

Organization of the Board.

In accordance with the provisions of the "Act to Establish a State Board of Health, and regulating the Practice of Medicine and Surgery", passed March 8th, 1881, his Excellency, Jacob B. Jackson, the Governor, commissioned the following persons, June 8th, 1881, as members of the State Board of Health:

For the First Congressional District.

James E. Reers, M.D., of Whiting, for the term of six years.
George B. Moffett, M.D., of Parkersburg, for the term of two years.

For the Second Congressional District.

C. J. Richardson, M.D., of Charleston, for the term of four years.
George H. Carpenter, M.D., of Moorefield, for the term of two years.

For the Third Congressional District.

A. R. Barbee, M.D., of Point Pleasant, for the term of six years.
Isaiah Bee, M.D., of Princeton, for the term of four years.

The following letter was addressed to the members of the Board:

Whiting, W. Va.,
June 9th, 1881.

"Dr. _____

"My dear Sir:

"The order in which his Excellency, Governor Jackson, has been pleased to write his appointments for the State Board of Health makes it my duty to call the Board together for organization.

Fearing confident you will agree with me in opinion that the Board should begin its important work as early as possible, and that its first meeting for organization should be held at the State Capitol, I have taken the liberty to appoint Tuesday, the 21st inst. the time, and Washington the place for the meeting; and hope you will not fail to be present at the date above mentioned.

"Very Respectfully,

"Your obt. servant,

James E. Reeves, M. D.

First Meeting of the Board.

Accordingly, the first meeting of the Board was held in the Executive Chamber at the Capitol, June 21, 1881, at 10 o'clock, A. M., the following members being present: Dr. Geo. B. Moffett, Dr. A. R. Barber, Dr. C. J. Richardson, Dr. Geo. H. Carpenter, and Dr. James E. Reeves.

On motion of Dr. Moffett, Dr. Carpenter was made temporary Secretary, after which Dr. James E. Reeves, temporary Chairman, addressed the Board as follows:

GENTLEMEN:—The order in which his excellency, Governor Jackson, has been pleased to write his appointments for the State Board of Health, made it my duty, according to law, to convene you for the purpose of organization. I have chosen this time and place in order that, at the earliest possible day, the Board may inaugurate its important work; and I trust I have not seriously inconvenienced any of you by my exercise of authority.

To-day we commence a new chapter in the history of West Virginia, and no more responsible trust was ever conferred by the State. We are confronted with questions concerning the life, health and happiness of the whole people of West Virginia; for the law says: "The Board shall take cognizance of the interests of the life and health of the inhabitants of the State; and shall make, or cause to be made, sanitary investigations and inquiries respecting the causes of diseases, especially of endemics and epidemics, and the means of prevention; the sources of mortality, and the effects of localities, employments, habits and circumstances of life on the public health."

What a broad charge of duties is therein contained! Nothing, indeed, is omitted which is of greatest concern to human life and the prosperity and happiness of society.

In no other branch of the State's service can be found the demand for such an amount of self-sacrificing, patient, competent labor as the State Board of Health has accepted to perform. And why not? Simply because the Board is composed exclusively of medical men, and that in every age of the world the mission of the medical profession has been regarded as broad as all humanity, and people of every class have been accustomed to look to physicians for leadership at every step in advance to protect life, promote health and elevate society.

Look all over our own glorious country! See the vast number of splendid establishments, with towers and spires pointing to the dominions of the great God above us, and ask, by whom were these proud monuments of charity planned?—the asylums for the insane, for the deaf and dumb, for the blind, for the feeble-minded, for the aged and infirm of both sexes, for the sick

poor of all religions—through whose labors, principally, have such institutions been erected, and their priceless benefits conferred upon society? Assuredly, physicians! Again, see the large and splendidly equipped army of active workers now engaged in the field of preventive medicine; levying their contributions from every available channel, using all the newly discovered means for the unfolding and correct interpretation of nature's laws, wrestling both day and night, yet noiselessly, with contagion, disease and death, in hospitals, in prisons, in the palaces of the rich, and in the hovels of the squalid poor where none but the all-searching eye of God seeth, and ask, who are they that have thus consecrated their lives, and pledged their sacred honors for the relief of suffering humanity? The answer again is, physicians!

West Virginia has now formally contributed her quota of volunteers to the grand army of sanitarians. Our good Governor, whose whole heart is warmly enlisted in the cause of public hygiene, has made us the advance guard. Soon we shall have *vedettes*—local boards of health—in every county of the State; then we shall be able to present a well organized effort, and commence in earnest to educate the people as to ~~the~~ causes of diseases and means of prevention; thus endeavoring to make the State Board of Health popular with and useful to the people of the State.

Physicians, who have given attention to the subject, know that by a strict observance of the now well-established principles of hygiene, at least one ~~part~~ of the deaths annually occurring from the four greatest factors of mortality—namely; So-called "consumption," scarlet fever, diphtheria and enteric or typhoid fever—may be prevented.

Besides loss of valuable lives from preventable sickness, it is estimated that for every case of death in a community there are about ~~many~~ sick persons who are non-productive, and have to be cared for by somebody, either at the expense of the citizen, or by the State. The average, in loss of time, medical attendance, medicines and nursing, is about \$50 each. And all this suffering and loss in treasure—not to mention the cost of burying the dead—from ignorance and neglect!

