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Nec araneorum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.

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Miramichi, Tuesday Afternoon, April 1, 1845.

Legislative News.

New Brunswick:

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, March 3.

TRACADIE DISEASE.

Report of Medical Officer in charge of
Lazaretto at Sheldrake Island.

To His Excellency Sir William Macbean
George Colebrooke, K. H., Lieutenant Governor of the Province of New Brunswick.
May it please Your Excellency,

Continued from our last.

In the case of a woman, which is recorded in the Session Records of Walls, and furnished by Mr Rennie, Session Clerk, it is stated, "She was ordered to be provided, at the expense of the Session, with back and bed clothes, a house fit for her to lodge in, and maintenance to be brought her daily at the house." Mr Rennie further states—"I have been informed by old persons, that she lived but a short time after she was put into the house built for her in the common, at a distance from other houses." He adds—"It has been reported to me, that in Papa, about the year 1778, a leprous woman was put out and died in the fields before a house could be built; and that about the same time there were leprous persons in the district of Watness, and that the son and daughter of a man, Henry Sinclair, were infected, and sent to the Hospital at Edinburgh."

Doctor Hillary states that it is not originally endemic in any part of the New World, and that it was first imported into and spread through the West Indies, &c., by subjects brought from Africa. Hillary professes himself certain upon this point.¹

Doctor Thomas says—"The disease (leprosy) is very readily propagated from one person to another by contact or cohabitation, as I have often witnessed during my residence in the West Indies." He adds—"The disease arises from an hereditary taint or predisposition sometimes, but it more commonly proceeds from infection communicated either by cohabitation, or otherwise coming in contact with them who labour under it in a high degree."²

Magendie, the celebrated French Physician, says—"The dread of contagion is still very general."³

Doctor Edmondstone remarks—"Nor does it seem to propagate itself by infection, unless in those cases where a matter is generated and discharged from the sores. There is the certain medium of communication, and an inattention to this circumstance has given rise to contradictory views of its nature."⁴

Doctor Copeland remarks—"I believe there is much truth in the latter part of this quotation. I quite agree with this opinion of my late friend. We have seen that it prevailed very generally in the Shetland Islands about sixty five years ago, and all the inhabitants were deeply impressed with a conviction of its contagious nature; and the history of the disease but too well confirms the accuracy of this opinion."⁵

Doctor Edmondstone adds in another place—"That it was propagated by contagion cannot admit of a doubt."⁶

Doctor Holland, who accompanied Sir G. McKenzie in his expedition to Iceland, in speaking of Elephantiasis, says—"The disease of which we have been speaking, when once introduced, will readily be kept up, partly by its contagious character, principally by the food and habits of the people."⁷

Doctor Jackson, in his account of the Empire of Morocco, says—"Those who are affected with leprosy are obliged to wear a badge of distinction, whenever they leave their habitation; so that a straw hat with a wide brim, tied on in a particular manner, is the signal for persons not to approach the wearer."⁸

Doctor Henderson, in his Tour to Iceland, states that Leprosy in that part seems to be both infectious and hereditary.

Doctor Good states that the disease (leprosy) is contagious as well as hereditary in India and Arabia. We have the concurrent testimony of all the Medical writers of both countries, native as well as foreign; so that there can be no doubt upon this subject.⁹ Good, as well as

Cullin, make contagion a part of their definition of this disease; and Darwin entertains no doubt of its contagious properties.

Doctor Gourlay says that thirty years antecedent to the period at which he wrote, (about sixty five years ago) "It raged at Pouta de Sol with all the violence of an infectious malady, passing from one family to another, and threatening to extend its ravages into the neighbouring country, till the Governor took the prudent and wise steps of separating the healthy from the diseased, and preventing their interference with each other."¹⁰

