NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF MARITIME QUARANTINE IN QUEENSLAND, 19th CENTURY

Compiled by C. R. WIBURD,
Quarantine Officer, Brisbane.

Introductory

From the earliest times the fact has been recognised that infection has been transferred from individuals exhibiting certain signs of disease, to other persons. As a result of this, rudimentary isolation practices have been introduced and applied for the purpose of preventing the spread of infection.

An example of such practices is the code of rules containing in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus. These rules define the degree of isolation and other measures to be applied in the case of "lepers."

In the early ages, countries remained isolated, and there was little trade between them so no marked spread of infection in an epidemic manner occurred. Measures of self protection against incoming diseases were not then considered necessary by any country. In the sixth century, however, the great plague epidemic, usually referred to as the Plague of Justinian, began in Egypt. Another critical period in the same connection is marked by the introduction of plague to Europe from China in the 14th Century. Creighton (History of Epidemics, Great Britain, Vol. 1, p. 1) emphasises the importance of these epochs as follows:—

"These are the two greatest pestileses in recorded history; each has no parallel except in the other. No single thing stands out more clearly as the stroke of fate in bringing the ancient civilisation to an end than the vast depopulation and solitude made by the plague which came with the corn-ships from Egypt to Byzantium in the year 543; and nothing marks so definitely the emergence of Europe from the middle period of stagnation as the other depopulation and social upheaval made by the plague which came in the overland track of Genoese and Venetian traders from China in the year 1347."
The plagues referred to were in all probability bubonic plague, although all epidemics in these early centuries were known as plagues or pestilences.

The Plague of Justinian began at Pelusium in Egypt in 542 A.D. After spreading through Egypt it appeared the next year at Constantinople, thence spreading throughout the whole Roman Empire.

The disastrous epidemic of plague which was brought direct from the Crimea to Genoa in 1347 may be regarded as the commencement and the direct incentive to organised measures of protection against infection of the sick or of persons coming from infected countries. It is recorded (Creighton, Vol. 1, p. 145) that Italian traders, besieged by Tartars at Caffa on the Black Sea, escaped by ship and sailed direct to Genoa, "and that the infection appeared in Genoa in its most deadly form a day or two after the arrival of the ship, although none of those on board were suffering from the plague."

This epidemic spread throughout Europe and caused wide-spread mortality so far away as England, and stimulated European countries to formulate measures of isolation for self protection.

The insistence of a port on the protection of its own interests at all costs has been clearly described by a Flemish Chronicler of 1348. He recorded how:

"... three galleys touched at Genoa driven by a fierce blast from the east, horribly infected and laden with divers spices and other weighty goods. When the men of Genoa learned this and saw how suddenly and irretrievably they infected other folk, they were driven forth from that port by fiery arrows and divers engines of war; for no man dared touch them, nor could any man deal with them in merchandise but he would die forthwith. Thus they were scattered from port to port till at length one of these aforesaid galleys came to Marseilles at whose coming all who took no precautions were infected and died forthwith. So this galley was driven forth from Marseilles and those who were left on it found the other two wandering about the seas . . ."

**Origin of Maritime Quarantine**

Maritime Quarantine, as we know it, commenced in 1348 when the overseers of Public Health at Venice
were authorised to spend public moneys for the pur­
pose of isolating infected ships, persons and goods, at
an island of the lagoon. A medical man was stationed
with the sick. As a result of these arrangements the
first maritime quarantine station of which there is any
record was established in 1403 at the Island of Santa
Maria di Nazareth at Venice.

The Venetian Authorities framed in 1348 a code of
quarantine regulations which served as a model for all
others to a very recent period. All merchants and per­
sons coming from the Levant were compelled to remain
in the House of St. Lazarus for a period of forty days
before admission into the city. From this is derived
the term "lazaret" which has persisted until now.

