

REPORT ON SMALLPOX IN BOSTON.

REFERENCE was last week made, in the Journal, to the reports of Committees appointed by the Boston Medical Association. That on the number of cases of smallpox and varioloid, signed by Jacob Bigelow, M.D., chairman, and J. B. Gregerson, M.D., Secretary, we condense and publish below. After stating that requisite inquiries had been addressed to all the physicians in the city, and that from the answers received it appeared that the disease had been seen and attended by less than half of the physicians, the report proceeds:—It appears that the whole number of cases known to the physicians of Boston during the present epidemic, and up to December 9th, is 248, as follows :

Males, 115 ; females, 121 ; sex not stated, 12.

In regard to their place of birth, it appears that there were—Native, 184 ; Irish, 13 ; other foreigners, 50 ; unknown, 1.

The extent of the disease in different sections of the city is as follows :—Eastern section, 9 ; Northern, 144 ; Central, 7 ; Western, 60 ; Southern, 13 ; South Boston, 13 ; unknown, 2.

The ages are as follows :—Under 2 years, 10 ; between 2 and 10, 44 ; do. 10 and 20, 49 ; do. 20 and 40, 101 ; over 40, 34 ; unknown, 10.

In regard to occupations and condition, there were—Laborers, 27 ; mechanics, 32 ; merchants, traders and professional, 22 ; domestics, 28 ; others, including children, 114 ; unknown, 25.

In regard to previous protective diseases, there had had previous smallpox, 13 ; vaccinated once, 149 ; vaccinated twice, 18 ; vaccinated more than twice, 1 ; never had smallpox nor vaccination, 55 ; unknown, 12.

In the 168 vaccinated, the time which had elapsed since vaccination was—less than 1 year, in 16 ; 1 to 5 years, 23 ; 5 to 10, 18 ; 10 to 20, 34 ; more than 20 years, 43 ; unknown, 34.

The causes to which the patients attributed their disease, were—Direct communication with the sick, 127 ; supposed conveyance of contagion by another, 1 ; unknown, 120.

In regard to the character and severity of the disease, the following are the results :—Varioloid, or slight disease, 145 ; smallpox, or severe disease, not fatal, 52 ; smallpox, fatal, 22 ; character not stated, 29.

An inquiry was further made by the committee into the number of persons who were exposed to take the disease by residence and direct communication with the sick, and also of those who actually took it from such exposure. The returns on this head were made by only a part of the physicians applied to, but will serve to throw some light on the proportion of cases. Persons reported as exposed as above, 1502 ; number of those who took the disease, 64, which is about 1 in 23.

The committee think it necessary further to state, that a few of the foregoing cases are supposed to be repetitions, in consequence of the same patients having been attended in different periods of their illness by different physicians. They have further to add, that in a separate report obtained from the resident physician of the city, 76

cases are given, a large portion of which were transferred to his care by other physicians, and of course included in the previous part of this report. As the names are not given in his return, the committee are not able to decide on the identity of the patients, but if one half of them be considered as additional cases, it will make the total aggregate of varioloid and smallpox amount to 296 cases, which is believed by the committee to be a full estimate of the whole aggregate, within the last two or three months.

The committee subjoin the following gross results, as illustrative of the protective power of vaccination, as now generally practised in this city.

The whole number of slight cases reported, is 145 ; severe do. 52 ; fatal, 22. Making the slight cases to the rest, as about two to one.

The persons reported as immediately exposed to the disease, are 1502, of whom 64 only are known to have taken the disease, or about 1 in 23.

Of the 22 cases which proved fatal, 18 were in persons never vaccinated, nor protected by previous smallpox, being nearly 6 out of 7. Of the remaining four, two had been vaccinated, and two had had the smallpox, one by inoculation, the other in the natural way.

Assuming the population of the city at 80,000, and the number of cases at 300, the proportion of inhabitants who have taken the disease is one to 266. The number of deaths which have occurred is 22, which being averaged on the foregoing population, is 1 in 3636 ; and of those vaccinated, only 1 in 40,000.

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VACCINATION.

At this particular period, when physicians are questioned so much and so frequently about the value of this operation, and the circumstances under which it should be performed, any information explanatory of the laws regulating the action of the vaccine virus, when introduced into the human system, cannot be otherwise than acceptable to the younger members of the profession. A variety of communications, chiefly theoretical in their character, relating to this very subject, were received in times past, originating principally in places where the public excitement was very great, in consequence of the existence of smallpox. Mr. Coggeshall, a student of medicine, who is very familiar with the process of vaccination, having enjoyed uncommon facilities, has presented the following paper, which is entitled to the respectful consideration of those who have leisure or inclination to examine the matter in detail. If he is correct in his deductions, a discovery has been made of consequence to mankind. We have no disposition to meddle with the subject any further than to give it a place in the Journal, with the conviction that gentlemen