

1902.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

(REPORT OF THE) BY THE CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

The Hon. the MINISTER of PUBLIC HEALTH to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY LORD,—

Public Health Office, Wellington, July 28, 1902.

I have the honour to submit to Your Excellency the report of the Public Health Department for the year 1901-2.

I have, &c.,

J. G. WARD,

His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand.

Minister of Public Health.

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

SIR,—

Department of Public Health, Wellington, July 28, 1902.

The dying words of the African empire-builder form a not unfitting introduction to this the second report of the Health Department—"So much to do, so little done." That there is much to do ere New Zealand can be said to be free from reproach in a sanitary sense is admitted even by that greatest of all philosophers, "the man in the street." Not even in his most vain-glorious moments would he hesitate to admit that all is not as it should be in this fair land of ours. Though little has been done that is apparent, the groundwork of many sound sanitary reforms has been laid. To insure that all steps taken in the future must be in the true and right direction has occupied a large amount of the attention of the officers of the Department. This certainly can be said, and with absolute truth: that, no matter how our colony may progress in respect to population, there need be no harking-back to unravel the web we are now weaving. The pattern now being laid will form a homogeneous whole with the larger schemes which our greater growth will necessitate. This in itself is a factor of no little value. The larger part of our work, however, has been far from partaking of this negative character; positive results have been obtained which have made, and are making, for the betterment of the health and the safety of the community. Several of the larger cities have actually embarked upon schemes of drainage and water-supply in consequence of the reiteration by the Department of their necessity, and works have been put aside on our recommendation which, if carried out, could only have ended in failure and waste of public money. This in itself is a matter for congratulation. Wherever local authorities require to borrow money for sanitary purposes the plans and specifications of all such works have to be submitted to and approved of by the Department. This, as can readily be understood, entails a large amount of work and technical knowledge. Occasionally it has required not a little persuasion to divorce a local authority from some scheme to which it has become wedded, but in most instances when the separation has been effected it has been grateful.

The continued presence of

## PLAGUE

in some of the Australasian Colonies has been a source of considerable anxiety. When in Hobart last February an informal discussion was held by the official representatives of the various States of the Commonwealth and New Zealand on the vexed question of quarantine. It was clearly evident that some change of opinion had taken place with regard to this most important subject. It was urged strongly by some of us that it was useless to impose the same restrictions against plague as against small-pox. Plague, as I have often pointed out, is rarely communicated by one person to another, unless when the form of the disease is that known as the pneumonic. Small-pox, on the other hand, is pre-eminently an infectious disease of the most virulent type.

Acting on this belief, we have established in New Zealand a counterpart of the system which was adopted by Great Britain some years ago in the face of a pronounced Continental opposition—an opposition which is gradually getting less, however. At the conference in Hobart all were agreed upon the excellence of the method, the only objection urged against it being its cost; this several of the Commonwealth delegates considered insuperable. The system in brief outline is as