

On the 8th March two rats were found upon Hobson Street Wharf which seemed to show signs of the plague bacillus, and it was at the same time reported to me that rats had been dying in the neighbourhood during the previous few days. Specimens in the suspected instances were sent to Head Office for confirmation, and the authorities were communicated with here in Auckland. A number of rats were carefully examined from various parts of the town, and a more careful watch made, especially in the neighbourhood of the wharves, for rats dying under similar suspicious circumstances. The suspicion was not, however, entirely confirmed, but the mortality ceased. It was a noticeable feature that for some time afterwards very few rats were observed in the neighbourhood where the dead ones had been found.

As in former reports, Mr. Symons has compiled the statistical figures in this report, for which I must express my thanks.

The rapidly increasing population of this health district, and the more earnest desire of the people in the outlying and smaller centres for the adequate supervision of sanitary requirements by this Department, has greatly increased the work of this office, even in the two years I have administered it. I foresee a necessary increase of the staff of this office at a no distant date.

JOS. P. FRENGLEY, M.D., D.P.H.,
District Health Officer.

HAWKE'S BAY DISTRICT.

SIR,—

Department of Public Health, District Office, Napier, 1st April, 1906.

I have the honour to lay before you the fifth annual report of the Hawke's Bay Health District.

I am pleased to report that there has been a steady advance in sanitary matters over the whole district during the past year. The awakening of the local authorities in some of the smaller centres, which I alluded to last year, continues, and I am glad to report that they are now becoming fully alive to their responsibilities, and are taking an active interest in the sanitary welfare of their districts.

I am further glad to report that the work has been carried on with a minimum of friction. I can safely say that the advance in sanitary matters during the past year has been greater than in any previous year since the Department has been in existence, yet from the manner in which I have been treated by the local bodies and the public generally it has been a very comfortable and pleasant year for me. I do not think that I am too optimistic in taking the view that the Department is popular with the people in this district, and they do not look on the District Health Officer as a fiend who will pick their pockets or augment the rates by insisting on the carrying-out of useless fads, but as a counsellor and a friend who will assist them in their difficulties.

Many of the up-country settlers have sought my advice with reference to the sanitary requirements on their premises, and many of them have septic-tank installations. In every case where my advice has been sought I have insisted that the drain-laying and plumbing should conform to up-to-date sanitation; have had the work inspected and the drains tested before allowing the work to be passed.

The following diseases have been notified during the year :—

Erysipelas and Blood-poisoning.—Hastings, 1; Gisborne, 1; other districts, 1: total, 3.

Scarlatina.—Napier, 2; Hastings, 5; Waipawa, 1; Dannevirke, 1; Woodville, 4; Gisborne, 2; other districts, 10: total, 25.

Typhoid Fever.—Napier, 12; Hastings, 3; Woodville, 1; Gisborne, 26; Wairoa, 5; other districts, 8: total, 55.

Tuberculosis.—Napier, 10; Hastings, 1; Waipawa, 1; Dannevirke, 1; Gisborne, 14; Wairoa (chiefly among the Maoris), 34; other districts, 12: total, 73.

Diphtheria.—Napier, 15; Hastings, 8; Waipawa, 1; Waipukurau, 2; Dannevirke, 1; Gisborne, 7; other districts, 10: total, 44.

NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES COMPARED WITH LAST YEAR.

Scarlatina.—In 1905, 38 cases; in 1906, 25 cases—a decrease of 13 cases.

Typhoid Fever.—In 1905, 43 cases; in 1906, 55 cases—an increase of 12 cases.

Tuberculosis.—In 1905, 67 cases; in 1906, 73 cases—an increase of 6 cases.

Diphtheria in both years was 44 cases—no alteration.

Analysis of the Above.

The decrease in the number of cases of scarlatina notified has little bearing on the sanitary condition of the district. The complaint depends on infection, and segregation aids its spread, but the presence of the epidemic has not such an important bearing on sanitation as that of many other diseases. Most of the children in the district are immune, from a previous attack in the widespread epidemic which visited the district three years ago, but it only needs fresh pabulum, and the introduction of a case to bring about another epidemic.

An increase of 12 notifications of typhoid fever is to be regretted, but the number of cases relatively to the population is very small, and notwithstanding the augmentation, the district is nevertheless to be congratulated on the paucity of the cases. Napier accounts for 12 cases, against 6 last year. The increase is to be regretted, but the number of cases relatively to the population is so small and so much less than has been experienced in comparatively recent years that the increase need give rise to no dissatisfaction or alarm. Gisborne is to the fore with 26 cases, an increase of 14 on last year.