

29TH AUGUST, 1893.

PRESENT :—

His Excellency the Governor, Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON, K.C.M.G.

Hon. G. T. M. O'BRIEN, C.M.G., Colonial Secretary.

Hon. W. M. GOODMAN, Attorney-General.

Hon. A. M. THOMSON, Acting Registrar-General.

Hon. N. G. MITCHELL-INNES, Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. F. A. COOPER, Director of Public Works.

Hon. R. M. RUMSEY, R. N., Harbour Master.

Hon. C. P. CHATER.

Hon. HO KAI.

Hon. J. J. KESWICK.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD.

Hon. E. R. BELLIOS.

Mr. A. Seth, Clerk of Councils.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

PAPERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to lay on the table the report of the Director of the Observatory for 1892, the report of the Director of Public Works for the first half year of 1893, and a despatch from the Secretary of State containing a copy of a note from the Chinese Minister in London with reference to the Yellow River Inundation in 1887.

THE ROYAL WEDDING. —REPLY OF HER MAJESTY TO HONGKONG.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have much pleasure in reading to the Council the following despatch which has been received from the Secretary of State by H.E. the Governor:—

"Downing Street,
"6th July, 1893.

"Sir, —I have laid before the Queen your telegram of the 5th instant and I am commanded by Her Majesty to request you to convey to the Council and community of Hongkong an expression of Her Majesty's cordial thanks for your loyal congratulations on the marriage of His Royal Highness the Duke of York and Her Serene Highness the Princess Victoria Mary of

Teck. —I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

"RIPON.

"H.E. Sir William Robinson, K.C.M.G."

FINANCIAL MINUTES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—I have the honour to submit the financial minutes which stand in my name and move that they be referred to the Finance Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Minutes referred.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

The DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS—I have the honour to lay on the table the report of a meeting of the Public Works Committee held on July 12th, and move that it be adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Adopted. —The report was to the effect that the Committee had considered the plans connected with the Kowloon water supply project and recommended that they be adopted.

THE GAP ROCK LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—Pursuant to notice, I beg to ask the following questions: —Has the attention of the Government been directed to a letter in the *China Mail* on Saturday, 15th instant, on the subject of the lighthouse keepers at Gap Rock? Have the lighthouse keepers complained to the Harbour Master or to the Government direct in respect of their pay and position? Is there any connection between these complaints and the unsatisfactory condition of the working of the Gap Rock signalling arrangements? If any such complaints exist, will the Government direct the Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor on 19th June last to investigate and report on the working of the Gap Rock Lighthouse, the telegraphic communication therewith, &c., &c., also to investigate and report on these complaints?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I will proceed to answer the questions of the hon member *seriatim*. The first is: —"Has the attention of the Government been directed to a letter in the *China Mail* on Saturday, 15th instant, on the subject of lighthouse keepers at Gap Rock?"

The answer is Yes. It is a very remarkable letter, but I should be out of order if I were to comment on it in answer to a question. The second question is:—"Have the lighthouse keepers complained either to the Harbour Master or to the Government in respect of their pay and position?" No representation has been received either by the Government or by the Harbour Master from the lighthouse keepers for more than a year. In July last year, shortly after their arrival, they made three requests. The first was for an addition to the lodging allowance which they had agreed to accept. This was refused. The second was to be allowed to repay certain advances which they had received from the Crown Agents, at the rate of 4/- to the dollar. To this they were not entitled, but as an act of grace it was allowed. Thirdly they asked for a special and extra allowance in connection with the expenses attending their settling themselves in Hongkong. They were entitled to nothing in this respect but as an act of grace they were granted portage. The third question of the hon member is:—"Is there any connection between these complaints and the unsatisfactory condition of the Gap Rock signalling arrangements?" The answer is, There are no complaints, and the men have nothing to do with the signalling arrangements. The fourth question is:—"If any such complaints exist will the Government direct the Commission, appointed by His Excellency the Governor on 19th June last, to investigate and report on the working of the Gap Rock Lighthouse, the telegraphic communication therewith, &c., also to investigate and report on these complaints?" The answer is, There are no complaints and it is not intended to make any reference on the subject to the Commission.

