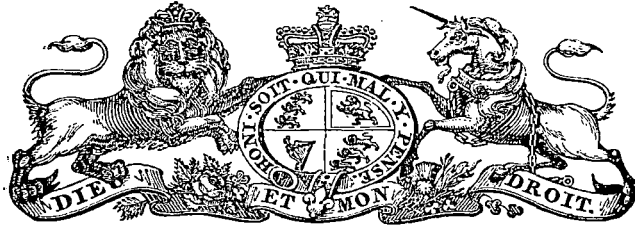


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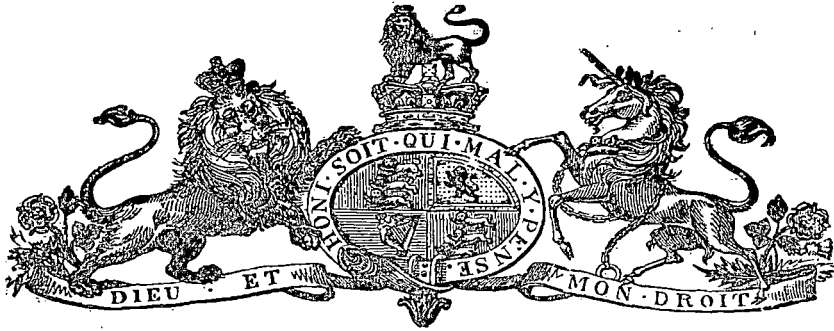
1886.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR NEW TOWN, SANDY
BAY, AND WELLINGTON HAMLETS:

REPORT FOR 1885.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



REPORT for 1885 of the Officer of Health for the Towns of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington Hamlets.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit my Annual Statistical Report for the Hobart Registration District, comprising, in addition to the three suburban towns, the City proper and the districts of Glenorchy and Queenborough. It is impossible to separate accurately the statistics of these localities, as they are included in one Registration District.

Before, however, passing to the district immediately under notice, it is well for the sake of comparison to ascertain the mortality rate for 1885 for the whole of Tasmania. I learn from the Statistician that the mean estimated population of Tasmania for 1885 was 132,166, an increase of 16,461 since the Census was taken in 1881; the deaths registered in Tasmania in 1885 were 2036, which is 46 more than in 1884, with an estimated population of nearly 4000 more. This gives a death rate for the whole of Tasmania of 15.40 per 1000 of the mean population. In 1884 the rate was 15.50 per 1000; in 1883, 17.06 per 1000; so that 1885 compares favourably with preceding years.

Confining my attention now to the Registration District of Hobart, I learn that the estimated mean population for 1885 is 29,987, or only 663 more than in 1884. The total number of deaths which occurred in this district was 734, giving a death rate of 24.47 per 1000, which is slightly in excess of that for 1884, but less than in the previous year. It is an interesting question why the urban rate should be 24.47, and the rate for the whole island, including the towns, only 15.40 per 1000? The mystery is somewhat explained when it is remembered that in the former rate are included the deaths of the pauper invalids of the whole island concentrated at the New Town Asylum, the deaths in the Hobart Gaol, the deaths of many a country patient removed to town for treatment, and deaths occurring at sea but registered here as the first port of call.

TABLE I.

TABLE of Deaths in the Hobart Registration District for the 10 years 1876-85, inclusive.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>January.</i>	<i>February.</i>	<i>March.</i>	<i>April.</i>	<i>May.</i>	<i>June.</i>	<i>July.</i>	<i>August.</i>	<i>September.</i>	<i>October.</i>	<i>November.</i>	<i>December.</i>	<i>Total of each Year.</i>
1876	53	48	48	32	63	47	61	44	44	63	58	52	613
1877	78	64	71	68	57	44	76	72	60	54	56	60	760
1878	61	62	72	51	55	61	51	45	40	46	44	42	630
1879	68	61	64	53	50	53	68	58	44	51	30	41	641
1880	58	62	81	51	36	56	68	47	44	49	48	47	647
1881	66	58	55	40	66	48	49	58	45	44	47	59	635
1882	61	66	53	63	50	47	67	55	46	44	47	68	667
1883	81	63	49	56	67	69	75	72	68	58	61	63	782
1884	63	51	52	43	70	57	72	72	51	55	49	67	702
1885	110	61	61	48	59	53	66	49	77	52	38	60	734
10 years' average	69.9	59.6	60.6	50.5	57.3	53.5	65.3	57.2	51.9	51.6	47.8	55.9	681.1

In this table the deaths for each month during 1885 are contrasted numerically with those of the preceding nine years, and the monthly average for the ten years 1876-85 is given. The 734 deaths for 1885 are 32 more than in 1884, but 48 less than in 1883; the number is, however, 52.9 above the ten years' average. Both January and September had an excessive number of deaths, the infant mortality in the former being very large. To balance this, November and August had fewer deaths than usual. According to the ten years' average, January and July are the least healthy months in the year; November the most favorable to life; the other months present very small differences.

