

(No. 38.)



1881.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

V A C C I N A T I O N :

REPORT FOR 1880.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
July 19, 1881.



REPORT on VACCINATION for the Year 1880.

Vaccination Office, 17th May, 1881.

I HAVE the honor to lay before the Government my Report on Vaccination for the year ending 31st December, 1880.

The vaccinations performed during that year were more numerous than in the year preceding; but the number was insignificantly small when compared with that of the unprotected throughout the island.

In two country districts only was vaccination carried on; no vaccinations having been performed at Launceston. In this town more than in any other part of the colony is the vaccination of the population necessary, from the fact of its being the port at which the majority of visitors and others arrive from Melbourne. In the event of small-pox making its appearance on the main land it is most probable that at Launceston the disease would be first introduced into Tasmania, and amongst an unprotected community it would rapidly spread. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the inhabitants of all the seaport towns, and more particularly Launceston and Hobart, should be protected.

I have noticed in a former Report the great difficulty which I experienced in carrying on arm to arm vaccination in Hobart. This difficulty still continues; and had it not been for the boarded-out children, over whose guardians some control can be exercised, I could not have kept it up to the present time. Parents are unwilling to give the time and trouble (trivial in amount as they are) involved in bringing their children to the office for two consecutive Fridays, and in nursing them during the progress of the vaccination.

The belief, too, amongst the great majority of the poor, as to vaccination originating or transmitting other diseases, is so confirmed, that it is only in times of panic, when they consider the danger of contagion from small-pox to be imminent, that they will ever be induced to have their children vaccinated.

I regret to say that certain medical men in Victoria have petitioned the Legislature for the repeal of the compulsory Vaccination Act in that colony; their principal objections to vaccination being the uncertainty of its protective power, and that it may be the means of communicating other diseases. The statistics of every country into which vaccination has been introduced most conclusively demonstrate the almost universal protection which it affords when the operation has been carefully and successfully performed; and in the comparatively small number of cases where vaccinated persons become affected with the small-pox, its course is almost invariably a mild one, and unattended with danger. Dr. Seaton says:—"There is certainly no subject on which medical testimony is more unanimous, than on the very large immunity from attacks of small-pox which successful vaccination will confer." While there are few unvaccinated persons who reach the average duration of human life without having sustained an attack of variola, and while the very great majority of such persons are attacked by it in childhood, the vaccinated are, as a rule, entirely exempt from that disease. "The first question," says that distinguished medical philosopher Dr. Alison, "which we have to consider is, whether or not we have at this time in the matter of cow-pox a power at our command capable, if duly employed, of depriving the poison of small-pox of all fatal influence over an immense majority of mankind. And on this subject there has been quite sufficient information collected, since the date of the papers which were held decisive of the question fifty years ago, to show that the same inference is still inevitable, and that he who disputes it is equally unreasonable as he who opposes in like manner any proposition in Euclid."

With regard to the transmission of disease through vaccination, all the most experienced authorities are agreed that, in the very few cases where this has occurred, the result has been the effect of careless vaccination, that is, by using lymph having an admixture of blood. All analogy tends to show that the pure lymph of the vaccine vesicle will propagate the vaccine disease, and no other. Occasionally skin eruptions and glandular swellings appear after vaccination, which are by some attributed to the operation. Those who have had most to do with vaccination on the one hand, and those who have been most concerned in the treatment of infantile disease on the other, concur in the belief of the non-communicability of disease by vaccination. Marson stated, some years ago, that in the performance of upwards of 40,000 vaccinations he had never seen other diseases communicated with the vaccine disease, nor did he believe in the popular reports that they are so communicated. The experience of the late Mr. Leese, whose vaccinations had been scarcely, if any, less numerous, was the same. Sir William Jenner put on record that at University College Hospital, and at the Hospital for Sick Children, he had in six years more than 13,000 sick adults and children under observation, and that in no case had he reason to believe, or even to suspect, that any constitutional taint had been conveyed from one person to another by vaccination. Dr. West's experience on 20,000 infants and children under his care in 17 years was to the like effect; and in stating that he had seen nothing in that time to make him believe that vaccination excites cutaneous eruptions in any but very exceptional cases, he referred such cases to a disposition in the children themselves, brought out by the vaccination, as it might have been by teething. Professor Paget, speaking from his long experience among children in the out-patient room at St. Bartholomew's, and enumerating some of the causes which develop cutaneous disease in young children, says: "Now vaccination may do, though I believe it very rarely does, what these several accidents may do,—viz.—by disturbing for a time the general health it may give opportunity for the external manifestation and complete evolution of some constitutional affection, which, but for it, might have remained rather longer latent." "This is," he adds, "the worst thing that can, with any show of reason, be charged against vaccination: even this can seldom be charged with truth."

I have myself, at Hobart and Launceston, vaccinated some thousands of children, but I never knew any bad consequences to arise from the operation. Even if it were true that disease in a few cases could be transmitted by vaccination, considering the immense benefit which the operation confers upon millions, it would scarcely be a valid reason for neglecting the practice. Fatal results occasionally ensue from the use of anæsthetics; but I cannot imagine that any one would advocate the discontinuance of their administration on that account.

In a former Report I had the honor to suggest, for the consideration of the Government, the outlines of a scheme of itinerant vaccination, which, I believed, would be more effective than the present system. By its adoption, in the course of three or four years all arrears of vaccination would be brought up, and the whole island be placed in a protected state. By the appointment of one or two competent vaccinators, whose sole duty would be to vaccinate throughout the island, the results of the vaccinations would be more satisfactory than under the present system. Drs. Seaton and Buchanan, in their Report on the state of vaccination in London, express themselves as being struck with the great difference of results of different operators working under apparently the same conditions. This difference was quite irrespective of general professional attainment. They further add: "We do not for a moment hesitate to express our strong conviction that the vaccination of London would be best done by a few thoroughly trained vaccinators who devoted themselves exclusively to the work."

The carrying out of the system which I advocate would involve an expenditure of not more than £800 or £900 a year for the first three or four years, and much less after that time.

But no system of vaccination can be made efficient without the passing of a compulsory Vaccination Act. Tasmania is, I believe, the only British Colony in which such an Act is not in operation.

The Colony expends a large sum yearly to guard against the remote contingency of a hostile fleet entering our ports, whilst next to nothing is done to guard against the advent of a far more formidable foe. In one case the risk is the loss of a few thousand pounds, in the other the loss of a few thousand lives; in the former case the money may be thrown away, for the towns may be laid under contribution notwithstanding all our preparations, whereas, in the latter case, there is a certainty of the money being well spent; for the population, or a large majority of it, being vaccinated, small-pox, in the event of its being introduced, could never gain a footing in the Island.

GEORGE TURNLEY, *Superintendent of Vaccinations.*

VACCINATION Return, TASMANIA, 1880.

<i>Registration District of—</i>	<i>Name of Public Vaccinator.</i>	<i>Date of Vaccination.</i>	<i>Total vaccinated.</i>	<i>At and under 6 Months old</i>	<i>6 Months to 12 Months.</i>	<i>One Year and upwards.</i>	<i>Returned on 8th day.</i>	<i>Entirely successful.</i>	<i>Entirely unsuccessful.</i>
Hobart	George Turnley.....	1880	171	10	14	147	165	163	2
Deloraine	J. M. M'Neece.....	1880	226	47	29	150	226	226	
Westbury	W. Allnutt	1880	15	1	4	10	15	15	
			412	58	47	307	406	404	2

GEORGE TURNLEY, *Superintendent of Vaccinations.*