

A letter to the Right Honble. W. Huskisson, M.P., President of the Board of Trade, on the Quarantine Bill / [A.B. Granville].

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A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONBLE. W. HUSKISSON, M. P.

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE.

ON

THE QUARANTINE BILL.

BY

A. B. GRANVILLE, M.D.; F.R.S.; F.L.S.; M.R.I.

ONE OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF CLARENCE'S PHYSICIANS IN
ORDINARY, LICENTIATE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
OF LONDON, &c. &c.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. DAVY, QUEEN STREET, SEVEN DIALS.

1825.

(CIRCULATED GRATUITOUSLY.)

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The present Letter was published in the **TIMES**, on the 26th instant, and is now reprinted for gratuitous circulation among the Members of both Houses of Parliament, and Gentlemen connected with Government, with two additional paragraphs, the subject matter of which has been supplied by two eminent individuals, mentioned in the body of the letter, well qualified to judge of the question on which the Legislature will be called upon to decide next Monday.

28th May, 1825.



TO THE
RIGHT HON^{BLE}. W. HUSKISSON, M. P.

President of the Board of Trade.

SIR,

My prediction is fulfilled: England is declared to be an infected country; she is put on a footing with Turkey at some of the principal ports of the Mediterranean, and her merchant navy, generally, has been directed to perform quarantine in those ports, in consequence of the reported relaxation in the sanitary laws said to have been recommended by this government to the legislature, and still more in consequence of the singular doctrines proclaimed in parliament, on some recent occasions, respecting the plague and the inutility of quarantine regulations.

As far back as the year 1819, I took the liberty of warning your predecessor in office, in a letter "on the Plague and Contagion,"* published subsequently to my examination before the Contagion Committee of the House of Commons, how far he ventured to interfere with the existing sanitary regulations of the country. My words were these: "Let it be borne in mind, that the abrogation of laws imposing very trifling shackles to a limited trade, besides exposing the whole nation to the visitation of a very destructive disease, will also subject the whole shipping trade of this country to the vexatious obligation of performing quaran-

* A letter to the Right Hon. F. Robinson, M. P., President of the Board of Trade, on the Plague and Contagion, with reference to the Quarantine Laws, by A. B. Granville, M.D. F.R.S. London, 1819.

tine in every port of France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, at all times, and under all circumstances," &c. "England, without quarantine laws, will instantly be noted in the books of health of every European nation as an infected country!"

And in the beginning of the last year, when examined, once more, before the Committee on Foreign Trade, and while answering a question put to me by the chairman, respecting the propriety of delivering certain goods immediately, and without performing quarantine, I again implored the members not to propose any considerable relaxation in the existing quarantine regulations without due caution, lest other nations should include every English vessel in their quarantine restrictions, for fear of opening a door to contagious disorders. "It must be borne in mind, (I then said) that in proportion as you relax with regard to foul or clean bills of health from Turkey, and even America, so will other European nations, particularly France, include you in their quarantine laws; all goods and vessels from England would have to undergo quarantine of some extent, even on proceeding to Calais."—"In legislating here, the King's Council will have an eye to the counter-measures which foreign nations might adopt in consequence."

Q. "Do you think that relaxation in this country, would induce foreign countries to make more strict regulations respecting English vessels?"

A. "There is little doubt of it."

Now, let us look at the events that are passing before us. A bill is introduced under your sanction, abrogating all existing regulations on quarantine, and embodying more liberal, and as it is stated, less oppressive measures on the subject, in one act. The introduction of this act gives rise to discussions in the British House of Com-