"From an official report on this subject, (Leprosy in Sardinia) recently published by order of the Sardinian Government, we learn that there at the present time upwards of one hundred cases of genuine leprosy in the different provinces of the kingdom. The disease is said to be decidedly contagious, at least in its advanced or suppurative stage, when it seems to be communicated not only by contact with a diseased individual, but also by his wearing apparel. Doctor Trompeo, who was employed by his government to report upon the subject, states it as his opinion, that it is essentially the ancient disease of the Egyptians and Greeks, modified indeed somewhat by lapse of time and the influence of modern civilization. In a few cases they exhibited each and every one of the symptoms and character of the genuine Leprosy, such as we read of in the authors of antiquity."¹¹

"Sig. Trompeo is clearly of opinion, that the affection (leprosy) is perpetuated in Europe, simply because effectual means are not taken to isolate the affected individuals, and prevent them from communicating the contagion to others. The old Leper Hospitals were undoubtedly imperfect, but under proper management he thinks they might have gradually eradicated the disease."¹²

Many more authorities might be produced, but I trust these are sufficient to shew that this disease has been known in every quarter of the globe; that when most prevalent and best known, it was universally considered contagious; that this opinion has been held by the most eminent Historians and Medical writers, from the days of Herodotus to the present time, a period of upwards of 2,200 years; that this opinion was never doubted until the seventeenth century, when the disease has become less frequent, and as a consequence less known; that in many countries this opinion had been formed from no other apparent cause, than observing its mode of propagation; that separation was considered necessary, and laws for its enforcement enacted by every nation in Europe; that where such laws did not exist, the same measures were enforced by the general consent of the people; and that very lately, a commission has been issued by the Sardinian Government, who have given the same opinion, and recommended the same measures, as the Commission your Excellency appointed in March, 1844.¹³

We have strong presumptive proof that the disease in this district does not proceed from location, diet, or habits, in its absence from the other French settlements along the coast; and those more inland cases occurring in individuals of different nations, and modes of life: a hereditary cause is not more applicable, as none of the lepers' parents or progenitors (that they know) have had the disease, with the exception of Francis Robicheaux, (Tertius) and Barnaby Savoy; and it is more probable that Francis took it from his mother, or the Robicheaux, who have it, and with whom he ate and slept; and that Barnaby caught it by immediate contact with his mother, who likewise has the disease, than that it came by hereditary transmission; at least such would be the inference in other contagious diseases.

It will remove many difficulties and apparent inconsistencies by bearing in mind that the suppurative stage is the most contagious, or that it is the matter generated by the sores that is the principal medium of communication;—that this stage is in many cases years in arriving, and in some never occurs; for instance, it has been stated that "Mrs J. Benoit's having been affected ten (7 or 8) years before her husband, makes it absurd to suppose that he could have contracted the disease from her;" while it only tends to prove that he did not get it from the same source as his wife, or it, more than probable, would have appeared about the same time; and clearly proves that until matter was formed, it was innocuous; and that when this took place, he caught the virus, sickened, and died. It has likewise been stated, that Peter Savoy, &c. have lived with their families without communicating the disease. Peter Savoy, Mrs Basque, Fabian Gotreaux, &c., have no sores, and to this is the safety of their families to be attributed. On putting the question to

¹ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, (1823) vol. xxvi, p. 24.

² Johnson's Journal, (1844) vol. 40, p. 509.

³ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, (1841) vol. lxi, p. 483.

⁴ The same opinion was given and measures recommended to the Northumberland Board of Health, in March, 1842, by Doctor Thomson of this place, and the writer.

