THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

BY THE EDITOR.

Brooklyn's Earlier Sanitary Provision, prior to 1854.—Brooklyn, in its earlier village days, was not without its nuisances "prejudicial to the public health;" but they were, for the most part, such as were easily controlled by the powers vested in the village trustees. In 1804, however, there was a slight epidemic of yellow fever in the Wallabout neighborhood; and, after the epidemic in New York, in 1805. foreign shipping, from infected ports, were no longer allowed to land at (or within three hundred yards of) the wharves of that city. Thenceforth, the Brooklyn shores were usually resorted to by such vessels: as a consequence of which, the village was visited (in 1809, and again in 1823) with two similar epidemies, while New York remained totally exempt. (See History of the Medical Profession of Kings County, Part II). As the village grew to be a city, the duties of a Health Board were fulfilled, after a fashion, by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen.

From Furman's Notes (p. 72), we learn that "As early as 1809, during the prevalence of the yellow fever in this town, the inhabitants met together in consequence of repeated solicitations from the Common Council of New York, and after stating in their proceedings that reports prevailed that disease exists to an alarming extent in the town of Brooklyn, they appointed the following gentlemen a committee for the purpose of inquiring into the state of the health of the inhabitants of said town, and to act as the case, in their opinion, may require, viz.: William Furman, John Garrison, Burdet Stryker, Henry Stanton, and Andrew Mercein." A sum of money was raised by subscription to meet the expenses of this committee.

In the year 1819, the trustees, although not strictly invested with power, yet feeling the necessity of acting with some degree of energy, in order to quell the fears of the inhabitants, arising from reports of the existence of a pestilential disease in New York, published an address, in which they state, that "during this season of alarm, they have not been unmindful of that part of their duty incumbent on them as a Board of Health for the village," and that "measures have been taken to obtain, from time to time, a report of the state of health throughout the village, that the inhabitants may be early apprised of any change affecting their welfare."

The Village Board of Health, created 1824.—March 4, 1824, in the Senate of the State of New York, John Lefferts, Esq., brought in a bill to estab-

lish a *Board of Health* in the village of Brooklyn, and also an act, to amend an act, to incorporate the said village, both of which bills were passed by the Legislature on the 9th of April following.

By this act, the trustees of the village were constituted a Board of Health, the President and Clerk being (ex-officio) President and Clerk of the Board of Health. The President's salary was \$150; and a health physician, appointed by the Board, received \$200 per annum. The duties of the Board related to the general conservation of the health of the village.

The Health Board Organization of 1854. By the provisions of the charter of 1854, the Board of Health of the City of Brooklyn was constituted of the aldermen of the city, or such a number of them as the Common Council might designate, and were invested with powers and functions, similar to those of the Board of Health of the City of New York. It was ordained that the Mayor, or, in his absence, or in case of his inability to act, the President of the Board of Aldermen, should be president of the Board of Health, and that the city clerk should be its clerk, and keep a journal of its proceedings. It was defined to be the duty of the President of the Board of Aldermen, at all meetings of said board, when he should be informed of any matter requiring the attention of the Board of Health, to lay such matter before them, whereupon they should proceed to consider and act upon it. It was provided that the Board of Health might be convened at any time by notice from the clerk, under direction of the president, or any two of its members, and that the Board should designate a place to be called the Office of the Board of Health, where the president or one or more of the members should attend daily, Sunday excepted, from the first day of June to the first day of October in each year, and that they might so attend on Sunday, if necessary; a faithful record of all transactions to be kept for the convenience of the Board and the inspection of the public.

The provisions of this act were ample and sufficient for the enforcement of the new ordinances, quarantine regulations, &c., for the sanitary welfare of a growing city.

