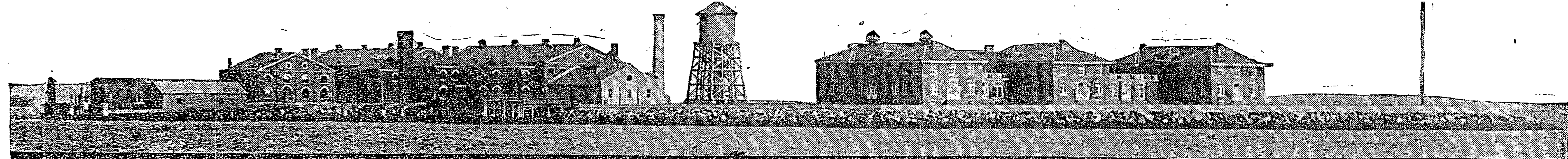


A LITTLE ISLAND NEAR NEW YORK PEOPLED WITH BABIES

Taken from Incoming Steamers Suffering from Measles, Scarlet Fever and Other Ills, They Are Cared for on Hoffman Island Till They Get Well.



The Hospital on Hoffman Island.

On a little strip of "made" land, rising midway from the waters of New York Bay, between the Coney and Staten Island shores—a strip safeguarded by grim seawalls and barely thirteen acres in extent—hundreds of foreigners, almost all women and children, gaze wistfully in the bay toward the city, scarcely visible in the distance, which lured them from their homes across the ocean with promise of work and riches. It is not Ellis Island—these particular immigrants have not got as near as that to the goal of their dreams.

The strip of "made" land is Hoffman Island and the hundreds on it are those taken from incoming ships by Dr. Doty, Health Officer of New York, and his busy assistants at the Quarantine station. Some of these—mostly little children—have been removed from the ships because of illness; the rest of those on the island are the mothers, brothers, and sisters of these children, who are allowed to remain on the island until their kin get well, and the passengers of incoming ships who have been exposed to infection while in transit and are under observation for signs of disease.

It is only within the last year that Hoffman Island has been so populous. Formerly only those under detention used to sojourn there. But exactly a year ago Dr. Doty put through a plan he had long had in mind—namely, to remove at Quarantine all persons on incoming ships found to have contagious diseases. Previous to the introduction of this rule, the Quarantine officials had jurisdiction only over cases of smallpox, yellow fever, typhus fever, bubonic plague, and cholera, which still go to Swinburne Island, Hoffman Island's neighbor, a short distance further down the bay.

