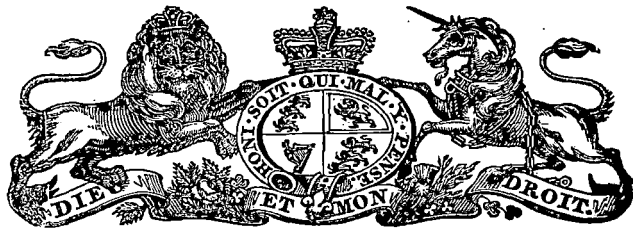


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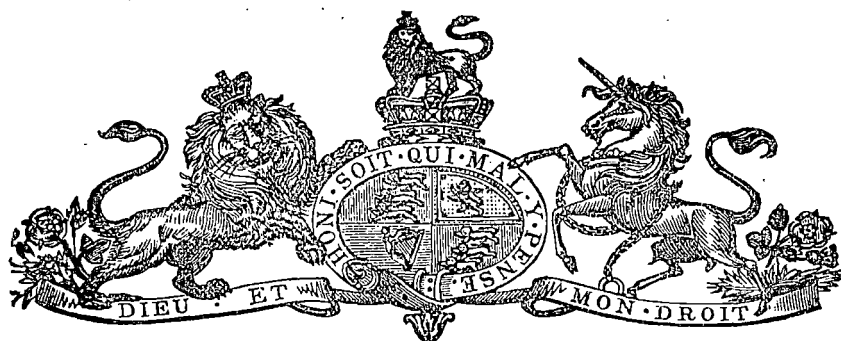


1891.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

AGNES RIVULET, NEAR PORT CYGNET :
REPORT BY THE SECRETARY, CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



RIVERS POLLUTION AND OBSTRUCTION.

To the Honourable the President and the Members of the Central Board of Health.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honour to call your attention to the appended papers relating to the condition of the Agnes Rivulet at Port Cygnet. The papers consist of a letter dated 11th October, 1890, from the Secretary of the Local Board of Health, with an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the said Board, containing a resolution that a "petition from the inhabitants pointing out the dangerous state of the Agnes Rivulet be forwarded to the Secretary of the Central Board of Health, and earnestly requesting that steps may be taken at once to have the rivulet cleared out;" and the petition referred to, which sets forth that the inhabitants have during summer to get their supply of water from the rivulet, which at that season becomes quite unfit for domestic purposes by reason "of decayed matter and fallen leaves from willows growing along its banks;" and praying that "prompt and efficient measures" be taken "to have this evil removed."

I was at Port Cygnet from the 17th to the 20th of this current month, and took the opportunity of examining the Agnes Rivulet. The main stream of this rivulet is shown to rise in the high lands to the north-eastward of the township, and, after a course of about seven miles, falls into Port Cygnet, at the town of Lovett. The upper part of its course is through lands reserved under the Mineral Lands Act, and which are not taken up nor settled upon. Thence it runs through lands allotted originally to pensioners, and receives affluents draining similar lands: these allotments are partially settled upon. The lower course of the stream is through alluvial land, and both banks are occupied by farmsteads, cottages, orchards, and gardens.

Along its whole course through settled lands the rivulet banks are planted with willows, whose roots greatly impede its flow, and whose branches hang down into the water. These impediments arrest the logs that are brought down by floods, and, consequently, the banks are continually being overflowed. The leaves falling every year from the willows also add to the evil by increasing the impediments as well as polluting the water. The adjoining lands and roads, and the houses and farmsteads of the neighbourhood have no other outfall for their drainage than the rivulet, and, therefore, every heavy rain carries manure and other impurities into the stream. Furthermore, as the lower course of the rivulet is through rich alluvium, some of the banks are continually falling and greatly discolouring and spoiling the water. The statements contained in the petition as to the condition of the rivulet are therefore quite true.

With respect to the prayer of the petition, it is evident that prompt and efficient measures should be taken to remedy the state of the rivulet. But the only way in which the Central Board can assist in the matter is, if it thinks fit, to bring the case under the notice of the Government. As, however, the case is by no means a singular one, for all over the country there are streams that are similarly impeded and polluted, I would suggest that the River Pollution Act of 1881 should be amended so as to bring such cases within its purview. This might be done by giving Local Authorities (as defined by that Act) powers to cause the clearing out of streams at the expense of the riverain proprietors, and to make by-laws in respect of the impediments created by tree-planting, &c.

I would further suggest that, as the clearing out of this rivulet would only temporarily improve the water supply, as the stream is, as above shown, liable to continual pollution, the inhabitants of the district should form a Water Trust for the purpose of bringing pure water from the upper district where no sources of pollution exist. If desired, I can furnish data to show that such a scheme is quite within their means.

I have the honour to remain,
Gentlemen,
Your faithful Servant,

A. MAULT.

Hobart, 27th October, 1890.

WILLIAM THOMAS STRUTT,
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.