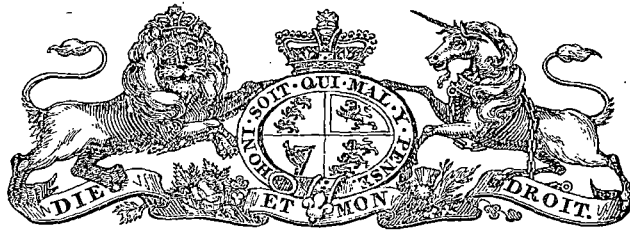


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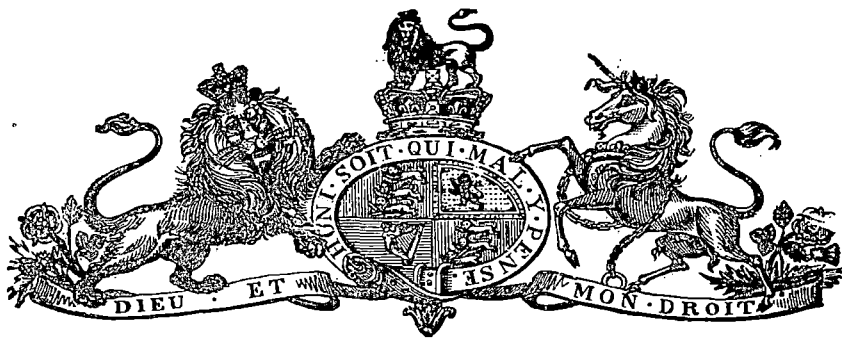
1887.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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

REPORT FOR 1886.

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



REPORT for 1886 of the Officer of Health for the Towns of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington Hamlets.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the Annual Statistical Report for the Hobart Registration District, which embraces the three suburban towns above mentioned, and the districts of Glenorchy and Queenborough, as well as the City of Hobart. Being confined in one Registration District, it is impossible to separate accurately the statistics of these different places.

For the sake of comparison it is advisable, before confining my attention to the Hobart Registration District, to ascertain the mortality rate for the whole of Tasmania. From the eminent Government Statistician I learn that the estimated mean population of Tasmania for 1886 is 135,501, an estimated increase of 3335 for the year, and an increase of 19,796 since the Census was taken in 1881. During 1886, 1976 deaths were registered in Tasmania, which is 60 less than in 1885, with an estimated population of over 3300 more; this gives a death-rate for Tasmania of 14·58 per 1000 of the mean population. In 1883 the rate was 17·06 per 1000; in 1884, 15·50; in 1885, 15·40; so that 1886 compares very favourably indeed with preceding years—the death-rate not having been so low since 1872.

Passing now to the Hobart Registration District, the great bulk of which is comprised in the city and suburbs, I am informed that the estimated mean population for 1886 is 31,253, or 1266 more than in 1885. The total number of deaths registered in the district was 718, giving a death-rate of 22·97 per 1000, which is 1·50 per 1000 less than in 1885. I have frequently in these reports adverted to the striking difference between the rate for Tasmania, including Hobart and Launceston, and that for Hobart alone—a difference this year of no less than 8·39 per 1000; and it is well to remember in connection with this subject that the death-rate for Hobart is swelled by the aggregation of the pauper invalids of the whole island at New Town, by Hospital deaths, including many a country case, by the registration of deaths occurring at sea and registered here as the first port of call,—much more numerous lately since we have had the large steamers regularly trading here,—and by the deaths after removal to town of many a country patient. It has been also universally observed that density of population has in itself a marked influence in determining the death-rate in favour of country districts.

TABLE I.

TABLE of Deaths in the Hobart Registration District for the 10 years 1877-86, inclusive.

Year.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Total of each Year.
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
1886	70	64	63	41	61	65	62	56	63	52	54	67	718
Ten years' average	71·6	61·2	62·1	51·4	57·1	55·3	65·4	58·4	53·8	50·5	47·4	57·4	691·6

This table serves to contrast the number of deaths each month in 1886 with the monthly deaths during the previous nine years, and with the monthly averages for the ten years 1877-86. The total number, 718, is 16 less than in 1885, but 27·4 more than the ten years' mean, which may be considered very satisfactory when the increase of population is remembered. No month had an excessive number of deaths, January as usual having the most, 70; while April had the fewest, 41. Coming now to the ten years' average, November and October are the months with the fewest deaths; in other words, the spring of the year is the most healthy season, while January and July have the largest averages, the former increased by summer diarrhoea amongst children, the latter by lung diseases amongst both old and young: the other months present no striking differences.

