

Storer (H. R.)

Volunteer Sanitary Organiza-  
tions as an Aid to Official  
Boards of Health.

---

BY  
HORATIO R. STORER, M.D.,  
OF NEWPORT, R. I.

---

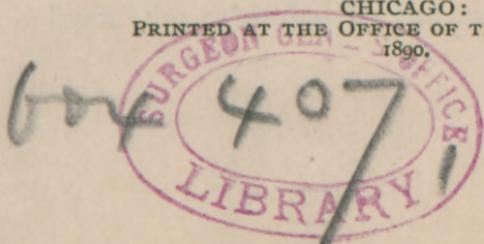
*Read in the Section of State Medicine at the Fortieth Annual Meeting  
of the American Medical Association, held at  
Newport, June, 1889.*

---

Reprinted for the Newport Sanitary Protection Association,  
from "The Journal of the American Medical  
Association," May 10, 1890.

---

CHICAGO:  
PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATION.  
1890.



Voluntary Sanitary Organization  
Means as an Aid to Official  
Boards of Health

The purpose of this work is to present to you the results of a study which has been made of the various voluntary sanitary organizations in the United States. It is intended to show the position of public health organizations in the United States, and to point out the various methods which have been used to bring about a better understanding of the public health problem.

The study was made by the National Board of Health, and is the result of a series of conferences and reports which have been made from time to time. It is intended to show the position of public health organizations in the United States, and to point out the various methods which have been used to bring about a better understanding of the public health problem.

VOLUNTEER SANITARY ORGANIZA-  
TIONS AS AN AID TO OFFICIAL  
BOARDS OF HEALTH.

---

The question that I am desired to present to you has been often discussed, generally, however, from a merely abstract standpoint. Viewed from the position of public boards, voluntary assistance, even if well organized, has too often appeared interference, while upon the other hand, the private citizen is inclined to criticise the average board official as indolent and the creature of red tape, or else too zealous and inclined to magnify his office.

TWO FIELDS FOR SANITATION, DISTINCT FROM  
EACH OTHER.

It will be my endeavor to avoid these extremes, and to show from a practical experience in this matter of nearly a dozen years, that in American communities there exist two distinct fields of operation. They are side by side, and necessarily everywhere present, though in some places more markedly so than in others. With the limitation that the law provides as to the supervision of private households by civic or State officials, in the absence of epidemics or complaints of a nuisance, this can be attained, if anything like completeness of result is desired, only by a method of surveillance wholly distinct from that provided by the public authorities.

THE PRIVATE FIELD REACHED ONLY FROM  
WITHIN.

Domestic privacy, which means not merely that of the family circle, but the retirement of the home water-closet and bath-room, the chamber ventilation, the furnace air supply, the first disposal of the laundry and kitchen waste, can hardly be reached save upon personal invitation from the head of the household. This entrance is not likely to be given to representatives of the press; still less, to the town constable. The family plumber knows of some of the conditions that are present; so does the family carpenter, and so also the family physician. This knowledge is, however, all of it of a confidential character, and if asked for outside would not be certain to be given.

The only key to the situation is through voluntary admission from within, and this is a privilege hardly to be expected save as the outcome of a purely self-interested motive upon the part of the occupant of the premises.

NEED OF INSPECTIONS.

Dwellings, like their owners, grow old and decay. As even infants have their diseases, so do also the newest residences. The rule concerning every house, no matter how recent its date, should be that it requires a thorough periodical inspection, at least once each year. The "Spring cleaning" should be a virtual taking account of stock, and employed as the opportunity of ascertaining defects and of making all necessary alterations and repairs. This is essential for the protection of its own occupants; but since dwellings like individuals become the subject of infectious disease, it also is necessary for the safety of its neighbors. As owners are usually careless

and nearly as often incompetent for the purpose, the examination should be made by a specially skilled adept. How then to obtain admission for the practical sanitarian to the most secret recesses of a private house?

