

(No. 2.)



1856.

TASMANIA.

P E T I T I O N .

REGISTRATION OF DEATHS.

Presented by Mr. Kermode, and ordered by the Legislative Council to be printed,
22 December, 1856.



To the Honourable the Members of the Legislative Council of the Island of Tasmania in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of EDWARD SWARBRECK HALL, Medical Practitioner.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

THAT your Petitioner is deeply impressed with the great importance to the vital interests of the Inhabitants of Tasmania of minute, correct, and comprehensive Registration of Marriages, Births, and Deaths.

That on the invaluable data collected by such kind of Registration by the Registrar-General of England, and communicated in a succinct manner to the public by weekly and other reports, Sanatory Reformers have been enabled to find those measures which have eventuated in the annual saving of so many human lives. This has been stated by high authority to have amounted to more in England than double all those sacrificed, directly or indirectly, by the late War with Russia.

That your Petitioner has carefully studied the Vital Statistics of this Island, from such information as is recorded by the Registrar-General of Tasmania, and from other sources.

That, by the officially published "Statistics of Tasmania for 1855," it appears that 1692 deaths took place in that year out of a free population of 62,222 individuals,—that is, at the rate of about 27,000 per million of inhabitants; whereas in the great Metropolis of England, on an average of fifteen years (including two years when Cholera raged so destructively), the mortality per million was only 24,883.

That the disproportion for Hobarton, and its rural Sub-districts of Brown's and the Huon Rivers, for 1855, was even still greater than the foregoing. Your Petitioner having classed and tabled from the Hobarton Registry 752 deaths (exclusive of Military) as having occurred in these Districts from the 1st January to 31st December, 1855, out of a free population of about 23,000 individuals: that is at the rate of nearly 8000 deaths per million of population more than in London; or an excess of nearly 32 per cent. of deaths, even in the comparatively favourable year of 1855.

That these startling facts show of what urgent importance it is to initiate Sanatory legislation for the protection of the lives of the inhabitants of Tasmania, and as a first step thereto to improve the Registration, so that the true sources of this excessive mortality may be easily traced out.

That the Registration hitherto existing is very defective.

1st. From the length of time that has been permitted to elapse after a death has taken place before it has been registered. In numerous instance, particularly in the case of Government Officials and Institutions, many months have been allowed to intervene.

2nd. From the meagre and obscure information recorded, the "native place" of the deceased not being entered, or "the place of decease," and the "cause of death" frequently given in the most vague, general, and incorrect terms.

3rd. From deaths on board emigrant ships on the voyage hither, and on board of other ships, being recorded in the same Register as those occurring in the Hobarton District.

That the Bill now before your Honourable Council proposing to abolish the office of Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages as a distinct department, and to transfer the duties as an appendage to the office of Registrar of Deeds, is not calculated to improve the efficiency of this important service, but more likely to still further impair it, as it will be incompatible with the numerous other duties attached to that department. The Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages requires special qualifications to enable him to make his Department contribute its due share to the science of Vital Statistics.

Wherefore your Petitioner prays that the Bill may not be passed into Law by your Honourable Council; but—

That a Bill may be enacted to amend the "Registration Act," and improve the mode of Registration,—

1st. By making it imperative that in no case, except on protracted inquests, shall interment be allowed to take place until the particulars of deceased's death shall be accurately registered as follows, as far as it is ascertainable:—

- A. The date of death.
- B. The Christian and surname of deceased.
- C. The sex.
- D. The age.
- E. The native place.
- F. The rank, occupation, &c.—single or married.
- G. The cause of death.
- H. The place of death, even to the number of the house in the street when in a city, town, or village; or the particular designation of the residence (if any), and the locality, if in the country.
- I. The signature, description, and place of residence of the informant.
- J. The date when registered, and signature of the Registrar.

2nd. By making it imperative on the Medical attendant on the deceased to give a certificate of "Cause of Death" to the head of the household in which the death has taken place, to be by him or her handed to the Registrar for the District. The certificate to be on the same plan, and in the same (as near as can be) nosological terms, as is now in use by the Registrar-General of England.

3rd. By making it imperative, in every case where a death has taken place without medical attendance, that an inquest shall be held; and that the Medical attendant on that inquest shall be bound to give a certificate of "Cause of Death" to the Coroner, to be by him registered forthwith.

4th. By making it imperative to enter in a separate Register all deaths occurring on board of ships at sea bound to the Ports of this Island.

5th. By making it imperative on the Registrars of Hobart Town and Launceston, and of any other town of more than 5000 inhabitants, to publish, at least monthly, in the *Government Gazette* a Table of Deaths occurring within their respective Districts. This table or report to be classed and detailed on the same plan as that followed by the Registrar-General of England, with the addition of the ages of the deceased in months up to 12 months,—in years from 1 to 5 years,—in quinquennial periods from 5 to 30 years,—and in decennial periods for all subsequent ages.

That annually a general and comprehensive Report of the same description for the whole Island, with such general remarks as circumstances may require, be published by the Registrar-General of Tasmania.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

EDWARD SWARBRECK HALL.

Ordered to be printed, 22 December,

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