TABLE II.

Months of Year 1885.	Deaths in Hobart Registration District.	1884.		Ten Years' Mean of the Month.		City Share of Deaths.	New Town Share of Deaths.	Sandy Bay Share of Deaths.	Wellington Share of Deaths.	Invalid Depôts at New Town.
		Above	Below	Above	Below					
January	110	+ 47	...	40.1	...	71	21	5	1	4
February	61	+ 10	...	1.4	...	44	11	1	0	11
March	61	+ 9	...	0.4	...	44	11	1	0	11
April	48	+ 5	...	...	2.5	29	12	3	2	10
May	59	...	— 11	1.7	...	38	14	2	0	12
June	53	...	— 4	...	0.5	34	14	2	1	12
July	66	...	— 6	0.7	...	31	21	2	3	17
August	49	...	— 23	...	8.2	28	19	0	0	19
September	77	+ 26	...	25.1	...	38	31	0	3	24
October	52	...	— 3	0.4	...	30	11	1	0	8
November	38	...	— 11	...	9.8	18	9	2	0	8
December	60	...	— 7	4.1	...	42	15	1	1	11
	734 667	+ 97	— 65	73.9	21.0	447	189	20	11	147
	67	+ 32		+ 52.9		667				

Here the monthly details for 1885 are contrasted, first with those for 1884, and then with the monthly averages for the past ten years. The deaths each month are further arranged topographically, the city and suburban towns having their shares properly allotted. Five of the months had more deaths than in 1884, seven less; but the totals show 32 more in 1885. In the next column, the deaths for 1885 are seen to be 52.9 in excess of the ten years' mean. The city share of deaths amounts to 447, which is 48 more than in 1884, but 60 less than in 1883. It is impossible to accurately gauge the population of the city proper except by Census; but making allowance for increase of population since 1881, this number gives a death-rate for the city of Hobart of about 18 per 1000, which cannot be regarded as other than favourable, especially when it is remembered that this includes a large number of deaths occurring in the city of people brought to town from country districts for medical treatment. Such cases it is impossible accurately to localise. The deaths in New Town were 189, of which 147 (seventeen less than in the previous year) took place at the Invalid Depôts, leaving 42 for New Town proper, or 3 more than in 1884. The town of Sandy Bay had 20 deaths, 9 in excess of those for 1884; but the town of Wellington Hamlets had only 11 deaths, which is 6 less than in the previous year. The aggregate occurring in city and suburbs, 667, when subtracted from the total for the year, leaves a balance of 67, which represents fatal cases at Hospital admitted from country districts, deaths at sea registered here as the first port of call, more numerous now since we have so many large steamers arriving here, and deaths in the Glenorchy and Queenborough parts of the district.

TABLE III.

Class.	Order.	Disease.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Total, 1885.	Total, 1884.	Total, 1883.	Total, 1882.	Total, 1881.		
1. ZYMOTIC.	Miasmatic.	Scarlatina .....	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8	5	7	4	...	
		Diphtheria	2	...	2	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	2	8	3	4	1	15
		Measles	2	...	1	2	3	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	12	1	...	...	8
		Croup	1	...	...	...	2	2	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	6	5	7	5	8
		Whooping Cough	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	20	...	2
		Typhoid Fever...	2	...	1	2	4	1	2	...	...	1	...	...	...	13	12	10	5	...
		Erysipelas.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	6	3	1
		Metria .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	5	...	...
		Influenza, &c. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	...	...	3	...	1	...	...
		Dysentery .....	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	2
		Diarrhoea	26	11	4	1	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	8	52	21	33	32
		Cholera	1	...
		Other Zymotic...	...	1	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	5	4	6	4
		Enthetic. ....	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	3	2	4	6
Dietic.....	...	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	9	6	9	1		
Parasitic .....	...	2	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	4	7	3	4	1		
ZYMOTIC TOTALS			38	16	10	6	9	8	7	0	7	2	0	12	115	74	112	79	70		
2. CONSTITUTIONAL	4	8	8	8	13	7	9	6	8	11	9	7	98	92	118	97	82				
3. LOCAL.....	30	22	21	19	21	21	26	20	42	30	18	15	285	302	359	278	278				
4. DEVELOPMENTAL	35	15	19	15	15	16	22	20	18	6	11	23	215	220	168	196	180				
5. VIOLENT.....	2	...	3	...	1	1	2	3	2	3	...	...	3	20	14	22	17	25		
UNCLASSIFIED	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	3	...	...	
TOTALS.....			110	61	61	48	59	53	66	49	77	52	38	60	734	702	782	667	635		

