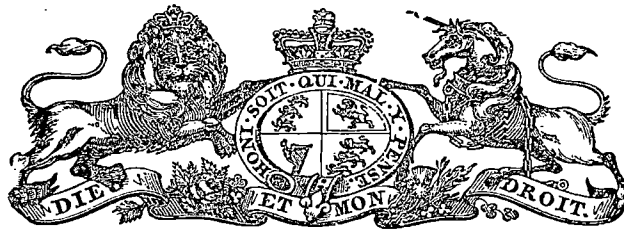


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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

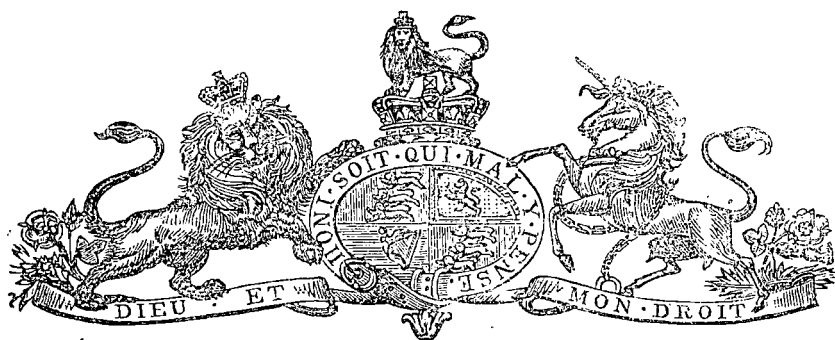
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GOVERNMENT MEDICAL OFFICER :

REPORT FOR 1889.

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



*Medical Department, Hobart, 29th March, 1890.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit my first Annual Report relating to the work performed by me as Government Medical Officer during the year 1889.

The several duties devolving upon me are as follows:—

1. The medical supervision of the sick inmates of the New Town Charitable Institution.
2. The visiting of the sick poor at their own homes in and around Hobart.
3. The boarding of vessels coming from infected ports, or arriving with cases of infectious disease on board.
4. The supervision of the Hospitals for the Insane at New Norfolk, and Cascades, Hobart; as the Chairman of the Official Visitors.
5. Medical Adviser to the Central Board of Health.

My duties in connection with the New Town Charitable Institution I shall now describe.

This Institution is distant from the city about three miles, on the New Town Road, and is well situated, being built on a gently rising slope at the foot of a high hill. The buildings are extensive, and are scattered over a large area of ground. Besides the Officers of the Institution, there is accommodation for 475 males and 190 females.

During the year 1889 the Institution contained an average number of 589 inmates, of whom 422 were males and 167 were females. The wards for the males are 21 in number, the largest of which holds 39 beds, and the smallest 3 beds. Of these wards seven are set apart for those who are entirely invalided or are bedridden, and they are called "Hospital Wards." The beds in these wards number 191, and are nearly always occupied throughout the year. The females are lodged in a separate block of buildings, and are fortunate in their possession of fine airy wards and comfortable rooms. There are three Hospital Wards for females, containing altogether 50 beds, all of which are occupied. It will be thus seen that there are 240 beds in the Hospital Wards of the Institution constantly occupied throughout the year by the sick and bedridden.

My regular visits to the Institution are twice weekly, on fixed days and at certain hours; but frequently I am called out to see some sick patient at other times, besides being in daily communication with the Institution by telephone.

Owing to the wards and buildings being scattered over so large an area, each visit occupies some considerable time in going round from ward to ward, as I make it a practice of seeing every patient in bed who is on the sick list, whether in the hospital or general wards; and so, frequently, I have to visit every ward according as the cases are reported.

The Hospital Wards as mentioned above contain those who are moved there when too unwell to remain in the general wards, or who require change of diet or extra nursing and attention. The beds in these wards are always fully occupied.

Besides the sick patients who are in bed in the wards, there are others who, though walking about, are yet on the sick list and require attention. These are attended to and prescribed for at the Dispensary of the Institution. The number of prescriptions made up at the Dispensary during the year amounted to 6703.

The ailments are mostly of a chronic nature—debility from sheer old age being the principal cause of their infirmities. Out of the 589 inmates no less than 365 are between 70 and 90 years of age. The younger inmates are suffering mostly from incurable diseases, such as phthisis, epilepsy, paralysis, &c., which render them incapable of working for their own living.

