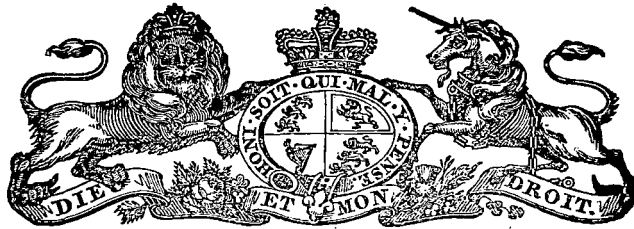


(No. 33.)



1879.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES:

CORRESPONDENCE.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Crowther, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
September 9, 1879.



"Wolverene," at Sea, Lat. 38° 35' S., Long. 179° 7' E.,
23rd May, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to enclose herewith a copy of a letter written to me by Staff Surgeon Reid, of this ship, on the subject of the prevalence of venereal disease at Hobart Town, and the risks run by Her Majesty's ships visiting the port of having their crews crippled by it.

2. The man of this ship whose case is particularly alluded to by Dr. Reid has been left at Hospital at Wellington, it is feared, in a dying state; and the number of cases for the time in port, and the severity of the disease, exceeds anything which has come under my notice for a very long time, though I have commanded ships in all parts of the world.

3. Though it may not have the result of affecting the visits of Her Majesty's ships to Hobart Town, yet I think it right to bring the matter to Your Excellency's notice, not only in our own interests but also that of the unfortunate sufferers by whom the disease is spread, in hopes that you may think it right to recommend some such legislative steps being taken as have succeeded so well in England, and I am told also in the neighbouring Colony of Victoria.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your Excellency's obedient Servant,

To His Excellency FREDERICK A. WELD, Esq.,
Governor of Tasmania.

A. H. HOSKINS, Commodore.

(Copy.)

Venereal Disease at Hobart Town.

H.M.S. "Wolverene," Wellington, N.Z., 15th May, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to bring under your notice the prevalence of venereal disease at Hobart Town, where the ship lay for 14 days in the month of March. We had 7 cases contracted there, and they were all of a severe type, and in one of them, a case of Syphilis, the symptoms have assumed one of the most virulent types that has occurred in my own experience.

I may contrast this with Wellington, where we have now been stationed 36 days, and where no cases of venereal disease, so far as I am aware, have been contracted.

It is therefore highly desirable that the authorities at Hobart Town should be made acquainted with these circumstances, as it may suggest to them the advisability of regulating the large amount of prostitution which I understand exists at that place, with the view to the diminution of venereal disease.

Under circumstances as they are at present it would be undesirable to send a man-of-war to that port except in cases of unavoidable necessity, owing to the risk she must run of having her crew seriously crippled by these diseases.

I have the honor, &c.

WALTER REID, M.D., Staff Surgeon.

Commodore HOSKINS, A.D.C., H.M.S. "Wolverene."

For the consideration of Ministers.

I enclose a private copy of the English Contagious Diseases Act, about which there was so much controversy some years ago, and also draft of a proposed South Australian Act, for information of Ministers.

FRED. A. WELD.
26th May, 1877.

MEMORANDUM.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 19th June, 1877.

THE accompanying letter from Commodore Hoskins to His Excellency the Governor, under date 23rd ultimo, upon the subject of the prevalence of venereal disease in Hobart Town, is forwarded to the Honorable the Attorney-General for his perusal, together with a copy of the English Act "for the prevention of contagious diseases at certain Naval and Military Stations" (27-28 Victoria, Cap. 85), and of a proposed South Australian Bill (1869) "for the better prevention of certain contagious diseases," for his perusal and opinion as to the best method of providing against the evils referred to by the Commodore.

THOS. REIBEY.

The Hon. Attorney-General.

PERUSED and returned. I believe the English Act is found to be of great service, and, to a great extent, has attained its object; but I do not think there is the least hope of such a measure, or any measure of a like nature, being carried here; and I cannot suggest any other remedy. If the Police properly enforced their powers the evil might be diminished, but would not be put an end to or materially decreased.

