

(No. 35.)



1880.

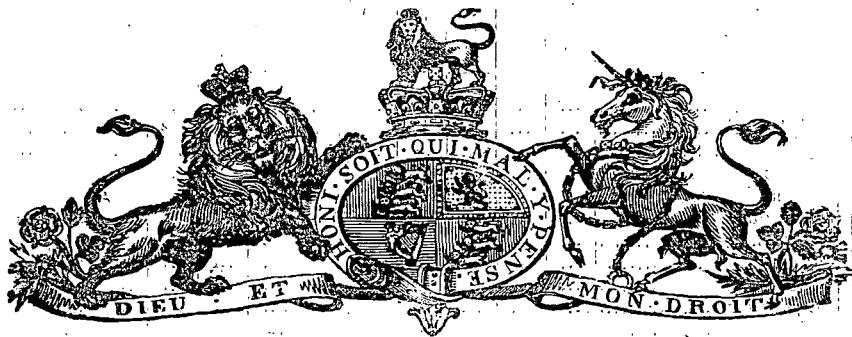
T A S M A N I A .

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

OFFICER OF HEALTH—HOBART TOWN
AND SUBURBS :

REPORT FOR 1879.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 10, 1880.



REPORT for 1879 of the Officer of Health for the Towns of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington Hamlets.

SIR,

IN my Report for 1878 I made very elaborate computations as to the probable increase of population since the Census of 1870. Adopting the same mode of calculation for estimating the numerical total of population in the whole of Tasmania in the middle of 1879, I make it as being, in round numbers, about 110,000.

In 1879 the total registered deaths for all Tasmania was 1688, being — 12 less than in 1878. The death-rate therefore for the year would be only a trifle above 15 per 1000, while that of 1878 was 15½.

The population of the Hobarton Registration District in the middle of 1879 I estimate at about 27,700. The actual number of persons who died in the District from the 1st January to the 31st December, both inclusive, was 641, and + 11 more than in 1878. The death-rate, therefore, would be about, in round numbers, 23 per 1000 per annum. In the following Table, No. 1, I have recorded the deaths in the same manner as in Table, No. 2, in 1878:—

TABLE No. 1.

Months of Year 1879.	Deaths in Hobarton Registration District.	Above or below 1878.	Above or Below 20 Years Mean of the Month.		City Share of the Deaths.	New Town Share.	Sandy Bay Share.	Wellington Share.
			Above	Below				
January	68	+ 7	+ 7 ¹⁵ / ₂₀		44	6	0	7
February	61	— 1	+ 9 ⁴ / ₂₀		45	7	2	2
March	64	— 8	+ 8 ²⁰ / ₂₀		41	10	2	5
April	53	+ 2	+ 8 ¹⁵ / ₂₀		29	14	0	4
May	50	— 5	+ 5 ¹⁷ / ₂₀		24	11	4	8
June	53	— 8	+ 6 ⁶ / ₂₀		26	14	0	6
July	68	+ 17	+ 14 ¹¹ / ₂₀		31	23	2	2
August	58	+ 13	+ 11 ¹⁹ / ₂₀		32	21	1	1
September	44	+ 1	+ 1		27	7	0	0
October	51	+ 5	+ 4 ¹⁶ / ₂₀		26	13	1	2
November	30	— 14		— 10 ³ / ₂₀	17	10	0	0
December	41	— 1		— 3 ¹² / ₂₀	27	8	2	0
	641	+ 45 — 37			369	144	14	37
	564							
	77					564		

Comparing this Table with the corresponding one in the Report for 1878, it will be seen that the actual deaths of citizens for Hobarton were 9 less than in 1878; that at New Town there were 36 more deaths, principally of males and females at the three Invalid Asylums. In the Town of Sandy Bay the deaths were 9 less, and in the Wellington Hamlets 20 less, caused nearly altogether by the removal of male Invalids from the Cascades to New Town. The deaths of persons not belonging to the Registration District of Hobarton being therefore 77, and

principally at the Hospital, were 13 more than in the previous year. Table 2, corresponding with Table 3 of the 1878 Report, is as follows:—

TABLE 2.