February 26th, 1866, an act was passed creating a "Metropolitan Sanitary District and Board of Health therein, for the preservation of life and health, and to prevent the spread of disease." The district, thus created, comprised the same territory as that embraced within the Metropolitan Police District, created the

same year, viz.: the City and County of New York, the County of Kings, and City of Brooklyn, Westchester and Richmond Counties, and the towns of Newtown, Flushing and Jamaica, in Queens. The Board of Health was constituted of four members, nominated by the Governor, and confirmed by the Senate, all of whom were to be residents of the said Metropolitan District; three of whom were to be physicians; and one of whom was to be a resident of the city of Brooklyn. These three, together with the Health Officer of the Port of New York, for the time being, were to be the Sanitary Commissioners of the said Metropolitan District; and, together with the Metropolitan Police Commissioners, they formed "the Metropolitan Board of Health." These Sanitary Commissioners were to hold office respectively, for one, two, three and four years, but their respective successors were to hold office for four years each.

An executive officer was created by the act to carry out the orders of this board, who was to be an experienced and skilful physician, and who was to be designated as "Sanitary Superintendent;" under him were two assistant sanitary superintendents, "one of whom was to be the acting chief officer of the Brooklyn Bureau of Sanitary Inspection;" and a corps of sanitary inspectors, of whom a large proportion were to be "physicians of practical skill and professional experience."

It was also made the duty of the Metropolitan Board of Police, not only to execute the orders of the Metropolitan Board of Health; but to "promptly advise said Metropolitan Board of Health of all threatened danger to human life or health, all matters demanding its attention, and all violations of its rules or ordinances."

The two Boards co-operated in all things, so far as was practicable, the Police doing their utmost to enforce the rules and ordinances of the Board of Health.

The act abolished the City Inspector's Department, and other officers who had hitherto performed some of the duties then delegated to the Board of Health, and created a "Board of Estimate," composed of the Mayor and Comptroller of the city of Brooklyn, together with the members of the board created by the act, to convene "annually, on or before the first day of August, make up a financial estimate and statement of the sums required for the year next ensuing, for the expenses and proper support, and for the discharge of the duties of said board; the sum raised for the expenses of any one year, however, not to exceed \$100,000," independently of such sums as may have been expended "in the presence of great and imminent peril to the public health from impending pestilence," &c. This act, so far as it related to the appointment of Sanitary Commissioners, took effect immediately, and in other respects went into effect March 1st, 1866.

In 1867, three acts (known respectively as chapters 687, 700 and 908 of the Session Laws of that year) were passed, abating certain nuisances in Brooklyn

deemed to be derogatory to the public health, regulating certain other matters of interest in this connection, and providing for the improvement of tenement houses and other dwellings of the poorer classes in Brooklyn and New York. Brooklyn was represented in the composition of this Board by James Crane, M. D., as Health Commissioner, and by John G. Bergen, as Police Commissioner.

On the 10th of March, John T. Conkling, M. D., was appointed Assistant Sanitary Superintendent, and Richard Cresson Stiles, Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics for Brooklyn, which was divided into five inspection districts, and six Sanitary Inspectors assigned to duty therein. The cholera epidemic of that year, which first appeared on the 5th of July, devolved no small responsibility on the Brooklyn Bureau, which was promptly met. Cholera hospitals were erected in the 12th Ward, at the corner of Hamilton avenue and Van Brunt street, and (by permission of the Common Council) in the City Park. (See p. 502.)

On the 2d day of January, 1868, George B. Lincoln, Esq., of Brooklyn, having been appointed a Sanitary Commissioner by the Governor (vice President Jackson S. Schultz, resigned), took his seat on the Board; and, on the 9th, Dr. James Crane was elected its President, for the unexpired term of the late President. Commissioner John G. Bergen died in February, and March 3d, Mr. Lincoln was elected President of the Board, in place of Dr. Crane, who declined a reelection. July 1, 1868, Henry S. Fellows, Esq., was appointed Assistant Attorney of the Board for the County of Kings.

In 1869, Dr. Conkling resigned as Assistant Sanitary Superintendent, and was succeeded by Dr. R. Cresson Stiles, who held office until the abolition of the Metropolitan Health Police system in 1870.

A City Board of Health again in 1870.—But in 1870 the Metropolitan system was laid aside, and matters of health, police, and excise were relegated to the local authorities of the several cities and counties heretofore comprising the Metropolitan District. The disbursements, expenses, and legal business of the Board were to be managed by the City Comptroller and Council, in the same manner as other expenses for general city purposes. The Common Council were empowered to confer upon the Police Board such powers in regard to public health as should be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Health Act. All monies standing to the credit of the city were to revert to the city, etc.