mons, during which, principles are promulgated, wholly at variance with doctrines sanctioned by dear-bought experience—by the brightest authorities, both dead and living, professional as well as unprofessional—by the testimony of many ages and every nation—by the open declaration of the highest medical tribunal in the country—and lastly, by a report from a committee of that very house, in which such heterodox principles are avowed and eloquently insisted upon. Vessels coming from Alexandria are permitted to unload their cargoes of cotton without performing quarantine, or after performing only a short one. And now, mark the consequence of all this. The Board of Health, at Leghorn, have been deliberating on the propriety of putting all vessels from Great Britain under quarantine, in consequence (as we are told officially by the agents at Lloyd's*) of the dangerous change made in this country in the time formerly fixed for *surveillance*: and the magistrates of a similar description at Genoa, have actually ordered that all ships coming from England, with any sort of goods, shall perform a quarantine of fifteen days; and if with Levant goods on board, then the quarantine to extend to forty days: the goods being at the same time expurgated. It is even rumoured that at Marseilles, Minorca, Barcelona, Naples, and Palermo, the same strong measures are likely to be adopted.

Here, then, we see the injurious effects of an incautious interference with the sanitary laws, predicted by a contagionist who has not been listened to, in full play against the British shipping; while the useful results that are to arise from a relaxation in those laws, promised by

* See the letters from Lloyd's Agents at Leghorn and Genoa, in "The Times" of the 21st instant.

the apostle of non-contagion, who appears to have been attentively listened to, are as yet, and I am sure will ever remain, problematical.

As the new bill, which has excited such mischief, is understood to have been framed at the suggestion of the Committee on Foreign Trade, in whose report I find myself cited as one of the medical witnesses who recommended a modification of the quarantine laws then in force, I feel it due to my character to address you on the subject, in order to remind you, that I implored, at the same time, the committee to be cautious in adopting any modification of the quarantine laws, and that I pointed out the penalty by which a different conduct would inevitably be followed.

To the political feature of the question I purposely confine myself. It is in consideration of its great importance, that I venture to intreat you to introduce your more enlightened measures of protection against contagion in a less objectionable form, and so framed as to afford the surest guarantee of the non-existence of dangerous innovations to those trading nations who are, as yet, unprepared to receive the doctrine of non-contagion in plague, and of the non-transmissibility of contagion by goods and persons.

Into the medical part of the question, respecting which more absurdities have perhaps been uttered within the last few years, and I may say, within the last few weeks, and more incorrect assertions made, than at any other time before, it is not my intention to enter. *Laterem lavare, quis curat?* If all that has been said hitherto in proof of the existence of contagion in plague—if the unimpeachable testimony of eminent persons in support of that existence—if the stubborn facts (and ten such facts are as good as ten thousand) brought forward in my letter

on the plague before alluded to, proving the existence of contagion, and its transmissibility by goods and persons, from one part of the world to another—facts which none of the non-contagionists have yet dared to contradict or impugn—if these things, I say, have failed to produce conviction, where conviction is important; it is not for me, at the eleventh hour, to come forward and again endeavour to remove affected doubts. Let the Government look at the question as one of international policy, and be wise. Medical men will settle those doubts among themselves.

But although I thus disclaim all intention of troubling either you or the public with any medical disquisition on the subject, I am unwilling to part with you without adverting to some of the misrepresentations respecting many circumstances connected with the question of the plague, to which currency has of late been given, I dare not say from any improper motive, yet with mischievous effect, inasmuch as they have tended to unsettle and agitate the public mind, and would continue to do so unless refuted.

1st. It has been asserted, that not a single expurgator in the lazaretto of Marseilles has caught the plague since 1720. This is at variance with truth: and I shall prove it to be so by mentioning the fact, that Dr. Robert officially reported to Professor Foderé, that cases of plague had, at times, occurred in the lazaretto of Marseilles, in consequence of vessels with the disease coming from Turkey or Barbary; and I will cite, in illustration, the three vessels commanded by Captains Bernardy, Giraud, and Pons, which arrived at the lazaretto of Marseilles in 1786 with the plague. But why instance Marseilles in particular? Would not the lazaretto of Leghorn do as well? and if cases of plague (or even a single