Self-interest, as has been implied, is the most potent of all motives that influence mankind. Formerly the mere idea of domestic inspection, otherwise than by the owner, would have been laughed at. Till of late, if a pipe leaked or burst, the plumber was sent for, repaired it, and then took his leave. If a privy was foul it was emptied, just as in croup, scarlet fever and typhoid the physician was summoned, attended the patient till death or recovery occurred, and then discontinued his visits.

With the progress of popular knowledge it is becoming appreciated that in plumbing and scavenging, and in the practice of medicine as well, prevention is far better than cure, though it is still through preventable zymotic disease that almost every household is thinned of its dearest members; and that when such misfortune has occurred, there remain effects that, if not neutralized, may become doubly disastrous and wide spreading.

#### INSPECTIONS REQUIRED BY SELF-INTEREST.

At this point, self-interest, well understood, assumes another phase. The money formerly so lavishly spent upon the physician, the pharmacist and the sick nurse, is now much of it begrudged, although to be sure all these succeed in protecting themselves by a steadily increasing tariff. The same is true of the undertaker. Not nearly as many infants in proportion now die as formerly—indeed there are not, in parts of this country at least, as many proportionately to die—but

then the loss is eventually made good to the professional person in question by the greater expense attending the funeral of a proportionately increased number of adults, whose lives through sanitary science have been prolonged to maturity.

Having thus reached the financial point in the question, the manner in which the greatest saving is to be effected, for even the millionaire who scatters his wealth most lavishly is as frequently addicted to the practice of prudent economies, the way becomes easier towards the desired result. It is granted, we will assume, that an inspection of one's premises from time to time is found of pecuniary advantage, upon the ground that such eventually lessens plumbers' bills, druggists' charges, doctors' accounts, and postpones those of the undertaker.

#### AN EXPERT NECESSARY.

The inspection, to be of value, must be by a disinterested person, an expert. The family physician cannot make it, save in a very general, if not indeed wholly superficial, manner. He has not ordinarily the technical skill, nor can he spare the several hours that are necessary to conduct the examination thoroughly, and to prepare a detailed report. The family plumber should hardly be called upon to pronounce upon his own work, and to entrust the survey to a rival would be unfair to the first, and perhaps be as unlikely to elicit a perfectly unbiassed opinion. What else then remains?

Thanks to modern progress, the clearer definition of social needs and the more perfect subdivision of educated labor, the profession of practical sanitation, of sanitary engineering, has become recognized as a necessity. In its way, and to a certain extent, it is indeed to be classed above

our own divine science of healing, though to this it owes its existence. It is admirable to restore the diseased to health, but upon the whole, simpler though it may seem, is it not even a higher function to keep men well? Now for house inspections a skilled expert is plainly preferable, but the services of these gentlemen cost much money—no more to be sure than they are worth, or will eventually be prized at—but at this stage of the world's progress a charge of fifty, or even thirty or twenty-five dollars for investigating a residence, seems to most householders quite a sum for the purpose, and the average man who would spend this amount without another thought upon cigars or similar luxuries, hesitates a long time before giving its worth of additional protection to his wife and children.

#### PROF. FLEEMING JENKIN'S PLAN.

Under these conditions, "a happy thought" struck the late Prof. Fleeming Jenkin, of the University of Edinburgh. He applied to house inspections, the principle of coöperation or mutual insurance, called the new system "Sanitary Protection," and it was placed at once in successful practice. The Association at Edinburgh was the first to be organized, in 1877. Our own at Newport, R. I., was the second, in 1878. London and other cities followed, and now the principle is in extended application. Much has been written concerning its theory and practice. It is unnecessary for me here, to do more than merely state that a portion of its earlier literature emanated from Newport. As a consistent disciple of the Edinburgh school of thought and of practice, it has been a constant satisfaction to me to watch the development of Jenkin's well concerted system.

