

"The head of the health department shall be called the Board of Health. Said board shall consist of the president of the the board of police, the health officer of the port, and two officers, one of whom shall have been a practising physician for not less than five years preceding his appointment. The commissioner of health, who is not a physician, shall be the president of the board, and shall be so designated in his appointment. The commissioners of health shall, unless sooner removed, respectively hold their offices for six years, and until their successors shall be respectively appointed and have qualified."

I am told that this clause was copied from the Charter of 1873, but I am at a loss to understand the reason for the disqualification of physicians for an office peculiarly requiring medical skill and experience.

But I ask your especial attention tonight to the abuse of medical charity—a subject which has been so often discussed and re-discussed that our souls have become weary, and I should hesitate to allude to it but for the seeming opportunity now offered to us in the power recently given to the State Board of Charities to revoke the charter of an institution proven to dispense medical charity improperly. This clause was introduced into the new constitution by Mr. Tunis G. Bergen, president of the State Board of Charities, to whom the profession is under a lasting debt of gratitude, and I never fully appreciated what this gentleman has attempted to do for us until I obtained accurate figures upon the subject, through the kindness of our distinguished colleague, Dr. Stephen Smith, who is a most energetic member of the same board. From these statistics it appears that the county of New York has at the present time twenty-six hospitals and 114 dispensaries. In the former, during 1895, 75,368 patients have been treated free, and in the latter 661,803, making a total of 737,171. The population of this city is only 1,851,060, so that the proportion of such free patients to the whole community

is 39 per cent. There have been 92,529 free visits of patients to hospitals in 1895, and 1,337,170 free visits of patients to dispensaries. Out of 1,104,381 prescriptions that have been dispensed, there is no means of knowing exactly how many have been without charge, because fifty-two of the dispensaries have made no report; the State Board of Charities, while of the sixty-two that have reported, sixteen make nominal charges of from five to fifty cents, or nothing when the patients are unable to pay. Of these 114 dispensaries, sixty take certain precautions to weed out the unworthy, such as making inquiries, questioning the patients, judging by their appearance, and by the statements of physicians sending them, while the remaining fifty-four either make no inquiries or have made no report. In attendance upon these 114 dispensaries are 949 medical men, which is twenty-seven per cent. of all the physicians in the city, who number 3430. Efforts were made to ascertain how many of these patients were non-residents, but the answers were usually very indefinite, one institution stating "Very few, if any," others "From one to ten per cent.," while ten had treated 212. The foregoing summary does not include institutions under the charge of the local Commissioners of Charity, one of whom, Mr. John P. Faure, has kindly informed me that there are eight city hospitals, containing 7089 patients, and that the out-patient branch has treated 49,620 patients during the year ending June 30, 1895. Although it is probable that these cases are really worthy of charity, yet, in strict logic, the figures should be added to those given above, which would swell the total of patients treated free in this city in one year to 793,880.

These statistics confirm the rumors that have been rife among us for many years, such as that the president of one of the largest municipal railroad corporations was discovered to be a regular attendant at one of the dispensaries; that patients come occasionally to the clinics in carriages; that practices can almost always be obtained from certain clinics in a large