[Report 1899] / Medical Officer of Health, Darlington County Borough.

Borough of Darlington.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1899.

The year rolls round so rapidly that I only just seem to have finished my report for 1898 when the task of making out that for its successor is presented to me, and as the past year has been a pretty busy one in sanitary work there should be no lack of material to present to the Committee.

POPULATION.

It is difficult to estimate our population in the present decade, as the increase in the former decade gives little indication of the increase in the present. During the decade ending in 1891 the population of the borough increased at the rate of about 300 per annum. If one looks at the birth-rate and estimates the increase of the population on that alone our progress is about the same. But if one takes the number of houses built since the census the population should have increased at about the rate of 1,000 a year, or a present population of 47,000. I believe there have been something like 1,800 houses built since the census was last taken. I do not wish to over-estimate the population, as that would vitiate our vital statistics and present them in too favourable a light, and will therefore take the population at the same figure as last year, 43,000.

VITAL STATISTICS.—BIRTH-RATE.

During the year the number of births registered in the borough was 1,227, an increase of 46 on the preceeding year. In my report for 1898 I gave a table showing the number of births registered each year since my appointment as Medical Officer of Health. This table showed a decline in the births from 1,448 in the first year of my appointment (1882) to 1,181 in 1898. These figures give a birth-rate of 28·5 per thousand population. I am favoured by the County Medical Officer with figures for the Administrative County, which show that our birth-rate is 6·5 below that of the County.

DEATH-RATE.

The number of deaths registered was 691, including 11 which occurred in the County Asylum, and 680 after deducting 3 cases of death in the Greenbank Hospital, 1 in the Borough Hospital, and 3 in the Workhouse from places outside the Borough. The deaths are practically the same as for 1898, there being only an increase of 1 last year over its predecessor if the Asylum figures be included, and of 2 if these latter be disregarded. The above figures give a death-rate of 15·9 per thousand per annum on 680 deaths.

For the ages at which death occurred, and the causes, consult tables annexed to this report.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The number of children who died under 1 year was 189, or 21 more than in the preceeding year, and gives an infantile mortality of 154 per thousand births, compared with 179 for the County, and 141 for last year. The increase in deaths among children was due to a large number of deaths in the young from diseases of the respiratory organs.

ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE.

There were 65 deaths from zymotic diseases, exclusive of influenza, which is, I believe, a disease that might well be included among the fevers, and to which 16 deaths were directly attributed, and probably five times that number indirectly. These deaths were caused by the following diseases :—Scarlatina 11, diphtheria 3, croup 2, enteric fever 4, puerperal fever 2, measles 3, whooping cough 11, and diarrhœa and dysentery 29. The zymotic death-rate from all causes stands at 1·46 per thousand population, and from the various diseases mentioned above in the following proportion :—Scarlatina ·25, diphtheria ·07, croup ·05, enteric fever ·09, puerperel fever ·05, measles ·07, whooping cough ·25, diarrhœa ·68.

The deaths from phthisis were 43, or 9 less than in the preceeding year. Indeed this is the smallest number of deaths from this disease that has been recorded for a considerable time. I do not know whether the open air crusade against phthisis dwelt upon in my last annual report has had any influence in so rapidly diminishing the fatality of this scourge of civilisation or not, but it is credible and highly probable that it may. The inference may easily be drawn by those who live in small and badly ventilated dwellings, that if plenty of fresh, pure air will cure a case of disease that has already begun, it ought also to be the best thing to prevent it from beginning at all, and so acting on this sensible theory they may have opened their windows to let in the air and the sunshine, which are the two agents at present credited with being the most potent weapons to combat this malady. Many people even yet are afraid to sleep in a room with an open window, though I am glad to say the number of people who sleep with open windows is rapidly increasing. I suppose the idea entertained by these timid people is that they might get moonstruck in the hours of the night if they left their bedroom window open. I think one can safely assure them that if they sleep with open windows they will never get to be

comsumption stricken. The consumption rate for this year is one-fifth less than for last year, and if it were reduced at this rate every year phthisis would in fifty years be an extinct disease, and our descendants would look upon a case of it as we now look upon a case of leprosy in these islands. I see no reason why at the end of the century upon which we are about to enter, phthisis, like leprosy, should not be abolished. As I have said in a former report, I do not think that notification of this disease will help at all to eradicate it, but a knowledge of how to prevent it and the spreading and inculcating that knowledge among all ages and classes of the community will. It is by letting the healthy light of science into people's minds that they may understand and know that by letting the fresh air and sunshine into their homes they will succeed in saving themselves from this doom. This must be our bulwark of defence against phthisis in the future.

NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year there were 365 cases of infectious diseases notified, or an increase of 203 cases on the preceeding year. The increase was due entirely to the prevalence of scarlatina, of which disease 221 more cases were reported than in 1898. The scarlatina epidemic increased so much in the month of November that I advised the Sanitary Committee to close the Elementary Schools of the town. This step on the part of the Authority had a very noticable effect in diminishing the number of scarlatina cases notified about a fortnight after its adoption. None of the other infectious diseases prevailed to any marked degree, and enteric fever cases were below the average and below my expectation. From the large number of cases of diarrhœa that occurred between the middle of July and September, I expected a considerable number of cases of enteric fever in autumn, as one finds that these two diseases usually run together. The number of cases of erysipilas reported was almost as great as the enteric cases. This disease a good many Sanitary Authorities omit from their list of notifiable infectious diseases, and I have never discovered any advantage it has been to the Darlington Corporation to have it, unless it may be considered a luxury. So far as I have ever known in this town it has only occurred in certain isolated cases, and has not assumed the epidemic form. This, I think, would have been its course if left to itself unvisited either by the Inspector or Medical Officer.

FEVER HOSPITAL.

During the year 243 cases were admitted into the Isolation Hospital. The following were the numbers of each disease admitted :—Scarlatina 199, diphtheria 10, enteric fever 30, varicella 1, meningitis 1, general tuberculosis 1, rheumatism 1. There were 19 cases of the aforementioned 119 sent in from the Rural District, and all the cases from the Rural District recovered, which leaves 180 cases admitted from the Borough, with 7 deaths, or a mortality of 3·8 per cent. Of the total number of cases of scarlatina reported, about 70 per cent. were treated in the Hospital, as I have said with a 3·8 per cent. mortality, or including the rural cases 3·5 per cent. Of the remaining 30 per cent. treated at their own homes 4·4 per cent. died. There

were 4 deaths and 26 recoveries among the 30 cases of Enteric Fever treated in the Hospital, or a percentage mortality of 13·3. There were 11 cases of diphtheria treated in the hospital, of whom 6 were from the Borough and 4 from the Rural District. One of the cases from the Rural District died after injection of anti-diphtheritic serum, and tracheotomy; all the other cases were subjected to serum therapy alone and recovered.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.

The slaughter-houses have been regularly inspected during the year, and as a rule have been found clean, well ventilated, and in good order. In a few cases, where the houses were not cleaned satisfactorily after slaughtering was completed, or the offal, &c., not removed at once according to the bye-laws, an informal notice by the Inspector was sufficient to procure the abatement of the nuisance in every case.

BAKEHOUSES.

The bakehouses have been found clean and regularly limewashed according to the bye-laws, and no interference by the Inspector was required. On several occasions the subject of ice cream manufacture, and its possible pollution has been before the attention of the Committee, and some difficulty has been experienced in determining the standard of cleanliness required, or the pollution necessary to constitute an idictable offence. The opinion is generally entertained that much of this commodity is of doubtful purity or cleanliness, and one can only hope that a standard of purity may soon be found.

SCAVENGERING.

The cleaning and watering of the streets, and also the cleaning of the back streets, has been excellently carried out. I am not satisfied that the ashpits have been emptied as frequently as they should be. These should be emptied at least once a fortnight, as the drains in these deep open ashpits are liable to get blocked by the ashes, and thus prevent the water from getting away. This wet condition favours the decay of the vegetable matter thrown into them, making them smell, and vitiating the surrounding atmosphere.

DRAINAGE.

There is nothing of a radical nature to report under this subject. The main drain conveying the sewage to the farm is as it has been, and only some new drains from new streets which have been laid down during the year have been connected with those already laid.

FOOD AND DRUGS.

During the year 50 samples of different kinds of food, drugs, and milk have been taken for analysis by the Inspector. All these were reported by the Analyst to be pure and of standard quality, except one sample of milk, which contained 40 per cent. of added water, and one sample of spirit, which was 35 degrees under proof. The vendor of the milk was fined £5 and costs, and of the spirits £1 and costs. There were three samples of water analysed from private wells, and one of these was condemned as unfit for use.

During the year 198 parcels of infected bedding were disinfected, and it was not considered necessary to destroy any, and 218 houses were disinfected from which cases of infectious disease had been notified. Two schools were also disinfected. Three houses were closed under the local bye-laws, and ten others made fit for habitation after formal notice requiring structural defects to be remedied.

