

“the effect that there is in such hospital a distinct and separate ward set apart for the exclusive accommodation of patients afflicted with small-pox, has been fyled with the clerk of the “Executive Council.” There are many ways of reading or of interpreting the meaning of certain clauses in Acts of Parliament, but we take it that this shows absolutely and conclusively that the legislators of that day were fully convinced of the injury and injustice done to other patients by exposing them to the contagion of small-pox; that they expressly enacted what was supposed to be a check, viz., isolation in a separate part of the building. It was never intended to affirm that all hospitals were to have a small pox department or forfeit their grant, but that the ward for small-pox shall be distinct and separate, so as to guard the other inmates against contagion.

Is it, then, necessary to isolate and segregate small-pox patients? This all hinges on a matter of belief. Some men do not believe in their own existence; they regard themselves and all around them as a myth; but we should imagine it a very unpleasant myth to contract small-pox through the folly and obstinacy of any number of men in power. It was to prevent the chance of contagion spreading amongst the inmates of the Montreal General Hospital that the Board of Governors determined to close the small-pox wards. We regret that they have agreed to withdraw from that position even for a time. But we have cause to regret the action of the Hotel Dieu as fraught with greater danger. That hospital claims to occupy some 175 beds—out of this number let us suppose they have 30 cases of small-pox—persons not suffering from that malady are being constantly visited by their friends. These persons go abroad to their houses, after a certain amount of exposure; and although they may not suffer themselves, yet they are capable of disseminating the poison of the disease, carrying it about in their clothes.

It is well known that contagious diseases are frequently thus propagated, we need not refer again to facts bearing on this subject; we write chiefly for medical readers who are familiar with this subject; but we doubt not that, if carefully inquired into, a large proportion of the cases of small-pox in our city, outside of the hospitals, could be traced to hospital exposure, or by having the disease brought to them from the hospitals. In the case of the Montreal General Hospital the exposure is less than in the Hotel Dieu, because the small-pox patients are in a separate building, and no persons except the medical staff are permitted to enter that building. In the case of the Hotel Dieu small-pox patients, until recently, were mixed with the other patients. We believe that they now occupy a separate flat, but are all under the same roof, and hence the danger of contagion to outsiders is very considerably augmented.