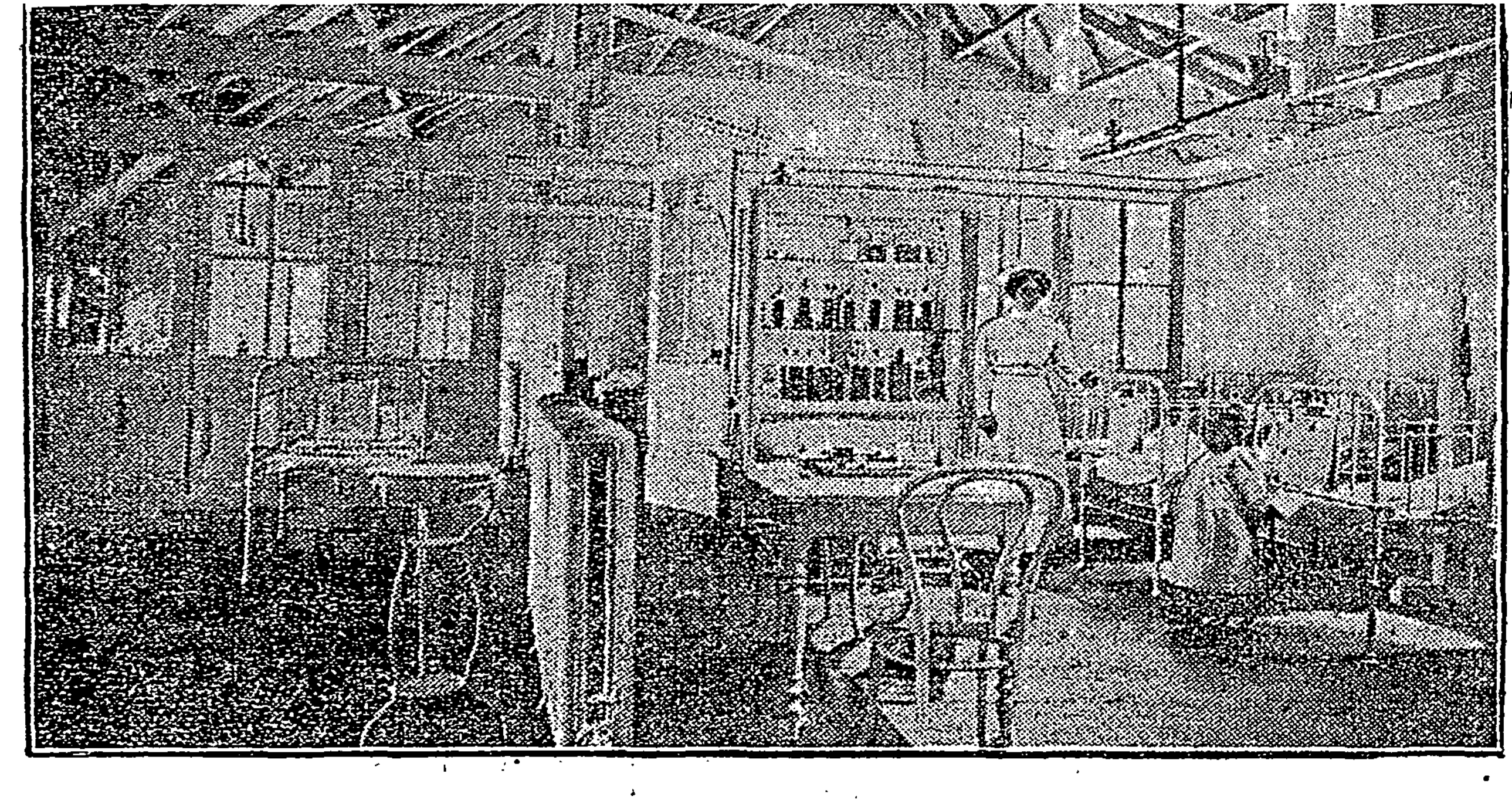
But under the new ruling Dr. Doty and his assistants take from the incoming ships all those suffering from measles, scarlet fever, and diphtheria. New York is the only port where this is done. On one ship recently they found no less than eighty cases of these diseases, mostly among children. Five little ones had already died in transit. So serious was the condition of a number of the eighty that they also died soon after their removal to Hoffman Island.

Under the old system those patients would have been taken past Quarantine to the steamship company's dock and then turned over to the Board of Health of New York. The Board of Health used to come alongside and take the sick—some in a moribund condition—and transport them to a pier in Brooklyn, from which an ambulance would carry them the final stage of their journey—an hour's ride to the hospital, Kingston Avenue, Brooklyn. Aside from the manifest inconvenience of such a method, the city officials found another objection. Among immigrants on ships infectious diseases spread with

alarming rapidity. Consequently it was frequently found that a child taken to the Kingston Avenue Hospital and placed, say, in the measles ward, was a sufferer likewise from scarlet fever, and in some cases of more complaints, all contracted in the crowded steerage quarters of the steamer which had borne them across the ocean, where, in spite of the best efforts

of the surgeon, nothing like decent hospital conditions can be achieved. As a result of this other patients not immigrants placed in the said measles ward of the city's hospital would contract scarlet fever and the other ailments introduced into the ward by the immigrant patients, thus occasioning grave reason for complaint from parents.

About one year and a half ago the city made clear that it no longer desired to take charge of cases of infectious disease brought in by steamers from across the ocean. Then it was that the Federal authorities at Ellis Island proceeded to build a hospital for the accommodation of such cases on the island under their jurisdiction.



In the Babies' Ward, Hoffman Island.



Some of the Nurses.

big windows and doors blows the keenest of salt air, in itself enough to set any sufferer on his or her feet.

