Canterbury Urban Sanitary Authority.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 1895.

To the Mayor and Members of the Sanitary Committee.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of presenting to you my nineteenth annual report of the health and sanitary condition of the Borough for the past year. Births.—The number of births registered in the Borough during the year 1895 was 591; 276 of which were males, and 315 females, making a birth-rate of 25·6 per 1,000 of the estimated population of 1891; viz., 23,026. Deaths.—The number of deaths in the year 1895 was 454, 253 of which were males and 201 females; 78 of which were under 1 year of age; 40 of 1 year of age and under 5; 18 of 5 years of age and under 15; 27 of 15 years of age and under 25; 109 of 25 years of age and under 60; and 182 of 60 years of age and upwards. 49 of these deaths occurred in the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, inclusive of 32 cases brought into the Hospital from the country districts with their fatal diseases upon them for medical and surgical treatment. The death-rate of the estimated population for the year 1895 would therefore be 19·7 per 1,000, including the 32 deaths in the Hospital brought from the country districts, and excluding the number 32 so introduced the actual death-rate for the city is 18·3 per 1,000. The excess of births over deaths for the year 1895 is 137. There is an increase of 65 deaths over last year; 14 more than 1893; 3 more than 1892; 50 more than 1891; 34 more than 1890; and 25 more than in 1889. The increased death-rate was due to the large number of old people dying during the severe weather of January, February, and March. There were 78 deaths under 1 year of age. The infantile death-rate measured by the proportion of deaths under 1 year of age to 1,000 births registered is 132; very slightly in excess of last year.

DEATH RATE FOR CANTERBURY AS REQUIRED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD FOR 1895.

Name of disease.	Under 5 years.	Over 5 years.
Small Pox	0	0
Scarlatina	0	1
Diphtheria	1	3
Membranous Croup	1	0
Typhus	0	0
Enteric	0	4
Continued	0	0
Relapsing	0	0
Puerperal	0	0
Cholera	0	0
Erysipelas	0	0
Measles	18	1
Whooping Cough	2	0
Diarrhœa and Dysentry	13	4
Rheumatic Fever	0	1
Ague	0	0
Phthisis	0	53
Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy	13	36
Heart disease	0	43
Injuries	0	6
All other diseases	70	186

Total for 1895.....454.

These figures should be compared with those of previous years, as seen in the following table:—

CAUSES OF DEATH IN CANTERBURY FOR TEN YEARS.

CAUSES.	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Smallpox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scarlatina	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	1	1	1
Measles	4	0	13	0	16	0	2	14	2	19
Diphtheria	5	8	7	8	6	1	2	1	5	4
Membranous Croup	3	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	1
Whoopingcough	9	10	4	1	3	8	2	4	19	2
Fevers. Typhus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fevers. Enteric	6	7	7	9	4	4	2	6	6	4
Fevers. Continued	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fevers. Relapsing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fevers. Puerperal	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0
Cholera	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Erysipelas	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0
Diarrhœa and Dysentery	17	10	6	16	2	3	3	19	1	17
Rheumatic Fvr	0	0	3	2	4	0	1	3	0	1
Ague	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phthisis	53	53	48	46	41	49	38	39	28	53
Bronchitis, Pleurisy, and pneumonia	93	72	52	65	46	52	86	56	56	49
Heart Disease	57	39	53	47	45	48	34	46	48	43
Injuries	10	19	4	14	6	8	8	4	5	4
Other Diseases	257	226	194	216	245	230	265	231	213	256
	510	457	421	429	420	404	451	440	389	454

The average number of deaths for the past ten years is 435·5; so that the number of deaths this year is above the average.

COMPARATIVE TABLE ON THE AGE AT WHICH DEATH OCCURRED IN CANTERBURY FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS.