In England in 1664 there were adopted Quaranteine Regulations which aimed particularly at control of
infection coming from the Levant. The regulations in­
cluded provisions that no vessel should leave any port
in Turkey or Egypt without a Bill of Health, and that
no Bill of Health was to be given until the expiration
of forty days from even a single case of plague.

The first Quarantine Act in England was passed
in 1710 under the influence of panic, plague being very
prevalent in the Baltic.

In 1752 a Quarantine Act was deliberately con­
sidered and passed. In 1825 a Revised Quarantine Act
was passed which described such precautionary
measures as were considered necessary in view of the
fact that diseases such as plague, cholera and yellow
fever, all existed in countries with which England had
maritime communication, and did not exist in England
itself. This Act remained in force until repealed by
the Public Health Act of 1896 and formed the basis of
the first Australian Quarantine Acts, viz., the Acts of
New South Wales 1832 and Western Australia 1833.

While the Act was concerned principally with
maritime traffic, there is one section which deserves
more than passing notice as it made provision for the
application of quarantine measures to passengers and
things within the United Kingdom, in the event of an
epidemic occurring within the Kingdom. An identical
section appears so late as 1897 in the Quarantine Act
of New South Wales, passed in that year, an Act which
was in force at the time the administration of Quarant­
tine was transferred to the Commonwealth.
The Introduction of Quarantine Measures into Australia

In the earliest days of New South Wales all vessels arriving in that colony were either official vessels or under official control throughout the voyage. Any occurrence of disease therefore was known from the commencement and special restrictive measures on arrival at Sydney were not necessary.

With the development during successive years of independent trading, vessels not officially controlled arrived and no quarantine measures were found necessary. Consequently no quarantine system was introduced.

In 1828 the ship "Morley" introduced whooping cough into the colony, the son of Governor Darling dying of the disease. This led to a system of control by the Executive Council of infected vessels, but did not immediately lead to the passage of any legislation on this subject.

In 1832 the Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a despatch to Governor Burke of New South Wales dealing with the subject of quarantine, dated 31st March, 1832. The despatch was acknowledged by Governor Burke on 30th October, 1832. Before its arrival, however, the first Quarantine Act had been passed by the Executive Council of New South Wales.

The two great migration decennia of Australian history 1788-1798 and 1850-1860 were signalised by ship, typhus fever. This disease has, however, been unmistakeably recorded amongst the shore population on a few occasions only, in Melbourne in 1865, and at Hobart in various years until about 1845.

Typhus so far as Australia is concerned was a disease of ships only. The greed of the contract transporters of convicts resulted in the packing of unfortunate convicts into spaces far too small for the numbers embarked, and the lax administration of the English prison authorities allowed the embarkation of persons ill with typhus fever. The tragedies which occurred, for example, in the "Neptune," "Surprise" and "Scarborough" in 1790 were the result. In these ships of nine hundred and thirty males sent out, two hundred and sixty-one died on board and fifty more after landing.

The crowding of the inadequate accommodation in
the immigrant ships in the early “fifties” provided conditions under which typhus fever flourished and led to such disasters as the outbreak on the “Ticonderoga,” 1852, in which one hundred and sixty-eight out of a total of eight hundred and four passengers died.

Quarantine in Queensland

Although Torres Strait had been discovered in 1606 and the coast of Queensland visited by Cook in 1770, and by Flinders in 1799 and 1802, it was not till 1824 that settlement was effected. At that time Governor Brisbane was desirous of locating depots sufficiently far from Sydney where there might be taken “all the convicts not usefully employed on the old settlements as well as the refractory and incorrigible.” Flinders had reported in somewhat favourable terms of Port Curtis, and Oxley was despatched there in the “Mermaid,” in October 1823. Considering Port Curtis unsuitable he returned to Moreton Bay, where the first settlement was effected at Redcliffe, in September 1824. Difficulty with blacks, the presence of swarms of mosquitoes, and the occurrence of a number of cases that were possibly malarial, resulted in a move being made two months later to the site where Brisbane now stands.

