

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RESIDENT
PHYSICIAN OF THE CITY OF NEW
YORK FOR 1865: PRESENTED TO
THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF HEALTH, JANUARY 4, 1866**

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Annual report of the resident physician of the city of New York for 1865: Presented to the Board of commissioners of health, January 4, 1866 by Various

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VARIOUS

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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
RESIDENT PHYSICIAN
OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK,
FOR 1865.

PRESENTED TO THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF HEALTH,

At their Meeting, January 4, 1866.

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## REPORT.

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MAYOR'S OFFICE, }  
NEW YORK, February 28, 1866. }

*To the Honorable the Common Council :*

GENTLEMEN—I have the honor to transmit herewith a certified copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Commissioners of Health, at a meeting held on the 27th instant, as well as a copy of the report of the Resident Physician alluded to therein.

Very respectfully,

JOHN T. HOFFMAN,

*Mayor.*

### RESOLUTION.

*Whereas*, The Board of Commissioners of Health has no authority to expend money, even for the publication of its own transactions ; and

*Whereas*, There are frequent and almost daily letters received from distant cities, asking for information and records of the proceedings ; and

*Whereas*, The annual report of the Resident Physician, Dr. Sayre, contains a great amount of useful information, which would properly answer such inquiries ; therefore, be it

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*Resolved*, That this Board request the Common Council to publish five thousand of said report in pamphlet form for general distribution, the same, when printed, to be delivered to the Mayor, at the Mayor's office.

NEW YORK, January 4, 1866.

*To Honorable John T. Hoffman, Mayor, and President of the Board of Commissioners of Health :*

SIR—I present the following report as the result of a portion of the duties performed in the office of the Resident Physician, during the year ending the 31st of December, 1865 :

To the Emigrant Hospital, Ward's Island, have been sent the following cases of contagious or infectious diseases :

| 1865.             | TYPHUS FEVER. | MALARIA. | SCARLET FEVER. | SMALL-POX. | TOTAL. |
|-------------------|---------------|----------|----------------|------------|--------|
| January .....     | 28            | ..       | ..             | 20         | 58     |
| February .....    | 38            | 1        | ..             | 48         | 82     |
| March .....       | 89            | 2        | 1              | 45         | 87     |
| April .....       | 85            | ..       | 2              | 20         | 57     |
| May .....         | 53            | 18       | 1              | 25         | 97     |
| June .....        | 60            | 8        | 1              | 10         | 74     |
| July .....        | 61            | 1        | 1              | 8          | 71     |
| August .....      | 84            | 1        | ..             | 2          | 87     |
| September .....   | 81            | 1        | ..             | 2          | 84     |
| October .....     | 72            | 1        | ..             | ..         | 73     |
| November .....    | 79            | 1        | ..             | 5          | 85     |
| December .....    | 41            | 3        | ..             | 2          | 46     |
| Grand Total ..... | 671           | 32       | 6              | 192        | 901    |

These patients, being emigrants of less than five years' residence, are cared for by the Commissioners of Emigration, and that amount of expense is, therefore, saved to the city tax.

## SMALL-POX, &amp;C.

|                                                                                                                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| At the Small-pox Hospital on Blackwell's Island,<br>there were remaining with that disease on the 1st of<br>December, 1864, . . . . . | 45         |
| Admitted during the year ending December<br>1, 1865, . . . . .                                                                        | 1,151      |
|                                                                                                                                       | -----1,196 |
| Number who died from December 1, 1864,<br>to December 1, 1865, . . . . .                                                              | 163        |
| Number discharged in same time, . . . . .                                                                                             | 1,009      |
|                                                                                                                                       | -----1,172 |
| Number remaining December 1, 1865, . . . . .                                                                                          | 24         |

The number of cases here shown, although frightfully large, is but a very small portion of what have actually occurred in the city within the past year. As much the larger portion of cases positively refuse to go to the hospital, and I have no legal authority to compel them to go, these figures do not give a correct idea of the extent of this disease among us. But it seems to me they are sufficiently great to speak in trumpet tongue to our legislators, and urge upon them the absolute necessity of immediately enacting a law for "compulsory vaccination," by which means this terrible scourge can be effectually exterminated from our country, if its provisions are universally adopted; and I have no doubt that, if New York will but take the initiative, each State and the General Government will soon follow her good example. I have so frequently urged this matter upon the proper authorities, with statistics and proofs which seemed to me to be convincing, that I have nothing new to add upon the subject, but most respectfully beg to refer to my former report



in 1862, and entreat that some efficient law be at once enacted, by which the power may be granted to expel this disease from the city.