By a law passed in 1870, it was ordained that the Board of Health, created by the charter of 1854, "shall, in addition to the powers therein conferred upon said Board, possess the same powers, rights and privileges, except as to compensation, as were conferred by the said acts of February 26, 1866, and the several acts

amendatory thereof, and by chapters 687, 700 and 908 of the laws of 1867, upon the Metropolitan Board of Health within the city of Brooklyn, except the power to appoint officers and to incur expenses otherwise than is herein provided." All officers required to be appointed for the purpose of carrying out such powers were appointed by the Common Council of said city, on the nominations of the Mayor.

Under this act, Dr. GEORGE COCHRANE assumed the position of head of the Department in 1870. He was succeeded by Dr. Andrew Otterson in 1872.

Department of Health Created by Act of 1873. -Section 1 of title XII. of the charter of 1873 declared: "There shall be a department of health, which shall be known as the Board of Health of the City of Brooklyn, which shall have jurisdiction over said city." The management and control of this Department was vested in a Board of Health, to be composed of the president of the Board of Aldermen, the president of the Board of Police, and one physician, who should have been ten years in active practice of his profession, · and a resident of Brooklyn for five years immediately prior to his appointment. It was ordained that, within five days after that of the passage of the act (June 28, 1873), and on "the first Monday in May, 1877, and every two years thereafter, the Mayor shall nominate, and, with the consent of the Board of Aldermen, appoint one physician, who is eligible to the office, as a member of the said Board of Health, who shall be President thereof, and shall hold office until his successor shall have been duly qualified, together with the President of the Board of Police and the President of the Board of Aldermen, shall constitute the Board of Health of the city of Brooklyn." In case of death, resignation, removal from office, or other inability to serve of the physician so appointed, the vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by the Mayor and Common Council in the manner herein provided, for appointment under this act. The salary of said physician shall be \$5,000 per annum. The Board of Health, thus constituted, was empowered to act as a legislative board in regard to all matters pertaining to public health, and to the registration of vital statistics of the city, and to make such rules and regulations regarding the appointment of officers and employees as might be deemed expedient for the purposes for which the Board was organized; to prepare ordinances and secure the registration of births and deaths; to appoint a secretary, sanitary superintendent, registrar of records, inspectors, and other necessary officers and employees, and fix their compensation, with the proviso "that the whole expense of administrating such Department shall not exceed the sum appropriated therefor by the Board of Estimate, and all expenditures, so incurred, for whatever purpose, shall be made and met in such manner as is provided for in other departments of the city government." It was made the

duty of the Board of Police to execute the orders of the Board of Health when so requested by authority of the Board. In the presence of great and imminent peril to the public health of the city of Brooklyn, the act required the Board of Health "to take such measures, to do, and order to be done, such acts, and to make such expenditures," beyond those duly estimated for, in accordance with the provision above stated, for the preservation of the public health from such impending pestilence as the Board might declare the public safety and health to demand; and the Mayor of Brooklyn and the President of the Medical Society of Kings County should approve in writing. It was further stipulated that such peril should not be deemed to exist, "except when and for such period of time as the Mayor, President of the Medical Society and Board of Health" should declare by proclamation.

The charter defined the manner of procedure to be adopted by the Board of Health against individuals or corporations whose business, conduct or property should be deemed detrimental to the public health, and provided for the right of appeal on the part of the latter to the City Court of Brooklyn, including the proviso that no established business, or the rights to property, of any person, should be interfered with until the offender or offenders therewith charged should have been duly summoned by not less than five days' notice to appear before the Board and show cause why such declaration or order of prohibition should not be enforced against him, her or them.

In conjunction with the Department of City Works, the charter gave the Board of Health power to contract for the removal of offal, dead animals, garbage, night soil and other refuse matter; all contracts to be signed by the Presidents of the two Boards, and no contract to be made or terminated except by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Board of Health and the Department of City Works, acting conjointly; all contracts to be carried out by the Department of City Works, partially under control of the Board of Health, to whom all complaints of neglect of duty on the part of a contractor were ordered to be made; the President of the Board of Health having power to convene a joint meeting of the two Boards whenever, in the opinion of the Board of Health, any contract entered into by the two Boards should be improperly or imperfectly executed by the Department of City Works.