In 1837, Governor Burke reported favourably on a proposal to withdraw the convicts from Brisbane. By 1839 only a few convicts remained and the district was thrown open for settlement.

The first government emigrant ship, the “Artemisia,” arrived in Moreton Bay on 13th December, 1848, and on 30th April, 1850, the last convict vessel the “Bangalore,” arrived.

The “Fortitude,” the first of the ships carrying immigrants selected by the Rev. J. D. Lang, arrived in Moreton Bay on 20th January, 1849, after a voyage of 123 days. Amongst the 253 immigrants there had been eight deaths, one from typhus fever. Another case of typhus fever had occurred and died whilst the vessel was in Moreton Bay. The vessel was quarantined on arrival and released on 7th February.

On 15th July, 1849, the Moreton Bay quarantine station was proclaimed at Dunwich.

On 8th August, 1850, the ship “Emigrant” was quarantined for typhus fever. According to the files of
the Brisbane "Courier" forty deaths occurred amongst the ship's company, including Dr. Marshall, the surgeon, and fourteen days after arrival the sick numbered fifty-six and the convalescent sixty-three. Dr. Mallon, from Brisbane, took charge of the Quarantine at Dunwich and contracted the infection but recovered. Dr. D. K. Ballow took his place but also contracted the disease and died on 29th September—a memorial tablet is to be found in St. John's Cathedral telling of Dr. Ballow's death at Dunwich, and at Dunwich cemetery there stands a memorial stone to him and other victims of typhus.—Dr. Kearsey Cannan took charge after Dr. Ballow's death. He put his tent on Bird Island, visiting his patients as required from there and escaped the contagion.

Later records of vessels quarantined in Queensland are contained in the reports of the health officer, Moreton Bay (New South Wales Votes and Proceedings), and in numbers of the Government Gazette. It is unfortunate that all the original papers relating to these quarantines were lost when the immigration records were destroyed in the 1893 floods in Brisbane.

1852.—On 10th September, 1852, the "Rajahgopaul" arrived with 351 immigrants of whom fifteen had died from influenza and typhus. In Knight's, "In the Early Days," it is recorded that passengers from this vessel "carried the disease to Ipswich," whether influenza or typhus is not stated; however, he notes on 31st October, 1852, an influenza epidemic in Brisbane. The Port Health Officer of Brisbane referring to this vessel stated, "Many of those immigrants fell sick of typhoid fever en route to the interior."

The history of Queensland as a separate colony commences in 1860, in which year it was invested with self government.

Record of Quarantines in Queensland from the Formation of the New Colony to the End of the Century

1862.—The first vessel recorded as quarantined in the new colony was the "Erin-go-bragh." The only local record available in regard to this vessel is an order in council dated the 4th August, 1862, which is quoted in full as it indicates current procedure. (Queensland Government Gazette, 1862, Vol. VII (p. 409.)
"Several deaths from fever of a typhoid character having occurred on board the ship 'Erin-go-bragh' during her passage to this colony, His Excellency the Governor directs it to be notified that he has deemed it expedient to place that vessel under surveillance at the anchorage in Moreton Bay and has prohibited the landing of any of her passengers except as hereinafter mentioned till he shall be assured by the report of the proper medical officer that such landing may be permitted without risk to the general health of the colony.

"In order to facilitate measures to be adopted for the fumigation of the vessel and the washing of linen and other clothing used during the voyage as well as to afford the passengers the means of necessary exercise and change, His Excellency has been pleased to establish a temporary quarantine station at the island of St. Helena, in Moreton Bay. During the detention of the vessel and her passengers under surveillance, the island in question will be appropriated to their sole use and all persons are strictly cautioned not to attempt to land on such island or in any way to establish communication with the people on shore or on board the vessel unless with the sanction of the Government for which application must be made at the office. A guard boat being in regular attendance, information will be transmitted by telegraph in the event of any attempt to evade the order now promulgated and the severest punishment prescribed by law will be inflicted on offenders."