THE LOAN.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—In pursuance of notice I beg to ask the following questions:— What is the net amount in sterling which has been received by the Crown Agents in London in respect of the recent Hongkong Gold Loan? Has any portion been remitted to Hongkong, or drawn for by the Colonial Government. and if so, at what rates of exchange? How is the balance in the hands of the Crown Agents in vested? If invested, what rate of interest is it earning? And what instructions have the Colonial Government sent to the Crown Agents since the closing of the Indian Mints to free coinage of silver as to the disposal of the balance of the loan?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir. I am sorry that I am not in a position to answer all these questions, but I will answer as many of them as I can. The first is:—"What is the net amount in sterling which has been received by the Crown Agents in London in respect of the recent Hongkong Gold Loan?" At the date of the last account rendered by the Crown Agents they had received a sum of £140,000 in respect of

the loan. According to the terms of the prospectus they should by now have received the balance of £60,000 and I have no reason to doubt that they have done so although I have no information on the subject. The second question is:—"Has any portion been remitted to Hongkong?" The answer is, None. The third question is:—"Or drawn for by the Colonial Government, and if so at what rates of exchange?" The answer is, No. The next question is:—"How is the balance in the hands of the Crown Agents invested?" I have written to the Crown Agents on this point, but there has not been time to receive an answer. It may, however, be assumed that they have adopted the usual course of depositing the available money in the bank at short call. The next question is:—"If invested, what rate of interest is it earning?" The Crown Agents usually obtain on money deposited in the bank at short call rates of interest varying from 1½ per cent. to 2½ per cent., according to the bank rate. The last question is: "What instructions have the Colonial Government sent to the Crown Agents since the closing of the Indian Mints to the free coinage of silver, as to the disposal of the balance of the loan?" The answer is, None. The closing of the Indian mints has no bearing on the disposal of the proceeds of the loan.

NOTICE OF MOTION ON THE MORPHINE QUESTION.

Hon. T. H. WHITEHEAD—I rise to give notice that at the next meeting of Council I will move the following resolution:—"That before proceeding with the second reading of the Morphine Ordinance of 1893 the Government lay on the table copies of any reports received from the Sanitary Board and the Medical Department on the subject of the consumption of morphine and the practice of administering or injecting preparations of morphine by unqualified persons."

THE MORPHINE ORDINANCE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL—I have the honour to move the first reading of a Bill entitled "The Morphine Ordinance, 1893." It is not usual, sir, to make any observations on the first reading of a Bill, but as this is an exceptional measure I may say one or two words. I will read the reasons and objects which are printed at the end of the Ordinance. I think they will make clear the purpose and scope and intentions of this Ordinance. The reasons and objects are as follows:—"There has recently sprung up in this Colony a pernicious practice of administering, by injection or otherwise, preparations of morphine in cases where such treatment would not be prescribed by any duly qualified medical man. Large numbers of ignorant Chinese coolies are now habitually resorting to places recently opened where for a small charge they receive injections of morphine administered by unqualified persons who there by derive pecuniary profit. There is reason also to

believe that preparations of morphine in various forms are largely taken by persons in other ways than by injection and in cases where no duly qualified medical man would prescribe such treatment. The object of this Bill is to render such practices illegal, and to bring the possession, consumption, and administration of morphine under regulation." It was mentioned to me, sir, as a matter of comment that there had been some petition from the Opium Farmer in relation to the sale of morphine. I need hardly say that in approaching this subject the Government does not approach it at all from the view or side of the Opium Farmer. It is purely and simply a question of public policy. We have nothing to do with whether the sale of morphine is prejudicial to the Opium Farmer or otherwise—that is a matter quite outside the scope and object of this Bill. What we have to deal with is the question, Does a great crying public evil exist and is it incumbent on the Government to endeavour as far as in it lies to put an end to that evil and stamp it out? It has been shown that coolies in large numbers, many hundreds every day, go to dens where they have received one, two, three, or even five injections in the course of a day, at a cost of about one cent each injection—which injection is performed by coolies equally ignorant—and injections at even that price leave a most handsome profit. The persons who set up in this business do so not because they are prompted by humane instincts but simply and solely because it puts money into their own pocket—money which is derived from doing that to their fellow creatures which they may think good for them at the time but which medical opinion shows to be extremely pernicious and which in the end must result, I might almost say, in their destruction. When such an evil as this becomes glaring—and it is of comparatively recent origin in this colony—it is incumbent on the Government to take such steps as it lies to put a stop to it. But while dealing with these ignorant coolies who are practised upon in this way it is necessary to go further. Morphine has been taken in other forms than by injection. It is taken in the form of lozenges, pills, in various preparations, and this Ordinance aims at putting a stop to that kind of thing also. It does not want to interfere with medical treatment in any way and therefore the Ordinance provides that if a duly qualified medical man prescribes such treatment it is quite lawful to treat in the way prescribed. But what the Ordinance does aim at is the putting down of unauthorised and improper use of morphine, which is most prejudicial to those who use it, and which is condemned by all the best medical men who have studied the subject in any way. The Ordinance itself is a very short one. I may say that I have seen Dr. Ayres, the Colonial Surgeon, and discussed this matter carefully with him, and I have not drawn up this Ordinance