The ordinances passed by the Board of Health were numerous, and of such an import and range as to provide for the preservation of the public health so far as is possible, in view of the present developments of science; and no means to the proper carrying out of the purposes of the health department have been overlooked in framing them. Every known precaution against infection and contagion was adopted.

The Board of Health acts in conjunction with the

Health Officer of the port of New York and his deputies, for the protection of the city against disease brought to the port by foreign and other vessels; the Health Officer keeping the Board of Health informed by weekly reports of the number of vessels in quarantine, of the number of persons sick in the floating or other hospitals, and of the diseases with which each of them is afflicted. The Health Officer of New York, or his assistants and deputies, receive into the floating hospital all cases of yellow fever found in Brooklyn; and do not allow the return to the vicinity of the city, without permit of the Sanitary Superintendent, any person, vessel or article which the Board of Health has ordered to quarantine.

The supervision of the Board of Health of the construction of residences, business and public buildings on sanitary principles, and in the healthful reconstruction of old and dangerous buildings, has done much toward rendering the city healthy and ameliorating the condition of many thousands of its inhabitants. Every means to prevent the quartering of people in unhealthy domiciles has been made available; and the school buildings, churches, halls, theatres, and other public buildings of Brooklyn, are as well ventilated and as healthful as those of any city in the Union.

Under the provisions of the charter, the Board of Health, in 1873, was composed of General James Jourdan, Dr. Joseph C. Hutchison, and John T. Conkling. M. D.

In 1874, the organization of the Board of Health was changed by the addition to its constituency of the President of the Board of City Works; and it was composed as follows: General James Jourdan, Dr. Joseph C. Hutchison, Dr. John T. Conkling, Lorin Palmer, and Jacob I. Bergen.

In June, 1875, another reorganization of the Board of Health took place, by which a physician must be its President, and it was constituted of Dr. Andrew Otterson, President; Jacob I. Bergen, President of the Board of Aldermen; and Daniel D. Briggs, President of the Board of Police. January 1st, 1876, John French succeeded Mr. Bergen. In the winter of that year Mr. Briggs died, and was succeeded by General James Jourdan. January 1st, 1877, Mr. French was succeeded by William H. Ray. In June, 1877, Dr. Otterson was replaced by Dr. James Crane. Mr. Ray was succeedby Francis B. Fisher, January 1st, 1878, and in turn succeeded the latter January 1st, 1879. Mr. Ray was succeeded, January 1st, 1880, by Robert Black. September, 1879, Dr. Crane was succeeded by Dr. Otterson. Otherwise the composition of the Board was unchanged till 1880.

Office of Health Commissioner Created.—By an Act in relation to the Government of the City of Brooklyn, passed May 5th, 1880, the organization of the Board of Health was changed, and the office of Health Commissioner was created; it being enacted

that "within thirty days after the passage of this act, the Mayor and Comptroller shall meet at the Mayor's office and * * * designate * * * proper person who shall be the head of the Department of Health and designated as the Commissioner of said department; and the President of the Department of Police and Excise and the President of the Board of Aldermen shall thereupon cease to be members of the Board of Health."

Dr. James Crane was appointed *Health Commissioner*, June 17th, 1880, and served as such until succeeded by Dr. Joseph H. Raymond, who was appointed February 1st, 1882.

The work of the Department of Health is now carried on by Commissioner Raymond and the following corps of subordinates and assistants:

R. M. Wyckoff, M. D., Secretary and Registrar: G. F. Elliott, Esq., Counsel; E. F. Page, M. Farrell, G. Iremonger, S. R. Tuomy, W. R. Kerr, W. Hughes, J. Lewis, Clerks; W. E. Griffiths, M. D., S. N. Fisk, M. D., J. Corbin, M. D., Sanitary Inspectors; E. Pendleton, M. D., J. J. Gleavy, M. D., J. B. Mattison, M.D., A. M. Burns, M. D., G. Wieber, M. D., R. N. Dennison, M. D., Ernest Palmer, M. D., G. McNaughton, M. D., W. A. De Long, M. D., H. A. Archer, M. D., N. Tittemore, M. D., W. J. Cruikshank, M. D., W. E. Beardsley, M. D., T. J. Wheeden, M. D., Assistant Sanitary Inspectors; E. H. Bartley, M. D., Assistant Inspector and Chemist; W. J. Hobday, Inspector of Meat; J.J. Powers, P. M. Moffatt, W. J. Roche, J. F. Williams, S. Bower, Inspectors of Plumbing; L. McLean, Veterinary Surgeon; L. T. Bell, Consulting Veterinarian.