At the boat landing on the island is a big plaza, paved with cement, which is used by the children who are not ailing for a playground. There they gather in knots, dressed in their picturesque costumes from across the ocean, and romp to their hearts' content.

"I didn't know of what use those things could possibly be," remarked a nurse, pointing to some sloping wooden coverings over cellar stairs on the sides of the plaza, "but now I do."

Their use is quite obvious. The little sojourners on the island use the sloping coverings for slides. There is never an hour of a pleasant day when they are not clambering eagerly to the top of the slopes or tumbling rapidly to the bottom, amid wild shrieks and babblings in a score of foreign tongues.

At present there are 150 patients—80 per cent. children—and 110 of their "folks" on Hoffman Island. If necessary, it could accommodate upward of 2,000 persons. Within the last few years the island has been more than doubled in area by the making of land about the hospital and detention buildings, and there is plenty of room for tents, should epidemics in foreign lands fill incoming ships with ailing passengers and tax the capacities of the island to the utmost.

With the nipping sea air sweeping over



Some of the Convalescents.

But Dr. Doty had another plan and set the wheels in motion for carrying it out. He and those under him at Quarantine are New York State officials. He told those at the head of things in Albany that the best way would be to remove all those on incoming vessels suffering from infectious diseases at Quarantine, instead of taking part of them off there and having the rest proceed to Ellis Island. The State authorities decided to allow him to go ahead and carry out this plan.

Hence the sudden blossoming forth of Hoffman Island as a full-fledged hospital station instead of a mere waiting place for passengers held while under observation. And hence it is that crowds of immigrants have, so to speak, the cup dashed from their lips just as the shores of the New World are becoming distinct. With the Statue of Liberty and the jagged skyline of New York about to loom up before them, they find their way suddenly barred.

A little steamboat bearing the yellow flag of quarantine comes out to their ship, and a doctor swings over the side. The ship's doctor shows him a febrile and points quietly to various figures among the immigrants—here a baby swathed in a shawl, crying on its mother's shoulder—there a boy, old enough to be all excitement over the city he has been longing to see, but flushed and coughing in the grip of disease.

A few minutes later baby and boy are in the steamboat with the yellow flag on their way to Hoffman Island. With them, dazed and often angry, go the mothers and brothers and sisters. But prisoners though they are, it is to something far from prisonlike that the little steamboat is bearing the sufferers and their kin. The Hoffman Island hospital wards and the rooms set apart for those accompanying the sick are places of speckless enamel, fresh coatings of paint, and whiffs of disinfectant. Through the

it, there surely could not be a better spot for a hospital than Hoffman Island, and its essentially salutary character is shown by the way patients mend when forced to be its inhabitants, and by the way their mothers and brothers and sisters grow fat and brown and sturdy while waiting about in idleness for a chance to continue on their way into the new world. But owing to the fact that so many of the island's patients are brought to it in a dying or very serious condition, Hoffman Island does not really get a fair show. It must be borne in mind that for patients who have boarded a ship in Europe suffering from disease and in whose systems that disease has made ravages during many days of a sea voyage, under the worst possible conditions, little can be done even in an ideal fresh air locality like the little island down the bay.

"Why, if we could get hold of all our cases the way the hospitals do in the city—that is, when the patients are in the first stages of disease—we would have hardly any mortality down here at all," declared Dr. Doty to a Times reporter who visited Hoffman Island.

To show how healthy the little strip of improvised land is, one has but to turn to the statistics on mastoiditis, an ailment particularly prevalent among immigrants on incoming ships. Since Jan. 1 of the present year thirty-eight operations for mastoiditis have been performed on patients by the Hoffman Island medical staff. Only one death has resulted. Compared to what occurs ordinarily in hospitals, this is an exceptionally good showing. In fact, according to the doctor in charge at the island, hospital physicians to whom he quoted these statistics could hardly believe them to be true.

While the patients are confined in the sick wards, those allowed to wait for them on the island lead a confined but certainly healthy and advantageous existence. This costs them not a cent. They sleep in big, airy rooms. No mattresses

are provided in order to guard the better against infection; the enforced sojourners have blankets which are spread on spring beds of light construction, arranged like the berths wherein they slept during their ocean trip. As soon as each crowd goes away all these blankets are thoroughly disinfected in the Hoffman Island disinfectant plant, which is the most complete in the world.

