[Report 1896] / Medical Officer of Health, Darlington County Borough.

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Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Borough of Darlington for the Year ending 31st December, 1896.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE.

GENTLEMEN,

The beginning of a new year reminds me of my duty to prepare for you an account of my work and recommendations in the past year which has been submitted to your various meetings for your sanction and approval, or the fire of your criticism, as in your wisdom you have deemed best.

VITAL STATISTICS—BIRTH RATE—The births registered during the year numbered 1,147, or 46 less than in the preceding year. There was a gradual increase in the births for each quarter, viz., 278 in the first, 284 in the second, 286 in the third, and 299 in the last quarter. This gives a birth rate of 28 per thousand per annum on a population estimated at 41,000.

DEATH RATE—The deaths registered during the same period numbered 594, or 42 less than in the preceding year. The lowest death rate occurred in the third quarter, 130, and the next lowest in the first, 133, that in the second and last being nearly the same, viz., 166 and 165 respectively. The population being estimated as above gives a death rate of 14·4 for the year, or rather less than 1 per thousand fewer than in 1895.

The table accompanying this report gives the ages at which these deaths occurred, and the diseases to which death was attributed.

The Infant mortality is slightly less than in the preceding year, being 3·7 instead of 4·9 per thousand under 1 year, and 6 instead of 6·2 under 5 years. The difference is more marked under 1 year than when the first 5 years are taken together.

ZYMOTIC DEATH RATE—The Zymotic death rate is lower than that of last year, being 1·8 compared with 2·4 per thousand. The most fatal of the Zymotic diseases was Measles, from which the death rate was ·46, followed closely by Whooping Cough and Scarlatina with rates of ·39 and ·36 respectively. All the deaths due to Measles occurred in children under 5 years of age, and from Whooping Cough all except 1. The death rate from Diarrhœa was small, and also that from Enteric Fever.

NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES—During the year there were 347 cases of Infectious Disease notified, or 146 more cases than in the preceeding year. The increase was due to an epidemic of Scarlatina which began at the very beginning of the year (or rather in November, 1895) and continued for the first six months, diminishing in the last six somewhat, though still producing

a considerable number of cases. The total number of cases of Scarlatina reported was 268, compared with 71 in 1895. The type of disease was more severe than usual, and the deaths amounted to 5·6 per cent. of those attacked, chiefly owing to the fact that many young children contracted the disease, and it was in children under 5 years that 12 out of the 15 deaths occurred. In March and April the disease had got to be so virulent in some districts that I thought it advisable to recommend the closing of certain schools with a view to check it. This step had the desired effect, though it was not possible to keep the schools closed sufficiently long to stamp out the epidemic. Owing to the number of cases of Measles in summer, I recommended certain schools to be closed earlier for the midsummer holidays. There can be no doubt that these epidemic diseases among children are spread at the schools. A child with the prodromata of Measles is sent to school supposed to be suffering from a common catarrh in the head. It spreads the germs of the disease throughout the class-room, and in a fortnight or so a whole crop arises from the seeds thus sown. In the same way a mild case of Scarlatina goes on attending school, and desquamation is not noticed, or if noticed it is too late to prevent the disease from being communicated to others. In this way mild cases are more likely to be injurious than severe ones as propagators of an epidemic. A careful look at the mortality table before alluded to will reveal the importance of trying to protect young children from Measles, Whooping Cough, aud Scarlatina, as most of the fatal cases in these diseases arise from children attacked under 5 years of age.

The following table gives the numbers of the different Infectious Diseases reported each month

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
Scarlatina ...	25	27	34	34	28	28	20	14	16	10	14	18	268
Diphtheria ...	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	9
Croup ...	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Enteric Fever ...	3	1	2	0	1	0	3	3	1	5	6	2	27
Continued Fever	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
Puerperal Fever	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Erysipelas ...	6	1	3	1	1	5	3	4	3	1	3	4	35
	34	30	39	37	32	33	28	23	24	18	23	26	

SCAVENGERING—During the year the streets havc been kept clean, and well watered in the summer when the drought rendered it necessary. Since the beginning of August, Jupiter Pluvius both watered the streets and flushed the sewers almost as much as was necessary. The nuisance created by the large deep ashpit still remains an evil to be remedied. I should recommend them to be cleaned out more frequently than at present, and I should like to know that every ashpit was cleaned at least every four weeks in winter and every two weeks in summer. A fairly good number of these standing abominations of ashpits have been altered during the year, and the number of bad ones is gradually diminishing, but great energy and perseverance will be necessary, as well as firmness on

the part of the Committee, to support the recommendations of their officers in this matter so that satisfactory progress may be made. We have abundant water carriage, and a large sewage farm for the disposal of the sewage, and our town is one that should take up the removal of its sewage entirely by water carriage. This method is most necesssary and advisable in the older portions of the town and in the yards, where the yards attached to the houses are small, and the population is more concentrated. It is most desirable that in these situations all excrementitious matter shonld be removed before it has time to decompose. To allow large privies and ashpits to remain in the middle of a thickly populated district is a likely way to spread Summer Diarrhœa and probably also Enteric Fever. The water carriage is the quickest mode of removing the sewage, and it does so before decomposition is set up, and consequently before any detriment to the health of the community can arise.

The Dairies and Cow Sheds and Milk Shops have all received attention, and the bye-laws relating to them have been observed so closely that no serious breach of them has arisen. The subject has often been discussed in the last few years as to the advisability of the inspection of animals kept for dairy purposes. I am not sure that the detection of tubercular disease in the early stage in cattle is an easy matter. It would be well, therefore, that milk should be boiled for three or four minutes before it is given to anyone as food.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES—The Slaughter Houses have all been inspected regularly, and the bye-laws complied with. The inspection of Slaughter Houses is a matter of importance and difficulty, seeing that they are scattered over the whole town. However, it is so essentially necessary that the meat supplied should be of good quality and free from disease, that the Inspector must spare no efforts to keep them under observation.

FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS, AND BAKEHOUSES—The Factories, Workshops, and Bakehouses have been inspected and the bye-laws complied with, so that any recommendations that have been made for slight defects have been attended to on these being pointed out to the owners.

METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS—During the past year the Meteorological Instruments in the Park have been attended to by the park keeper, and the observations recorded by him daily. The rainfall was small during the first six months, and pretty heavy during the last six, viz., 8 54 inches compared with 17·48. The month of December was that on which most rain fell, 4·77 inches, and the wet and dry bulbs of the hygrometer often registered the same temperature.

FEVER HOSPITAL—During the year 192 cases were admitted into the Hospital. There were 15 deaths in the Institution, giving a percentage mortality of 7·8 on the whole of the cases. There were 174 cases of Scarlatina admitted with 13 deaths, or 7·4 per cent , 16 cases of Enteric Fever with 2 deaths, or 12·5 per cent., and 2 cases of Diphtheria, both of whom recovered. One of the fatal cases of Enteric Fever occurred in a case which was admitted from the Rural Sanitary District. The cases of Diphtheria were treated by the Anti-Diphtheritic Serum hypodemically, and both did well.

FOOD AND DRUGS—During the year 18lbs of unsound meat were seized in the market. No proceedings were taken in this case, as the meat had evidently gone bad through standing in the market from Saturday till Monday. It was given up and destroyed. There were 11 samples of milk taken for analysis, and 7 were reported pure and 1 deficient in fat, 3 of the other samples were of doubtful quality, and the vendors were cautioned by letter. The vendor of the sample that was deficient in fat was summoned, but the magistrates declined to convict owing to their being no Government standard of fatty matter in milk. There were 12 samples of spirits analysed, of which 9 were pure and 3 deficient in spirit. The vendor of one sample of gin, 8·7 per cent below the standard, was convicted and fined £2 and 18/- costs. One sample of Scotch whisky was 4·6 and the other 4·4 per cent. below the standard. Owing to the small amount of the deficiency of spirit in these cases no proceedings were taken, but the vendors were warned in writing. One sample of well water was analysed and found pure.

There were 21½ cwts. of cherries seized which had gone bad in transit. The owners gave them up to be destroyed, and no proceedings were taken.

There were 157 lots of bedding disinfected and one lot destroyed during the year, and 135 houses disinfected after the occurrence of infectious disease.

ABATEMENT OF NUISANCES—During the year 970 nuisances were abated, such as foul condition of houses (2), structural defects of houses (31), over-crowding (6), lodging houses (2), slaughter house (1), ashpits and privies (365), deposits of manure (4), water closets (45), defective pavement of yards (223), defective traps (169), sinks and spouting connected with drains (7), yard drains stopped (98), pigsties (6), animals kept in an improper condition (4), and foul yards (5).

In company with the Inspector, I have visited all the districts of the town, and gone over the lowest parts from house to house. As will be seen from the above number of nuisances abated, and the number of yards paved, and privies and ashpits attended to, there has been a great deal of improvement and advance made in the sanitary condition of the town in the past year. The same energy in dealing with the yards and ashpits will be necessary in the future, as I am convinced the health of the community will be benefited in proportion to the number of these old capacious receptacles that is removed from its midst. The town has grown rapidly in the past year as the number of new houses springing up in almost every part testifies. The rapidity with which new houses are occupied shows that there is a large influx of strangers coming to reside in the town. And this is not to be wondered at, when one considers the advantages that Darlington offers over neigbouring towns as a residential place. In the first place I would put its educational advantages—Grammar School, High School for Girls, and many other private establishments, its Free Library, Mechanics' Institute, and in the near future its palatial Technical College. In the second place I would mention its convenient railway service to North, South, East, and West. In the third place its clean and well paved streets and healthy and salubrious climate; and last, but not least, its Parks, and propinquity to picturesque country spots accessible by pleasant walks in almost all directions.

When the Health Committee takes these things into consideration, it will be for them to leave nothing undone that is possible to make Darlington fit for what it is rapidly becoming—a residential town and health resort.

In conclusion, I have to thank the Committee and their energetic Chairman for the support and confidence they have extended to me, the Town Clerk and Borough Surveyor for their courtesy, advice, and assistance, and the Sanitary Inspector and his staff for the prompt manner in which they have carried out my insiructions.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES LAWRENCE,

Medical Officer of Health.

Table of **Deaths** during the year 1895, in the Darlington Urban Sanitary District, classified according to Diseases, Ages, and Localities.

Mortality from all causes, at subjoined Ages.						
At all ages	Under 1 year	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards
591	153	93	25	40	175	103

	Mortality from subjoined causes, distinguishing Deaths of Children under Five Years of Age.																			
	Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diptheria Membranous Croup	Fevers					Cholera	Erysipelas	Measles	Whooping Cough	Diarrhœa and Dysentery	Rheumatic Fever	Phthisis	Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy	Heart Disease	Influenza	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total
				Typhus	Enteric or Typhoid	Continued	Relapsing	Puerperal													
Under 5	0	12	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	19	15	6	0	0	50	2	0	4	132	246
5 upwards .	0	3	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	50	26	57	4	11	184	348

Area and Population of the District or Division to which this Return relates.

Area in Acres, 3,909

Population (1891) 38,060

" (Estimated to middle of 1896) 41,000

Death Rates { General 14·4 { per 1,000 population, estimated to middle of 1896

Death Rates { Infant (under one year of age) 133 { per 1,000 Births registered