	At all Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 60.	60 and upwards.
1886	570	100	55	21	38	126	170
1887	457	109	52	25	28	106	146
1888	421	167	60	17	36	94	146
1889	429	76	38	14	31	128	142
1890	420	79	39	16	21	124	141
1891	404	60	37	14	30	91	172
1892	451	87	34	14	29	111	181
1893	440	99	43	15	27	109	147
1894	389	75	44	22	16	84	148
1895	454	78	40	18	27	109	182

Zymotic Rate.—The zymotic death-rate will be 1.7 per 1,000. The number of deaths from infectious or preventible disease is 30, a decrease of 50 over last year; an increase of four over 1893; an increase of 15 over 1892; 17 over 1891; of 1 over 1890; of 1 over 1889; and a decrease of 34 over 1888.

Notification of Infectious Disease.—There were 78 cases of infectious disease notified, a decrease of 33 on last year, viz.:—Smallpox, 19; scarlatina, 13; diphtheria, 12; typhoid fever, 11; erysipelas, 22; membranous croup, 1.

Scarlatina.—This disease was not epidemic during the year. There were 13 cases notified with one death. In

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three cases the infections could be traced. The remainder were isolated cases, and there was no connection with each other. Three occurred in one house, two in another, and eight single cases.

Diphtheria.—Of the 13 cases of this disease, one was supposed to have been contracted through unstopping a drain, and the infection was conveyed to other members of the same family. As there was no means of isolation, and no hospital to which the patients could be taken, I thought it advisable to engage a trained nurse, which was done, with the result that the disease did not spread further. Three cases were contracted by the children going to the house where a child was suffering from membranous croup, which disease is really diphtheria, and should be isolated in the same way. Two cases were imported into the district, and four were isolated cases in which no cause was assigned.

Measles.—There was an epidemic of this disease during February, March, and April, and many of the elementary schools were closed in consequence. Measles caused 19 deaths. This disease is very difficult to stamp out as it is infectious before the rash comes out, and the child becomes infectious even before the mother knows the child has the disease. It spreads rapidly in schools, and is very fatal in cold weather.

Typhoid Fever.—Of the 11 cases of this disease six were traced to milk, which came from a country dairy where there had been similar illness; prompt action was taken, the milk supply from the infected farm was stopped, and there were no fresh cases. Of the other notifications, two were attributed to polluted water, two from defective drains, and one through inhaling smells from a corpse whilst acting as undertaker, the body having been disinterred after a year's burial. This disease caused four deaths. In addition to the outbreak of typhoid which was due to milk, another peculiar event happened last autumn, which was also due to milk. At least 11 persons were attacked one night with violent pains, sickness, and other symtoms of poisoning. They had all partaken of ice creams. Upon enquiry, it was ascertained the milk that had been used in the manufacture of the ices was obtained from the country, and from a cow which the following day was found to be suffering from milk fever and had to be slaughtered. Such instances as these shews the necessity of the precaution being taken of boiling all milk before using it.

Erysipelas.—There were 22 cases of the disease, four occurred in the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, one in the Union Infirmary, and 17 in different parts of the city. This disease is due to many causes and some patients are subject to recurrent attacks.

Whooping Cough caused two deaths under five years of age, a decrease of 17 over last year.

Diarrhœa caused 17 deaths, 13 under and four over 5 years of age.

Smallpox.—Of the 19 cases reported, no less than 17 occurred during the first quarter and 2 in the second. This epidemic was a continuation of the one that commenced in December, 1894, and which I reported on in my last annual report. It was confined to one district, viz., Wincheap, 5 cases in one house, 2 each in three houses, and 8 isolated cases. A Smallpox Hospital was erected, and as soon as the cases were removed to it the disease was stamped out. Not a single death occurred, although some of the cases were of a very severe type. I think it is a cause for congratulation that the disease did not spread into other parts of Canterbury, and that it was stamped out so readily by the erection of a Smallpox Hospital. I am sure it will compare favourably with any epidemic of a similar character occurring in other places, both as to the number attacked and to the cost of stamping it out.

Sanatorium.—The land on which the Sanatorium is to be built has been purchased. An inquiry has been held as to the necessity of providing a Hospital for Infectious Diseases by the Local Government Board, and the Board has sanctioned the loan of the money, shewing they agree with the Council as to its necessity. The plans have been approved by the same authority. Now it only remains for the Council to build the Hospital, and I sincerely trust that no unnecessary delay will occur in carrying out the work. The military authorities, I believe, are anxious to co-operate with the Council by sending their infectious cases to our Hospital and paying for the same. On the principal that prevention is better than cure, the Hospital should be the means of stamping out any infectious disease as quickly as it arises, and by making Canterbury a city free from the infectious diseases will confer a lasting boon on the city.

