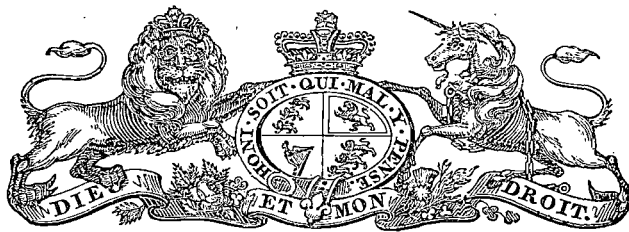


(No. 121.)



1887.

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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

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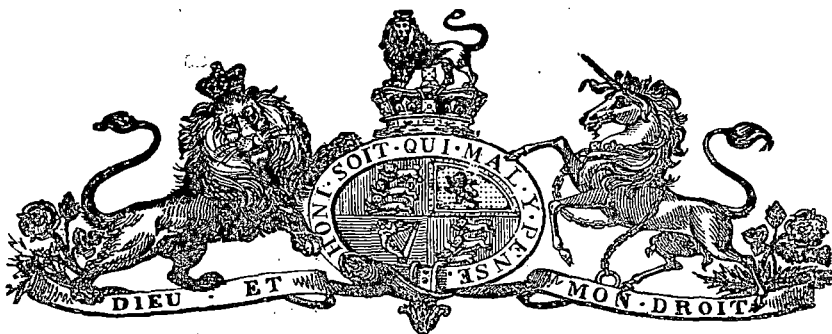
CASE OF MR. LUCADOU WELLS :

CORRESPONDENCE.

*Return to an Order of the House of Assembly. (Mr. Scott.)*

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Laid upon the Table by the Attorney-General, September 22, 1887; and ordered  
by the House of Assembly to be printed, September 28, 1887.



## CASE OF MR. LUCADOU WELLS.

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*Office of Superintendent of Police, Launceston, 29th March, 1887.*

SIR,

I FORWARD this day by post for analysis a bottle of champagne. The person who gave it me states he found it in his house corked as now. He pierced the cork and drew off a little of the contents by means of a small tap designed for this purpose. He was surprised to find the cork had been before pierced, and that there was an absence of effervescence. He tasted a little of the liquid he had drawn, and says he has had a tendency to sickness since, and believes the wine contains a solution of arsenic, injected through one of those taps. The wine came from a man who had been an intimate of his and his wife, and a frequent visitor at their house, until scandalous reports circulated respecting the wife and this visitor. Contrary to the wife's parents and the husband's wishes and some unpleasant scenes which have occurred, this man seeks to continue his intimacy with the wife, and sends gifts to the house, and the husband thinks the wine was sent with design to poison the wife, in which case suspicion was likely to fall upon the husband. The wife is at present in ill-health, and has a nurse attending on her. The husband states he gave to the nurse a little of the wine which he drew from the bottle, and that she professes to have felt no ill effect from it. It is quite possible the man's own imaginings have produced on him the effects which he attributes to the wine. The matter is, however, sufficiently grave to render it desirable an analysis should be made, and I request you will ask Mr. Ward to make it.

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES COULTER, *Superintendent.*

To ROBERT CARTER, *Esq., Mayor of Launceston.*

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WILL Mr. Ward be good enough to make an analysis of the wine, in order that the Superintendent of Police may have sufficient information as to the necessity for further proceedings?

ROBERT CARTER, *Mayor.*  
29. 3. 87.

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*Government Laboratory, Hobart, 1st April, 1887.*

DEAR SIR,

THE bottle of champagne forwarded by you arrived yesterday, and, after standing all night, a sediment of arsenic deposited from the wine. This sediment alone, without taking account of what is dissolved in the wine, being sufficient to cause death, I sent you a telegram—"Much arsenic found"—to permit of your taking what further steps might be necessary at once. So far as I can see the cork has not been drawn, and there is only one hole through it, but I think it would be advisable to send me a pint bottle of the same champagne, so that I may closely compare the mode of wiring and stringing in each case. Copy of label in margin—["Fréminet & Fils, First quality."]

Yours faithfully,

W. F. WARD.

J. COULTER, *Esq., Superintendent of Police, Launceston.*

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*Office of Superintendent of Police, Launceston, 2nd April, 1887.*

DEAR SIR,

After receiving your telegram yesterday, I sought the person from whom I had received the bottle of champagne, and found him in the house of his wife, from whom he has been separated. He told me her father and mother were there also, and that she was dying from disease of the lungs, which she has long been suffering under, and which, no doubt, has been aggravated by mental suffering. He was no longer willing to take any action, and professed he had not the means of tracing the wine to the person he accused. I am, therefore, unable to take further action. If he had determined otherwise the action would come to nought, save in as far as the characters of accuser and accused would be affected, for there would be no evidence save the accuser's to show the wine was tampered with before it came into his possession. As the matter stops here, there is no reason the analysis should be treated as one made for public purposes, and I therefore request you will send me an account for same, that I may obtain payment for it.

Yours very faithfully,

JAMES COULTER.

To W. F. WARD, Esq., *Government Analyst, Hobart.*

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THE Government Analyst will be glad to receive the advice of the Hon. the Chief Secretary as to his further action in connection with the subject of the enclosed correspondence. The total quantity of arsenic present in the bottle would be about seven times the *minimum* fatal dose on record.