Ambulance Surgeons.—E. F. Pearce, M. D., J. Merzbach, M. D., A. A. Reid, M. D., Western District, located at L. I. College Hospital; C. P. Peterman, M. D., J. N. Dimon, M. D., Eastern District, Hospital and Dispensary; C. F. Drake, M. D., D. P. Maddux, M. D., Central District, Homeopathic Hospital; J.B. Hammill, M. D., L. E. Tieste, M. D., St. Mary's Hospital.

Report of the Health Department for 1883.— Health Commissioner Raymond's annual report to the Mayor, for the year ending Nov. 30, 1883, states:

The total deaths in the city within twelve months, ending November 30, 1883, were 13,833, or 1,180 less than the actual mortality during the calendar year, 1882. Assuming that this total, 13,833, fairly represents the mortality of 1883, and estimating the population to be 624,118, we fix the death rate at 22.16 in each thousand of persons living.

This rule is lower than that of 1882, when there died 24.84 in each thousand, the population at that time being held to be 604,356. In other words, there has been a saving of life this year, as compared with 1882, amounting to more than 1,600 lives.

He congratulates his fellow eitizens on the fact that there seems to be a permanent improvement in the sanitary condition of Brooklyn, and fortifies his opinion by the following:

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COMPARATIVE TABLE OF MORTALITY BY PROMINENT CAUSES OF DEATH IN RECENT YEARS.

The saving of life was most remarkable among children under 5 years of age—the decrease amounting to 1,229. The decline in deaths of zymotic diseases was over 2,000, and is very significant of a better tone of the public health.

Diseases of the zymotic class flourish when the community is broken down in its health, and they are expelled or reduced when the city's pulse and circulation come back to the normal. In last year's report to your Honor, I referred to the exceptionally cleanly condition of our street sewers and the probable good effect thereof upon the health rate. I have no reason to abate anything that I then said, but am impelled to state my conviction that the efficient operations of the Department of City Works have vastly improved our sewer system, and, for some months, at least, have given us purer air to breathe, by giving us relatively cleaner streets under the new contract; and have thus, indirectly, come to the aid of the sanitary authority in its fight against zymotic disease. It will also be seen by the above table that at no time since 1875 has the zymotic mortality fallen below 3,000 until the present year; while, in 1881, it rose to nearly 5,000. This low zymotic ebb is extremely gratifying to all who watch the progress of the city's health, for there can scarcely be a question that our city is destined to make advance in this direction and make a name for herself as a wholesome home city. A further examination of the parallel columns in the table shows that the only diseases cited therein that have a higher total this year than last, are consumption and typhoid fever, and in respect to both of these, the increase is significant.

He reports as to

THE AMBULANCE SERVICE, organized in May, 1873, by resolution of the Common Council, and placed by that body for management in the Board of Health, was, for the first time, established on a permanent basis by the charter amendment passed June 4, 1880 (chap. 545), which reads: "Said Board of Health, as thus constituted, and its successors, shall have power to act as a legislative body in regard to, and shall have and exercise exclusive power in said city over all matters pertaining to public health, the removal and burial of the dead, the maintenance and operating of an ambulance service for the speedy removal of sick and injured persons, etc." The ambulance districts are four in number, each under the charge of a surgeon and an assistant. The surgeon of the Western District is located at the Long Island College

