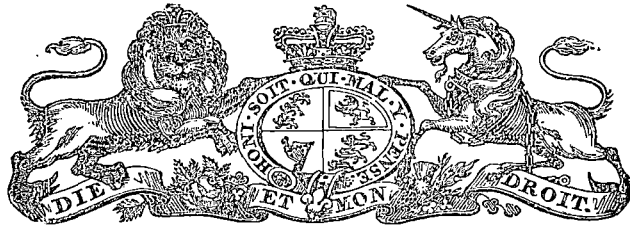


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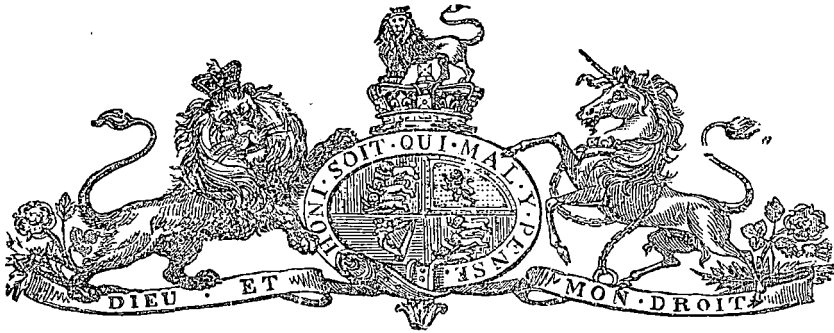
1893.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

GOVERNMENT MEDICAL OFFICER :

REPORT FOR 1892.

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



GOVERNMENT MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT, 1892.

Medical Department, Hobart, 27th March, 1893.

SIR,

As the Government Medical Officer, I have the honor to submit my Annual Report for the year 1892.

The several duties allotted to me have kept me actively engaged throughout the year. These duties are as follows:—Medical Officer to the New Town Charitable Institution, Visiting Medical Officer to the Sick Poor of Hobart, Health Officer for the Port of Hobart, Chairman of the Official Visitors to the Hospitals for the Insane at New Norfolk and Hobart, Medical Officer to the Territorial Police, Member of and Medical Adviser to the Central Board of Health.

As Medical Officer to the New Town Charitable Institution I make frequent visits weekly, as the numerous cases of sickness in the hospital wards require constant attention throughout the year. Some idea of the medical work in the Institution may be gathered from the number of prescriptions that were dispensed for the use of the sick during the past year. The number of prescriptions made up at the dispensary of the Institution amounted to—for the males, 7782, and for the females, 695—making a total of 8477, besides the simple remedies given out by the Matron to the females.

The number of inmates in the Institution during the year reached an average of—males, 378; females, 158; or a total of 536. Out of this number one-fourth at least are on the sick list, and require constant attention and medical treatment.

During my visits I invariably personally examine all the patients in bed in every ward, and attend to their several wants, and also see all cases that may come to the dispensary for treatment. Should any serious case occur during the intervals of my visits I am at once informed by telephone, and, if required, I forthwith visit the patient at the Institution.

The four paid wardsmen in the hospital wards continue to give every satisfaction, and endeavour to carry out their duties, often of a disagreeable nature, as kindly and attentively as possible; and it is gratifying to note that the patients themselves much appreciate the care and attention bestowed upon them, not only by the attendants but also by the officers of the Institution, and are, as a rule, grateful for the comforts they receive during their sickness, and for the endeavours made to alleviate their sufferings.

The mortality for the year was—males, 81; females, 28; making a total of 109 for the year, which is considerably less than the previous year, when influenza carried off so many of the aged and debilitated. The average age of those that died was, for males 75·97 years, and for females 73·03 years; or for both sexes combined, 75·23 years.

There were six cases of cancer during the year, and one case of senile gangrene. These cases were treated in a building set apart from the general wards, where every attention was paid to their comfort, and measures adopted to relieve their sufferings.

Disinfectants have been freely used throughout the hospital wards with good effect, and as carbolic acid has been disallowed for general use on account of its poisonous character if accidentally or otherwise taken, Quibell's disinfectant has been found to be an excellent substitute.

As Visiting Medical Officer to the poor in Hobart I was much engaged throughout the year, as the number of sick cases visited amounted to 418. This year there was no severe epidemic of influenza as prevailed in October of the previous year; but diphtheria was more prevalent than usual towards the latter part of the year. There was fortunately less typhoid fever. The other diseases treated by me were mostly those of women and children.

The medical work connected with visiting and prescribing for these cases may be seen by the number of prescriptions dispensed at the General Hospital, which amounted to upwards of 2000 for the year.

The condition of the poorer classes in several instances was intensified by abject poverty, which was painfully evident upon my visits. Want of work, with the consequent want of means to buy necessaries, was the reason given, and when sickness is in the house, misery could hardly reach a lower ebb. Notwithstanding these depressing circumstances, it is gratifying to find these poor people very thankful for the medical attendance brought to their doors, and appreciative of any attention shown to them during sickness.

