asylums have been opened for persons coming from Philadelphia, infected with the fever:—And measures of the same kind have been adopted, I understand, at Elk. To those whose conduct has not been tinged with an equal degree of charity, we may say —“Go—do ye likewise.”

Unfortunately, we have had, for a continuance of time, a series of weather uncommonly unfavourable to this disorder. For above two months, we have had no rain—and during that time, there have not been above ten or twelve moderately cool days. It is worthy of particular attention, that the degree of mortality has depended greatly on the degree of heat. On very sultry days, the number of deaths has been much greater than on cool days. A fall of rain last night, accompanied with cool weather, which continues this day, has made a most flattering change in the prospects of this city.

The discordant opinions and practice of the gentlemen of the faculty have been a great means of destroying the confidence of the public in their prescriptions. Dr. Rush and some other physicians have strongly advocated bleeding, and purges of calomel and jalap. They have been very successful.—Others have rested their hopes principally on the cold bath, bark, generous living, and a few occasional plasters of old Madeira.

There are some important facts, respecting this disorder, which deserve very particular attention. Many persons, infected with it, have removed from Philadelphia, and died in different parts of the neighbouring states: and yet there is not, I believe, a single instance, properly authenticated, of their communicating it to any others, who have died in consequence. A man from Philadelphia died, about two days after his arrival, in New-York. The place of his death was a boarding house, in which  
were

were several people, one of whom slept in the same bed with him. Two of the family were slightly affected—but not in such a degree as to require medical assistance. They recovered very speedily. A man in Baltimore died in similar circumstances, in a tavern. No person was affected but his doctor, whose indisposition was not of long continuance. Many people had visited and attended the sick man without injury. In Princeton, Woodbridge, Germantown, and Lancaster, similar instances have occurred. Three persons from Philadelphia, died of this disorder at Woodbury, and nobody caught it from them.—These examples should dispel the unmanly fears that have prevailed in so many places, and led to measures, which, if not cruel, were certainly arbitrary and severe.

Another circumstance of a consoling nature, is, that vast numbers, who have been afflicted with the disorder, have recovered, and are now in as good a state of health as ever. Of the family of William Young, no less than ten persons had the fever, only one of whom died: the others are either totally recovered, or in a state of convalescence. James Corkrin and four of his family were confined with it, and are now all well. George Hunter had six ill, from four years old to seventy; they are all perfectly restored. And numberless other instances of the same kind could be mentioned.

It is further to be observed, that in many families, one, two, and three persons have had the disorder, and the remainder escaped, although constantly exposed to the effluvia from the sick. Many who have unremittingly attended on their diseased relations and friends, and who, after their death, have put them into the coffins, have never been in the slightest degree affected. All the attendants at Bushhill are in a good state of health. Mr. Girard and Mr. Helm, whom I have already mentioned, have been for nearly four weeks employed in the laborious

laborious office of managers of that hospital, and have never experienced a single attack of the fever.

I quite forgot to mention one of the most laudable works of the committee. The numerous deaths that took place, left many wretched orphans in the most deplorable and abandoned state. To relieve these, the Loganian library, which has been given up to the committee by John Swanwick, has been converted into an orphan house, for the reception of those whose parents die without being able to make provision for them. In this charitable asylum, are to be found children of every age, from one week to ten, twelve, or fourteen years, who, but for this resource, must have absolutely perished of hunger. There are at present under their care, about 100 orphans. Israel Israel and John Letchworth have the merit of being the principal superintendants of the house.

The sum already borrowed of the bank of North America, is 6500 dollars—of which 3000 are laid out;—and when the services actually performed, are paid for, it is supposed the whole sum will be expended.

Want of leisure, which prevents me from methodising what I have written, will, I hope, apologize for the desultory nature of this sketch.

M. CAREY.

List of Deaths in Philadelphia, from August 1, to October 11, 1793, inclusive, of all ages, sexes, and of every disorder, taken from returns made by the different Clergymen, Sextons, &c.

Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
1. 8	1. 11	1. 63
2. 7	2. 10	2. 63
3. 6	3. 10	3. 70
4. 4	4. 16	4. 56
5. 1	5. 20	5. 67
6. 1	6. 19	6. 71
7. 2	7. 10	7. 67
8. 10	8. 40	8. 86
9. 5	9. 23	9. 94
10. 5	10. 23	10. 72
11. 3	11. 16	11. 101
12. 2	12. 29	
13. 7	13. 27	
14. 2	14. 37	
15. 5	15. 43	
16. 2	16. 50	
17. 2	17. 55	
18. 1	18. 49	
19. 7	19. 60	
20. 7	20. 61	
21. 5	21. 54	
22. 9	22. 68	
23. 5	23. 57	
24. 15	24. 87	
25. 8	25. 77	
26. 9	26. 55	
27. 8	27. 49	
28. 23	28. 48	
29. 16	29. 50	
30. 27	30. 67	
31. 15		
<hr/> 217 <hr/>	<hr/> 1221 <hr/>	<hr/> 809 <hr/>
August, -	-	217
September, -	-	1221
October, -	-	809

Brought forward  
 Rev. Mr. Marshall's Meeting (no return) supposed  
 1st Presbyterian congregation, no return from  
 Oct. 1 to 11—supposed  
 Christ Church, do. do.  
 German Catholics, no regular return, supposed  
 Potter's Field, from Aug. 1 to 29, returned in  
 gross  
 Kensington Church, no return,  
 German Lutherans, returned in gross to Sep-  
 tember 18,  
 Methodists, returned in gross  
 Baptists, do.  
 Universalists,

273

*List of Burials in the several Grave Yards in the City  
 and Liberties of Philadelphia, from August 1, to  
 October 11, 1793, inclusive.*

Presbyterians	{	First congregation	72
		Second do.	97
		Third do.	83
Seceders—Rev. Mr. Annan's,			28
Protestant Episcopalians	{	Christ's Church	107
		Peter's do.	79
		Paul's do.	56
German	{	Lutherans	416
		Calvinists	167
		Catholics—no return—supposed	80
St Mary's Church			179
Friends			282
Moravians			8
Swedes			48
Potter's Field			864
Rev. Mr. Marshall's congregation, no return— supposed			10
Kensington	do.	do.	100
Methodists			30
Baptists			29
Universalists			2