All packages brought by immigrants to the island are taken from them on arrival and disinfected. Each person receives a number and a corresponding number is placed on the packages belonging to that person. When the immigrants depart from the island they receive the package bearing the number corresponding to that which they carry.

Some of the immigrant mothers assist the nurses and help in doing the work connected with running the island, but this is not such as to make their stay on the island strenuous. Of course, many get extremely impatient to leave, and write heartrending stories to their kin in New York and elsewhere in the United States about their imprisonment, but, as has been pointed out, conditions on Hoffman Island are such that, in most cases, they leave it far better in health than when they first became the prisoners of the inexorable Dr. Doty.

Whenever a sick child is taken to the island the mother, who accompanies it, is asked at once with whom she desires to communicate. She usually gives the name of her husband, already in the United States, who has sent to Europe for her and the children.

A form letter is then sent to the father, acquainting him with the fact that the child is ill and is being held, together with the rest of the family, on Hoffman Island. Once a week he is notified as to the progress of the sufferer. Should he desire to visit his family Sunday is set aside for that purpose. The father may then go to Hoffman Island, but he is not allowed to enter the hospital.

When a patient dies, the steamship company which brought the patient to New York and the Ellis Island immigration officials are immediately notified. In some cases mothers of invalids detained on the island are so eager to reach their homes in the New World that they go away with their husbands, without waiting for their little ones to get well. There have even been cases where children have died on the island, on the very threshold of those new homes, and no trace has been found of their parents. In such cases the steamship companies attend to the burial. Many of the children who die on Hoffman Island are buried in cemeteries on the near-by shore of Staten Island.

When Dr. Doty was told to go ahead and use Hoffman Island as he saw fit, the wares of character in the buildings which he found there, used until then as detention stations. He not only transformed the biggest of them into his hospital for the additional diseases placed under his jurisdiction, and got it all ready in the most approved modern way for the reception of the little sufferers from across the ocean, but he caused the building of several shedlike structures, in which dangerous diseases are now isolated. There are three of these on the island at present; four more will be built, it is hoped, before long.

In addition to this, there has been built, under Dr. Doty's administration, a large and commodious building at one end of the island for the housing of cabin passengers, either ill or well, ordered detained on Hoffman Island. Just at present this is empty—last week it had several hundred occupants—next week it may have double as many.

Thus things go on Hoffman Island three or four days of almost complete idleness for its staff, and then—presto!—some infected ship creeps inside Sandy Hook and all are swamped with work and beset by squalling little invalids, babies and bewildered women, speaking incomprehensible tongues.

Then—half-empty wards again and a strong smell of disinfectants. As cabin passengers are never taken off ships in such numbers as are those of the steerage, the big building destined for the accommodation of the former lies empty a good part of the time. For that reason the quarters of the Hoffman Island corps of nurses has been established in one wing of the building.

"But we're all ready for the cabin passengers at any time," declared Dr. Doty, as he piloted his visitor through long, empty corridors and allowed him to peek into nice little rooms—"quite as good as those in a hotel," the proud guide remarked. In this "first cabin" of Hoffman Island there is a real bona fide solarium, with enormous windows, capable of capturing even the shiest of sunbeams. In it the visitor spied a plane with the score of gay song on the rack—a relic of a lot of passengers from Havana recently detained. Oh, life on Hoffman Island isn't a bad thing at all. Suddenly the whistle of the little boat which connects the island with the outer world blew warningly. Dr. Doty and the man from that outer world started on their way to the landing. They threaded their way through groups of mothers and children, the latter engaged in that favorite island pastime, sliding down those sloping covering over the cellar stairs.

And, as the boat backed away from the landing and pointed its nose toward the Staten Island shore, on which loomed up the group of buildings of Quarantine proper, a row of these little ones stood solemnly by the sea wall, with their fingers stuck in their mouths, gazing confidingly at those on the deck of the receding vessel.

There was another line also of silent foreign women, with gay head-coverings and saddened, wistful eyes, which searched those on the boat, as if to ask: "And why may not we go, too?"