

At the last meeting of the New Zealand Branch of the British Medical Association Dr. Truby King's excellent paper on the subject evoked much discussion, and subsequently a subcommittee was appointed to confer with the officers of this Department with a view to drawing up a pamphlet on infant-feeding which would be generally acceptable to the medical profession. Short of this a pamphlet would be of little real value.

T. H. A. VALINTINE,
Assistant Chief Health Officer

SIR,—

Department of Public Health, Wellington, 30th April, 1906.

I have the honour to present my annual report for the year 1905-6.

The duties of Chief Health Officer having fallen upon Dr. Valintine in your absence, it is necessary for me to undertake the report on the general work of the district. Owing to the somewhat varied nature of my duties, a fair portion of my time has been taken up with matters affecting other districts—such as the bacteriological analysis of the principal water-supplies, the examination of rats in Auckland, and the plans and site for the consumptive annexe at Christchurch. Owing, however, to the excellent results obtained from the system of sanitary inspection which has been established in the greater part of the Wellington Province, the work of the district has been overtaken in a fairly satisfactory manner. The appointment of Mr. Schauer as Chief Inspector has relieved me of much of the routine work, such as the supervision of the reports and recommendations from Sanitary Inspectors, while many of the special inspections I can safely refer to so capable and reliable an officer. As regard the bacteriological-laboratory work, I am of course unable to devote as much time to this subject as I should like, or as its importance demands. There are many sanitary questions which offer a useful field for research-work in the laboratory, but these cannot be touched on unless one has an opportunity of devoting the whole of one's time to the subject. As it was, the scientific side of my duties was crowded too much into the background, and would have been wholly beyond my reach but for the skill and enthusiasm of my assistant, Mr. Hurley, whose work I cannot too highly praise. How much I depend on him I learnt especially during his absence on a brief holiday—a period which meant for me not infrequent vigils on towards the small hours of the morning.

The officers of the Department in general, both clerical and in the field, have, by their loyal co-operation, greatly assisted in making the work of a heavy year run smoothly.

VITAL STATISTICS.

It is greatly to be regretted that we have not available complete statistics for the various parts of the district. The Registrar-General's returns only give general details for the whole colony, and for the four larger centres. It is most essential that we should be able to have before us the death-rate returns for each division of the district. A slight advance has been made during the past year, in that we now receive notices of deaths from zymotic diseases in the larger districts.

It is to be hoped that the very important information to be gathered from complete statistics may shortly be placed within our reach.

BIRTH-RATE.

The birth-rate for Wellington during the year 1905 was 29·72 per 1,000 of population, showing a marked increase on that for 1904, which was 26·77. The average in the four centres was 28·34.

DEATH-RATE.

The death-rate for both Wellington City and city and suburbs shows a satisfactory decrease this year, both being below the average for the four centres, as the following tables show :—

Table I.—Death-rate for the Whole Colony per 1,000 Population.

						Wellington City.	Wellington and Suburbs.	Average of Four Centres, including Suburbs.
1901	..	..	..	..	..	10·66	10·29	11·50
1902	..	..	..	..	..	12·58	12·24	12·74
1903	..	..	..	..	..	11·30	10·93	11·73
1904	..	..	..	..	..	10·75	10·43	10·73
1905	..	..	..	..	..	10·55	10·21	10·42
Mean for five years						11·16	10·82	11·42

Excluding children under one year, the drop is even more marked :—

Table II.—Death-rate, excluding Children under One Year.

Table 11.—Death-rate, excluding Children under One Year.								Wellington and Suburbs.	Average, Four Centres.
1901	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.59	8.96
1902	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.86	9.56
1903	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.27	9.14
1904	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.89	8.30
1905	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.38	8.02
Mean average for five years					..	..	7.99	8.79