C. HAMILTON BROMBY.
24th July, 1877.

"Wolverene," at Sydney, 18th January, 1879.

SIR,

WITH reference to my predecessor's letter to Your Excellency, dated 23rd May, 1877, enclosing a report from Dr. Reid, Staff Surgeon of the *Wolverene*, relative to the prevalence and virulence of venereal disease at Hobart Town, I beg to forward another letter written by Dr. Reid on the same subject; and I would point out to Your Excellency the great benefit which would result in the event of a Contagious Disease Act being brought into force at Hobart Town.

At present I am deterred from sending ships to that place in consequence of the prevalence of disease; whereas, if a Contagious Disease Act existed, Hobart Town, from its geographical position, would naturally be the resort of the Squadron for at least the three hot months of each year, and generally be more frequently visited at other times.

I can indorse all Dr. Reid says touching the admirable results to be observed in England, where the Act is in force.

At such places as Portsmouth and Plymouth, where, twenty years ago, gross immorality was a common occurrence in the public streets, now a woman can walk by night or day without fear of seeing anything unbecoming.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,
J. C. WILSON, *Commodore.*

His Excellency F. A. WELD, Esq., C.M.G., Governor of Tasmania.

(Copy.)

Prevalence of Venereal Disease at Hobart Town.

H.M.S. "Wolverene," Sydney, 13th January, 1879.

SIR,

IN connection with the "Return of the cases of Venereal Diseases" for last quarter, which has been submitted to you, I have the honor to draw your attention to the number of cases contracted at Hobart Town. Thus, out of 9 cases contracted during that period, 6 have been due to Hobart Town, although the period embraced by our stay there was only 7 days out of 92 embraced by the whole quarter.

Already, in a letter dated 15th May, 1877, I have drawn the attention of Commodore Hoskins, C.B., to the prevalence of venereal disease at Hobart Town; as experienced by a visit of this ship to that port in March, 1877. He was most desirous that something should be done to mitigate the evil, and in forwarding my letter he addressed His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania accordingly.

Although these representations created some attention at the time, no steps have, so far as I am aware, been taken in this matter by the Legislature of Tasmania. Whether this arises from an

indifference to the subject, or from prejudice against the kind of legislation which deals with the prevention of Contagious Diseases, I do not know. It is certain, however, that until something be done to remove an evil which may at any time seriously cripple a ship's company, no medical officer can advise that any of Her Majesty's ships should be sent to Hobart Town for the benefit of the health of their crews. This is the more to be regretted since Hobart Town presents in other respects unrivalled advantages as a health resort for a sickly ship's company; and, inasmuch as a considerable portion of the naval force in these seas is now employed in the tropical and unhealthy parts of the station, this has become of greater importance to the service than it was in former times.

The Contagious Disease Acts have now been in operation for upwards of 14 years in certain of the English garrison towns and naval ports, with very great benefit not only to the health of Her Majesty's forces but also to the community at large. In these places decency exists where it was formerly unknown. The numerous vices and crimes which always arise in connection with unbridled licentiousness have been diminished in a remarkable degree; not only so, but many of the unfortunate women are yearly, through the influence of these Acts, reclaimed from a life of vice and lawlessness to become useful and respectable members of society.

These results of the Contagious Disease Acts are now being recognised everywhere. They have now gained the confidence of the magistrates, of the clergy, and of the inhabitants generally, where they are in force, so that other towns are taking steps to have the benefits of the Acts extended to them.

Contagious Disease Acts are now in force in the colonies of Queensland and Victoria, and I trust that ere long one will also be in force in New South Wales.

I may add that, as a naval medical officer who has served in many parts of the world, and had many opportunities of seeing legislation of this nature in operation, my experience has been entirely in its favour from every point of view.

It is therefore to be hoped that the Legislature of Tasmania will shortly be led to adopt the necessary means for removing the evil to which I have drawn your attention, and which alone is the only hinderance to our regarding Hobart Town as one of the healthiest and most pleasant stations in the world for ships of war.