#### STREETS AND SEWERS.

Our streets and sewers, until within the last few weeks, have been in much better condition than for some years past, but very far from being in as good sanitary condition as they should be, and at the present time are disgraceful. In fact, many of the streets must be entirely repaired before they can be kept clean, and our entire system of sewerage changed and vastly improved before we can give to the city the proper drainage necessary for health, and which, owing to our peculiar geographical position, can be so easily and efficiently done.

I shall in a short time lay before the Board, for consideration, a plan or system of sewerage, which I trust will not only accomplish the object desired, viz., perfect drainage, but at the same time prevent the waste of valuable material, which is now choking up our slips and rapidly destroying the harbor, and convert it into a fertilizer, adapted for useful purposes, and which will yield sufficient revenue to the city to pay an interest on the investment requisite to make the improvement.

#### TENEMENT HOUSES.

I have so often described the condition of our tenement-house population, and so earnestly appealed to our legislative authorities for the enactment of a law by which the construction of our buildings should be regulated by sanitary science, without effect, that I

almost despair of ever being able to reach the practical good which I have so long desired. Still, in the discharge of my duty, I must again narrate facts which are patent to every observer, and urge with additional zeal upon the authorities the absolute necessity of some legal enactment by which the construction of all tenement-houses, with special reference to limiting the number of inhabitants and the ventilation, shall be placed under the regulation and direction of some properly qualified sanitary inspector.

At present most of the tenement-houses in this city are absolutely unfit for occupation ; and they may be divided into three classes : First, those which, by a slight modification and improvement in ventilation, can be made habitable ; second, those that, by reconstruction and a limited number of tenants, can be made healthful ; and, third, those which by no possibility could be made so, except by destruction and rebuilding. As they are now, they are the pest-holes that breed typhoid and typhus fever, not only destroying the inhabitants within their walls, but becoming the sources of its propagation to other and more respectable parts of the city.

We have at the present time laws prescribing the proper thickness for walls in proportion to the height of the building, that the danger of their falling down may be prevented. How much greater the necessity for a proper regulation in regard to ventilation. How many persons have died from the effects of falling walls in this city, for the last ten years, except from fires ! As far as I have been able to ascertain from the statistics, there are less than five a year. And how

many thousands have been murdered by breathing the poisonous atmosphere of the ill-ventilated houses, or houses in which there is no ventilation at all ! Where a falling wall has claimed its one victim, these pest-holes of foul air have claimed their thousands. I would, therefore, again urge upon the proper authorities the necessity of enforcing, by legal enactment, the arrest of this frightful mortality.

#### CHOLERA.

The cholera, which has arrived within our harbor, and has been so near our shores within a few weeks past, was anchored in the bay, and detained there. The city, which was ripe for its reception, with its filthy streets, its over-crowded tenement-houses, its obstructed sewers, the decaying animal and vegetable matter, and with the peculiar condition of climate, ready to spread its infectious influences into an epidemic, has thus been preserved from its ravages by the rigid enforcement of quarantine regulations. A system or plan which has shown such good results is of sufficient importance to demand our most serious attention, if not to command our approval. Leaving out of discussion, at the present time, the question of its infectious or contagious nature, which is not as yet settled among the most scientific observers, we must admit that at all events it is *portable*, and subject to quarantine regulations. In support of this I beg to call your attention to some authorities whose evidence, I think, must be convincing.

Dr. Mulig, Physician to the Prussian Embassy, and to the Imperial Naval Hospital at Kassim-pacha, reports as follows :