## ITS FEATURES AND ITS COST AT NEWPORT.

The general principle upon which this system is based is the following: To enable its members to obtain for a comparatively very small sum, an inspection of their houses of the same thorough character, as would otherwise cost several times the amount. At present the annual dues of membership in the Newport Association are \$2 per year, which collectively defray the current expenses of printing, postage, etc., no salaries whatever being paid. For a house inspection, which may require the better part of a day, with considerable subsequent clerical labor in preparing the report, \$8 is charged, and for water analysis \$5; these fees being given, entire, to the inspectors and analyst for their services.

## NEWPORT SANITARY CONDITIONS.

The city of Newport in its sanitary relations, is peculiar. The compact part of the town is like that of most old American seaports, which were originally wholly commercial. As sails were replaced by steam, and the carrying business, home and foreign, became centralized in what are now the great foci of trade, both wharf and residential property deteriorated in value in the smaller places, and so far from sufficient annual outlay being made to keep them in their former order, a condition of general neglect has necessarily obtained. The foreign have largely replaced the native born as laborers, and houses that were built for the needs of a single family have now to serve for two or three. Subdivision of use, whether of a dwelling, an out-house or a well, lessens individual responsibility for its care. From times far gone there has been a very general intermarriage between the "old" families within many of these retrograding cities. From

Newport besides, till of late years, and indeed the exodus continues, there has been a large emigration of its most energetic young people to places of greater activity, with the threefold effect of progressive loss of public energy, an increased general inertia, and a more marked disposition upon the part of those who have been turning downwards with Fortune's wheel, to become merely glorifiers of the past.

Among the natural effects of this has been the very general retention of the countless old vaults and privies, some of which are in direct connection with wells that are daily employed for household purposes, that still honeycomb the compact portion of these old sea-board towns. In many of them, as here, a free artificial supply of water has been introduced; and in some of them, as here till quite recently, there has been no proper system of sewers to remove the flow, after its pollution.

#### DANGERS RESULTING.

Again, Newport has become for a portion of the year the centre of American fashion and wealth. Houses of the most expensive character have been built, increasing in number upon a constantly progressing scale. They are furnished with complicated systems of plumbing and drainage. The needs of the place have therefore been twofold. Ancient conditions exist in close proximity to the most modern ones. The dangers of old towns, supersaturated by the retention of centuries of sewage, are supplemented by those arising from the introduction into dwellings upon which architects have lavished all the resources of their art as regards adornment, of every kind of modern so-called sanitary device, good, bad and indifferent, which for economy's sake aside

from that of safety, should be as intelligently placed at the outset as possible, and thereafter regularly receive the most intelligent supervision. Many of these establishments are so extensive, and the social demands upon their occupants so great, that all care-taking is entrusted to subordinates, whose only aim again is to play their own petty part in the year's Vanity Fair with the least possible expenditure of trouble. The result has been that more than one Newport palace has proved, wholly unnecessarily, the tomb of its possessor. It would be fortunate for all concerned if such occurrences were of the past alone.

#### TERMS OF NEWPORT CHARTER.

By the terms of the Charter of the Newport Association, for which the present efficient mayor of the city, Hon. Thomas Coggeshall, was one of the petitioners, it was established for "the purpose of securing the proper sanitary condition of the dwellings of its members, and of any other buildings or premises in said Newport, so as to aid in promoting the sanitary condition of the said city." At that time, January, 1879, there existed no health authorities here save the Board of Aldermen, under whose direction there were a city physician (the present incumbent and the senior of the Newport profession), an inspector of nuisances (who at that time was also the only overseer of the poor), a health officer (in addition to now, the harbor master, a retired sea captain) and an overseer of small-pox (who was a blacksmith by trade). The Association fully recognized at the beginning the dual character of the responsibilities with which it had been entrusted by the State, to care for the premises of its immediate members, and for their sake as well as for the safety and good name of

the whole city, to aid in improving the system that supervised the public health.

