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1880.

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T A S M A N I A .

H O U S E O F A S S E M B L Y .

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**OCEAN LIGHT-HOUSE SERVICE :**

**CORRESPONDENCE IN REFERENCE TO THE SUPPLY OF  
STORES AT KENT'S GROUP.**

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Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed, August 17, 1880.



*Colonial Treasury, Hobart Town, 10th August, 1880.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to draw your attention to the enclosed copy of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* of Wednesday, 4th August, 1880, in which you will find a letter from Captain Mathieu, of the French war-ship *Rhin*, headed "Distressed condition of the Lighthouse-keeper at the Kent Group;" and I shall be glad to be favoured with a Report stating the reason of the Lighthouse-keeper and party being in such a condition as this letter discloses.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. R. GIBLIN, *Colonial Treasurer.*

*The Master Warden, Marine Board, Hobart Town.*

#### DISTRESSED CONDITION OF THE LIGHTHOUSE-KEEPER AT THE KENT GROUP.

The following letter from Captain Mathieu, written on board the French war ship *Rhin*, off the Kent Group, on the 14th ultimo, was received by M. Bechet, of Barrack-street, yesterday. The letter, which refers to the condition of the officials at the Deal Island Lighthouse, bears the Tasmanian post-mark, and must therefore have been forwarded by some vessel fallen in with by the *Rhin* :—

*On board "Le Rhin," 14th July, 1880, 2:30 P.M.*

MY DEAR BECHET,

We are near the lighthouse on Deal Island, one of the Kent Group. A boat having made signals we stopped, and the keeper of the lighthouse came on board.

For a fortnight the men of the lighthouse had been waiting for rations, and they were on the point of starvation. We gave them what we thought would be most useful—wine, brandy, salt beef, biscuits, flour, and haricot beans; to which supplies the officers, including your friend, added fresh vegetables, coffee, and sugar.

The unfortunate keeper has a wife and several children, so I sent them a lot of nice cakes, which my cook Chevel is exceedingly clever in making.

I am glad that the course which we had to steer should have put it in our power to be of service to these good fellows.

I thought I had left Australia for ever, but it was not to be; and I take advantage of this opportunity to ask you again to tell my friends that never, never will I forget them, and that my heart is still in Australia.

*Au revoir*, my dear Bechet, with the liveliest remembrance of your good fellowship.

A. MATHIEU.

*Marine Board Office, 12th August, 1880.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 10th inst., calling my attention to a letter from Captain Mathieu, of the French war-ship *Rhin*, published in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* newspaper of the 4th inst., headed "Distressed Condition of the Lighthouse-keeper at the Kent Group," and requesting me to favour you with a report stating the reason of the Lighthouse-keeper and party being in the condition disclosed by that letter.

In reply, I have now to inform you that the scarcity of provisions at Kent's Group was occasioned by the following causes, for which it will be seen the Marine Board cannot be held in any degree responsible :—

The Lighthouse-keeper and his assistants at Kent's Group are not rationed by the Board, but supply themselves, the provisions they require being purchased for them by their respective

agents in Hobart Town, and shipped in the store vessel which the Board sends round to the Lighthouses three times a year. It appears that when the ketch *Recamia* went to Kent's Group in February last, the provisions sent for the use of one of the men by his agent were both insufficient in quantity and bad in quality. The consequence was that long before the next store vessel was due at the Island he had to borrow from his fellow-assistants, and their supplies, which under other circumstances would have been ample for their own use, were thus reduced until they had barely sufficient to last them till the usual period of the arrival of the store vessel early in June. But a delay, in no way attributable to the Board, accidentally took place in the despatch of the stores from Hobart Town. The *Recamia*, which was under contract to perform the service, on her way from Adelaide called at the Mersey to load with wheat for Hobart Town, and there sprang a leak and sunk. Thus, without notice, deprived of the services of the vessel it had relied on, the Board had to find and charter another. Unavoidable delay occurred, and the *Starling*, which had been engaged to take the place of the *Recamia*, did not sail from Hobart Town till the 27th June, and, being further detained by calling at George's Bay and adverse weather, did not reach Kent's Group till the 15th of July, one day after the *Rhin* passed the Island, and a full month after the usual time. That a scarcity of certain kinds of provisions had at that date arisen there is no doubt; but Captain Mathieu's letter, doubtless from ignorance of the true state of the case, unquestionably exaggerates the "distressed" condition of the men,—for as a fact the keeper has plenty of cattle, sheep, and poultry on the Island, and vegetables are abundant, so that anything like real want or starvation was simply out of the question, and indeed, in looking over the list of articles supplied by the *Rhin*, they appear to consist as much of the luxuries as the actual necessities of life. The Board, however, is exceedingly annoyed that an occurrence, calculated, in the absence of a knowledge of the real facts, to expose its management of the Lighthouses in the Straits to unmerited censure, should have taken place, and it has determined to take measures effectually to prevent a recurrence of any such circumstances.