As Health Officer for the Port of Hobart I was kept unusually busy during the months of June, July, and August, in boarding vessels and inspecting their passengers and crews arriving from the neighbouring colonies, owing to an outbreak of smallpox in Melbourne and Sydney.

The first case of smallpox occurred in Melbourne on 21st June, the patient being a passenger per s.s. *Oroya*, from London *via* Colombo, which had arrived at Adelaide three days previously, and had been granted pratique both at Adelaide and Melbourne, and consequently had landed all its passengers for those ports. It was not even suspected that there had been either smallpox or any other infectious disease on board. The chief danger to this colony as regards the importation of this disease was the fact that the ship's passengers (200 or more) had scattered after landing, and it was found that some of them were coming to Tasmania. To meet this probable danger a proclamation was issued, and stringent quarantine regulations were at once put into operation making it imperative that all vessels arriving from South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales should not come beyond a given line until the Health Officer at Hobart had visited any such vessel and granted pratique.

The inspection on board of passengers was thoroughly carried out in each instance, and often occupied a considerable time, as every person on board had to be seen, and in a crowded vessel this is not very quickly accomplished. As a rule, I required the list of passengers and crew to be read out, and each person accordingly passed under my view. In this way I was certain of seeing every one on board. The fact that the inspection resulted in no case of infectious disease being found then or afterwards must be regarded as a satisfactory ending to an anxious time.

As there was a probability of persons arriving in Hobart who had been passengers on board the s.s. *Oroya*, and who presumably would carry infection, the proclamation gave "power to remove persons reasonably supposed to have been subjected to infection on board the *Oroya* or in connection with any cases of smallpox to any hospital or quarantine station, and to keep them there for such time as the Central Board of Health may think fit, or to inspect and examine such persons and to vaccinate them, and to take such other measures as the said Board may order, or to enter all premises for the purpose of seeing and examining such persons; and to cleanse and disinfect all premises that have been occupied by such persons, and to empower the said Board to make regulations for the Officers of Health carrying out the orders."

This proclamation was in force until the middle of August, when it was revoked, as more than twenty-one days had then elapsed since the last case of smallpox was discovered in Sydney, and when clean bills of health were issued to vessels leaving that port.

Happily no case of smallpox appeared in Tasmania, which result may no doubt be due to the vigilance exercised by the authorities in the neighbouring colonies, where they quarantined at once all the passengers per s.s. *Oroya* wherever found, immediately upon the discovery of the case of smallpox in Melbourne, as well as all who had been in contact with them, releasing these latter only after they had been vaccinated.

During the months of August and September another fatal disease, Asiatic cholera, was raging to a most alarming extent in Russia and Germany, and as it seemed possible that it might be brought to our shores in the packing material of goods arriving from Hamburg and other European places, a proclamation was issued declaring certain ports of Europe infected, and making regulations for inspection of vessels and other precautions to be taken as were deemed necessary. Fortunately for the colonies no case of Asiatic cholera was imported, and as it died out by the latter end of September almost entirely at Hamburg, the proclamation was rescinded.

With the view of discovering the probable cause of the spread of cholera, an Imperial Commission was empowered to investigate the disease, and as a result of their inquiries it was found

that the principal source of its transmission to man was impure drinking water, or water that had been fouled by sewage matter. Articles of food also, such as butter, cheese, fruits, &c. were considered as likely vehicles for the spread of the disease, especially those which came from infected districts.

There is no doubt but that it can be carried to a distance, especially in crowded vessels, as was the case with ships arriving at New York from Hamburg; but there seems little chance for it to be carried so far as Tasmania, as the voyage is necessarily long, and the disease, if it appeared at first starting, would have time to develop and decline long before the voyage was ended, unless gross carelessness prevailed on board as regards taking ordinary precautions to prevent its spread. This condition of affairs is not at all likely with the fine and well-managed class of vessels arriving here from Europe, each having a surgeon on board to attend to these matters. It is found that with cleanliness, disinfection, and proper regard to diet, the disease as a rule dies a natural death without becoming epidemic when accidentally introduced into temperate climes.

Under the provisions of the Chinese Immigration Act, as Health Officer for the Port I have to examine all Chinese arriving by sea, and, if not previously vaccinated, it is my duty to vaccinate them before they are permitted to land. During August and September twenty-seven Chinese arrived from Melbourne and Sydney, and out of this number I found three who did not show decided marks of vaccination, and accordingly I at once vaccinated them.

As Chairman of the Board of Official Visitors my time is daily occupied in attending to the correspondence connected with the large Institutions for the Insane, and in supervising the many details of their management. Visits of inspection are frequently made to the Hospitals for Insane at New Norfolk as well as to the one at Hobart, all of which are duly reported in the tabulated statements forwarded to the Hon. the Chief Secretary in accordance with the provisions of "The Insane Hospitals Act."

The number of miles travelled by me in the course of my various duties during the year amounted to about the same total as in previous years.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

C. E. BARNARD, *M.D.*,

Government Medical Officer.

The Honorable the Chief Secretary.