TABLE II.

Months of Year 1886.	Deaths in Hobart Registration District.	Above.	Below.	Above.	Below.	City Share of Deaths.	New Town Share of Deaths.	Sandy Bay Share of Deaths.	Wellington Share of Deaths.	Invalid Depôts at New Town.
		1885.		Ten Years' Mean of the Month.						
January	70	..	— 40	..	1·6	45	14	2	2	13
February	64	+ 3	..	2·8	..	43	13	0	1	10
March	63	+ 2	..	0·9	..	42	9	1	2	6
April	41	..	— 7	..	10·4	23	10	1	2	8
May	61	+ 2	..	3·9	..	46	19	2	1	13
June	65	+ 12	..	9·7	..	41	14	3	0	12
July	62	..	— 4	..	3·4	34	19	2	0	16
August	56	+ 7	..	..	2·4	32	15	0	0	13
September ..	63	..	— 14	9·2	..	33	17	1	1	12
October	52	+ 0	— 0	1·5	..	27	17	1	1	13
November ...	54	+ 16	..	6·6	..	21	19	1	1	12
December ..	67	+ 7	..	9·6	..	37	18	1	0	18
	718 634	+ 49	— 65	44·2	17·8	424	184	15	11	146
	84	— 16		+ 26·4		634				

In this table the number of deaths each month in 1886 is contrasted with the monthly deaths in 1885, and also with the monthly averages for the past ten years; the numbers are further arranged topographically, the city and suburbs having their respective shares tabulated. Although seven of the months of 1886 had a larger number than in 1885, and only four less, the total shows a balance of 16 in favour of 1886. The even character of the year is shown by the next column, no months having a greater divergence from the ten years' mean than April, which was 10·4 below, and December, which was 9·6 above that average; the total excess being only 26·4. The city share of deaths amounts to 424, which is 23 less than in 1885; probably not as many as this belong to the city, as it is impossible to trace all cases.

From the Statistician I learn that the estimated population of the city for 1886 is 25,043. This gives a death-rate of 16·9 per 1000 of the population, which cannot be regarded as other than favourable, especially when it is remembered that this includes so large a proportion of old people. The New Town share of deaths is 184, which is 5 less than in 1885; of these 146—one less than in the previous year—occurred at the Invalid Asylums, leaving 38 for New Town proper, or 4 less than in 1885.

The Town of Sandy Bay had 15 deaths, 5 fewer than in 1885; and that of Wellington Hamlets 11, a similar number occurring in the previous year. The total of these deaths in the city and suburbs reaches 634, leaving, when subtracted from the total in the first column, a balance of 84, made up of deaths in hospital, of country cases, those at sea, and those 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, 1886.	Total, 1885.	Total, 1884.	Total, 1883.	Total, 1882.	
1. ZYMOTIC.	Miasmatic.	Scarlatina.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8	7	4
		Diphtheria	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	...	4	8	5	3	4
		Measles .....	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	12	1	...	...
		Croup .....	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	4	6	5	7	5
		Whooping Cough .....	...	...	...	...	1	2	1	2	4	5	...	1	16	1	...	20	...
		Typhoid Fever...	...	1	2	1	1	...	...	1	...	1	...	2	9	13	12	10	5
		Erysipelas.....	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	1	...	1	1	...	5	...	1	6	3
		Metria .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	5	...
		Influenza, &c.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	1	...
		Dysentery.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	2	...	...	2
		Diarrhœa	14	5	2	2	1	1	1	4	30	52	21	38	32
		Cholera.....	1	6
		Other Zymotic...	1	2	1	4	3	5	4	6
	Enthetic.....	...	3	1	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	6	9	6	6	9
	Dietic.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	1	4	7	3	4
	Parasitic.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
ZYMOTIC TOTALS			18	9	5	6	5	4	3	5	6	9	5	7	82	115	74	112	79	
2. CONSTITUTIONAL			6	11	9	4	7	12	7	4	9	6	7	4	86	98	92	118	97	
3. LOCAL			24	25	31	17	21	26	32	28	25	22	26	26	303	285	302	359	278	
4. DEVELOPMENTAL			16	18	15	14	25	19	20	16	21	13	14	28	219	215	220	168	180	
5. VIOLENT.....			6	1	2	...	3	4	...	3	2	2	2	2	27	20	14	22	25	
UNCLASSIFIED .....			...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	3	...
TOTALS.....			70	64	63	41	61	65	62	56	63	52	54	67	718	734	702	782	635	