several of the lepers last Wednesday,—if they considered it catching when there were no sores, they replied—"We will not say that you will not catch it, but it is hard to catch." To shew the opinion of the lepers and their friends as to the cause of this disease, I will make a few extracts from my Case Book on the question being put to them or their friends:—"Do you know any cause for this disease?" "All concur in the opinion that Joseph Benoit caught it from his wife." "Mrs F. Benoit, in her friendly services to her sister, (Mrs J. Benoit) caught the disease."—"Francis Soney was often at the Benoit's where the disease was, thinks he got the disease by matter discharged on his shoulder from the coffin of Mrs J. Benoit."—"Mrs Francis Robicheaux, Junior, (Edith Soney) got it from her brother Francis Soney." "Cyril Austin got it from Francis Soney, with whom he stopped the last two years of his (Soney's) life."—"John Robicheaux caught it from Mrs F. Robicheaux, Junior, who lived the last six or seven years of her life in his brother's (Francis Robicheaux, Senior) house, where he lived."—"Mrs Basque has been often where it was, has stopped with them, more especially with Mrs F. Benoit,—did not nurse her child for fear she would give it the disease."—"Tranquil and Israel Robicheaux got it from their brother's wife, (Mrs F. R., Junior) who lived in their father's house."—"Francis Robicheaux (Tertius) got it from his mother, or Tranquil and Israel Robicheaux, with whom he eats and sleeps."—"Mrs John Soney got it from Mrs Francis Robicheaux, Junior, who stayed with her a few months previous to her death."—"Oliver Robicheaux got it from his brothers Israel and Tranquil."—"What is the reason, Oliver, that although older than your brothers, you have been last in catching it?" "Because I was least at home." Then you consider it contagious? "I consider if I had never been there, I would not have the disease." Thomas Comeaux "thinks he got it from John Robicheaux, who lived twelve months in his house—the disease appeared on him three months after J. R. came to his house." Louis Doivon (or Gould) "used often to assist Thomas Comeaux; and considers he caught it from him; sleeps in a bed by himself; has not touched any of his children since he had the disease, for fear of giving it to them." Charlotte Benoit "has been often where it was; lived with Mrs F. Benoit during the last year of her life; the disease appeared on her about the time of Mrs F. Benoit's death; thinks she got it from her."—"Fabian Gotreaux "was not afraid of it, and therefore used to go every place where it was."—"Juliana Ferguson "has been in many places where she might have caught it; did not nurse her child for fear of injuring it; believes it is taking." Barnaby Savoy's father thinks "he (Barnaby) took it from his mother; thinks it taking." Mary Rose Robicheaux—her mother said, "that individuals laboring under the disease, had been in her house, and had slept there; that she was very particular in washing the bed clothes; this was previous to its breaking out on her daughter, &c." Mrs Victory Savoy, (Frances) "has been often where it was; visited Mrs F. Benoit twice after she was very bad, and staid a short time with her."—"Peter Savoy "stopped a winter in Tracadie four years ago; has been often there since, where the disease was, previous to its appearing on him."—"William Brown "has no doubt that he got it from Mrs Gardiner, who died in his father's house from the same disease; knows it is the same disease; he cannot be mistaken, it looks so like it." John Brown "sleeps with his brother William, and caught it from him."—"Their mother says "she has no doubt that William and John got the disease in manner stated; and that Mary Sweezey was living in her house, and took the disease from her sons; none of her's or Brown's people ever had this disease."

With two or three exceptions we can trace the contagion to every source from whence it emanated; and these exceptions are less wonderful than that such a clear and connected history of its course should have been obtained from those whose feelings would naturally incline them to a contrary line of conduct.

I have made particular inquiries of the inhabitants of Tracadie, and the other settlements along the Gulf shore, and all are confident that Mrs J. Benoit's was the first case; true, a number of cases of a disease similar to Sibbens have occurred in Caraque, &c., and several of the most severe were under my care, but they were very different in appearance, course and termination, to the disease under consideration; none died, all recovered, and many of them without any, or at all events any adequate remedy; and for some time past they have altogether disappeared.

I intended making a few remarks on the causes that have tended to retard or accelerate its dissemination, on the Lazaretto discipline, and on the treatment of the disease; but as this communication has extended to an unexpected length, I will only say, that the patients generally have improved, that many of the sores have healed, and all have assumed a more healthy aspect; but whether this improvement

is to terminate in recovery or relapse, I am at present unable to decide. The principal remedies used have been alternative doses of the Bi-Chloride of Mercury, and Iodine.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your Excellency's very obedient
humble servant,

A. KEY.

Miramichi, 22nd February, 1845.

March 17.

