

(Copy of Letter)

August 10, 1908.

Honorable Mayor and Council,
City Hall.

Gentlemen:

Before the beginning of the September school term, I wish respectfully to call your attention to the great need of a permanent medical school inspection.

At the beginning of the last September school term the advisability of inaugurating a school inspection was brought to the attention of the School Board, and permission was given to the Health Department to proceed with the work. Having no funds, a paid inspection was out of the question, and about thirty of our physicians residing in the different neighborhoods very generously agreed to do the work for a period of one school year.

Several of these inspectors have given the city excellent service, and have demonstrated in their districts the importance of this work. Others have given very indifferent service, and have demonstrated in this way its very great and grave importance.

The experience of the Shattuck and Chapman Schools during this term might be cited as an example of the results of efficient inspection and the lack of it, and a more forcible argument for the maintenance of a permanent and efficient school inspection could not be offered.

In the early part of the school year, cases of scabies (itch) were reported by the inspector of the Shattuck School. Some of the parents

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and family physicians disputed the diagnosis and said that these cases were not itch, but a microscopic examination in every instance confirmed the opinion of the inspector. As a further confirmation of the diagnosis of these cases, one of the assistants in the bacteriologist's office was infected with scabies from making an examination of one of these cases.

Over sixty cases were excluded, properly treated and returned to school, cured. While sixty cases of this comparatively harmless, but loathsome disease, should never be found in any school,---to have discovered and controlled it was of the highest importance. For the possibility of that number of cases unrecognized and unrestrained in a school of six or eight hundred children could not possibly be foretold.

In the same school a case of favus was discovered and excluded at the beginning of the term. Favus is a rare disease in this country. This case must have escaped detection at the port of entry, as it is a disease that excludes immigrants, and the child had not been in this country more than a year. It is a very offensive parasitic disease, contagious and almost incurable---and yet there are those who consider school inspection unnecessary. Had this one exclusion been the only thing accomplished during the term the work would have been justified.

Trachoma, a contagious and almost incurable disease of the eye lids which frequently results in blindness, should also be guarded against in the schools. This disease excludes immigrants from the country when it is detected, but when it escapes detection or develops here it may go unchallenged into our schools. This disease is very prevalent in certain countries bordering on the Mediteranean, and the danger from it increases with the increased immigration from those countries.

No attention was paid to the Chapman School by the man who had agreed to look after it during the last term, and on the evening of May 5th, a physician from another part of the city reported a case of small-

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pox from that district. I inspected the school on May 6th and found about twelve cases of smallpox in the school. These cases of smallpox were mild, but they were in different stages, and no inspector could have failed to have recognized them.

Smallpox had doubtless existed in the Chapman School for at least two months before it was diagnosed. The Doctors in that part of the city had treated some of these cases for chickenpox and had given the children certificates to return to school. Some of these certificates were refused by the principal for the reason that the children were still scaling. None of these cases were reported to the Health Office.

On the 5th of May there was not a child in the Chapman School who had not been exposed to smallpox. We took the names and addresses of all of the absentees, and in almost every instance found the cause of absence to be smallpox. Seven hundred inspection were made during this epidemic, forty-nine houses quarantined, seventy-seven cases of smallpox reported and three hundred persons vaccinated by the Health Department from this section of the city.

The plumbing and general sanitary conditions of the Chapman School is far above the average city school, but from the stand point of personal hygiene, the school ranked very low on first inspection. A week later all of the children had been bathed, and there was a decided improvement.

The epidemic in the Chapman School ^{district} was entirely suppressed by the 1st of July. At present there are no quarantines there, and the experience has undoubtedly been beneficial to that section of the city. This epidemic could have been avoided by a proper school inspection, and the city would have been saved a great deal of trouble and expense.

Since the closing of the schools, several members of the graduating class of the Brooklyn School have developed smallpox. The

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fact that they all came down about the same time would indicate that they were all exposed at the same time, either in their class-room or at some exercise in which they all participated.

Diphtheria is by far the most dreadful disease of childhood, and one from which children should be the most carefully protected. It lacks the one mitigating characteristic of many other infections,--one attack does not confer immunity. The Health Board of this city has recently ordered that no diphtheria quarantine be released until a negative culture has been returned. The fact that diphtheria germs linger in the throat long after the patient is apparently well, and that five or six cultures have been taken and found positive or dangerous before a negative one is returned, demonstrates the importance of this rule.

Children very frequently attend school infected with a light case of diphtheria, and in this way the disease is communicated. During the month of April a culture was taken from the throat of every child applying for a certificate to return to school after having remained at home for a day or two on account of a common cold. Three of these cultures were found to be diphtheretic, and might have spread the disease had they been allowed to return to school.

There is a steady death rate from this disease that could undoubtedly be reduced by closer attention to school conditions. If cultures were taken in all cases of children attending school with sore throats, many cases of diphtheria would be detected, and the spread of the disease prevented.

This matter has been brought to the attention of the Board of Education, and that Board has indorsed the recommendations of the Health

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Board, that a permanent medical school inspection be inaugurated, and that two physicians, at a salary of \$100.00 per month, and a nurse at a salary of \$75.00 per month, be employed for this purpose.

It will cost about \$965.00 to conduct this work until the end of the year, and an appropriation for this amount is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

E. C. Pohl

Health Officer.

ECP/EM