This vessel is referred to by Hall, in a paper to the Epidemiological Society of London on "The Epidemic Diseases of Tasmania (1863)."

"A few weeks ago a vessel bound to Queensland with emigrants touched at this island for supplies. She anchored about eleven miles from Hobart on . . . She had lost nearly sixty passengers by typhus and scarlet fever and whooping cough . . . The medical officer on board being confined to his cabin by sickness I was engaged to visit the passengers on behalf of the ship . . . Great secrecy was maintained as to the mortality that had occurred, and I failed to get a sight of the medical journal. When this vessel reached Brisbane she was subjected to a long quarantine."
1864.—The ship “Flying Cloud,” of the Black Ball Line, arrived at Brisbane on 19th February, 1864, from Gravesend. There were on board 482 passengers, of which 196 were members of families, 222 single men and 64 single women. After examination by the health officer, pratique was granted. There had been 20 deaths during the voyage from the following causes:—4 from fever; 4 from dysentery; 2 from diarrhoea and seasickness; 1 from diarrhoea; 5 from phthisis; 1 from atrophy; 1 from peritonitis; 1 from pericarditis and 1 from pneumonia. The last case of “fever” had terminated on 10th January.

On 22nd February the passengers were brought up to Brisbane from the bay anchorage by the steamer “Settler.” According to the files of the Brisbane “Courier” on 2nd March, a local medical practitioner reported several cases of fever “of a highly dangerous and infectious nature,” which he attributed to the arrival of the “Flying Cloud.” On 4th March, the “Courier” noted that there were “at present in the Brisbane hospital several persons suffering from fever, all of whom were passengers by the “Flying Cloud.” One person was taken direct from the steamer “Settler” to the hospital.” A Government Gazette and “Courier” of 7th March, noted the quarantining of the vessel, “in consequence of the appearance of fever of malignant type among the crew.” An inquiry into the circumstances was commenced by the Government. A vigorous correspondence commenced in the columns of the “Courier” over the circumstances of granting pratique to the vessel. Some letters were from local medical practitioners. Dr. J. Burnet Temple stated that he had “several cases of fever all subsequent to the landing of passengers from the “Flying Cloud,” whilst Dr. William Smith in a letter dated the 7th March, reported:—

“In justice to Dr. Hobbs (the Port health officer) permit me to state that I have personally attended five cases of typhoid and typhus fever within the past six weeks, not one of which could, so far as I am able to trace cause and effect, be in the remotest degree influenced by the arrival of the ‘Flying Cloud’ . . . The cause lies more in the atmospheric and hydrometric influences surrounding us in the last few weeks rather than in the potential influences arising from the presence of the ‘Flying Cloud’ and her living cargo.”
The vessel was released from quarantine on 27th March, 1864. The captain and surgeon of the vessel were committed for trial on a charge of unlawfully giving false answers to the health officer, the health officer having stated that on two occasions "the surgeon superintendent gave me the most positive assurance both verbal and written that there was no infectious or contagious disease on board nor had there been for a month previously."

On the decision of the Attorney-General the captain was released but at the Supreme Court on 1st June, Mr. Justice Lutwyche sentenced the surgeon to be imprisoned in Brisbane Gaol for six calendar months, the jury after an absence of ten minutes having brought in a verdict of guilty.

1865.—During this year four vessels were quarantined for "typhus fever" but the only records are those contained in the Government Gazette of that year (Vol. VI) the formal orders in council proclaiming the quarantines. The emigrant ship "Lobelia" was ordered to be quarantined in Moreton Bay on 5th July, on account of the presence of several cases of typhus fever on board. The emigrant ship "Naval Reserve" was ordered to be quarantined on 29th July at Stradbroke Island as typhus existed on board.

The emigrant ship "Golden Land" was ordered to be quarantined in Hervey Bay on 27th October, on account of typhus fever. Woody Island in Hervey Bay was proclaimed a quarantine station for the occasion.

