

(No. 58.)



1853.

VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

S M A L L - P O X .

ENCLOSURE IN HIS EXCELLENCY THE LIEUTENANT-
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE No. 22.

Ordered by the Council to be printed, 6th September, 1853.



Hobart Town, 26th August, 1853.

SIR,

UNDERSTANDING that the Small-pox has been brought to Sydney, I feel it necessary to submit for His Excellency's consideration a precautionary measure, by the use of which the introduction of this fearful disease into this Colony will produce as little harm as could result from such a visitation.

I need not offer one word in support of the value of Vaccination as a preventive: yet, while it is generally known the great benefits that result from Vaccination when effectually performed, it is no less notorious that a large number of persons are careless in getting their children, and consequently the Public, protected by its use.

In the visitations of Cholera in England, it has been observed how fatal that disease is when it has arrived at the state of collapse,—how little treatment then affects the results: whereas a premonitory state of Diarrhœa can easily be treated with success,—and Cholera thus be checked in its early stages. No gratuitous supplies of remedies, no establishment of Dispensaries for their distribution, no diffusion of information on the subject, roused the people generally to the use of the simple means that were offered for their relief. House-to-house visitation was required to find out the people affected, and thus to check the spread of this malady.

Vaccination is more disregarded in England (the land of its discovery) than almost any other European Country.

In this Island, where no case of Small-pox has yet occurred, there must be thousands who are liable to its influences; and I need not say that, with the increased numbers affected, the poison is rendered more intense.

The amount of population, and the number of persons already protected, renders the plan I submit comparatively easy in its execution, and therefore more effectual in its results.

I submit for the Lieutenant-Governor's consideration, that the Towns and Districts of this Island should be placed under the charge of Medical Practitioners,—who should have each to visit, in the District assigned to him, every house; grant certificates to those vaccinated or who have had the Small-pox; and vaccinate those unprotected: and for each person vaccinated by him that he should receive a fee of 2s. 6d. in the Town, and 2s. in addition for every mile from the Medical Man's residence, and for each house visited a fee of 7s. 6d.

That this visitation should be commenced immediately; and, from the number of Medical Practitioners, I am of opinion three calendar months after its establishment would enable them to visit and vaccinate all in the Island requiring it.

That the Medical Practitioners should send in Returns of the annexed forms for the cases they vaccinate; and that, on the presentation of these Returns, the fees due should be paid by the Colonial Treasurer.

Although the expenditure would be considerable to effect this object, there can be no doubt of its real economy to the Public by averting so fearful a disease, without referring to its safety and humanity.

It cannot be expected that Medical Men can afford the time to undertake such a duty without payment; and, unless some such plan is fully and promptly carried out, the disease, which must ere long reach these shores, will commit fearful ravages among the Inhabitants.

When the last vessels left England, a Bill was under consideration making Vaccination compulsory, and the production of Certificates of Vaccination necessary.

Should this measure become Law, it would be desirable to have an enactment in this Colony; and the Certificates proposed in this Letter are in accordance with the measure under consideration in England.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
E. S. P. BEDFORD.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary.
&c. &c. &c.