#### CREATION OF NEWPORT BOARD OF HEALTH.

From the beginning, therefore, the Association has persistently labored to obtain a properly organized and sufficiently independent Board of Health, and it has endeavored to do this by repeated memorials to the City Government, by enlisting the interest of the General Assembly, and by producing in many ways a change in public sentiment. In this, at the end of nearly a dozen years of unremitting effort, it may be said to have been in a great measure successful. To have obtained this advance in a city like Newport, with a century of apathy, inertia, and prejudice against all innovations behind it, means a very great deal. The physicians of the place, without exception and year after year, have been in sympathy with the movement, and so have one or two of the clergymen. A general act passed the Rhode Island Assembly empowering Boards of Aldermen to transfer their powers to separate Boards of Health. Though this has not yet been entirely done in Newport, the progress towards its accomplishment is constantly increasing. At first a so-called "Advisory Board," of whose members a portion were medical men, was appointed by the Aldermen, but it did not consider it was expected to volunteer suggestions, and its advice was not often asked for or followed. After a year or two, the at present existing improvement was made. A board of five, three of whom are physicians, is annually created for a single year, and annually filled for that time by the Board of Aldermen. It is known as the Newport Board of Health, though often it is still called an advisory board, and probably by many

considered as merely such, since the Aldermen occasionally convene "as a Board of Health." Under such a transient tenure of existence, the Board could hardly at first have been expected to have a very definite policy or to show any remarkable measure of energy. Their suggestions, however, are now received with more and more respect. The appropriations for which they ask are now more generously granted them, and at present there is much more active sympathy between the Board of Health and the Aldermen than ever before. The Board have an executive officer, appointed, upon their nomination, by the Board of Aldermen, and he also acts as their clerk. Neither the inspector of nuisances nor the "health officer" are appointed by them, though they nominate the former, and receive his reports. Both of the present incumbents of these offices are men of experience and well fitted for their duties. The latter has had, perhaps still has, the additional title of "Sentinel," as he is primarily the Harbor-master, and is expected to report the cases of disease upon shipboard that come within his notice. The City Physician happens, fortunately, thought not necessarily, to be a member of the Board.

#### THE PROGRESS OF THE BOARD.

Frail as is yet the tenure of the Newport Board of Health, it yet deserves credit for what it has already accomplished towards lessening the sanitary dangers and retrieving the repute of the city. Thanks are due to the authorities for having thus far "tried the experiment," as it has been said, of yielding to the advice of those most familiar with such matters, and to the memorials of the heaviest taxpayers, and to what seem the dictates of common sense. The money worth of

a bread producer is elsewhere recognized as representing a definite amount in dollars and cents, belonging to the whole community, to preserve which in its effective integrity is, aside from all motives of private selfishness or mere philanthropy and sentiment, a public duty. It has taken Newport a long time to recognize that Death knocks with equal beat upon the gate of the millionaire and the door of the laborer, and that every fatality from zymotic disease, even though from what are called so trivial affections as whooping cough and measles, is so far a disgrace to modern civilization and a robbery of the public treasury. "My father died of typhoid, therefore so should I," would seem to be one of the forms of ancestor worship that still pervades certain of the old New England communities, but the more direct and constant their contact with the outside world, the more completely prejudice yields and the more warmly the at first dreaded, if not derided, innovations of modern science are welcomed. The final abandonment of a polluted site of ice collection, the filtration of the public water supply at its source, the relinquishment of a project for a new cemetery within that area, and the construction of a garbage cremator,<sup>1</sup> all of them since the commencement of the present year, are the direct effects of advice given by the Board of Health, upon public sentiment.

Though the Sanitary Protection Association takes pride in having aided towards the development of a proper Board of Health, it can hardly be satisfied until much that still remains to be done has been accomplished. As at present constituted, there is probably not a single member of the Board whom the Association would desire to have changed, for it combines the decision of

---

<sup>1</sup> The latter, unfortunately, has not proved a complete success.

maturity with the conservatism of age, and the practical ways of the business man with the scientific training of the physician. As to the extent of the powers of the Board under its present relations there have been differences of opinion, not only on the part of the people but of its own members, and from this it has been blamed for apparent slowness in its work. These questions, however, have of late been clearly decided, and doubts removed, by an exhaustive statement of the law in the case, in its various bearings, enunciated by Judge Darius Baker of this city, at the request of the Newport Business Men's Association. The communication referred to is a brief one, and contains so much that would be of value to other communities, similarly situated, that I present it entire.