Yet, this is but a part of the loss to the State. Who can number the permanently, hopelessly disabled in every community whose departure from the standard of perfect health can be directly traced to some violation of the laws of health! If we go into the State Asylum for the Blind and Deaf at Romney, we will behold the ineffacable and irremediable penalties inflicted upon helpless children from disregard of hygienic rules by their parents, dating either from the lying-in room, scarlet fever, or diphtheria; and it is a fair estimate to assert that at least 30 per cent of these charges to the State are directly chargeable to the causes just mentioned. Surely, subjects of such momentous importance are worthy of attention by the State!

The law establishing the State Board of Health is a good one; and it is our duty to insure its strict enforcement. Its provisions cover every interest connected with the public health, and we must be ready to give advice respecting the influence of the topography, geology and climate of the various parts of the State upon the health of its citizens; the relation of drainage and sewerage to the health of families and whole communities; the importance of sanitary architecture in public and private buildings, and the influence of the domicile in developing tendency to certain forms of transmissible disease; the influence of foods, drinks, clothing and occupations; the rearing, training and educating the young; and last, but not least, point out the nature and causes of epidemics, endemics, and contagious diseases, and the means for their prevention and eradication.

The medical features of the law are not less beneficent. They guarantee to the people well-qualified physicians and surgeons; and will soon separate well-educated physicians from ignorant, dangerous pretenders, who cannot be otherwise regarded than as public enemies.

I apprehend that it will be the duty of the board to issue three classes of medical certificates:

First—Those setting forth the fact of diploma qualification.

Second—Those to accommodate practitioners of more than ten years' experience in practice within the limits of this State.

Third—Those for practitioners of less than ten years' experience, who are not the possessors of a diploma from a ~~respectable~~ medical college.

The latter is the only class of physicians which will be required to appear before the board for examination. And what shall be our standard? The law says it shall be "sufficiently strict to test the qualifications of the candidate as a practitioner of medicine, surgery and osteo-~~pathy~~rics." If we err in this matter I know it will always be on the side of liberality.

The enforcement of the 14th and 15th sections, concerning *itinerant physicians*, and offenders generally, must rest mainly with the local Boards of Health. The language of the law is simple and specific, and cannot be misunderstood.

For any violation, all that is required is to make information of the fact to any Justice of the peace, or to the State's attorney.

Such, gentlemen, is an outline of the work committed to our care; and though unpaid, there will be rewards to the people of incalculable value, and the State will be honored thereby.

Until now I have not had the pleasure of meeting all the members of the Board, but I know you have large hearts, and will give to our work your very best energies.

I look forward to the enjoyment of great pleasure by our association. Again I welcome you to this grand, glorious, self-sacrificing duty, which, if faithfully performed, will bless and make happy the people of West Virginia.

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A vote of thanks was returned Dr. Reeves for his address, after which, by formal ballot, Dr. George B. Moffett was elected President.

On motion of Dr. Richardson a ballot was next taken for permanent Secretary - The executive officers of the Board, ~~which~~ ^{who} resulted in the unanimous election of Dr. James E. Reeves, who at once entered upon the duties of his office.

The members of the board were then furnished with copies of the Act, and the Secretary read from it, section by section, in order to insure a perfect understanding of the duties in detail.

On motion of Dr. Barber, the Secretary was instructed to supply his office with all needful books and Stationery, and to have printed such blank forms of Medical Certificate, License, etc., for the different classes of Medical practitioners, as provided for by law; to secure a Seal for the use of the State Board of Health; and to make such other purchases, in the name of the Board, as he shall deem necessary to carry on the business of his Department.

The Salary of the Secretary was, at his request, left undetermined until a future meeting.

For the government of the board, on motion of Dr. Carpenter, the Rules of Order of the last House of Delegates were adopted, and with these proceedings the board completed its organization.

A recess was then taken until two o'clock, p. m.

Afternoon.

At the appointed time the board reassembled, and

the remainder of the session was ^{principally} occupied in the examination of Lew S. Franklin ^{of Newville,} Leonard Eskey ^{of Beeswood,} and Geo. I. Garrison, ^{of Burton,} applicants for Medical Certificate, who were found duly qualified.

The appointments of local or County Boards of Health was the subject next considered; and there was a full understanding by the members, pursuant of the very great care that should be exercised in making these appointments in order to guard against mistakes in making nominations for these offices, and to insure the largest benefits from the exercise of the law, it was agreed that the members of the State board should make the appointments for their several Districts and report the same to the Secretary for record.

By way of inaugurating a general plan of work for the immediate future, the board resolved itself into several standing committees to give special study and attention to some of the most important subjects connected with ^{the} public health, ~~and~~ ~~high~~.

* There being no further business, the Board adjourned to meet at the call of the Secretary.

George B. Miffell, M.D., President.

James E. Reeves, M.D.,

Secretary.

* On motion of Dr. Carpenter, a committee was appointed to draft Rules for the transactions of the business of the Board, and make report at the next meeting; whereupon Drs. Carpenter and Reeves were appointed by the President.