Hospital, Henry street, corner Pacific; that of the Eastern District, at the Eastern District Hospital, 108, 110 and 112 South Third street, and that of the Central District at the Homeopathic Hospital, on Cumberland street. This latter district is one which has been in existence since January, 1881, and the ambulance used is the property of the hospital, although it is under the management and control of the Department of Health. During the present month, an additional ambulance has been provided by St. Mary's Hospital, on St. Marks avenue, near Rochester, and its services have been placed at the disposal of the city by the authorities of that institution; the expenses of its maintenance, however, being paid by them. The rooms of the surgeons are connected by telephone with Police Headquarters, and also with the stables where the ambulances are located, so that promptness characterizes this service equally with that of the Fire Department. The cost of maintaining this service is \$5,200 annually; \$1,200 of this amount is raised by the Board of Estimate specifically for the services of the ambulance of the Homeopathic Hospital. The city owns four ambulances, two of which are always on duty, the others acting as reserves. It was deemed wise at the inception of this service in 1873, to make contracts with livery-stable keepers to furnish horses and drivers, rather than for the city to assume the work; this plan has worked so satisfactorily that it has not been changed. The amount paid for each district is \$1,000 annually, the city furnishing the ambulances and apparatus and keeping the same in repair.

In order that this service may be of the greatest possible value, the city is divided into districts, and the duties of the surgeons distinctly defined.

Since the organization of this service, in August, 1873, there have been 15,785 calls for assistance answered by the ambulances, divided by years as follows:

1873, 159; 1874, 601; 1875, 821; 1876, 911; 1877, 884; 1878, 1,340; 1879, 1,572; 1880, 2,014; 1881, 2,282; 1882, 2,498; 11 months of 1883, 2,703. Total, 15,785. The surgeons serve without compensation.

NIGHT MEDICAL SERVICE. - In the year 1880, the Legislature of the State of New York passed an act, chapter 588 of the session laws, entitled "An Act to organize a night medical service in the City of New York, and to provide medical assistance in cases of sudden sickness, or accident, during the the night time." It was urged, at the time this act was introduced, that there were many cases of sudden sickness occurring during the night, and that it was very often difficult to obtain the services of a physician. This measure was designed to overcome the difficulty.

In the following year a similar act was passed, chapter 221 of the Laws of 1881, making the same provision for the city of Brooklyn.

It is mandatory upon the Board of Estimate to apportion and insert in their estimate of the expenses of said city, in each year, an amount necessary for the support of the aforesaid night medical service. The Board of Estimate of 1881 had adjourned sine die before the act was signed by the Governor, consequently no provision was made for the support of the service for 1882. In 1882, however, \$1,000 were appropriated for its maintenance during the year 1883. On the 1st of January of the present year, the service was organized, and 86 physicians have registered their names for duty.

During the eleven months ending November 30, there have been eighty-nine calls, for which the city has paid \$267. In addition to this amount, \$95 have been expended for forms and the necessary books of record.

I am satisfied that, in one instance at least, a human life

has been saved by a physician of the service, and that, in many cases, pain and suffering have been alleviated.

For the coming year, \$600 have been appropriated—a sum which will undoubtedly be sufficient to meet all demands.

THE PLUMBING LAW.—This law, which practically went into effect May 1, 1882. has been enforced since that date, and has undoubtedly contributed a large share to the improvement noticeable in the public health. During the past eleven months, 2,223 new houses have been plumbed in conformity with this law, which requires the work to be done under the supervision of this department; making in all 3,451 buildings in the city, which have the benefit of improved sanitary plumbing, and are occupied, probably, by not less than 20,000 persons.

INSPECTION OF FOOD.—This work has been continued with the zeal and vigor which its importance demands, and has

resulted in giving to the citizens of Brooklyn a supply of meat and milk second to no city in the State.

PUMPS AND WELLS.—The examination of pump water, which was commenced last year, has been continued during the year 1883; and, at the present time, we have the result of the analysis of the water from every pump in the city. It will be seen by reference to the table hereto appended that when this work was begun, there were 296 pumps. Of these, 230 have been condemned as furnishing water which was unfit for human consumption, and 17 were found to be so unobjectionable as not to warrant condemnation. The Common Council have given the necessary authority to close 172, and these have all been filled, and are, therefore, no longer in existence. There still remain in the city 124, of which number 106 have been condemned; and 18 have not been condemned."