case) should appear to have occurred in that lazaretto, among persons communicating with vessels having the plague on board, or with their crew, or with their cargo, would not the contagion of the disorder be equally proved? I assert then, on the authority of General Spanocchi, (a living witness) who was Governor of Leghorn in 1814, at which period I visited the quarantine establishments of that place, that two cases of plague had shortly before occurred in the lazaretto of St. Leopold, under circumstances such as I have here alluded to. But by far the strongest example of communicated plague to the servants of a lazaretto, by the crew and goods of an infected vessel, is that which was reported by the British Consul-General at Venice, in 1818, and which I afterwards had the means of personally verifying, by the oral testimony of the physician and surgeon of the lazaretto, when I visited that country in 1819. I allude to the case of a vessel from Durazzo importing the plague into the lazaretto of Poviglia, at Venice, in October 1818, which affected all those that had any communication with the crew or cargo, most of them dying, and among them four *bastazzi*, or expurgators. Will this number suffice, instead of the only disputed case said to have occurred at Marseilles, quoted by an honorable gentleman? Government are in possession of the very dispatches of Mr. Hoppner, which announced this example of communicated plague to the expurgators; and yet no answer was given to the gentleman in question, when he made the assertion here disputed, on which he appeared to rely so much, as a means of proving the inutility of quarantine laws!

2dly. It has been stated, that "no man could produce a single instance to prove that contagion

had been conveyed in cotton goods of any kind whatever." To what purpose, I ask, have Sir A. Faulkner, Sir James Macgregor, myself, and above all, Mr. Hayes, who resided forty-four years in Smyrna, given their evidence before the Committee on Contagion in 1819? What has been the use of Sir Gilbert Blane's, Mr. Joseph Green's, and my own examination before the Committee of Foreign Trade, in 1824, when such a statement can be made and repeated? If the assertion here noticed is made in ignorance of the evidence published by those committees, then it is to be regretted that the evidence was not read before the assertion was attempted. If, on the other hand, that evidence has been read, it is not surely pretended to doubt the word of witnesses practically conversant with the subject, averring facts that have come to their own knowledge; while that of one or two medical persons, with either a short experience in such matters, or with none, is readily attended to! But, perhaps, another instance of plague imported by means of cotton goods, and that over land too, which has never been much noticed, will, in addition to those brought forward by Mr. Hayes and myself, satisfy the incredulous. Let them, then, inquire of the proper authorities, whether the real Levant plague was not conveyed in April, 1819, from Smyrna to Greiffenberg, in Silesia, in bales of cotton; and whether, in consequence of such an importation, some cases of death did not actually take place, until the disease was fortunately checked by insulation, and the most rigorous measures of segregation.

3dly. It has been advanced, that Holland never had, and has not, now, any quarantine establishments. Why was not this assertion instantly contradicted by those who heard it (and must

have known it to be founded on misconception), as it had been contradicted over and over again, on former occasions, by those best acquainted with the state of Holland? Had not Sir James Gambier's letter to Mr. Planta, in 1819, informed the Government that vessels from the Barbary coast are carefully inspected in Holland, and that the Marine Department determines, according to the nature of the case, "to what extent quarantine shall be enforced?" Is it not in evidence before the Committee on Foreign Trade, that the late secretary to the Dutch ambassador in London, had assured one of the witnesses then examined, that quarantine establishments existed, and had long existed, in Holland; and did not that same witness give in the title of the printed code of quarantine laws actually in force in the kingdom of the United Netherlands? And yet the non-contagionists keep repeating, time after time, that Holland has no sanatory laws.

4thly. The statement of an anonymous writer of a pamphlet, published in 1720, that the idea of contagion in plague first arose in the sixteenth century, out of a Popish state-trick, aided by Fracastorus, has been renewed by a contemporary physician, who is looked upon as the leader of the non-contagionists in this country; and, since him, the same statement has been repeated by four or five other writers of books and reviews, as well as by one or two persons in a more commanding station of life. Now, although it makes but little in support of the belief in the contagion of plague, whether the idea of contagion was first conceived at one time rather than at another—and so far the statement might be suffered to go to the world unmolested—it is, on the other hand, just that ignorance should be exposed, when it assumes the garb of