When a patient is admitted suffering from a disease that may be cured, but which requires special nursing or appliances only to be obtained at the General Hospital, I recommend the Administrator of Charitable Grants to remove him there, as giving him the best chance of recovery.

The patients in the Hospital Wards have the benefit of being allowed such change of diet as may be suited to their condition. The diet is on a liberal scale, and the food is of excellent quality, and is generally well cooked. I frequently inspect the food prepared for the sick patients, as well as the provisions generally, and find that care is exercised in the selection of the meat and other food. The diet scale is arranged in such a way that those who can eat the ordinary meals have what is called "full diet," consisting of meat, vegetables, bread, &c., and those who have not an appetite for the harder food have "spoon diet," consisting of soup, oatmeal-gruel, rice, &c., or any article the patient may need, such as eggs, milk, fish, &c. The full diet too, is varied every day, so that some get baked meat and potatoes one day, and Irish stew as a pleasant change another day.

The medical comforts are given only by my order to those patients who in my opinion require them. Only the most feeble and those depressed by illness or affliction are given these comforts regularly. Year by year these cases are increasing in number. During the year the sick have been unusually numerous—about 288 daily, males and females—hence the amount of medical comforts given during the year has been proportionally high; but as their use has been undoubtedly the means of prolonging as well as of saving life, their value is at once evident.

The Institution has been particularly free from cancer cases during the year, the last patient having died on 8th June, 1889. These cases when admitted are lodged in a separate ward, which at one time was always full, and then seemed too small for the purpose. To remedy this, a plan, I believe, has been prepared for a new cancer ward to be built on the grounds separate from the main buildings. This ward when completed will be a marked improvement upon the present ill-ventilated one, as ventilation and other requirements can then be attended to.

The wards generally of the Institution are very well suited for the class of cases at present occupying them, as they are large, lofty, and sufficiently well ventilated, and in winter are warmed by fireplaces and stoves, in which coal is burned. The beds in some wards seem close as compared with those in a hospital for curative purposes; but with the good ventilation which each ward possesses, the atmosphere, unless tainted by foul cases, rarely becomes offensive.

The attendants in the Hospital Wards are chosen from the inmates, and although in some instances clean and attentive, yet, as a body, they cannot be considered as thoroughly efficient in the art of nursing. They certainly do their best considering their infirmities, and being under the constant supervision of the Superintendent and his Assistant, they may be said to perform their duties in a tolerably satisfactory manner. At the same time I should like to see an improved state of things as regards the nursing. As some prejudice exists against the employment of female nurses, I would suggest that active and intelligent male attendants of good character be engaged, similar to those employed at the Hospital for the Insane at New Norfolk. With the assistance of the present wardsmen one attendant could supervise each large Hospital Ward or two smaller ones. In this way the sick would have their wants attended to by better nursing than can be the case at present.

The mortality during the year has not been excessive, notwithstanding the unusually large number of cases of sickness. The deaths amounted to 112, of whom 84 were males and 28 were females. The average age of those who died during the year was, for males 72, and for females 71½. The oldest was a female, who died at the wonderful age of 103 years.

The Diet Scale is as follows:—

<i>Full Diet.</i>	<i>Spoon Diet.</i>
1½ lbs. bread—20 per cent.	1 lb. bread, fine.
¾ lbs. fresh meat.	¼ oz. tea.
½ oz. salt.	1½ ozs. sugar.
½ oz. tea.	1 oz. butter.
1½ ozs. sugar.	¼ pint milk.
½ oz. barley.	
1 oz. tobacco weekly.	

With whatever extras may be ordered.

## Description of Medical Comforts and Extras in use :—

Port wine, 3 ozs.	Oatmeal, (on Monday and Thursday).
Brandy, 2 ozs., with water.	Sago, (on Tuesday and Friday).
Rum, 2 oz., ditto.	Rice, (on Wednesday and Saturday).
Gin, 2 oz., ditto.	Sugar, light, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs., for the oatmeal.
Milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 pints.	Potatoes, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb.
Eggs, one or two.	Ale, $\frac{1}{2}$ pint.
Butter, 1 oz.	

Any of the above issued upon order of the Medical Officer, and are changed from time to time as he directs.

Visiting the sick poor of Hobart at their own homes.—This is a daily duty, which takes up a considerable portion of every day, according to the number of patients to be visited and their distances apart. Only those patients receive orders for my professional attendance who are unable from illness to attend at the Hospital Dispensary.