Here the deaths are arranged in classes according to their cause, while the Zymotic deaths are further divided into Orders and Diseases; then the totals are contrasted with similar totals for the four preceding years. The first point noticeable is the increase in Zymotic deaths, 115 for 1885, or 41 more than in 1884, and 3 more than in 1883. This increase is partly due to the prevalence of measles in the early months of the year, 12 deaths being attributable to this cause; on the other hand, there were no deaths from Scarlatina, of which in 1884 there were eight. The largest increase, however, occurs in Diarrhoea, which had no less than 52 deaths, or 31 more than in 1884. This disease was very fatal to infants in January, February, and December, the three hottest months of the year. The deaths from Diphtheria and Influenza were also slightly more, the deaths from this latter being three. Another Zymotic disease closely allied to Influenza, though differing from it in many particulars, was very prevalent during the year. This disease was popularly termed "Fog Fever," though it is difficult to say where or why the name arose; by some it was considered to be merely Influenza, by others it was thought to be a modified form of Dengue, or Dandy Fever, in America called Breakbone Fever, and it was supposed to have extended from Fiji to Queensland, and thence down the Australian Coast to Tasmania—certainly none of the Colonies were free from it. Though fatal in but few instances (the deaths certified as Influenza were in all probability Fog Fever), the symptoms were in many cases painfully severe, with a great tendency to relapse, and many will remember for years the Fog Fever of 1885. With the summer the disease disappeared. In the other Zymotic Orders the deaths were slightly fewer than in 1884, more, however, in the Dietic Order, but less in the Parasitic, which includes Thrush and Hydatid Disease. The totals in the other classes present no striking divergence from the average. One death is returned as unclassified, no cause having been assigned to the Registrar, who cannot compel the person registering the death to produce a proper certificate. The necessity for an amended Registration Act has frequently been pointed out, and I regret that last Session passed without the Bill which was under consideration becoming law. At the present time it is lawful for an undertaker to bury a corpse, registering the cause of death some days later; if he neglects to do so, it is no one's business to remind him. It were surely far better to make registration of death a necessary preliminary to burial.

TABLE IV.

<i>Months of 1885.</i>	<i>Under 1.</i>	<i>1 to 5.</i>	<i>5 to 10.</i>	<i>10 to 15.</i>	<i>15 to 20.</i>	<i>Total under 20.</i>	<i>20 to 60.</i>	<i>60 and above.</i>	<i>Total at all Ages.</i>
January.....	53	9	1	2	5	70	9	31	110
February.....	23	5	0	0	2	30	11	20	61
March.....	13	6	2	1	1	23	15	23	61
April.....	7	3	1	2	0	13	12	23	48
May.....	6	6	1	1	2	16	20	23	59
June.....	9	5	2	1	1	18	9	26	53
July.....	5	4	2	1	2	14	17	35	66
August.....	6	6	0	0	0	12	10	27	47
September.....	15	1	1	3	2	22	11	44	77
October.....	4	3	2	1	2	12	15	25	52
November.....	4	0	1	1	0	6	11	21	38
December.....	14	3	0	1	1	19	19	22	60
TOTALS, 1885.....	159	51	13	14	18	255	159	320	734
TOTALS, 1884.....	134	34	8	10	19	205	181	316	702
TOTALS, 1883.....	163	70	15	14	19	281	196	305	782
TOTALS, 1882.....	129	33	14	6	19	201	162	304	667
TOTALS, 1881.....	144	37	7	14	13	215	159	261	635

In this table the monthly deaths are classified according to the age at which they occurred, and the totals compared with those for the four preceding years. The "Infant Mortality," or deaths under one year old, for 1885 is 159, or 25 more than in 1884, though 4 less than in 1883. Of these 159 deaths, no less than 53, exactly one-third, took place in the month of January, while February had 23; but October and November only 4 each. The number of births registered in the district during the year was 1103, which gives an infant mortality rate of 14.41 per cent. This rate is larger than in 1884, which had only 11.84 per cent., but smaller than in 1883, which had no less than 17.17 per cent. The increase is due to the excessive number of deaths from Diarrhoea in the summer months alluded to. The number of deaths under 20 are larger than usual, but the total between 20 and 60 years, 159, is less than in the preceding three years; while at ages above 60 the deaths were more numerous than before. Subtracting the deaths at the extremes of life, namely, those under one year old and those over sixty, we have the very satisfactory result, that out of a total of 734 there were only 255 deaths, or a little more than a third of the whole number between the ages of one and sixty years.