dictatorial learning. This statement, then, respecting the origin of the idea of contagion, like the other assertions already noticed, is perfectly at variance with truth. History tells us that the very word "quarantine" belongs to the sixth, and not the sixteenth century; and that it arose out of an edict of Justinian, enjoining all those who came from a country known to be infected, to repair to a particular spot, there to be watched for the term of *forty days*, in order to ascertain whether they brought with them the *seed* of the disease. And from the same source we learn, that an edict of the Venetian Senate, dated more than a century (March, 1448,) before the pretended Popish state-trick took place, was passed, establishing a board of health for the especial purpose of preventing the introduction of the plague.

5th. Equally unfounded with the preceding assertions, and betraying an equal ignorance of modern history, is the statement that Persia has never had the plague, although caravans and travellers from Turkey are constantly arriving in that country—a statement which, it is pretended, proves that the disease cannot be contagious, or it would have travelled eastward from Turkey into Persia.* But how is the real fact. Persia, it is true, has generally been free from the plague; but this immunity the inhabitants owe to their strong belief in the contagion of that disease, in consequence of which, very strict, and as Sir Gore Ouseley (the highest authority I can quote on this point) assures me, very severe *surveillance* is exercised over travellers and caravans coming from Turkey. When the chances of war,

* See the speeches in the House of Commons on the introduction of the bill this session, and the tenor of the assertions made before both Committees of the house, so often alluded to.

however, threw a portion of that empire into the hands of the Ottoman troops, whom the tenets of predestination teach to disregard the fatal effects of the plague, that disease made its way into Persia, and committed great havoc. Thus, during the occupation of Tabriz, and the greatest part of the province of Azerbaijan by the Turkish invaders, upwards of 30,000 of the inhabitants died of the plague; but since that province has been restored to the Persian Monarchs, no instance of that disease has occurred, in consequence of the precautions taken at the frontiers of Erivan—precautions which amount, in effect, to our quarantine laws, though much more severe in their nature. I trust that after this information, which I am authorized by our late ambassador at the court of Hispahan to make public, we shall hear no more of the futile and unsound argument against the non-contagious nature of plague, deduced from the immunity of Persia.

But facts every day crowd upon us from all parts, to overwhelm, as it were, the innovators and levellers of sound doctrines and old institutions. A recent and highly interesting communication from General Count Michel Woronzow, Governor General of New Russia and Bessarabia, informs me that the plague penetrated, in November last, into Ismail, from the right bank of the Danube, where that disease had been raging for fifteen months, and that its introduction was traced to an individual who contrived to elude the quarantine regulations. This took place during the *cold season* (mark that!) and seventy-three cases of death occurred during a period of two months, in a population of 12,000 inhabitants, who were saved from the desolating effects of the disease by the active and immediate regulations of insulation adopted by the government, it being proved that the disorder, through

those regulations, was wholly confined to those individuals who had communicated with the first importer, or had received goods belonging to him.

I might extend much farther this *exposé* of the ignorance or disingenuity of those who proclaim aloud the non-existence of contagion in plague, and call for the abolition of all sanitary laws. Thus I could tell you, that it is not true, that the contemporary physician to whom I have alluded as the advocate of non-contagion, was the only physician who, since the establishment of the doctrine of contagion, has been experimentally in collision with the plague: for, without alluding to the well-marked case of Dr. White, I know, from having been present at the experiment, that Dr. Valli inoculated himself with the matter of the plague, and caught the disorder, the progress of which I witnessed at the hospital Galata in 1803. I could also tell you, that it is not true, that the two chief medical officers of the French army in Egypt, as quoted by the non-contagionists, are of opinion that the plague is not contagious, and that medical officers in that army had dressed the sores of patients ill of the plague, and opened the bodies of those who died of the disease, without contracting it. Both those distinguished individuals have recorded their firm belief in the contagion of the plague, in very valuable works; and it is known that no fewer than 44 medical officers of that army died of the plague in Egypt. Larrey himself informs us, that one of his assistants who opened a body was seized with the plague and died; and Lattil, another experienced medical officer, whose Dissertation on Plague has been kept so studiously in the dark, caught the disease by dressing a bubo. But I fear that by following such a course, I should be insensibly