In order to prevent any misapprehension, I think it right to add that the scarcity mentioned by Captain Mathieu was entirely confined to the men's own stores, and that before the arrival of the *Starling* at the Group there was in store then a supply of oil and all other things necessary for the proper maintenance of the Light for a period of four months.

I append extracts from a letter from the Lighthouse-keeper, and the report of the Harbour Master, explanatory of the circumstances under which the supplies were obtained from the *Rhin*.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. TARLETON, *Master Warden*.

*The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer.*

*Marine Board Offices, 13th August, 1880.*

SIR,

WITH respect to the keepers on Kent's Group being short of provisions, this matter has been greatly exaggerated.

I arrived there on the 15th July, the day after they had been on board the French transport *Rhin*. There is no doubt they had been short of some things, such as tea, sugar, and flour: for the latter they had a good substitute. Captain Mathieu very generously offered them two months' provisions if required.

There are eight adults and six children on the station. Had they been so very short of provisions they surely would have accepted more than they did.

The Superintendent has a number of sheep (estimates his next clip at 1100 or 1200 lbs.), 10 or 12 head of cattle, including milch cows, beside 8 working bullocks (the property of the Marine Board), a number of pigs, and any quantity of poultry. All the keepers have gardens and grow vegetables, so that they could not possibly be in a state of starvation.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES RIDDLE, *Harbour Master*.

*Master Warden, Marine Board.*

*EXTRACT from a Letter from the Superintendent, Kent's Group Lighthouse, dated 15th July, 1880, to the Marine Board.*

"WE have been very short of provisions, partly owing to the vessel being so long over-due. I have been supplying the assistants with provisions for the last seven weeks, as they were short of everything; the consequence was I was left short myself. I was obliged to board the French war ship *Rhin* and get a supply of provisions.

"Captain Mathieu kindly supplied me with all I required."

Hobart Town, 27th July, 1880.

SIR,

I AM informed by Captain Mathieu, of the French transport *le Rhin*, that when passing Kent's Group on the 14th instant, he was applied to by Superintendent Jackson, of the Lighthouse, and three (3) men, for 20 days' provisions. These were supplied, as shown in the accompanying list, original of which I hold, receipted by Mr. Jackson, of the Kent's Group Lighthouse.

The Minister of Marine will determine whether or not any reimbursement for the value will be sought; and in the meantime I forward the particulars to you, and a copy to the Marine Board at Hobart Town.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

J. M'C. BROWNE, *Consular Agent.*

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town, Tasmania.*

FORWARDED to the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer.

WM. MOORE.  
29 July, 1880.

FORWARDED to the Master Warden of the Marine Board, Hobart Town, the service having been performed for his Department.

W. R. GIBLIN, *Colonial Treasurer.*  
29. 7. 80.

RETURNED for the information of the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, in connection with the Report of the 12th instant.

W. TARLETON, *Master Warden.*  
13. 8. 80.

*STATEMENT of Provisions given by the French Transport le "Rhin" to the Keeper of the Lighthouse at Kent's Group.*

		<i>Price of the purchase by the "Rhin" in Australia.</i>		
Biscuits,	20 <sup>k</sup> ,	10.42 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	8.40
Flour,	1 <sup>k</sup> ,	0.3562 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	3.57
Wine,	2 litres	0.62 le litre	.....	1.24
Rum,	1 litre	0.78 ditto	.....	0.78
Salt Lard,	3 <sup>k</sup> 600,	1.15 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	4.13
Preserves,	3 <sup>k</sup> 200,	1.25 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	4.00
Coffee	1 <sup>k</sup> 200,	2.75 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	3.30
Sugar	1 <sup>k</sup> 500,	0.75 le k <sup>o</sup> .	.....	1.10

Francs 26.52, or £1 1s. 8d.

*On Board, 14th July, 1880.*

RECEIVED the provisions above mentioned.

(Signed) ROBERT JACKSON.