The number of cases each year is constantly increasing. In 1886 the patients that received medical aid at their own homes numbered 161; in 1887 they increased to 280; in 1888 they amounted to 300; while during 1889 there were 356 patients to visit, besides many others who had not procured the necessary authority for my attendance, but who were urgently in need of medical advice.

Of the 356 patients visited during the year, 38 were sent in to the Hospital, as they required better nursing and nourishment than they could possibly have procured at home. The majority of these patients were suffering from typhoid fever.

Several of the most infirm of the patients I was called upon to visit, who had no comfortable homes, I recommended for admission into the New Town Charitable Institution, as they were suffering from incurable complaints, and were not cases for Hospital treatment.

Every patient, upon receipt of the order to visit, is attended to the same day it is obtained, and again the following days until improvement takes place; and then from time to time according to the requirements of the case until cured.

Some cases require much more visiting than others, and so there can be no rule as to the number of visits each patient should have. Taking six as an average number for each case, the total number of visits during the year would amount to about 1800. Besides visiting them, I prescribe for many of the patients, who, when getting better, come to my residence. The total number of prescriptions made up at the Hospital Dispensary for these outside patients amounts to upwards of 2000.

As Health Officer for the Port of Hobart, I have to board all vessels coming from infected ports—such as Port Louis, Mauritius,—for the purpose of examining the crews and passengers. Five vessels arrived from Mauritius during the year, and there being no sign of any infectious disease amongst the crews they were granted pratique.

Smallpox was reported to be present in the Island of Mauritius in one of the inland districts; but as the patients and district were isolated and placed under quarantine regulations, no serious outbreak took place.

As smallpox was brought to Adelaide by a passenger of one of the mail steamers from Europe, in November, and as there appeared to be a likelihood of the occurrence of more cases, I was instructed by the Central Board of Health “to particularly examine the passengers and crews of all vessels coming to this port from South Australia, and to take the necessary steps to prevent the introduction of the disease in case the necessity arises.” Fortunately, the disease was confined to the one case in Adelaide.

Once a fortnight large mail steamships call at this port from London *en route* to New Zealand. Formerly it was my practice to board each steamer upon arrival. But as these vessels always carried a surgeon who paid great attention to the health of the passengers and crew; and as they, in consequence, seldom had other than a clean bill of health upon arrival at this port, it was considered sufficient that the Harbour Master—who always boards vessels upon arrival—should be empowered to act on behalf of the Health Officer, in accordance with Section 9 of “The Quarantine Act,” and obtain answers to the questions contained in the form provided by the first Schedule of the Act, signed by the captain and surgeon of the ship. In the case of these answers being satisfactory the Harbour Master was empowered to at once grant pratique in accordance with Schedule 2; but if it should appear by the answers given that sickness has prevailed on board during the

voyage, the Harbour Master was required to at once report the matter to me. It would be my duty then to proceed to the ship and ascertain the nature and extent of the sickness, and deal with the case as the occasion demanded.

The Harbour Master has regularly carried out the duty assigned to him. In one instance there was occasion to report to me. This was in the case of the s.s. *Aorangi* from London, which arrived here on Christmas Day with a case of Scarlet Fever on board. As the patient—a child—had been immediately isolated on board upon the outbreak of the disease, and as there had been no fresh cases, I granted pratique to the vessel upon the understanding that the patient—who was then convalescent—should be kept isolated and removed, together with the rest of the family, consisting of parents and two other children, to the General Hospital. This was carried out. I directed that the luggage of the family should be fumigated and kept separate from the other passengers' luggage upon landing, and that the linen and bedding of the child should be disinfected and washed. These measures were successful in limiting the disease to this one case only. Mr. Mault, the Secretary of the Central Board of Health, kindly assisted in the matter by obtaining the assent of the Hospital Authorities for the removal of the patient and the family to the wards there.

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Frequently, as the Medical Adviser to the Central Board of Health, I am called upon to advise respecting matters that are brought before the Board; also with regard to questions affecting the health of the community. These matters are contained in the Annual Report of the Central Board of Health.

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In addition to the duties enumerated above, I, as Chairman of the Board of Official Visitors, have to exercise supervision over the management of the Hospitals for the Insane at New Norfolk and Cascades, Hobart. This duty entails upon me constant thought and attention, as the correspondence and matters connected therewith have to be always promptly attended to. My work in connection with this duty is contained in the Annual Report of the Official Visitors to the Hospitals for the Insane.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

C. E. BARNARD, *M.D.*,  
*Government Medical Officer.*

*The Honorable the Chief Secretary.*