TABLE V.
HOBART Registration District.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>	<i>Births in excess of Deaths.</i>
1875.....	755	753	2
1876.....	761	605	156
1877.....	809	759	50
1878.....	844	639	205
1879.....	858	648	210
1880.....	900	647	253
1881.....	887	638	249
1882.....	917	683	234
1883.....	949	785	164
1884.....	1131	708	423
1885.....	1103	734	369
TOTALS	9914	7599	2315
Mean	901·2	690·8	210·4

In this table are compared the births and deaths in the Hobart district during the year 1885 and the preceding ten years. 125 less births were registered in 1885 than in 1884, while there were 26 more deaths. The births in excess of deaths were 369, or 158·6 above the mean excess.

The most important event of the year, from a sanitary point of view, was the passing of that comprehensive measure, "The Public Health Act." Under its provisions Local Boards of Health for the towns of New Town and Sandy Bay have already been appointed, and I shall now be able to do more than threaten legal proceedings when requiring the abatement of any nuisance, as the machinery for enforcing the same is ample. Fortunately there is little nuisance to complain of in the three suburban towns. Mezger's bone-mill at New Town, long a source of annoyance from the disgusting, if not unhealthy, stench it emitted, has been closed. Another bone-mill and animal manure factory has, however, been started in the adjoining district of Glenorchy, which is very offensive to the neighbouring residents of New Town.

During the year the provisions of "The Public Health (Hobart) Act," passed in the preceding Session, have been satisfactorily carried out. The keeping of pigs is now almost unknown in the city, instead of pigsties creating a nuisance in all directions. The process of closing up the cesspits, however, only goes on slowly, and though owners have had ample warning,—upwards of two years,—it is feared that many will delay until the last minute this very necessary reform. The penalties are sufficiently heavy to make any permanent delay a serious matter. The benefits already resulting from what has been done are marked; from one yard where previously about ten cesspits for about fifteen tenements were in close contiguity, and where Typhoid prevailed each autumn, the closing of the cesspits has banished this disease, no case having as far as I know occurred since. The removal of the nightsoil by the Corporation carts works satisfactorily; the greatest trouble arises from the neglect of the poorer classes to use earth or ashes in the pails, the latter an excellent deodorant, of which a supply is always at hand.

Some delay has occurred in the Rivulet works, owing to the heavy floods during the year; considerable damage was done to the concrete and cemented invert by the masses of débris washed down. This damage has not yet been repaired, but the owners of properties abutting on the rivulet higher up have received notices to build retaining walls. This necessary preliminary work is now in many instances being carried out, and it is further in contemplation to lay the bed of the creek with blocks of concrete specially prepared beforehand.

In reference to the drainage of the other parts of the city, I may be allowed to quote what I wrote last year. "At no very distant date the subject of adequate drainage for the whole of the City and suburbs will have to be faced and fairly discussed; hitherto underground sewers have been constructed in a piecemeal fashion, either by the Corporation or by private people, to suit their own requirements. What is really wanted is a thorough survey as to levels of the City and suburban towns, and the arrangement of such a system of drainage as can be carried on according to a fixed plan, even though it should have to be done only by slow degrees. At present many houses have a drain for rain and house water, but it has no proper outlet, the contents stagnating, evaporating, or soaking away as best they may, a nuisance to the neighbours and inhabitants generally." Such a system as that alluded to does not necessarily include the substitution of water-closets for the pail system now being established. Theoretically the water carriage system is by far the best, and may in a few cases be adopted with advantage; but I fear that practically it is beyond our means for

the whole community. The present supply of water, large as it is, in summer is frequently inadequate, and it would be much more so if used for this purpose. What is actually needed is a wholesome get-away for the drainage from each house, which does not at present exist. It is the duty of the Corporation in the City, and of the Road Trusts in the suburban towns, to construct proper side channels,—not of cobble stones as at present, retarding the flow, but of some smooth yet durable materials. It is their duty to see these channels periodically and thoroughly flushed and cleansed. Owners of properties have their duty, too, which is to connect the drains from their houses with these side channels. Skilled professional assistance to enable them to overcome difficulties, and to arrange for neighbouring owners to join in a common drain, may well be afforded by the Local Boards. In some places where the houses are closest and the fall bad, underground drains might be advantageously employed; but to reticulate the streets of Hobart and its suburbs with costly underground sewers, leaving the side channels to carry off storm water only, would be, to my mind, a piece of reckless extravagance, which the present state of Public Health does not demand.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD O. GIBLIN, *M.D.*

August 19, 1886.

The Hon. J. W. AGNEW, M.D., Chief Secretary.