

Despatches respecting the question of Quarantine.

*Presented to the Legislative Council by Command of
His Excellency the Governor.*

(1.)

Governor Sir G. F. Bowen, G.C.M.G. to the Secretary of State.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
HONGKONG, 19th December, 1884.

MY LORD,

With reference to my despatch of the 9th August ultimo, and to previous correspondence respecting the question of quarantine, I have the honour to report that, Her Majesty's Minister at Peking (Sir HARRY PARKES), in a despatch dated on the 5th instant, has written to me as follows:—

“I should take this opportunity of stating to your Excellency that the instructions I received last year from the Foreign Office on the subject of quarantine, and which I have been directed to communicate to the Chinese Government, show that Her Majesty's Government are not in favour of the adoption of that measure. I take from these instructions the following passage:—

“Much as scientific men may have differed upon the ‘Contagion’ of Cholera, there is a complete agreement among all who have a practical acquaintance with the subject either in India, or in the United Kingdom, that the generally received theory and practice of quarantine is not only useless, but also hurtful.”

“The custom of imprisoning the healthy with the sick is calculated, for moral and physical reasons which are easily understood, to increase the number of the persons attacked, to intensify the virulence of the disease, and to convert the prison into a nidus of infection; while the unfounded belief by the security given by quarantine discourages the adoption of those sanitary measures which alone are proved to check the spread of the epidemic.”

“If the above reasoning be applicable to epidemic cholera, it would appear to have greater force in regard to any endemic form of the disease, such as that which occasionally appears in China during the summer months.”

2. Personally, I am disposed to agree with the spirit of the instructions from the Foreign Office quoted above. But, it will be remembered that very conflicting opinions have been held, and very different courses of action have been followed, respecting quarantine, by various Colonial Governments and Communities. I would request your Lordship to inform me, for my future guidance, if you desire that the principle laid down by the Foreign Office should be followed, in questions relating to Quarantine, by the Government of Hongkong.

I have, &c.,

(Signed), G. F. BOWEN.

The Right Honourable

THE EARL OF DERBY, K.G.,

&c.,

&c.,

&c.

(2.)

Secretary of State to Governor Sir G. F. Bowen, G.C.M.G.

DOWNING STREET, 13th February, 1885.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch of the 19th December last, on the subject of Quarantine regulations.

2. The views expressed in the Foreign Office instructions to Her Majesty's Minister at Peking, quoted in your Despatch, are those entertained by Her Majesty's Government on the subject of Quarantine against Cholera, and these views have been put in practice in the United Kingdom, where Quarantine is no longer enforced except against plague and yellow fever.

3. Her Majesty's Government have not, however, thought it necessary to press for the adoption of a similar course in Colonies where public opinion is strongly in favour of the enforcement of strict Quarantine regulations; but, if it is probable that the Legislature of Hongkong would be willing to adopt the English practice, I should approve of your introducing the necessary legislation.

4. If Quarantine were abolished, it would be necessary to give the Governor in Council power of making regulations similar to that possessed by the Local Government Board under Section 130 of the Public Health Act, 1875; and it would be necessary for the Governor in Council to make regulations for the detention and examination of ships suspected of being infected with Cholera, or coming from places infected with Cholera; for the medical examination of the passengers and crew, and for the removal from the ship and the detention and treatment in proper isolated places of the sick persons on board; for the disinfection of the ship, and for the disinfection or destruction of all infected articles on board similar to those made by the Local Government Board in their Order of 12th July, 1883. A copy of that Order is enclosed for your information, with copies of the accompanying letter to the Sanitary Authorities, and of a Memorandum by the Medical Officer of the Board on Precautions against Infection of Cholera.

I have, &c.,

(Signed), DERBY.

Governor

Sir G. F. BOWEN, G.C.M.G.,

&c.,*&c.*,*&c.*