without also carefully discussing the question with the hon. member who specially represents the Chinese and who, I understand, is prepared to second this Bill. He having medical knowledge as well as legal knowledge sees the necessity for some measure of this kind. I may point out in passing that in this Ordinance it is not intended to interfere with the possession of morphine by duly qualified chemists. Section 5, which deals with this point, says, "Any person, not being a duly qualified medical practitioner or a chemist or druggist actually carrying on business as such, who shall have in his possession any morphine or any preparation of morphine shall on conviction" be punishable. The Ordinance itself is very simple. There are only three sections to which I need refer. Section 3 declares the administration of morphine by injection or otherwise, by any person not being a duly qualified practitioner, to be punishable as an offence. Section 4, in order to make section 3 capable of being enforced, says that "any person, not being a duly qualified medical practitioner, who shall, except in cases where morphine has been prescribed by some duly qualified medical practitioner, furnish morphine or a hypodermic syringe or other appliance for the injection of morphine to any person except a duly qualified practitioner shall, on conviction before a Magistrate," be punishable. The last section, which I have already mentioned deals with the possession of morphine. It does not prevent any duly qualified medical practitioner, or any chemist and druggist carrying on business here, having it in his possession. I do not know whether when it comes to be carefully considered in Committee it will be found possible to improve the Ordinance as it now stands. but I am sure that any suggestion which is made will be carefully weighed. In the meantime I must commend this Bill to the Council as an honest attempt to meet a crying and urgent evil.

Hon. HO KAI—I have much pleasure in seconding the first reading of this Bill, and in doing so I think I ought to make a few remarks in support of it. It is well known, I think, to every hon. member in this Council, and I think to every person outside of the Council, that opium smoking is pernicious enough in itself. It does not require medical testimony or scientific investigation to show that, We can see the many examples of it around us every day, and if we have our senses open at all to external impressions we see the evil results everywhere. Now, opium smoking is bad enough, but the eating of opium or any of its preparations, or the introduction of any of the active principles of opium, like morphine into the system by injection or otherwise, is worst of all. In taking opium by smoking here is only a very small quantity of the, active principle of the drug absorbed into the system at a time, and consequently the evil effect

from that is very gradual and comparatively slight. But by introducing it into the system by the mouth or by subcutaneous injection the full effect is produced at once and in a few months the effects are very much exaggerated and the evil arising from it is correspondingly great. Now, in this colony from time to time there have been some quack medicines sold as being mixtures for enabling opium smokers to leave off the habit. The object of these medicines is supposed to be good and they have induced a great number of Chinese who have fallen into the habit of opium smoking and subsequently seen the evil of it to resort to these medicines, but I need scarcely say, to their cost and their grief, the smokers find out afterwards they are jumping from the frying pan into the fire. In fact, the cure is worse than the disease; and I was wondering why the Government had not seen its way before this to pass an Ordinance of this kind to prevent the sale of such poisonous medicines as morphine and all its injurious preparations by persons not duly licensed. The evil has gone a step further. As I understand, during the last two or three months there have sprung up in the Colony a good many dens where morphine is injected subcutaneously, and that is equivalent to introducing the active principle of the opium more directly into the system. I do not wish to say very much against the practice in a medical sense, because, as everyone of us knows—especially those who are family doctors—morphine may sometimes have a good effect; but it ought only to be given to alleviate great pain and to give the patient sound sleep. We avoid giving it where we can, and when I was a dresser in St. Thomas's Hospital I had as many as twenty or thirty applications in one night for morphia. I was always reluctant to give it; and in many cases I injected pure water, and that so acted upon the patients, believing that they were receiving morphine, that they have actually gone to sleep. with the advantage that when they awoke they had none of the after effects of morphine. If long continued, the injection of morphine, even in cases where morphine is properly prescribed, always leaves in its train evil consequences, and in cases where it is not really required it brings on emaciation and constipation, the whole system gets blocked up, and in time the patient pines away and his life is not worth many years' purchase. For these reasons I second the Bill. I hope the learned Attorney-General will in Committee make it apply not only to the injection of morphine but to the administering of morphia in every shape and form, including those patent medicines which are being sold every day for enabling a man to leave off the habit of opium smoking. In fact, if the medicine is a good one it should not contain any morphine or any active principle of opium at all, and any medicine substitutive for

