

(No. 30.)



1882.

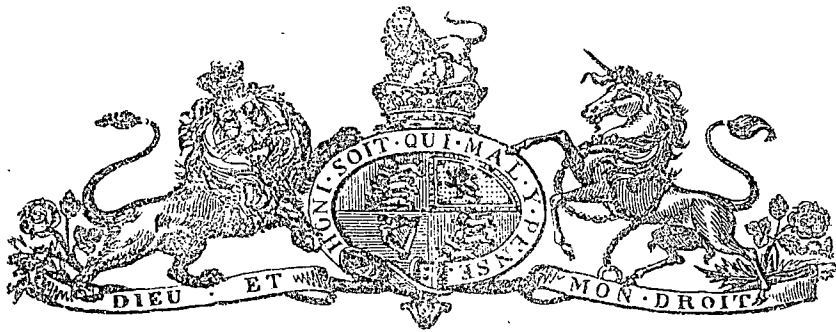
TASMANIA.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HEALTH OFFICER:

REPORT FOR 1881.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
July 12, 1882.



REPORT for 1881 of the Officer of Health for the Towns of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington Hamlets.

SIR,

THE population of Tasmania, as ascertained by the Census taken in April, 1881, was 115,705, against 99,328 in 1870, showing a total increase of 16,377 in upwards of ten years, and an increase of 3405 on the estimated population for 1880. The number of deaths registered throughout the Island during 1881 was 1733, being 99 less than in 1880. This gives a death-rate for the whole Island of 14·9 per 1000, which is slightly in excess of the death-rate of Australasia for 1880, but more than 5 per 1000 better than that of England and Wales. Leaving the further consideration of this larger subject to the able Government Statistician, I learn that the population of the Hobart Registration District, as taken by Census, was 27,248. This District includes the City of Hobart and the Towns of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington, and the rest of the Electoral Districts of Glenorchy and Queenborough. The total number of deaths which occurred in this District in 1881 was 635, giving a death-rate of 23·3 per 1000, compared in the following Table with the monthly deaths during the previous 19 years :—

TABLE I.

TABLE of Deaths in the Hobart Registration District for the 20 Years, 1862-1881 inclusive.

Year.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Total of each Year.
1862.....	55	58	52	37	36	53	36	43	56	30	45	52	553
1863.....	45	69	53	48	35	48	48	41	42	49	30	39	547
1864.....	24	47	73	54	48	54	70	41	37	41	43	36	563
1865.....	41	53	56	38	43	32	36	42	44	40	37	30	492
1866.....	31	54	57	45	43	48	54	33	28	36	36	50	515
1867.....	56	34	54	48	46	48	68	35	35	42	48	42	551
1868.....	38	45	53	45	39	54	64	54	46	49	38	54	579
1869.....	41	40	42	27	38	35	47	42	22	49	40	39	462
1870.....	64	48	47	34	39	46	40	49	38	34	25	36	500
1871.....	47	42	51	29	33	51	42	34	47	40	45	46	507
1872.....	51	40	60	35	53	42	39	39	39	51	32	43	524
1873.....	49	53	48	50	44	39	46	45	53	58	44	46	575
1874.....	55	47	49	37	46	53	58	49	42	58	34	47	575
1875.....	48	49	99	102	77	62	55	66	51	55	45	41	750*
1876.....	53	48	48	32	63	47	61	44	44	63	58	52	613
1877.....	73	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.....	63	61	64	53	50	53	68	58	44	51	30	41	641
1880.....	53	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
20 Years' Average	51 $\frac{3}{20}$	51 $\frac{13}{20}$	59 $\frac{3}{20}$	45 $\frac{13}{20}$	47 $\frac{3}{20}$	48 $\frac{14}{20}$	53 $\frac{16}{20}$	46 $\frac{17}{20}$	42 $\frac{17}{20}$	46 $\frac{19}{20}$	41 $\frac{5}{20}$	45 $\frac{3}{20}$	581 $\frac{4}{20}$

* Measles epidemic.