*Government Laboratory, 4th April, 1887.*

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REFERRED to the Hon. the Attorney-General, with the request that he will advise in this case.

P. O. FYSH.  
5th April, 1887.

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*Attorney-General's Office, Hobart, 15th April, 1887.*

MEMO.

I HAVE perused the accompanying correspondence. Inasmuch as the Superintendent of the Launceston Police, in his letter of the 20th March last, states that the wine came from a certain person whom he mentions, Mr. Coulter should be called upon, through the Mayor, to lay a charge against that person of "attempting to administer poison" (Reg. v. Dale, 6 Cox 14), when the person who gave the wine to Mr. Coulter will be put upon his oath as to the facts and circumstances of the case, and the whole matter will be investigated in a public manner, as is befitting the gravity of the charge. It is of no consequence that the person from whom Mr. Coulter received the bottle is "no longer willing to take any action." The matter is now in the hands of the Police, and the fullest investigation should be made at once. I suggest that Mr. Miller should be retained to conduct the prosecution.

A. INGLIS CLARK.

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*Chief Secretary's Office, Hobart, 22nd April, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward the enclosed correspondence relating to an alleged attempt to administer poison.

I am advised by the Hon. the Attorney-General that the proper course to pursue is for your Superintendent of Police to lay a charge against the person mentioned by him as having supplied the wine to Mr. Coulter's informant "for attempting to administer poison," who would then be put upon his oath as to the facts and circumstances of the case, and the whole matter will be investigated in a public manner.

The disinclination of the person from whom the Superintendent received the bottle to take any action cannot be allowed to interfere with the fullest possible investigation, and I have to request that you will be good enough to instruct your Officer to take the necessary steps.

Mr. R. B. Miller has been communicated with, requesting him to conduct the prosecution.

I have, &c.

B. STAFFORD BIRD.  
*For Chief Secretary, absent.*

*The Worshipful the Mayor, Launceston.*

HIS Worship forwards the enclosed correspondence to the Superintendent of Police for his information and guidance.

C. W. ROCHER.

*Office of Superintendent of Police, Launceston, 25th April, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to return annexed correspondence, and to state had there been any reasonable grounds to lead to belief that "an attempt to administer poison" had been made, I would ere this have taken the course suggested. There is no reasonable ground for such belief. A man makes the charge against another, who is his rival in trade and in the affections of his wife. It is notorious he bears him ill-will, and had struck him with a stick a few nights before, and warned him against interfering in any way with his wife. He can only suggest as a motive that in case of the wife's death from poison suspicion would be likely to fall on the husband, and one is asked to believe that a man seeks to poison a dying woman (she has since died) for whom he entertains affection that a suspicion of criminality may fall on her husband, and he seeks to do it in the reckless way of sending poisoned wine to the dying woman's house, which wine may never be given to her—may be drank by any of the inmates—and must inevitably be traced to him.

A more reasonable hypothesis is that the husband, enraged at finding the other dared send gifts to his wife after all that had passed, resolved to make this gift the basis of his ruin—placed in it the solution of arsenic, and then brought the bottle and his tale to me. He is not at all a brilliant man, yet in this case the slight matters which he described as existing—his suspicion—the care with which he examined and tested the contents of the bottle—his belief that it contained arsenic in solution because what he had tasted gave him a tendency to nausea and pain at back of the eyes—the probability that the solution was of a kind used by his rival (a dentist) in destroying the nerves in teeth—all this showed an intelligence, and, as analysis proved, a correctness of deduction which surprised me. I have since come to the conclusion that the whole was simply the cunning device of a weak man influenced by passion. If this matter be made the subject of public investigation, I will necessarily be an important witness in the case, and request that the charge be laid by some one else, for I most respectfully decline the responsibility. The person who made the charge is Arthur C. Reed, against Arthur Lucadou Wells, both dentists; date of alleged offence, on or about the 28th March, 1887; place, Launceston.

I have, &c.

JAMES COULTER, *Superintendent.*

ROBERT CARTER, *Mayor of Launceston.*

*Town Hall, Launceston, 26th April, 1887.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to return the annexed correspondence, and forward a letter of the Superintendent of Police which contains further data for the consideration of the Hon. the Attorney-General.

It can hardly be expected that the Superintendent of Police would take a course that might leave him open to damages for malicious prosecution.

I have, &c.

ROBERT CARTER, *Mayor.*

*The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Hobart.*

FORWARDED to the Hon. the Attorney-General.

P. O. FYSH.  
27th April, '87.

I RECOMMEND that the Inspector of Police be instructed to cause Superintendent Armstrong to lay these papers, with my Memorandum of the 15th instant, before Mr. Miller, who has been retained in this matter, and be guided by his advice as to whether any, and if so, what criminal proceedings should be instituted against any person under the circumstances detailed.

A. INGLIS CLARK.  
29th April, '87.

*The Hon. the Chief Secretary.*

FORWARDED to Mr. Superintendent Armstrong, who is instructed to take the course recommended by the Honorable the Attorney-General in his Memorandum of the 29th instant.

FRED. J. PATERSON, *for Inspector of Police.*  
30th April, '87.

*The Superintendent of Police, Selby.*