In this table the monthly deaths are classified according to their cause; the Zymotic deaths, which are more or less preventible, and the tabulation of which is therefore important, are further divided into Orders and Diseases, the totals for 1886 being contrasted with those of the preceding four years. A marked diminution is at once noticeable in the number of Zymotic deaths, only 82 as against 115 in 1885; and this notwithstanding the prevalence of Whooping Cough, which caused 16 deaths in 1886 and one only in 1885. The most marked diminution is in Diarrhœa, the number falling from 52 in 1885 to 30, which is about the average. Diphtheria caused only 4 deaths, Measles only one, and Typhoid Fever 9, as against 13 and 12 in the two preceding years. Erysipelas shows a fatal wave, 5 deaths occurring, though there were none and one in the two years previous. There was again no death from Scarlatina during the year; but looking at past experience, and the fact that a few cases have already occurred, I should not be surprised to have to record in 1888 a large mortality from an epidemic of this disease. In the Orders other than Miasmatic there were also fewer deaths than usual, no death having occurred during the year from Hydatid disease, which is unusual. In the Constitutional class, which includes deaths from two fatal diseases, Cancer and Phthisis, fewer deaths were recorded than in the quinquennial period. The other classes present little differences, except that the deaths from Violence were more numerous than before, eleven of the 27 deaths being due to Drowning. One death was registered without a cause being assigned, and is therefore unclassified,—giving me the opportunity to again draw attention to the necessity of the amendment and consolidation of the old Acts, the first dating as far back as 1837, under which registration takes place.

TABLE IV.

<i>Months of 1886.</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	23	4	1	0	3	31	18	21	70
February	16	2	2	0	3	23	14	27	64
March	11	4	1	2	1	19	23	21	63
April.....	10	2	1	2	3	18	7	16	41
May	11	3	1	1	2	18	13	30	61
June	7	4	2	2	1	16	19	30	65
July	15	4	1	1	1	22	10	30	62
August	10	3	1	0	1	15	17	24	56
September	7	11	1	0	1	20	15	28	63
October.....	10	4	2	0	0	16	8	28	52
November.....	9	5	1	0	3	18	12	24	54
December.....	20	3	1	1	1	26	11	30	67
TOTALS, 1886	149	49	15	9	20	242	167	309	718
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

Here the monthly deaths are classified according to age, and the deaths compared with those of the four preceding years. The total of deaths under one year old was 149, or 10 less than in the previous year, and, notwithstanding the increase of population, only 3 more than the average for the four preceding years. The greatest number of these deaths, as usual, occurred in January and December, but no month had an excessive number. The number of births registered in the District during the year was 1108, which gives an infant mortality rate of 13·44 per cent. of the births. This rate varies considerably from year to year. In 1883 it was 17·17; in 1884, 11·84; in 1885, 14·41; and in 1886, 13·44 per cent.—a satisfactory decrease. The total number of deaths under 20, 242, was fewer than in 1885, those between 20 and 60 rather in excess, though less than in the previous years, while deaths above 60 were 309. This column shows a striking uniformity during the quinquennial period, the difference between the minimum, in 1882, and the maximum, in 1885, being only 16. This column, too, is one of the most satisfactory features in our vital statistics, showing that this year 309 out of a total of 718, or 43 per cent., of the decedents had reached the advanced age of sixty years,—many of these a far greater age, for no less than 145 were registered as dying from pure “old age,” at an average age of 78 years.

TABLE V.

Hobart Registration District.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>	<i>Births in excess of Deaths.</i>
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
1886.....	1108	718	390
TOTALS.....	10,267	7564	2703
MEAN	933·3	687·6	245·7

In this table are compared the births *registered* and the deaths *occurring* in the Hobart District during the year 1886 and the preceding ten years. Five more births were registered in 1886 than in 1885, and there were 16 less deaths. The births in excess of deaths were 390, or 164·3 above the mean excess.