NUISANCES ABATED.

During the year the number of nuisances abated has been greater than in any former year, and has entailed a great amount of inspection and clerical work and serving of notices upon the Sanitary Department. These nuisances have been of the usual kind, viz. :—Structural defects and foul state of dwellings, foul condition of dairies and cowsheds, and of slaughter houses, ashpits, and privies, deposits of manure, defects in water closets and their fittings, yard pavements, stoppage of drains, animals improperly kept, foul yards, &c., &c.

During the year a great deal of good work has been done in the number of foul ashpits that have been converted into waterclosets and had ash boxes supplied for their house refuse. In a certain number of cases these old-fashioned deep ashpits have been converted into privy ashpits, where access could be obtained to empty them by the soil carts. As I have pointed out in a former report, this is the kind of sanitary work most required by the Borough. I have no doubt but that the health of the community will be improved in proportion to the number of these pestilitial, sunken ashpits that are removed from our midst. Another matter which will require attention in the future is the almost uninhabitable condition of some of the houses in the old yards of the town. These are often without proper space for air to circulate, and what air there is is often polluted by ashpit and privy in the neighbourhood. Some of these old yards, too, are paved with kidneys or cobbles, so that it is almost impossible to keep the surface of the yard clean. To pave these yards and put the offices of some of these houses into proper sanitary condition would almost take more money to do than the whole premises are worth, and when all was done that could be done they would never be very wholesome nor elavating abodes. As I have said, the question will soon have to be decided what is to be done with this class of property. A good number of house yards are also paved with the same material, and the same difficulty of keeping them clean is experienced as is the case in the before mentioned common yards.

The water supply during the year has been abundant and of good quality. There has not been any disease noticed in the town which could in any way be attributed to the water.

In conclusion, my thanks are due to the Chairman and members of the Committee for the way in which they have aided me in my work by carrying out the various suggestions I have made to them from time to time upon matters affecting the health of the town.

JAMES LAWRENCE, M.D.,
Medical Officer of Health.

A. Table of **Deaths** during the year 1899, 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
680	189	71	31	33	178	178

Mortality from subjoined causes, distinguishing Deaths of Children under Five Years of Age.

	Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Membranous Croup	Fevers: Typhus	Fevers: Enteric or Typhoid	Fevers: Continued	Fevers: Relapsing	Fevers: Puerperal	Cholera	Erysipelas	Measles	Whooping Cough	Diarrhœa and Dysentery	Rheumatic Fever	Phthisis	Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy	Heart Disease	Influenza	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total
Under 5.....	0	8	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	11	27	0	0	44	0	0	3	161	260
5 upwards...	0	3	2	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	43	66	63	8	16	210	420

Deaths occurring outside the district among persons belonging thereto in the County Asylum.

0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	5	11

Deaths occurring within the district among persons not belonging thereto in the Workhouse, the Hospital, and the Fever Hospital.

0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	7

B. Table of **Population, Births, and of New Cases of Infectious Sickness,** coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health, during the year 1899, in the Darlington Urban Sanitary District, classified according to Diseases, Ages, and Localities.

Population at all Ages: Last Census.	Population at all Ages: Estimated to middle of 1899	Registered Births
38060	43000	1227

New Cases of Sickness in each Locality, coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health.

Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Membranous Croup	Fevers: Typhus	Fevers: Enteric or Typhoid	Fevers: Continued	Fevers: Relapsing	Fevers: Puerperal	Cholera	Erysipelas
0	270	11	6	0	38	1	0	6	0	33

Number of such Cases Removed from their homes in the several Localities for Treatment in Isolation Hospital.

Smallpox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Membranous Croup	Fevers: Typhus	Fevers: Enteric or Typhoid	Fevers: Continued	Fevers: Relapsing	Fevers: Puerperal	Cholera	Erysipelas
0	199	10	0	0	30	0	0	0	0	0

"Notification of Infectious Disease" has been compulsory in the District since 1889.
Darlington Borough Hospital is situated within the District.

JAMES LAWRENCE,
Medical Officer of Health.

12th February, 1900.

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

Area in Acres, 3,909.

Population (last Census), 38,060.

,, (estimated to middle of 1899), 43,000.

Death Rates — General 15·9 — per 1,000 population, estimated to middle of 1899.

Death Rates — Infant (under 1 year of age) 154 — per 1,000 Births Registered.