#### JUDGE BAKER'S STATEMENT OF LAW.

‘The protection of the public health belongs to what is known as the police power. All property is held subject to this power, which regulates its private use and enjoyment by the owner. If he suffer injury from its exercise, it is either *damnum absque injuriâ*, injury without wrong, or he is compensated for it by sharing in the general benefits which the regulations are intended to secure. This power, which is of wide scope and includes many other things for the preservation of the public health, for convenience of exercise and administration is usually delegated to municipal corporations. For present purposes we shall refer only to that branch of it which pertains to health. This has been expressly conferred upon our city by that portion of the charter which provides that ‘the City Council shall have power to make ordinances and regulations for the government of said city relative to the public health.’

‘The Public Statutes also provide that ‘town councils and boards of aldermen shall be *ex officio* boards of health in their respective towns and may make such rules and regulations, not repugnant to the law, as they shall judge proper for the preservation of the health of the inhabitants thereof, the prevention and abatement of nuisances, the promotion of cleanliness, the removal of

the causes and the prevention of the introduction and spread of any contagious or infectious diseases therein,' with authority to affix penalties for the breach of such rules and regulations not exceeding three hundred dollars fine or six months' imprisonment for any one offense, and with the proviso that the City Council may appoint a Board of Health, which shall have all or any part of the powers and duties of the Board of Aldermen as a Board of Health, as the City Council may determine.

"In addition to this, extensive powers as to the abatement or removal of certain nuisances are conferred upon town councils (which may be construed to mean boards of aldermen)—such as slaughter-houses, bone-boiling establishments and fish oil works—as to the regulation or control of the 'construction and location of all places for keeping swine, privy vaults, sinks, sink drains, sink spouts, cesspools, and the outlets thereof;' 'the summary removal or reconstruction of all such as shall be by them deemed prejudicial to the public health, the location of stables and the time or manner of removing filth from them and from the vaults or slaughter-houses'—also as to making suitable regulations and arrangements for the prevention of infectious and contagious diseases, and for the quarantine of vessels and persons on them, and for the burial of the dead. By public law, passed in 1885, a 'town council may order the owner or occupant of any premises' in the town 'to remove at his own expense any nuisance, source of filth, filth or cause of sickness found thereon within twenty-four hours' after notice, under penalty of not exceeding twenty dollars a day for a non-compliance with such order. It may also 'when satisfied upon due examination that any cellar, room, tenement or building in its town occupied as a dwelling place has become, by means of the number of occupants or want of cleanliness or other causes, unfit for occupation as a dwelling place and a cause of nuisance to the occupants or the public,' require the premises in question to be suitably cleansed and, if the order is not complied with, may cause them to be cleansed at the occupants' expense, or may forcibly remove the occupants and close the building against future occupancy.

"The health officer required to be appointed in towns under this act is the agent of the town council for 'making all sanitary inspections,' may 'make complaints for the violation of any law, ordinance, rule or regulation relating to the public health of his town, without giving surety for costs or, in cases of emergency, when the

council cannot be conveniently convened, shall have all the authority conferred by this act upon town councils.' The city of Newport is exempted from appointing such health officer; but the power and duties of its Board of Health are commensurate with the powers and duties of the health officer as set forth in the act.

'We have by no means stated all of the powers specifically conferred in relation to the public health and its preservation, but enough has been said to show the scope or extent of the authority delegated to the city in this matter. It is undoubtedly adequate to the exigencies of the case. The next inquiry naturally is as to how far these powers have been exercised by the city. Under them the City Council has from time to time passed various ordinances relating to most, and perhaps all, the subjects above referred to, including quarantine, the burial of the dead, and the regulation of a great many matters properly grouped under the head of nuisances, for example, as to the use of fish manure in this city, the localities of hog pens, the removal of offal, and other filth from private premises, when calculated to injure health, and other kindred matters. It does not seem necessary, as it is not my present purpose, to show how fully these powers have been used as to matters of detail.