Passing from statistical details, there are a few general matters connected with health to which I may be allowed to allude. By the Public Health (Hobart) Act, passed in 1884, two and a-half years were allowed owners of property within the City to close and fill up all cesspits; that period expired on the 1st January, 1887, and though in a few cases the Act had not then been complied with, a wonderful change had nevertheless been effected; for the noisome privies whose contents were saturating the soil and subsoil for yards around in nearly every yard or garden are now a thing of the past, and in their place there is the pail or earth-closet, which, though less offensive because more frequently emptied, is in a great number of cases open to improvement, on account of the negligent or ignorant habits of the people. Where such simple and easily obtained deodorants as sifted house ashes or dry earth are used in the pails there is little cause of complaint, but I regret to have to report that many are too careless to use even these simple measures; and as great offence is also given by the rumbling of the carts employed for emptying the pails, a scheme is now under discussion for supplying duplicate pans with air-tight lids, by which means the removal could be effected in the day-time. The pails would then be emptied and properly cleansed at a *dépôt*, at which street sweepings and house refuse generally could be disintegrated by heat, and turned into a manure. By this a second difficulty would be overcome, for there is urgent need of a systematic collection and proper disposal of house refuse; but a third difficulty remains, for the liquid excreta have still to be disposed of; and though frequent flushings and cleansing of street channels may lessen the nuisance caused by soap-suds and house-fluids generally, in the summer months, when putrefaction is most active, the gutters are bound to be offensive. I believe the great frequency of summer diarrhoea among children, especially babies, causing a very large mortality, is in no small degree due to the unwholesome character of the street gutters, and so I have urged from time to time in these reports, and would again urge, the advisability of establishing a system of underground—*not deep drainage*—which would embrace both City and Suburbs, and which would leave the present side-channels to carry off storm-waters alone; such a system is already in contemplation by the City Authorities, who have been making arrangements for a plan of the City, and who propose to approach Parliament for aid in carrying out this large work.

This suggestion may at first sight appear inconsistent with what I wrote last year in condemnation of deep underground sewers for the city as too costly, and as not demanded by the state of Public Health. Unfortunately, since then we have been visited by a severe epidemic of Typhoid, which does demand an improvement in the disposal of our excreta, solid and liquid, an improvement which will best be effected in the manner indicated above—by the establishment of the duplicate pan system, and the construction of light underground, not deep, drains.

In connection with this subject, it is pleasing to report that in the Town of Sandy Bay, through the energy of the Road Trust a great improvement has recently been made in the gutters. The whole of these have been cleansed and washed with tar, an effective and cheap application. This has also been done in some parts of the city; but in other parts, and in the other suburban towns, there is a great want of more active measures, especially in the summer.

The work of improving the City Rivulet, by cementing its bed, has been further delayed; the owners of properties on each side in many instances postponed so long the erection of retaining walls,—a necessary preliminary to the work,—that it has been found expedient to call for tenders and proceed with the erection by the Municipal Council, the owners having subsequently to pay the cost. Such parts as have been cemented, even though damaged by floods and not yet repaired, are a marked improvement on the former condition of things, the lower part of the town having been recently very free from sickness in comparison with other parts,—a fact which has been attributed, and not without reason, to the improvements already effected in the Rivulet.

The question of Vaccination is one which has frequently been alluded to in these reports, and one concerning which it behoves those with special knowledge to speak with no uncertain sound. From enquiries I have made, I believe that a very large proportion of the children of this colony are as yet unvaccinated, notwithstanding the compulsory nature of the present Act. The recent outbreak of smallpox on board the German steamer *Preussen*, quarantined at Sydney, and the spread of the disease amongst the passengers, with the heavy mortality amongst the unvaccinated, emphasize the necessity for stringent protective measures. Some remarks by the President of the New Wales Board of Health, in a report on the subject, seem equally applicable to Tasmania, and are well worth quoting. After detailing the beneficial effects of perfect vaccination as a protective against smallpox, he goes on to say :—“ The awful proportion of mortality among the unvaccinated passengers should furnish a warning to the inhabitants of this colony who, whether from carelessness or from the influence of evil councillors, persist in neglecting to avail themselves of the benefit of vaccination in a way that cannot fail before long to produce the most disastrous results. The efforts of this Board to prevent the introduction of smallpox into the colony have hitherto been attended with success; but

it would be unreasonable to expect, considering the extraordinary development of steam communication, that these efforts should not at some time fail. If by any misfortune this loathsome disease were to be introduced into our community, which, so far at least as the young are concerned, is practically unvaccinated, the results would be in the last degree calamitous." The primary cost of vaccination is as a drop in the bucket compared with the expense which must be incurred in stamping out small-pox, should it be introduced, to say nothing of the loss of many valuable lives.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD O. GIBLIN, *M.D.*

25th June, 1887.

The Hon. P. O. Fysh, Chief Secretary.