† Scarlatina epidemic.

On examination of the foregoing table, which will be very useful for future reference, it will be seen that, considering the increase of population, the year 1881 compares favorably with those preceding it. Coming now to the monthly averages, it appears that March, July, February, and January are in that order the most fatal to life, while November and September are least so. This is probably to be accounted for by atmospheric reasons, the summer heats causing miasmatic diarrhoea, especially fatal to children; while the colder weather of July lessens the vitality of the aged and infirm.

TABLE II.

Months of Year 1881.	Deaths in Hobart Registration District.	Above or below 1880.		Above Below 20 Years Mean of the Month.		City share of Deaths.	New Town share of Deaths.	Sandy Bay share of Deaths.	Wellington share of Deaths.
January	66		+ 8	+14 ¹¹ / ₃₀		36	16	2	2
February	58	- 4		+ 6 ⁵ / ₃₀		41	11	1	0
March.....	55	-26			-4 ⁵ / ₂₀	33	17	3	0
April.....	40	-11			-5 ¹² / ₃₀	29	6	0	0
May.....	66		+30	+18 ¹³ / ₃₀		51	12	0	1
June	48	- 8			-0 ¹⁴ / ₂₀	29	12	0	2
July.....	49	-19			-4 ¹⁶ / ₂₀	30	13	0	3
August	58		+11	+11 ³ / ₃₀		32	17	0	0
September ...	45		+ 1	+ 2 ³ / ₃₀		32	10	1	0
October	44	- 5			-2 ¹⁹ / ₂₀	25	11	4	1
November	47	- 1		+ 5 ¹⁵ / ₃₀		28	11	1	0
December.....	59		+12	+13 ¹⁵ / ₃₀		42	13	0	2
	635	74	62			408	149	12	11
	580								
	55	12						580	

This table, compared with a corresponding one of 1880, gives a balance of 12 in favor of 1881. No month of the year had an excessive number of deaths, though January and May had each 66, while in April there were only 40. The largest number of deaths in any month of 1880 was 81 in March, the smallest, 36, in May. The city share of deaths was 408, being 34 more than in 1880. Probably not as many as this actually belong to the city, as it is difficult to trace all cases. By the recent Census the population of the city was found to be 21,118: this, then, gives us a death-rate of 19.3 per 1000,—far too high a death-rate for so favourably situated a town. New Town has the large number of 149 deaths for a population of 1720; this gives the enormous death-rate of 86.6 per 1000. Judging carelessly, it might be supposed from this that New Town was a very unhealthy place to live in. The true explanation of this high rate being that upwards of 700 of the population of the township are invalids from various parts of the Island concentrated at the two Asylums, where 127 out of the 149 deaths occurred, leaving the death-rate for the rest of New Town at 22 per 1000. The Sandy Bay share of deaths is only 12, which gives a death-rate of 15.0 per 1000; the Wellington share, 11. During the year 55 deaths occurred, most of them at the hospital, of persons not belonging to the Hobart Registration District.

TABLE III.