I have strongly to recommend that you may be pleased to take such steps as may appear to you necessary in order to ensure for this matter the attention of the proper authorities.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

WALTER REID, *M.D., Staff Surgeon, R.N.*

COMMODORE WILSON, *R.N., A.D.C.,*
H.M.S. "Wolverene."

General Hospital, Hobart Town, 17th March, 1879.

SIR,

KNOWING that the question of introducing a Contagious Diseases Act is now under the consideration of the Government, I have the honor to forward to you a letter on this subject, addressed by Dr. Hall to the Board of Management of this Hospital, together with the reply which I have sent to Dr. Hall with the approval of the Board.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOS. C. SMART, *Chairman.*

To the Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

58, Campbell-street, Hobart Town, 14th February, 1879.

GENTLEMEN,

I TAKE leave respectfully to direct your attention to what transpired recently when a deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary to ask him to take steps to provide a residence in Hobart Town for the Commodore of the Australian Naval Forces, so that the ships of war might more frequently and longer remain here, being the most healthy for a "naval sanitarium" in the command.

The Commodore's objection that the health of the sailors was more impaired by visits to this city than to any other in his command, from the greater prevalence of the two first diseases of the enthetic order of the zymotic class, appears to be well sustained by the report to him of the medical officer.

In the Commodore's suggestion that a law similar to the English "Contagious Diseases Act" should be enacted for Tasmania I cordially concur. My intimate acquaintance with the "reports" of the working of this Act in the ports and garrisons where it is enforced in England, and of similar laws elsewhere, has thoroughly satisfied me that disease and immorality would be greatly reduced here were such a law in operation, and that many virtuous wives and their innocent offspring be saved life-long sufferings,—independently, moreover, of the improved physical health of the community that would be thereby gained. It is evident from the "reports" I have alluded to that the operation of the law has the effect of deterring many females from becoming prostitutes, as well as rescuing many from continuing their wretched avocation.

I have little doubt that, were you to take up this matter, the Government would ask Parliament to enact a measure similar to "The Contagious Diseases Act" of England.

In the meantime you could help the good work by no longer permitting those suffering from the contagious stages of the diseases I have cited being treated as *out-door* patients, with the power of continuing their vile habits and spreading their diseases; but make it compulsory that they shall be treated *in hospital* until well.

While in hospital they can come under the reforming influences of the clergy and others, which have proved so successful elsewhere.

I have the honor to be
Your obedient Servant,

E. SWARBRECK HALL,

*Officer of Health for the City of Hobart Town and the suburban Townships
of New Town, Sandy Bay, and Wellington.*

*To the Chairman and Members of the Board of
Management of the Hobart Town Hospital.*

General Hospital, Hobart Town, 17th March, 1879.

SIR,

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th ultimo, addressed to the Chairman and members of the Board of Management of the General Hospital, and to inform you that, at a meeting of the Board held on the 14th instant, it was taken into consideration.

The Board fully recognises the advantages to Hobart Town which would accrue from the establishment of a Naval Depot, or Sanitarium, in its port, and feels that the reasons assigned by the Commodore as hindrances to the attainment of this desirable object are worthy of the consideration of the Government.

The Board also cordially agrees with you in its approval of the suggestion of the Commodore to the effect that a law, similar to the English "Contagious Diseases Act," might, with beneficial results, be introduced into Tasmania. But, while fully concurring in these views, the Board feels that, in absence of the necessary Legislative enactment, it is powerless either to initiate or control a system of medical treatment demanding compulsory detention in hospital.

Moreover, the Board entertains serious doubts as to the propriety of establishing a Prison Lock Hospital, with all its necessary adjuncts, within the precincts of the present General Hospital; seeing that neither as regards accommodation, airing ground, work-rooms, supervision, or security, could any adequate arrangement be made without seriously impairing the very limited accommodation at present available for the wants of the general public.

In the meantime, however, the House Surgeon has been instructed to exercise the greatest vigilance in respect to the class of diseases referred to in your letter; and the Board will, if desired, be glad at all times to afford the Government every assistance in the promotion of any measure calculated to benefit the public health.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

THOS. C. SMART, *Chairman.*

R. S. HALL, *Esq., M.R.C.S.*