opium, any of its active principles in the form of mixtures, pills, etc., taken instead of smoking is bad in itself. I hope that the Government while they are passing a Bill to prevent the injection of morphine will include the whole of these things.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL—By way of explanation I may say that this Bill does aim at the suppression of the administration of morphine in every form. Section 3 provides that any person who shall administer morphine by injection or otherwise shall, etc. We will make that clear in Committee.

The Bill was then read a first time.

STATUTORY DECLARATIONS ORDINANCE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the Council should go into Committee again on this Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Bill re-committed.

Some verbal alterations having been made, the Bill was reported, read a third time, and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

HIS EXCELLENCY—I propose that the Council should meet again on this day fortnight.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held immediately after the Council rose. The Colonial Secretary presided.

SALARIES, &c.

The CHAIRMAN—The Committee may remember that when they agreed to an additional expenditure not exceeding \$100,000 to meet payments falling due, in the last month of the year, which in the previous year had been made from votes for the following year, I undertook that the items of expenditure should be ascertained and that the Committee should be made acquainted with them. These items have now been ascertained and a list has been printed, copies of which have been circulated to members. The total, I see, amounts to \$78,190.88.

THE GOVERNOR'S FURNITURE.

The CHAIRMAN—The first matter before the Committee is a financial minute in which the Governor recommends the Council to vote the sum of \$600, being cost of furniture at Government House. The Governor is sorry to come to the Council for a vote which is in a sense on his own account, but the following memorandum from his private secretary will explain the circumstances:—

"Craigieburn.

"Sir,

"Re-vote for repairs to furniture and incidental expenses at Government House.

"I have the honour to inform you that this vote has been exceeded and that a supplementary vote will be required to carry on to the end of the year. That the vote has been exceeded is due to the fact that preparatory to the visit of

Lord and Lady Jersey, and Lady Kintore and family, in the Spring bedroom furniture had to be supplied for the two best bedrooms in order that they might be in a fit state to receive them. The cost of the furniture amounted to about \$600.

"CYRIL PLATT, Private Sec."

I do not know whether any member of the Committee would care to have details of the necessity for this expenditure, but I may mention one circumstance that will go far to show that the outlay was necessary. When the two bedsteads in these bedrooms were sold they only fetched between them \$5. (Laughter).

Vote passed.

A RE-VOTE.

The CHAIRMAN—The Governor recommends the Council to re-vote the sum of \$80,000 being part of the sum voted in 1892, as the Government contribution to the Praya Reclamation Fund. This is merely a matter of account revoting the portion of last year's vote which was not brought to account last year. I presume there will be no objection to that.

Vote passed.

REPAIRS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The CHAIRMAN—The Governor recommends the Council to vote a sum of \$5,000 for repairs to Public Buildings. On this matter the Director of Public Works reports that on careful examination he finds that considerable repairs are necessary in certain Government buildings owing to white ants and other causes. I may mention with

regard to this minute, which recommends the expenditure of \$5,000, and the next minute, which recommends the expenditure of \$1,500, that the Director of Public Works anticipates savings of votes in the estimates for the current year which will suffice to cover the expenditure. So that if the Finance Committee agree to these additional expenditures they will not thereby run any risk of the total amount of expenditure already agreed to against the revenue of the current year being exceeded. I can only say that I am sorry that the necessity for the expenditure has arisen, and if any hon. member desires any further information the Director of Public Works will be glad to give it.

Vote passed.

KOWLOON ROADS.

The CHAIRMAN—The next and last minute is one in which the Governor recommends the Council to vote \$1,500 for repairs of roads at Kowloon. I have already mentioned that the Director of Public Works has stated that owing to some savings effected on other votes this expenditure will not cause over-expenditure on the total expenditure already agreed to by the Council and by the Finance Committee. The vote for 1892 was \$10,000 and the Director of Public Works thought that for 1893 he could do with only \$6,000. Unfortunately he has been mistaken and he now requires a further sum of \$1,500.

Vote passed.

The Committee then adjourned.