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# PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS.

## UNITED STATES.

### *The danger to life and hardships imposed on travelers by lack of port quarantine facilities.*

The report on international quarantine, adopted by the Pan-American Medical Congress in the City of Mexico, November, 1896, provided among other measures, that each government should maintain quarantine stations at its domestic ports. That this provision is essential not only for protecting the several countries from the introduction of contagious disease, but as an act of justice to the crews and passengers of an infected ship, is instanced by the narration in the annual report of the Marine-Hospital Service for 1893, Volume II, pages 7 and 8, of the experience of the four vessels which left Naples while cholera was prevalent there for ports in South America. Developing cholera en route, they were not allowed to land at the port of arrival, but were obliged to return to Naples, many deaths from cholera occurring on the return voyage.

A similar instance of the injustice to passengers and crew by reason of the lack of quarantine stations with facilities for the care of an infected ship, is narrated below; the infection in this instance being yellow fever and the vessel being refused harbor at port after port on the west coast of South America, the passengers being subjected to the dangers of yellow-fever infection with no possibility of escape from the vessel for a period of more than one month.

### *Lack of quarantine stations on the west coast of South America.*

NEW YORK, *March 18, 1901.*

SIR: Referring to our conversation relative to the utter absence of quarantine stations on the west coast of South America and the imperative need for the establishment of same, I concluded that the best way to put you in full possession of the facts was to obtain a written statement from Mr. Archer Harman, managing director of the Ecuadorian Association, Limited, who are now building the Guayaquil and Quito Railroad, which I have the pleasure to inclose herein. Mr. Harman's letter shows the imperative need of the establishment of stations to protect the lives of our citizens. On board the vessel to which he refers were a number of American gentlemen and ladies. Further comment

March 29, 1901

614

is unnecessary, as the letter speaks for itself and shows the dreadful ordeal to which the passengers of the *Chile* were subjected.

Trusting that it may aid you in the good work in which you are engaged, I am,

Respectfully,

PERRY M. DE LEON,

*United States Consul-General to Ecuador.*

The SURGEON-GENERAL,

*U. S. Marine-Hospital Service.*

[Inclosure.]

NEW YORK, March 14, 1901.

SIR: In reply to your request for report on my trip last summer on the steamer *Chile*, I beg to say that about July 9, 1900, I went aboard the steamer *Chile* at Panama with a party of 14, consisting of engineers and superintendents employed by my company in Ecuador, and 2 ladies—one, the wife of one of our engineers, and the other, the sister of our assistant chief engineer. The second day out from Panama there was 1 death on board from yellow fever. We arrived at Puna, on the Guayas River, on July 12, and were ordered to anchor for observation for six days, as there was no quarantine station at Puna or at the port of Guayaquil; in fact, none upon the coast of Ecuador. The captain of the steamer determined to proceed south to Payta. On arriving at Payta, we had 2 more deaths from yellow fever. That port refused to receive us, as there was no quarantine station; neither would they allow the steamer to remain in the harbor. On leaving Payta, it developed that there was no doctor on board ship; that the man whom the Pacific Steam Navigation Company had shipped as a physician had only consented to represent himself as such to obtain a free passage to Callao. In due course we arrived at the port of Callao. The authorities there refused to allow the steamer to enter the harbor or the passengers to communicate with the shore, stating that there was no quarantine station and that those on board the ship must remain there. While in the port of Callao, 2 further deaths occurred from the same disease. The authorities at Callao were requested repeatedly to send a physician and medicine and disinfectants on board the ship but refused to do so. I arranged with W. R. Grace & Co. to charter a steamer to take me off the *Chile* and to proceed to sea with my party, remaining there until the authorities would be satisfied to receive us, but the Peruvian authorities declined to allow the steamer which W. R. Grace & Co. had chartered to take myself and party from the steamer *Chile*. After exhausting all the means in our power to induce the Peruvian authorities to charter at our expense a sailing vessel or some other method of placing us in quarantine, and their refusing to do so, we then proceeded south and in due course arrived at Arica. Unfortunately, 2 or 3 deaths had occurred between Callao and Arica. There being no quarantine station at Arica, a small gunboat was ordered out and drove the steamer out of the harbor, refusing to provide either medicine, disinfectants, or provisions. We then proceeded south, and in due course arrived at Pisagua where the Pacific Steam Navigation Company had some coal stored in barges. The authorities there attempted to drive us out of the harbor, but as the steamer had no coal it was impossible for us to proceed. It was finally agreed that the steamer should proceed to sea for 5 miles, that lighters or barges containing coal should be anchored within a mile and a half of the steamer, and that the crew of the steamer should tow them out and unload them, sinking the barges after the cargo was discharged. After consuming several days in obtaining coal, and 1 or 2 further deaths occurring, but failing to obtain either medicine or disinfectants, we proceeded south and in due course arrived at Valparaiso, after the loss of several more passengers by yellow fever, arriving in Valparaiso about August 15, where, after a careful inspection, the passengers were allowed to land.

There are no quarantine stations on the west coast of South America between Panama and Valparaiso, neither are there any quarantine stations at Panama or Valparaiso. There is no place where a steamer on which there is any infectious disease can land or discharge its passengers on the west coast of South America; neither is it possible to secure medicines, disinfectants, or medical attendance.

The *Chile* is an English steamer owned by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company.

Respectfully,

PERRY M. DE LEON, *Washington, D. C.*

ARCHER HARMAN.