Class.	Order.	Disease.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Total, 1881.	Total, 1880.	Total, 1879.	Total, 1878.	Total, 1877.		
1.—ZYMOTIC.	Miasmatic.	Scarlatina.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	1	60
		Diphtheria.....	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	12	9	21	13
		Quinsy.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
		Croup.....	...	1	...	...	1	1	1	1	1	1	...	1	...	8	5	7	10
		Whooping-cough..	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7	12	3	3
		Typhoid Fever.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9	8	17	15
		Erysipelas.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	1	...	7	3
		Metria.....	1	2	
		Catarrh, &c.....	3	
		Dysentery.....	2	...	2	2	1	
		Diarrhoea.....	10	3	2	5	1	1	1	1	1	4	29	51	35	37	26	
		Cholera.....	1	2
		Other Zymotic.....	1	...	2	4	9	...	2	1	19	8	7	2	4	
		Enthetic.....	...	2	...	2	1	1	6	2	8	7	3	
		Dietic.....	...	1	1	2	3	6
Parasitic.....	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	3	3	5	...	
TOTALS.....			14	6	6	9	13	3	5	2	2	2	3	5	70	101	98	107	158		
2. CONSTITUTIONAL.....			13	7	3	3	5	7	4	9	11	4	7	9	82	85	93	80	97		
3. LOCAL.....			22	26	21	22	27	24	23	28	17	26	22	20	278	294	282	283	322		
4. DEVELOPMENTAL.....			15	15	22	5	17	13	16	17	14	10	13	23	180	147	148	132	155		
5. VIOLENT.....			2	4	3	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	25	20	20	28	28		
TOTALS.....			66	58	55	40	66	48	49	58	45	44	47	59	635	647	641	630	760		

The above table, which compares the diseases causing death in each month of 1881 with the four preceding years, shows that 1881 has been much more favourable to life in those diseases which are classified as Zymotic, and more or less preventible by sanitary science. In this class only 70 deaths were registered, as against 101 in 1880, 98 in 1879, and 107 in 1878. There were absolutely no fatal cases of Typhoid Fever or Scarlatina during the year, and only one each of Diphtheria and Erysipelas, and two of Whooping-cough. Diarrhoea, too, was much less prevalent than in previous years, though "Other Zymotic," which includes some cases of Measles and Pyæmia, had more deaths. In the Constitutional Class, and that of Violence, the deaths for 1881 were about the average; while in Local Diseases they are slightly fewer; and in Developmental Diseases, principally Atrophy of children, and Old Age, they are in excess.

TABLE IV.

<i>Months.</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	20	2	0	2	1	25	17	24	66
February	13	2	1	0	1	17	14	27	58
March	16	3	1	2	1	23	5	27	55
April	16	3	0	0	1	20	6	14	40
May	16	8	0	0	1	25	19	22	66
June	5	2	0	0	1	8	18	22	48
July	7	5	0	3	0	15	15	19	49
August	7	3	1	2	1	14	14	30	58
September	7	4	2	1	2	16	8	21	45
October	9	1	1	1	3	15	16	13	44
November	10	1	0	2	0	13	13	21	47
December	18	3	1	1	1	24	14	21	59
TOTALS, 1881	144	37	7	14	13	215	159	261	635
TOTALS, 1880	118	46	15	9	21	209	154	284	647
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

This table gives the monthly deaths at various ages, and contrasts the totals with the four preceding years. Here we are at once arrested by the startling fact that 144 deaths occurred in the district of infants under one year old,—26 more than last year, and even 13 more than 1877, which had a total of 760 deaths, Scarlatina being prevalent. The proper method of ascertaining the infant mortality of any district, according to the Registrar-General of England, is to contrast the deaths under one year old with the number of births: Using this method, then, I find that there were 887 births during 1881, and 144 deaths under one year old, which gives a percentage of 16.2 deaths. From a valuable paper on this subject, read before the Royal Society of Tasmania by that able Statistician, Mr. E. C. Nowell, in 1875, I learn that the average percentage for the five years 1869-73 for the same district was 12.9; while for the whole Colony it was only 9.45. In England a similar percentage for the ten years 1861-70 was 14.9. This high rate of infant mortality, so rapidly increasing in our district, cannot but be considered a bad sign, and must, if possible, be checked, whether it be due to local causes, hereditary debility, ignorance in feeding, or culpable neglect on the part of unmotherly mothers. In the quinquennial periods, 1 to 5, 5 to 10, and 15 to 20, 1881 contrasts favourably with the years preceding, in that of 10 to 15 unfavourably.

TABLE V.

