

Department of Public Health,
Wellington, 30th September, 1908.
MY LORD,—
I have the honour to transmit herewith, for Your Excellency's information, the report of the Department of Public Health for the year 1907–8.
I have, &c.,
GEO. FOWLDS,
Minister of Public Health.
His Excellency the Right Hon. Baron Plunket, K.C.V.O.,
Governor of New Zealand.

The CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

SIR,—

The past year has been one of steady progress. The several reports of the District Health Officers and their Inspectors show clear evidence of this.

There has been a great increase in the work of the Bacteriologist and the Analysts, and every year the Department becomes a more manageable and effective machine for the conservation of the public health.

I desire to record my warmest appreciation of the loyal service rendered by all the officers.

CONSUMPTION.

There is one feature of the campaign which deserves the earnest attention of all who have the interests of the patients at heart not less than the safeguarding of the general public. For long the warnings issued as to the infectivity of consumption went unheeded; but there came a time when they were hearkened to, and then followed an unreasoning fear and consequent isolation with occasional injustice to the poor sufferer.

I record the following case not because I think it one likely to happen again, nor because any suchlike took place before, but simply in order to call a halt to the unreasoning dread which has filled the minds of some of our people.

A. had been an inmate of "Te Waikato" for a few months, but it was soon seen that he could not get better. When he learned this he asked to be allowed to go home. He had plenty of money; his fare to Wellington was assured, and he landed in Onehunga timed to catch the southern boat. Unfortunately the weather was bad, and the boat was put off till the Monday. Vainly he sought a lodging, and, although he had money enough to pay, he could find a bed nowhere save in an outhouse. From pillar to post did he wander next day, till finally he found shelter in a hotel, where he died.

Collectively we have great sympathy for the poor soul stricken with this disease; individually we occasion him much unnecessary hardship. Day after day I have men and women who have passed through one or other of our sanatoria, and are now fairly well, eager and anxious to undertake some work, and yet hardly any one will give them a chance. It is a blot upon our alleged altruism that such treatment could be meted out to any one as was offered to poor A.

I wish to proclaim it as forcibly as I can that the man who has spent a few months in a well-ordered sanatorium is a safer neighbour, even though he be still ill, than the sufferer who has had no institutional instruction, though maybe he seems well. Destruction of the sputum, care of the person, and all that proper living really spells has been so dinned into them at the sanatorium that it is next to impossible for them to behave in such a way as to endanger the health of others.