'These ordinances were most of them passed years ago, and while, perhaps, they may not be entirely adequate to the requirements of the modern view as to sanitary regulations, yet it is probable that whatever deficiency there may be in them as a system lies largely in the failure to provide the proper means for the efficient enforcement of existing laws and regulations. In the present generally accepted views as to the origin spread and danger of filth diseases and the means to be employed for their suppression, the old arrangement, under which the inspector of nuisances was the chief and perhaps only executive health officer of the city, is confessedly entirely insufficient. It furnished a way in which a nuisance could be abated, but it is not in harmony with the spirit pervading more recent health legislation, which provides for thorough sanitary supervision and intelligently attempts to prevent as well as to remove the causes of disease.

'The requisites of such sanitary supervision are the gathering of complete health statistics, the right of local inspection, the compelling of a general observance of uniform and wholesome regulations and the power of quarantine and of summarily removing the cause of dis-

ease in cases of emergency. I will not attempt to elaborate either of these points. It is difficult to conceive of anyone's objecting to such a system if intelligently and wisely administered. It was a step toward the more efficient administration of health regulations when the City Council passed an ordinance creating a board of health and giving to it practically all of the administrative and executive powers of the board of aldermen as a board of health. The powers of the board under this ordinance are to 'make all proper inquiries into all things in said city which may in any way affect the health;' to 'prepare and compile all such statistics relating to the health of said city as it may deem proper;' to 'see to the enforcement of all laws pertaining to the health of said city as well as the regulations originating with said board and those of the board of aldermen acting as a board of health.' It has an executive officer, and the inspector of nuisances is also subject to its directions. From this it is apparent that the board is clothed with large executive powers, which in emergencies are very reaching, when we take into account the provisions of the act above referred to, passed in 1885.

"I assume that legislative power is not conferred upon the board under the ordinance, notwithstanding the reference to 'the regulation originating with said board,' as that is obviously an allusion to a provision in the ordinance as originally passed in 1885 (since stricken out), that the board might prepare regulations and submit them to the board of aldermen for their approval.

"Without here discussing the question as to whether events have shown that the power of the board of health might well be enlarged (as to which I simply say that I am inclined to the opinion that for the present the existing division of authority is unobjectionable), I think that it has been generally recognized that its existence has demonstrated its usefulness and necessity. And if its efficiency is to be greatly increased, that can be best accomplished by bringing within its control all matters pertaining to the administration of that branch of government relating to the public health.

"The board itself is apparently open to criticism in not using all of its authority in this direction. It is understood that it has no direct knowledge or supervision of the regulations as to the proper disposal and removal of swill and garbage. Yet the complaints in relation thereto are made to the inspector of nuisances, who under the ordinance is expressly made subject to its order. In my

judgment what is now most needed is in this same line of improving the administration of the health department, namely, some provision for the better enforcement of some of the existing regulations and ordinances.

"For instance, a regulation requires a house-holder to get permission before connecting a private drain with a public sewer, and also that a trap shall be placed between the sewer connection and the house. These requirements are eminently proper ones. But the permit being obtained, there is no arrangement for public supervision to see that the work is properly done or that the trap is suitably placed. I am informed that there is at the present time in this city a case of diphtheria in a house where drain pipe connects directly with the public sewer without any intervening trap. There should be some regulation requiring public supervision of such an important matter as this.

"I repeat, therefore, that what now appears to be most requisite in this connection is the taking of those steps which tend to the more efficient enforcement of existing laws, ordinances and regulations.

"Although most of our ordinances as to the preservation of health, as has already been indicated, have the sanction of years, it is not improbable that many of them may be susceptible of improvement in some respects. The suggestion of such changes, if they are really needed, would naturally first come from those who are to discuss this question of public health as to its practical aspects. I only call attention to two or three things, which are important to be considered in the making of ordinances and regulations like these which have been referred to. These regulations are all infringements upon the rights of owners to use or enjoy their own property, and in consequence they should be no more burdensome than is necessary. Therefore; when a question arises as to the validity of an ordinance, some of the principal tests are: Is it in conformity with existing laws? Is it impartial, fair and general? Is it oppressive? Is it reasonable? At first thought it might seem that, when the power to make ordinances in relation to a certain subject is conferred by some general law upon different municipalities, they might all exercise it in the same way and to the same extent. But it requires no demonstration to show that the provisions of an ordinance might be reasonable as applied to the city of Providence and quite the reverse in reference to the town of Jamestown.

