

## REPORT.

The INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF HOSPITALS AND CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH, HOSPITALS, AND CHARITABLE AID.

I HAVE the honour to lay before you the annual report of the Department for the year 1911-12.

### PUBLIC HEALTH.

1. The birth-rate of the Dominion for 1911 was 25·97 per 1,000—the lowest recorded since 1902 (25·89). But for the low birth-rate recorded in Victoria for the year 1911 (24·84), New Zealand would have had the unenviable distinction of the lowest birth-rate in Australasia.

The death-rate for 1911 was 9·39—slightly lower than that of the previous year (9·71). The lowest death-rate recorded in New Zealand was that for 1896 (9·10).

The infantile death-rate—*i.e.*, the total number of deaths under one year per 1,000 births—was 56·31, the lowest infantile-mortality rate hitherto recorded in the Dominion.

The following table shows during the last ten years that there has been a noticeable decline in this rate in our four chief cities :—

*Number of Infantile Deaths per 1,000 Births, Years 1902-11.*

	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.	1911.
The Dominion .. ..	82·89	81·08	70·98	67·52	62·10	88·78	67·88	61·60	67·73	56·31
Auckland and suburban boroughs	140·74	121·48	70·12	91·52	85·80	97·19	81·87	61·85	79·02	63·02
Wellington and suburban boroughs	130·20	92·76	95·33	96·21	71·88	117·80	81·67	84·21	84·59	73·36
Christchurch and suburban boroughs	117·55	100·52	102·96	88·99	74·37	126·16	67·82	62·78	69·40	62·90
Dunedin and suburban boroughs	89·07	62·30	93·02	67·13	72·60	95·36	74·54	48·52	79·08	43·42

### *Tuberculosis.*

2. In 1911, 738 persons died from some form or other of tubercular disease—the mortality-rate being 7·27 per 10,000, the lowest hitherto recorded. Of these 738 deaths, 536 were due to phthisis, the mortality-rate for the latter being 5·28 per 10,000. The decrease in this mortality-rate, which was commented on in last year's report, has therefore been maintained.

Though this is eminently satisfactory, it is to be hoped that during the ensuing year Hospital Boards and other public and private authorities will initiate a more rigorous campaign against this disease.

Three of the larger Hospital Boards have started anti-tuberculosis dispensaries with a view to catching and treating the early case of consumption, as well as arranging for the treatment of consumptive patients, in a more systematic manner than has been the case in the past. It is the intention of the Department to call at an early date a conference of medical practitioners who have made a special study of the control and treatment of consumption. By this means it may be possible to reopen the campaign against this disease with renewed vigour, and with all the armamentarium considered necessary by recent experience and research.

### *Cancer.*

3. Those who may care to peruse the statistics attached to this report will note with concern the gradual increase in the mortality-rate from this disease, which was the cause last year of no less than 809 deaths, or a mortality-rate of 7·97—the highest hitherto recorded in New Zealand. At one time it was thought that the increase was due to more accurate diagnosis on the part of the profession, but no longer can this solace be allowed. The causes of cancer and the reasons for its increase are not known, and we can therefore only wait as patiently as we can the reports of the Cancer Research Commission.

### *Infectious Diseases.*

4. 4,878 cases of infectious disease were notified last year, as against 4,153 in 1910. Chief of these were—(a) Scarlet fever, 2,362 cases with only 9 deaths; (b) diphtheria, 868 cases; (c) enteric fever, 792 cases with 67 deaths.

The District Health Officers' remarks as to the incidence of these diseases are contained in an appendix to this report.

Special attention may, however, be directed to the remarks of Drs. Makgill and Chesson with regard to the part that the Maori plays in the spread of typhoid fever. The epidemics at Waiapu, Ahipara, Te Puke, Ripia, Kawhia, and other places originated in Native settlements, and the epidemic at Gisborne was largely due to the same source. It is significant that of the 792 notifications, only 89 were from the South Island.