CLASS.	ORDER.	DISEASE.	JANUARY.	FEBRUARY.	MARCH.	APRIL.	MAY.	JUNE.	JULY.	AUGUST.	SEPTEMBER.	OCTOBER.	NOVEMBER.	DECEMBER.	TOTAL, 1879.	TOTAL, 1878.	TOTAL, 1877.			
1. ZYMOTIC.	Miasmatic.	Scarlatina .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	60			
		Diphtheria .....	...	...	2	...	1	1	...	...	2	3	...	...	9	21	13		
		Quinsy .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	3	
		Croup	1	...	...	1	1	...	2	1	...	...	...	1	...	7	5	10	
		Whooping-cough	2	1	1	...	...	...	...	1	1	1	1	1	3	12	3	3	
		Typhoid Fever .....	...	...	...	1	3	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	8	17	15	
		Erysipelas .....	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	3	...	1	...	1	...	7	3	7	
		Metria.....	2	2	
		Catarrh, &c.	3	3	
		Dysentery	2	1	1	
		Diarrhoea	4	14	10	3	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	2	35	37	26	
		Cholera	1	2	2	
		Other Zymotic	2	...	...	...	2	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	7	2	4	
		Enthetic	1	...	2	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	3	...	...	8	7	3	
		Dietic .....	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	3	6	
Parasitic	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	3	5	0			
TOTALS			11	16	16	7	9	5	8	3	4	9	2	8	98	107	158			
2. CONSTITUTIONAL			11	9	6	6	2	13	7	9	8	10	3	9	93	80	97			
3. LOCAL			28	24	27	27	19	24	34	28	18	22	17	14	282	283	322			
4. DEVELOPMENTAL			17	10	13	12	18	10	16	17	14	9	5	7	148	132	155			
5. VIOLENT			1	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	...	1	3	3	20	28	28			
TOTALS			68	61	64	53	50	53	68	58	44	51	30	41	641	630	760			

An analysis of this Table will give results more favourable to the health character of 1879 than was the case for the two previous years; for though the total deaths of 1878 were 11 less than in 1879, the ages at death, and the diseases which caused death, were to the advantage of last year.

In the Zymotic class of Diseases 1879 had, on the whole, — 11 fewer deaths than in 1878, and — 60 less than in 1877. The + 60, however, in 1877 were from Scarlatina, from which disease not a single death occurred in 1879.

The following table gives the deaths for each month in eight groups of ages, as in Table 4 of the Report for 1878:—

TABLE 3.

Months.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 10.	10 to 15.	15 to 20.	Total under 20.	20 to 60.	60 and above.	Total at all Ages.
January.....	18	4	1	1	1	25	16	27	68
February	20	4	1	0	2	27	10	24	61
March.....	22	5	4	0	2	33	13	18	64
April.....	7	2	1	1	2	13	17	23	53
May.....	6	2	2	0	3	13	9	28	50
June.....	2	5	1	0	3	11	14	28	53
July.....	12	3	2	2	0	19	16	33	68
August.....	4	6	3	0	3	16	9	33	58
September.....	11	4	0	1	2	18	10	16	44
October.....	9	4	0	1	3	17	16	18	51
November.....	6	3	0	2	1	12	5	13	30
December.....	10	1	1	0	1	13	13	15	41
TOTALS, 1879	127	43	16	8	23	217	148	276	641
TOTALS, 1878	125	35	22	8	22	212	178	240	630
TOTALS, 1877	131	66	40	17	31	285	197	278	760

At all ages under 20 it will be seen in the foregoing table that only + 5 more deaths took place than in 1878, notwithstanding that the registered births in the Hobart District were 858, being + 14 more than in 1878. The total births registered for all Tasmania was 3554, being + 52 more than in 1878. The proportion of the births registered in Hobart to that of all Tasmania was a trifle more favourable in 1879 than in 1878.

Post hoc propter hoc conclusions are too often fallacious for me to urge that the improvements in the sanitation of the City and its suburban Towns, as evidenced by the Mortuary Returns of 1879, were solely, or even principally, owing to the abatement of many nuisances injurious to public health. Nevertheless, the meteorological details given in my published Monthly Reports scarcely show that the general character of the weather in 1879 was so much superior to what prevailed in the two previous years as to account for the improvement of the public health I have shown to exist.

Though a considerable number of nuisances injurious to public health were removed during the year, they formed far too small a proportion of the vast amount of those that existed to satisfy my desires. As long as privy cesspits, polluting the atmosphere and saturating the soil with their poisonous contents, are allowed to exist; with pig-sties in close proximity to human habitations; and a great elongated and comparatively stagnant cesspool traversing the very heart of the City; and no steps taken to secure freedom from adulteration or injurious condition of the food and drink supplies of the population, the health of the inhabitants, of even such an admirably situated place as Hobarton is, must suffer, and can never attain to the foremost place it ought to hold in the smallness of its death-rate. Why the Municipal Bye-law of 1855, for the prevention of filth and rubbish being thrown into the City Rivulet should have so long remained in abeyance, to the detriment of the comfort, health, and lives of the citizens, or how it could be nullified by proclaiming the Rivulet a common sewer in the previous year, I cannot understand. This law, however, has been resuscitated, as far as republication goes, and if in future enforced will do much to improve public health.

