

**September 27th, 1794. Gentlemen. Actuated by a sincere regard for the welfare of our common city. I take the liberty to trouble you with a few lines. [Urging, for business reasons an authoritative statement of the actual state of the yellow fever in the city] [Signed] Mathew Carey. To the Committee of Health for the City of Philadelphia. [Philadelphia**

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September 27th, 1794.

Gentlemen,

Actuated by a sincere regard for the welfare of our common city, I take the liberty to trouble you with a few lines. The motive that impels me to this step, will incline you to excuse me, even if your better judgment and superior information, should induce you to reject the suggestions I may offer.

By the concurrent voices of most, if not all the Physicians in this city, it appears that the dreadful destroyer, whose ravages last year were so severely felt, has again made its appearance. As yet, it is true, it has caused little injury. But obsta principiis, is a wise maxim—And I doubt not that you will take the most prudent steps to prevent, as far as possible, the extension of the evil, and to eradicate it as soon as may be done—such steps as might be naturally expected from a body of citizens, to whose vigilance the care over the health of the city has been entrusted.

Such, indeed, is my opinion of your exertions on this occasion, that I should deem it presumption to trespass on your time, were that the sole object of immediate concern.

The point to which I request your most serious attention, is, to moderate the fears of the timid, and to prevent the spreading of an alarm, whose effects on business might be nearly as ruinous, as the calamity itself, even if it rose to the same height as last year.

The terror in Philadelphia, though at present not very considerable, is far greater than the real danger, or the actual state of things, justifies. This terror is likely to increase; indeed it is increasing. One wicked, interested person—and what place is free from such?—might, at the present moment, do irreparable mischief. A timid, though well-meaning one might cause equal distress.

Last year, as early as the 9th of September, a letter was written by some weak, terrified person, or by some detestable, designing wretch, to a correspondent in Norfolk, stating that “the few people who remained in the “city, died so fast, that they were dragged away, like dead beasts, and “ten, or

fifteen, or more put in a hole together." Another letter was published the 10th of September, in the Chestertonn paper, stating that on the 5th, (the date of it) "some thousands had been killed by the disorder."

At the time of writing these terrific accounts, the deaths were about twenty or thirty daily; but the general belief in the country was, that they exceeded a hundred.

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Reasoning from these circumstances, we have ground to apprehend, that similar misinformation will now spread in the country, through the agency of the same description of people. It were to expect the meridian splendor of the sun at midnight, to look for any other issue.

In effect, circumstances have fallen under my observation, of country dealers, who have been actually terrified out of the city, and have fled the supposed danger, through the lying rumours current here.

Some of our citizens are, I have strong reason to believe, at this hour preparing to leave the city. Others, I know to a certainty, are deliberating on the subject.

What, then, is to be done at this crisis? How can the impending evil be averted? How are the minds of our citizens to be calmed? How are the shameless lies and reports current to be counteracted?

The remedy is obvious. Let the genuine truth be made known. Let such a respectable body of men as you are—a body in whom not only our own citizens, but those of the other states, will place implicit reliance—publish daily, or otherwise, as you may judge proper, a faithful, unvarnished state of the business. Let the number of cases that have occurred—the precautions that have been taken—the measures that are contemplated—and every circumstance attending the visitation, be universally known. Then and not till then will all opportunity for the lying and treacherous tongue of invention to injure us, be effectually removed. Our citizens will be ashamed of their groundless alarm—and confidence will be fully restored, unless a fatal change should take place, which heaven avert.

It will be, and has been said—that the very measure I so strongly advocate, instead of restoring confidence, would destroy it, by making public a circumstance, which interest and policy require us to keep secret.

Interest and policy, I grant, require us to keep the misfortune a secret, while so small in degree, as it actually is. But, gentlemen, I ask, is it likely, is it possible, to keep such a circumstance secret? Can we bridle the tongues of the interested, the malicious, the timid, the newsmongers, who delight in

retailing and magnifying every thing that borders on the frightful or marvellous? No, certainly. And the worst possible form that the evil can assume, will hardly ever be halt so dreadful as the rumours of the day, especially when they have travelled a distance into the country, the place in which the fatal consequences I deprecate, are to be apprehended.

Let the world, therefore, be enabled to regulate their hopes and their fears by the existing circumstances, and not be the prey of idle reports, calculated, whatever cause they proceed from, to effect the temporary ruin of Philadelphia.

I remain, Gentlemen, with sentiments of esteem, your obedient humble servant, MATHEW CAREY.

To the Committee of Health for the City of Philadelphia.