"An ordinance prohibiting the burial of the dead in

the lower part of New York city was held to be reasonable and valid. A similar ordinance, practically prohibitive, in a suburban town, was held to be unreasonable and invalid.

“The law will not allow the rights of property to be invalid under the guise of police regulation for the preservation of health’ when such regulation is not for public good. And the question of reasonableness is determined by the courts, and not by juries.”

#### PAST WORK OF ASSOCIATION.

Leaving this portion of the subject, it may be said that the especial field of the labors of the Newport Sanitary Association has been of late among its own members. This is a sphere for activity that will necessarily always exist, even were there fifty boards of health, with all the powers conferable by common law or statute, behind them. For the first few years its meetings were held monthly, at private houses, when papers were read upon sanitary topics, followed by interesting discussions. These were reported fully in the newspapers, and in this way reached the whole community. Through the Association a considerable sum was raised for a house-to-house inspection of the city, and it was made under the direction of the then existing National Board of Health. A report upon the sanitary condition of Newport was thus secured, which even the most unwilling were compelled to acknowledge as thorough and reliable. The Association has encouraged special researches by its members into questions of moment regarding the health of the city. The ice and water supplies<sup>2</sup> of Newport have been subject to most careful investigation by Profs. Pumpelly, of the U. S. Geological Survey, and Hills, the Association’s analyst, and Capt. J. P. Cotton, one of its consulting engineers, with the effect of greatly improving their condition.

<sup>2</sup>“The Dangers of Impure Ice.” *The Sanitarian*, May, 1882.  
“Newport’s Water Supply,” *Ibid.*, August, 1888.

In similar manner the merits of Newport as a residence for persons of phthisical tendency have been studied in a series of reports to the Association<sup>3</sup> by the writer of the present paper, and the facts clearly brought out: 1, that pneumonia and phthisis, originating here, are very rare as compared with the main land; 2, that most of the cases occurring are in unnecessarily damp and clearly circumscribed localities, as houses with wet cellars the number of which is constantly diminishing; and 3, that the moisture of the climate is more than counterbalanced, if not indeed made a favorable feature, by its constant salinity,<sup>4</sup> and the decided equability and comparative mildness of the winter temperature—the conditions being in the main like those of a ship at sea. The Association has taken an active part towards inducing the citizens to adopt the general plan of sewerage and consequent drainage also, which is now in successful operation through the larger part of the compact portion of the town. Every year it has conducted for its members many house inspections, and analyses from private as well as the public sources of water supply. For the latter

---

<sup>3</sup> "Newport, R. I., as a Winter Resort for Consumptives," *Ibid*, Jan. 11, 18 and 25 and Feb. 5, 1883; "Concerning Newport, R. I., as a Resort for Consumptives," *Boston Med. and Surg. Jour.*, March 22 and April 26, 1883; "The Mild Winter Climate of Newport, R. I., as the Effect of the Gulf Stream," *Medical Record*, December 22, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> I am well aware of the discussion concerning the part played by chloride of sodium in pulmonary disease. Vide H. B. Baker, "Relations of Certain Meteorological Conditions to Diseases of the Lungs and Air Passages," etc. (*Trans. Ninth International Medical Congress*, Washington, 1887; *Annual Report Michigan Board of Health*, 1888.) The peculiar exemption of Ventnor and Newport from these diseases, except as imported, is, however, a sufficient commentary. Wholly independent studies of this question, as regards Newport, made by Dr. F. H. Rankin, Secretary of the Newport Board of Health, and based upon the more recent mortality statistics to the present time, seem to completely confirm my previous observations and conclusions. The *Sanitarian* for May, 1889, in analyzing the Newport Board of Health's Annual Report for 1888, editorially states that the death-rate from consumption "is probably the lowest of any equal city population in New England." (*Loc. cit.*, p. 464.)