drawn into the medical consideration of the present question, from which I professed my intention of abstaining. I shall, therefore, conclude here, with repeating that the object I had in addressing you on the present occasion, was chiefly of a political tendency, and of a two-fold nature. First, to advert to the injury that has already resulted from the promulgation of the unsound doctrines lately started on the subject of quarantine laws—an injury which the shipping interest of Great Britain is actually feeling at this moment, and is likely to feel as long as the present measures are *so* introduced and *so* discussed in the British House of Commons; and secondly, to expose a few of the many misrepresentations on which those doctrines are made to stand.

With respect to that part of the question which relates to the hardships felt by the Levant Trade, under the old quarantine laws, I confess I cannot comprehend the use it is intended to make of that special circumstance in legislating for a general object. What more right have persons engaged in importing Levant goods, to complain of restrictive conditions imposed on that trade by the Government of this country, than the importers of foreign corn have, for instance, who are equally restricted from disposing of their cargoes until certain conditions are fulfilled—or, in other words, until the market price of that commodity is such as to allow of the disposal of those cargoes? Both are measures of national policy. The one to protect the whole community from the devastating effects of imported disease; the other to protect part of the community only, namely, the agricultural interest, against the depreciating effect of an overflowing market. But how wide is the difference in the degrees of importance that belong to the ultimate end of those two legislative measures!

I wish it had been possible for me to point out to your attention, how much more the question of quarantine regulations is one of international policy than of medical research, without alluding in so direct a manner to the part I have taken at different times in its discussion and consideration. It would have been greatly more suitable to my feelings to have been able so to do; but the paramount importance of the subject has silenced all sentiments of personal inconvenience; and it is on the same ground that I prefer the press as a vehicle of my letter, to the unsafe, and not always useful, transmission of such communications by a private channel.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

A. B. GRANVILLE, M. D.

16, Grafton-street, Berkeley-square,

May 24, 1825.

This letter was sent, as published in the *Times*, the same day, to the Right Honourable Gentleman to whom it is addressed, with the following explanatory note:—

Dr. Granville begs to call Mr. Huskisson's attention to a letter contained in the accompanying number of the *Times*, addressed to him, as President of the Board of Trade, for reasons therein stated, both as to the motive and channel of the communication.

Dr. Granville being anxious that the contents of that article should meet the eye of Mr. Hus-

kisson, before any further discussion on the quarantine bill takes place in Parliament, will leave this packet himself to day at Mr. Huskisson's residence.

Dr. Granville cannot help declaring, that he considers the new bill likely to be looked upon as unsatisfactory, by the vigilant mind of foreign Boards of Health, in its present state, and as by no means calculated to quiet the feelings of insecurity which its bare discussion has excited among foreign nations; and were he consulted by the Sardinian ambassador in London, to whom he has the honour of being attached as physician, respecting the steps already taken at Genoa, by the Piedmontese government, he would be under the necessity of pointing out the objectionable features of the new bill; not in reference to any want of salutary restrictions in its clauses, as it has been inconsiderately, and it may be said, unfortunately believed, at home and abroad; but in reference to the imperfect nature of those provisions which relate to the Lazarettoes themselves, and the manner of *performing* quarantine.

Dr. Granville has enlarged so much on these two points, both in his letter to Mr. Robinson, and in his evidence before the Committee of Foreign Trade, that he thinks it needless to do more than allude to them in this place.

Although Dr. Granville has not the honour of being known to Mr. Huskisson, he may venture to say that he is not altogether unknown to Mr. Huskisson's predecessor in Office, and to him reference may be made as to the degree of moral weight that may attach to Dr. Granville's assertions.

May 26,

16, Grafton Street, Berkeley Square.