YELLOW FEVER
And the National Board of Health.

[From the Pensacola Advance, March 10th, 1880.]

Dr. J. C. Le Hardy, of Savannah, Ga., is agitating to limit the powers of the National Board of Health, or rather to prevent their extension or giving "It a political influence that may be used to injure any section of the country." Dr. Haring having received a Circular and a private letter calling on him to aid in organizing an opposition to a Bill introduced in Congress, by so good and Southern a man as Senator Harris of Tennessee, has replied in terms which cannot fail to have full weight, with the community. There are sanitarians who have local interest, men of greed, and who stand with the suppression from without. With these Dr. Haring has no sympathy. He is not afraid that Dr. Le Hardy's method of stirring up the country may give him a handle to plans and projects which Dr. Le Hardy himself might be the first to condemn. The National Board of Health has no political significance whatever. Such men as Dr. Cabell of Virginia, Dr. Mitchell of Memphis and Dr. Benis of New Orleans are Southern men. Drs. Billings and Turner belong to no section since they are Army and Navy Officers. Apart from the Solicitor General we know of no member of the National Board who has either a strong claim or a medical and, none as a politician, to hold the position to which he was originally nominated. It is well such a fact should be known and widely published, since the prevention of plagues is too important a matter in the health to be made the subject of any angry or senseless discussion.

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA, March 10th, 1880.

DEAR SIR—Your circular letter and note have only reached me, and, I regret you think that Congress may "cast upon our country laws which must prove detrimental to the commerce, as well as the political prosperity of the Republic." I feel reassured, however, when I learned that the indefatigable Chairman of the Senate Committee on Epidemic Disease—no man than Governor I. G. Harris of Tennessee—had charged of this indefatigable Bill.

Within the limits of this reply I cannot pretend to review the operations and the future tendencies of the National Board of Health. You say "now is your time to work for your theory." I have worked throughout the entire period of my professional career, at the History and Pathology of Yellow Fever, and it will be my earnest endeavor to afford such proofs to the Medical Profession, on the Ship origin of this plague, in tropical America, as must, in my opinion, prove convincing. But I have no sympathy with clogging the wheels of sanitary legislation, for any personal ends or motives of self-aggrandizement.

The National Board of Health has been unfortunate in favoring the view that Yellow Fever is endemic in Cuba. The Report of the Havana Commission must, before another decade is past, as it deserves, with the strongest condemnation. Such is my opinion on this one point. It is difficult enough to get the Spanish government to do its duty, towards this country, by parrying the tides of the Atlantic, and how can we hope for their energetic action when an American physician, clothed with all the prestige of authority, assures the world that Yellow Fever in Havana is inevitable?

In this vicinity, in a single day, four from contagious malarial, where climatic seasonal conditions, only rarely favor the propagation of impacted yellow fever, and where the winter hybernation of the malarial has been proved impossible over a period, to my knowledge, of 10 years, how can we throw open our ports to commerce, in the summer and autumn, when a single ship from Cuba having one case of the disease on board, will close all local communication? It is, I confess, with absolute impatience that I learn of the commendable advocacy of the local origin of yellow fever, either in the Continent or in the West Indies. The opinions of the Profession are still in striking contrast to the common sense of the people, on the one vital question of the communicability of this disease. The eloquent teachings of cholera—quarantine—detestable as every form of real or apparent inhumanity must be—may yet drive home the substantial truths, to relieve us from the immanence of the difficulty by Railroads and refugees.

When I reflect that a most worthy representative of the Medical Profession in the South, Dr. Caudle, is President of the National Board of Health, and that an old and tried Sanitarian, Dr. D. Upjohn Smith of New York, is watching the interests of American Medicine, I hesitate to raise my voice in opposition to measures, which, with the enjoining duties of a busy life in practice, it is impossible for me to judge closely.

We have a golden opportunity, each year, of criticizing the action of the National Board of Health, at the meeting of the American Public Health Association, and I hope we may have leaders of courage to be heard. We should advocate the removal of the: 5

In conclusion, my dear Sir, I beg to assure you that any request from the National Board of Health, to strengthen its position by such influential however trivial, that I may use, will be treated with the greatest respect and unqualified consideration. The interests of commerce and of the whole world are bound up in the great question which I, for one, am glad to see extricated for action and deliberation to the National Board of Health. That our colleagues on that Board will not betray their trust, nor act rashly, is universally acknowledged. I am in favor of an amendment, and not destruction of those powers,

ROBT. B. HARRIS, M. D.

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