duty it has from the commencement possessed the valuable services of Prof. Wm. B. Hills, of the Chemical Department of Harvard University, while it has had a succession of house inspectors. Its present inspecting engineers are Messrs. Chapman & Farquhar, whose names as experts in connection with Col. Waring, are familiar to all sanitarians. Through the moderation of the Association's charges, possible only through its system of coöperation, the same thorough examination is made for members for a comparative trifle that otherwise would cost several times the amount. One of the two great ends for which it has labored, the establishment of a city board of health, having been attained, it now more closely confines itself to its private work; not hesitating, however, to express itself when it perceives a public need, and it at all times holds itself ready to assist in every way that may be within its power, any desire or project of the Board that may come to its knowledge.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the establishment of a Volunteer Health Organization at Newport of the character indicated has shown an important and possible way, previously untried in this country, in which such an Association can be of aid to official boards of health.

#### ORIGINAL DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME.

There were special difficulties in Newport.

1. The non-homogeneity, for evident reasons, of large portions of its population.
2. The traditional, if not hereditary, apathy of the permanent residents regarding public questions of the kind, partly the effect of circumstances already stated, and perhaps also in part the result of the local, non-stimulating, climate.
3. The commensurate lack of interest by the

summer people in anything not of a purely social character.

4. The very prevalent fear upon the part of each, lest sanitary agitation might injure the reputation of the place as a resort both for pleasure and for health.

These obstacles are now surmounted. The summer people recognize that pleasures may be purchased at risk to life, unless they give reasonable attention to their surroundings. The winter people have come to see that no matter what the natural advantages of the place, they must provide the same safeguards to the taxpayers that are given by communities elsewhere. The last year's list of members of the Association comprises no less than fifty-two, among them many of the most intelligent, most influential and most wealthy of the residents of Newport.

In the present brief sketch of the success of an isolated experiment in public as well as private sanitation, I have purposely refrained from alluding to the admirable work that has been done elsewhere by volunteer sanitary organizations in aid of official boards of health during special emergencies, at New Orleans, Jacksonville, etc., for each deserves its own historian.

#### REPORT OF PARENT ASSOCIATION AT EDINBURGH.

It will be of interest, however, if I give a brief sketch of what is being done by the parent body of all the so-called Sanitary Protection Associations, that of Edinburgh, the report of which for the past year has reached me while preparing the present paper.

The President of the Edinburgh Association is Prof. Sir Douglas Maclagan, Kt., M.D., assisted by two Vice-Presidents, a Council of fifteen gentlemen, and a Secretary, who is also Treasurer.

There are a Resident Engineer and three assistants. There were no less than 104 public buildings (schools, club-houses, banks, hotels, and hospitals) inspected during 1888, besides many private residences. Since the foundation of the Association, 536 gentlemen's country houses have been examined. The number of guinea subscribers the past year was 529. The balance in bank at the commencement of 1888 was £557 13s. 9d. The income from all sources was £2,253 os. 7d., making a total credit or "charge" account of £2,810 14s. 4d. The total expense or "discharge" account for the year was £2,033 17s. 1d., leaving a balance of £776 17s. 3d. in the treasury at the opening of 1889. An Association whose assets thus reach from \$12,000 to \$15,000 yearly is clearly capable of accomplishing much good. The results show that the Edinburgh Association is fully competent for its mission. At its recent annual meeting, Sir Wm. Muir stated that "no institution in Edinburgh was of more value to society than the Sanitary Association."

Besides the Edinburgh Association, similar organizations now exist at Glasgow and Dundee, Scotland; London, Bedford, Bradford, Brighton, Cheltenham, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Wolverhampton, Liverpool, Cambridge, Cardiff and Bath, England; Dublin, Ireland; and Montreal, Canada.

