

National Board of Health,

Washington, D. C., April 15 1879

Prof O. C. Marsh.

P. Nat: Ac: of Sciences

My dear Sir,

I have to enclose a letter
from the President of the
National Board of Health.
with a circular published
by the Board & am

Very respectfully to

Thomas J. Turner

Secy N. B. of Health.

National Board of Health,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

No. 3. - - - April 7, 1879.

CIRCULAR.

To Prof O. C. Marsh
Pres. N. Acad^y of Sciences.

The National Board of Health desires, through the medium of this circular-letter, to give information of its organization, of the objects which it is designed to accomplish, and of its proposed methods of performing its prescribed duties. The act establishing this Board passed Congress March 4th, 1879, and is as follows :

AN ACT to prevent the introduction of infectious or contagious diseases into the United States, and to establish a National Board of Health.

There shall be established a National Board of Health to consist of seven members, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, not more than one of whom shall be appointed from any one State, whose compensation, during the time when actually engaged in the performance of their duties under this act, shall be ten dollars per diem each and reasonable expenses, and of one medical officer of the Army, one medical officer of the Navy, one medical officer of the Marine Hospital Service, and one officer from the Department of Justice, to be detailed by the Secretaries of the several Departments and the Attorney General, respectively, and the officers so detailed shall receive no compensation. Said Board shall meet in Washington within thirty days after the passage of this act, and in Washington or elsewhere from time to time upon notice from the president of the Board, who is to be chosen by the members thereof, or upon its own adjournments, and shall frame all rules and regulations authorized or required by this act, and shall make or cause to be made such special examinations and investigations at any place or places within the

United States, or at foreign ports, as they may deem best, to aid in the execution of this act and the promotion of its objects.

The duties of the National Board of Health shall be to obtain information upon all matters affecting the public health, to advise the several Departments of the Government, the executives of the several States, and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, on all questions submitted by them, or whenever in the opinion of the Board such advice may tend to the preservation and improvement of the public health.

The Board of Health with the assistance of the Academy of Science, which is hereby requested and directed to co-operate with them for that purpose, shall report to Congress at its next session a full statement of its transactions, together with a plan for a national public health organization, which plan shall be prepared after consultation with the principal sanitary organizations and the sanitarians of the several States of the United States, special attention being given to the subject of quarantine, both maritime and inland, and especially as to regulations which should be established between State or local systems of quarantine and a national quarantine system.

The membership of the Board of Health, constituted under this act, is as follows: Dr. PRESTON H. BAILHACHE, U. S. Marine Hospital service; Dr. SAMUEL M. BEMISS, of Louisiana; Dr. HENRY I. BOWDITCH, of Massachusetts; Dr. JOHN S. BILLINGS, United States Army; Dr. JAMES L. CABELL, of Virginia; Dr. HOSMER A. JOHNSON, of Illinois; Dr. ROBERT W. MITCHELL, of Tennessee; SAM'L F. PHILLIPS, Solicitor General; Dr. STEPHEN SMITH, of New York; Dr. THOMAS J. TURNER, United States Navy; Dr. TULLIO S. VERDI, of the District of Columbia.

The Board held its first meeting on the 2d of April, and organized by the election of the following officers: President, Dr. JAMES M. CABELL; Vice-President, Dr. JOHN S. BILLINGS; Secretary, Dr. THOMAS J. TURNER; with Dr. STEPHEN SMITH, and P. H. BAILHACHE, as Executive Committee.

It will be perceived that, by the act establishing a National Board of Health, the functions of that body are in no sense executive, but chiefly co-operative and advisory.

The special duties indicated are three fold, viz: 1. The institution of special examinations and investigations, and the collection of information upon all matters affecting the public health. 2. Advising the several Departments of the Government, the Executives of the several States, and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, on all questions referred to it. 3. Submitting to Congress a plan for a National Public Health Organization.

In the performance of the first class of duties the National Board feels well assured that its utility depends mainly upon its securing the confidence and cordial co-operation of State and local sanitary authorities, and of the leading physicians, sanitarians, and scientific men of the United States. Such confidence and co-operation it will seek to obtain by advising and aiding in the most fraternal spirit such authorities, and by employing skilled persons in the investigations which it may undertake. We deem it the duty of this Board to act as the agent through which the United States Government shall furnish the necessary stimulus and means to enable skilled sanitarians and properly constituted sanitary authorities and organizations to prosecute and perfect scientific inquiries necessary to the protection and preservation of the public health. Acting in this capacity, the Board must necessarily exercise its discretion as to the kind of work most important, and by whom and where it shall be performed to secure the best results. In general, such work must be performed by local agencies, and it will be the highest privilege, as well as the most serious responsibility of this Board, to select throughout the United States the men best qualified for such special duties, to stimulate and sustain them in their efforts and finally to give proper publicity to their studies.

In the discharge of the second or advisory functions required, this Board must often seek the co-operation of State and municipal authorities, especially when questions are submitted by the executives of States. In such cases the National Board desire, to the fullest extent of its means, to aid local authorities in making needful investigations, and to co-operate as far as it shall have power in giving force and effect to the advice submitted.

In preparing a plan for a national public health organization to be submitted to the next Congress, this Board is especially required to obtain the co-operation of the Academy of Sciences, and consult the principal sanitary organizations and the sanitarians of the several States of the United States. In order to the proper performance of this duty, perhaps the most important which will devolve upon it, this Board earnestly asks the counsel and co-operation of all persons who are interested in establishing permanent sanitary administration in connection with the General Government. The time was never so auspicious as the present for laying broad and deep the foundations of a public health service at the seat of Government.

Public sentiment is now not only ripe, but urgent, for such a re-

form, while Congress is prepared to adopt and give effect to a measure for perfecting such an organization. Aided by the enlightened counsels of the scientific bodies and sanitarians to whom it is permitted to appeal, the National Board of Health will avail itself of every means in its power to perfect a plan of a public health organization worthy of a country whose soil and climate require only the incorporation of adequate sanitary into civil administration—National, State, and municipal—to make it the home of the healthiest and happiest people of the world.