HOBART Registration District.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>	<i>Births in excess of Deaths.</i>
1871.....	773	514	259
1872.....	718	545	173
1873.....	725	584	141
1874.....	783	586	197
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
	8813	6918	1895

In the above table the number of births and deaths registered in the Hobart District during the year 1881 are contrasted with those registered in the previous ten years. By this it appears that more births were registered in 1881 than in any other year except 1880, which had 900, or 13 more, while 638 deaths were registered, being less than any year since 1877. In the previous part of this Report the number of deaths for 1881 has been stated as 635, which is the actual number that occurred within the year, whensoever registered.

Some matters additional to the above statistical details require comment at my hands, and I will briefly allude to them. It is impossible to pass along the streets, and especially the suburban streets, of this splendidly situated town, without discovering that there is no attempt made on the part of the authorities to carry out an efficient system of drainage. Throughout the many miles of streets in city and suburbs the length of the underground sewers can be measured by yards, and it thus becomes practically impossible to carry out the 242nd Clause of the Police Act, compelling people to connect their private drains with street sewers, if no sewers exist. The consequence is that side channels and gutters, which should only carry off surface water, are made to do the duty of subsoil sewers; into them are drained the kitchen slops, soapy water, and even worse refuse from the houses, which in their slow course to the harbour ferment and putrify, giving rise to poisonous and offensive odours. One step in the right direction, however, has been taken by the Municipal authorities, for during the year the main sewer of the city, the Hobart Rivulet, has been much improved at its outlet, and the second portion of the work has been commenced. When the whole scheme has been carried out, and the inhabitants on each side compelled to convey their filth into the centre channel, where a stream of salt water will be constantly flowing, instead of as now depositing it on the banks, to their own and their neighbours' discomfort, one great source of pestilence will have been removed. The advantage of good drainage is well exemplified by the diminished death-rate in the division of Harwich, England, known as Wilton, which until 1878 was wholly without drainage. At that time an efficient system was introduced, with the following result: Population, 5782; death-rate in 1878, 21.5; in 1879, 18.8; in 1880, 16.4; in 1881, 14.3. This shows that in three years the death rate was reduced one third. Assuming an equally happy result for Hobart properly drained, upwards of 200 people would yearly be added to, or rather kept in the population.

It is matter for sincere congratulation that at length a Compulsory Vaccination Act has been passed; for, as my predecessor in his enthusiasm for sanitary science urgently and repeatedly pointed out, the arrears of vaccination had so accumulated that it was almost hopeless to attempt to overtake them. The scare produced by the near presence of smallpox in both Sydney and Victoria undoubtedly did good in this respect, and with some amendment in the present Act such arrears can never occur again. From the Superintendent of Vaccinations I learn that upwards of 12,000 people were successfully vaccinated last year by the Public Vaccinators, to which must be added the unknown though large number performed privately. To this extent the near approach of smallpox has been an advantage to Tasmania; and when some system of peripatetic vaccinators has been established, as suggested by the Superintendent, by which the outlying districts can be visited and thoroughly vaccinated, at less cost than under the present Act, it will become less and less possible for this loathsome disease to gain a permanent footing in Tasmania, even should it reach our shores. For some time during the scare, and since, calf-to-arm vaccination was privately performed in Hobart, thus satisfying the caprice of those persons who preferred that method to the equally efficacious and much more convenient practice of arm-to-arm vaccination.

The additional clauses of the Police Act passed during the last session of Parliament, which gave the Mayor and Corporation power to remove dilapidated buildings, and order repairs when required, have lately been acted upon. Visits of inspection have been made to various parts of the city by the Mayor and Health Committee, and houses manifestly unfit for human habitation have been pulled down; while in other cases, where only the want of repairs has rendered them injurious to the health of the inhabitants, the needed repairs have been ordered. Much, however, yet remains to be done, and it is too early to expect great results from this Act.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD O. GIBLIN, *M.D.*
Hobart, 1st May, 1882.

The Hon. W. MOORE, M.L.C.,
Colonial Secretary, Tasmania.