

**THE TUBERCULOSIS INFIRMARY  
OF THE METROPOLITAN  
HOSPITAL, DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC CHARITIES, NEW YORK  
CITY**

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The Tuberculosis Infirmary of the Metropolitan Hospital, Department of Public Charities, New York City by Walter Sands Mills

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**WALTER SANDS MILLS**

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The Tuberculosis Infirmary

OF THE

Metropolitan Hospital

Department of Public Charities

NEW YORK CITY

BY WALTER SANDS MILLS, A. B., M. D.

Chairman of the Tuberculosis Committee of the Medical Board; Associate Member of the Association of Tuberculosis Clinics of New York City, representing the Department of Public Charities; Member of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis; Member of the New York State Committee of the International Congress on Tuberculosis.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S COTTAGE—METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL



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## The Tuberculosis Infirmary of the Metropolitan Hospital.

### HISTORICAL SKETCH.

In 1875 the municipal charities and prisons of New York City were, and had been for a number of years, administered under a board of three members appointed by the Mayor and known as the Commissioners of Charities and Correction. The charities included a number of large hospitals. For several years the homeopathic branch of the medical profession had endeavored to get a foothold in one of these hospitals through the Commissioners, but without success. During the winter of 1874 and 1875 a more determined effort was made, and a petition signed by six hundred and fifty-five taxpayers representing more than half the estimated wealth of New York City, was presented to the Commissioners of Charities and Correction asking that a public hospital be set aside for the homeopathic treatment. There was some delay in getting a favorable response, so the matter was laid before Mayor William H. Wickham by a committee of laymen headed by A. T. Stewart and William Cullen Bryant. The Mayor took the matter under advisement, and shortly after the request was granted; a building on Ward's Island, in the East River, to be known as the Ward's Island Homeopathic Hospital, was assigned for the desired purpose. It was opened for the reception of patients October 15, 1875.

The general administration was, like that of the other City institutions, under the supervision of the Commissioners of Charities and Correction. A resident superintendent was appointed to look after the local affairs of the new hospital. The medical and surgical treatment was placed in the hands of a Medical Board of twenty-five physicians and surgeons chosen from the membership of the Homeopathic Medical Society of the County of New York. As is the custom in the other hospitals belonging

to the City, this Medical Board has since that time been self-perpetuating. That is, candidates are recommended for appointment by the Medical Board to the Commissioners. The final appointing power rests with them.

At the time the new hospital was organized the City cared for its insane as well as for its physically sick, and there were buildings for both classes of patients scattered about the different City properties. In 1894 this was changed by law; thenceforth all insane patients throughout the State were sent to State Hospitals. The Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane was established at Ward's Island and the entire island taken over by the State. The insane in one of the City buildings on Blackwell's Island, further down the East River, were removed to Ward's Island, and the patients at the Ward's Island Homeopathic Hospital were sent to Blackwell's Island. This necessitated a change of name and the homeopathic hospital since then has been known as the Metropolitan Hospital.

January 1, 1896, the Department of Charities and Correction was separated into the Department of Public Charities, and the Department of Correction, each with its own Commissioners. The first took control of all the eleemosynary institutions, the second of all the criminal.

In 1901 the then Commissioner of Public Charities, the Hon. John W. Keller, informed the Medical Board of the Metropolitan Hospital that the remainder of the insane patients, occupying two buildings adjacent to the hospital, were about to be removed, and that he intended to add those buildings to the equipment of the Metropolitan. The question arose as to what was best to do with them. A large number of tuberculosis patients were in the Metropolitan, as in all of the City hospitals. These patients had been grouped by themselves first, as a matter of convenience, in a part of a ward. Later, as the present ideas regarding the communicability of tuberculosis became prevalent, the sufferers from it were placed in wards by themselves. It was now decided that this would be a good opportunity to put them in a separate building. The idea was presented to Commissioner Keller and met with his approval. Delays occurred in the removal of the insane, however, and they did not get away until so near the end of Commissioner Keller's term of office that he thought best