On motion of Mr End, Ordered, that the Petition from the Justices of the Peace for the County of Gloucester, praying that an assessment may be authorized to be made on the said County towards the payment of the County Debt; and also, that a Grant may pass in aid thereof, which was presented to the House on the nineteenth day of February last, and ordered to lie on the table, be now referred to the Committee of Supply.

The Lieutenant Governor informs the House, in answer to their Address of the fourteenth inst, that an account of any appropriation which may from time to time be made, under Instructions from Her Majesty's Government, from the Surplus of the Civil List Fund, will be duly laid before the House, but he has no Communication which he feels himself authorized at the present time to make to the House on the subject.

To John C. Quaid the sum of £17 10s. being the balance due him on contracts for building bridges on the Road from the Bend of Petticodiac to Richibucto.

To His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, the sum of £20 towards improving the Line of Road from Campbellton to Boiestown; being a re-appropriation of the same amount granted in 1841, and not drawn, to open a line of Road upon the South West Branch of the River Miramichi, from Porter's Brook to the Upper Settlement on the Division Line between the County of York and Northumberland.

To Ann Ellis the sum of £30 for having taught a School in the Parish of New Bandon, County of Gloucester, for eighteen months ending the fifteenth day of January 1845.

To Donald Downie the sum of £20 for having taught a School in the Parish of Durham, County of Restigouche, for twelve months ending the first day of January, 1845.

March 18.

Read a third time as engrossed, A Bill to extend the Division Line between the Counties of Northumberland and Kent to the rear Line of the Counties of Queen's County and Sunbury. Resolved, That the Bill do pass.

Mr. Barberie moved for leave to present a Petition from John M'Minn, praying remuneration for teaching a School in the Parish of Colebrooke, in the County of Restigouche, for a period of six months ending on the twenty fourth day of January last.

The Order, as regards the time for introducing Petitions, being dispensed with, leave was granted, and the Petition then read. Ordered, That the said Petition be received and referred to the Committee of Supply.

March 22.

On motion of Mr. Hazen, the House again went into Committee of the whole on a Bill to make provision for the regulation of Seamen shipped on board of or belonging to all Ships or Vessels registered in or belonging to the Province of New Brunswick, while such Ships or Vessels shall be within the precincts thereof. The Chairman reported, that the Committee having the Bill referred to them again under their consideration, had made amendments thereto, and then agreed to the said Bill.

Mr. Hill, from the Committee appointed on the twenty ninth day of January last, to take under consideration all matters affecting the Lumbering Interests of the Province, reported—That having had the subject of Mill Reserves before them, they had prepared a Bill, under the Title of "A Bill relating to Mill Reserves," which he was directed to submit to the House, and request that the powers of the Committee may be continued.

The Bill, as reported by the Committee, being handed in was read a first time; and Ordered, that the said Committee be continued, to enable them to make further Report upon the matters referred for their consideration.

On motion of the Honorable Mr. Allen, Ordered, that the Report of the Auditor General on the Account of Expenditures made under the Special Commission to Northumberland, and the expenses of the removal of the Troops thither, laid before the House by command of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor on the twentieth day of March instant, be referred to the Committee of Supply.

On like motion of the Honorable Mr. Allen, that the Report from the Secretary of the Board of Health for the Counties of Northumberland and Gloucester relative to the Lazaretto at Sheldrake Island, for the reception of persons affected with Leprosy, which was laid before the House by command of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor on the tenth day of March instant, be also referred to the Committee of Supply.

¹ See his observations on the diseases of Barbadoes, (1766) p. 322; and also for the same opinion, Schilling's Commentaries de Leprosy, (1776) p. 20.

² Pract. of Physic, (1821) 7 Ed. p. 664.

³ Med. Chir. Rev. (1835) vol. xxviii. p. 535.

⁴ Edin. Medical and Surgical Journal, (1810) vol. vi, p. 164.

⁵ Dict. of Pract. Med. vol. ii, p. 703, (part viii published 1842)

⁶ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, (1810) vol. vi, p. 165.

⁷ Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, (1812) vol. viii, p. 204.

⁸ Study of Med. (1829) vol. iii, p. 427.