The other measures contemplated by the corporate authority, for which Parliament has so lately granted it the means to raise the necessary funds, will do much towards making Hobarton what it should be, the sanitarium of the Australasian Colonies.

The Vaccination Returns for 1879 for all Tasmania are even of a less satisfactory character than in the previous year. Though upwards of 3000 children under six months old ought to have been vaccinated there were less than 20 of that age successfully operated upon, and less than 300 of all ages. Every year is thus adding to the great mass in the community unprotected from the possible ravages of Small-pox. In Hobarton the total of individuals of all ages successfully vaccinated in 1879 was only 115, and of these all but 12 were at or above one year old, though the long-proved useless existing Vaccination Act requires that all children shall be vaccinated before attaining the age of six months, and the registered births amounted to 858. There would have been a somewhat better return for Hobarton had it not been that for about five months in the year recourse was had again to the so often before proved useless attempt to induce people to have their children vaccinated at the Hospital. As I stated in my last year's Report, only one child was submitted to the operation during the five months. To keep up a regular weekly supply of arm to arm vaccinations from properly selected cases at the best age (before teething commences) not less than 10 children under six months old should be vaccinated every week. Such a number could be done easily out of the children born, were there a really working compulsory Vaccination Act steadily enforced, as is the case elsewhere. For upwards of a quarter of a century I have been constantly bringing this most important subject to the well-being of the Tasmanian population under the notice of the Government, the Parliament, and the people. The Nemesis that may any day occur here, from past neglect of vaccination, is well exemplified by what has recently occurred elsewhere from the same apathy.

From that City of South America which bears a name (Valparaiso), which it can scarcely be more deserving of than our own beautifully-situated capital of Tasmania, news has recently come which ought to be a terrible warning to us for our short-comings in the way of protecting the inhabitants of this fair isle from one of the most painful, loathsome, and deadly of diseases. The number of the 20th December last of *The National Board of Health Bulletin*, officially printed and published weekly in Washington, with which I was favoured, records:—"That in the month of November last 1333 deaths in a population of 101,088 occurred in Valparaiso, being at the annual rate of 158.2 per 1000. Of this excessive mortality Small-pox caused 678 deaths, being more than half of the deaths from all causes, and at the annual rate of 80.5 per 1000 of the population."

A similar outbreak in Tasmania, from its unprotected condition, would therefore cause probably not far short of 1000 deaths in a single month.

As an instance of the vigorous measures adopted in such woeful visitations, I may cite what was done in the City of Worcester, Massachusetts, having a population of 52,000:—"We manage the epidemic by requiring all physicians to report to us at once every case coming under their notice; in case of neglect a fine is imposed, by order of the Municipal Court. I (it is the Officer of Health reporting to the National Board of Health at Washington) visit personally every case as soon as reported, and give all directions as to its management, excepting the medical treatment, which is left to the attending physician. A warning flag, with *Small-pox* printed in large letters on each side, is placed in a conspicuous position. I do not remove the cases to the Hospital but quarantine the house, and enforce the isolation of its inmates by the constant presence of a competent officer detailed for the purpose. The district is also placed under the supervision of a sanitary inspector,

who visits every house, enforces vaccination of all not protected, attends to sanitary measures, and reports to me. On the termination of cases the houses are disinfected, and all clothing, &c. that is not worth disinfecting is burned. It is the duty of the inspector to see that medical attendance is furnished in cases where it is not done by the family. The police officer is required to see that quarantined persons receive proper supplies of necessaries. No child is admitted to the public school without a certificate of *successful* vaccination from a physician; and free vaccination is offered by the city to all school children who choose to apply. The disease has thus been kept down to two or three cases at a time, and confined to two small districts. The Hospital for contagious diseases is three miles from the city, and is perfectly isolated."

When the day comes that such stringent measures as these become necessary to restrain the slaughter of the people from Small-pox, as all past experience shows that it will come sooner or later, there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and deep humiliation, sorrow, and remorse for those who ought to have averted such a calamity.

Very lately it has been found necessary in the case of other Zymotic diseases becoming epidemic in Victoria to adopt measures nearly as strong as the foregoing. Legislative provision for the prevention of the spread of contagious diseases in this Island is much required.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
E. SWARBRECK HALL.

To the Hon. WILLIAM MOORE, Esq., M.L.C.,
Colonial Secretary, Tasmania.