The Housing of the Working Classes Act.—I have made the usual inspection of the cottage property within the district. In conjunction with your Surveyor, I have drawn up and presented a special report on the three blocks of cottages in the three passages in Stour Street. A scheme was proposed to compensate the owners, and to pull down these dilapidated and insanitary dwellings. The matter was shelved, but I do hope the Council will not lose sight of this important reform, and eventually clear the passages and build up a block of sanitary buildings, with proper light, ventilation, and drainage.

Water Supply.—Fifty-two houses have been supplied with water from the Canterbury Gas and Water mains, making a total of 4,485 houses so supplied. It is impossible to provide a better supply, and Canterbury is noted for its pure water supply.

Drainage.—The houses on both sides of Norman Road and Nunnery Road have been drained into the main sewer, paved, channelled, and made good. Cesspools abandoned. The lower end of Hanover Place and Hanover Road have been dealt with in the same way. The Northgate and Sturry Road sewer is to be enlarged during the coming year, and the drainage of the latter district undertaken. It is an important and urgent matter.

30 New Houses Erected.—The Surveyor informs me he has not certified any new houses as fit for habitation, and the whole matter of the building bye-laws is deserving of the attention of the Council.

Scavenging.—The old system of scavenging by a band of men has been done away with, and a new and, in my opinion, a much better system has taken its place. It is now carried on by a system of a district being allotted to each man with a hand cart, so that the streets are paraded by each man at least once a day and in the main streets three or four times a day. The streets are much cleaner and in a better sanitary condition than formerly.

Bakehouses.—The usual inspection of these has taken place, and with one or two exceptions were found in a satisfactory condition. The slaughter-houses, dairies, and cow-sheds have been inspected and found satisfactory.

Recent legislation has placed additional work on local sanitary officers with respect to Factories and Workshops. These Acts at one time were under the Factory Inspectors, but now all matters relating to sanitation, such as cleanliness, sanitary arrangements and overcrowding (each worker to have not less than 250ft. air space) are under the local authorities. Laundries are also included in the Acts.

Adulteration.—Mr. Harvey, the Canterbury Analyst, kindly forward me the following report under the Food and Drugs' Act:—Twenty-five samples were analysed, viz.:—Butter 4 samples, bread 2, coffee 1, lard 2, milk 14, white pepper 1, vinegar 1, all of which were found to be genuine; 9 samples of water submitted for analyse, 4 of which were affected by sewage percolation, and 5 were within the standard limit and passed as safe for drinking purposes.

I append your Sanitary Inspector's report of the details of his work as follows:—35 houses, 1 school, and the Sanitorium were fumigated after infectious disease; 25 quantities of bedding, clothing, &c., disinfected at the Disinfecting Chamber, and 5 lots of bedding destroyed by request. 34 houses supplied with disinfectants, and drains periodically flushed during cases of illness. 5 patients were removed in the infectious carriage to the Sanitorium. 51 drains were examined on account of illness. 63 houses were examined by request. 115 drains were submitted to the smoke test. 129 closets and drains unstopped, and 26 cesspools emptied. 118 complaints were received. 87 nuisances abated. 30 offensive accumulations removed. 13 cases of overcrowding were dealt with. 9 persons ordered to discontinue keeping pigs within 50ft. of dwelling houses. 1,472 houses and tenements inspected; 387 having defects. Two lots of fish and three of meat, unfit for food, were destroyed. 47 inspections under the Factories and Workshops Acts. Two half-yearly visits paid to the 54 bakehouses in the city. The cowsheds and dairies, lodging-houses, slaughter-houses, and stable yards were also under periodical inspection.

And remain,

Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

FRANK WACHER,

Medical Officer of Health.

Monastery House,
Canterbury,
March 24th, 1896.