The emigrant ship "La Rochelle" was quarantined in Moreton Bay as several cases of typhus fever were present aboard.

1866.—Two vessels, both emigrant ships, the "Wandraham" and "Rockhampton" were quarantined in Moreton Bay.

Some time prior to 1878 and probably in the decade, 1860-70, two vessels were presumably subjected to quarantine but only vague references are now available. They were:—"Gauntlet," from which an engineer was removed suffering from typhoid fever seventeen clear days after the immigrants had been landed at Pearl Island; "Ophelia," one of whose passengers was laid up with typhoid fever shortly after arrival at his home.

1871.—The Australian Medical Journal, 1871,
page 224, records, "The immigrant ship, 'Shakespeare' lately arrived in Brisbane with sixty-six cases of smallpox on board."

1876.—Two vessels were temporarily held in quarantine for typhoid fever but were apparently released on the decision of the Central Board of Health (constituted in 1865). These vessels were:—“Indus,” which arrived in Moreton Bay from Hervey Bay and was ordered into quarantine at Peel Island, on 9th March; “Western Monarch,” from overseas ordered into quarantine on arrival in Moreton May, on 16th March.

1877.—R.M.S. “Normanby” arrived at Townsville, on 11th July, 1877, from Singapore, via Cooktown, where pratique had not been granted. The surgeon reported that there had been four cases of Asiatic cholera on board, two of which had died, the last death having occurred on 5th July. The health officer (Dr. Russel Frost) ordered the vessel to remain in quarantine and instructed the master to remain in port. The captain, however, proceeded south and following a request for prosecution with which the Colonial Secretary refused to concur, Dr. Frost resigned. No further particulars are available in regard to this vessel beyond the fact that she was quarantined on arrival in Sydney.

“Windsor Castle” arrived in Moreton Bay on 16th September, from Gravesend direct, with 366 passengers. One female passenger had suffered from typhoid fever. The vessel was ordered into quarantine at Peel Island “for a period not less than ten days.” The Central Board of Health overruled the health officer and excepting the patient and a passenger with fever, the passengers were released from quarantine on 18th September. The health officer disclaimed all responsibility in giving pratique in this case.

1878.—The ship “Friedeburg” from Hamburg was quarantined at Peel Island, on 17th October, on account of typhoid fever on board. Some passengers were released on 18th November, and the remainder with the crew on 27th November.

During the years 1867-78 there was some discussion between the Port Health Officer, the Central Board of Health and the Colonial Secretary on the question of quarantine restrictions on vessels on board which typhoid fever was present.
Dr. Henry Challinor, who was health officer at that time, held very definite views on the advisability of maintaining quarantine in these cases. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, in May, 1878, referring to the release of the "Western Monarch" "before she had performed the full period of quarantine on the recommendation of the Central Board of Health," he called attention to the fact that an influential lay member and the ex-officio chairman (the Colonial Secretary, himself) were extensive importers on this vessel whilst in connection with the release of the "Windsor Castle" the "aforesaid lay member had several relatives on board."

In the same letter it is noted that "The great danger incurred in admitting vessels to pratique which have or have had recently, typhoid fever on board, was seen in the 'Rajahgopaul' in former times, many of whose immigrants fell sick of it en route to the interior, and in more recent times in those of the 'Flying Cloud' and 'Indus.' In the case of the 'Flying Cloud' I have been informed on indubitible authority that several valuable lives were lost in consequence of hiring servants from that vessel."

1879.—In this year Quarantine Regulations, under the Quarantine Act of 1863, were gazetted (Government Gazette 1879, Vol. 1, p. 843). The ship "Clara" was ordered into quarantine at Peel Island, on account of typhus on 3rd January. The ship "Fritz Reuter" from Hamburg, was quarantined for typhoid fever in Moreton Bay on 20th January.

The steamship "L'Allier," on arrival at Cooktown from Java, was ordered into quarantine on 14th February, with typhoid fever on board. A special area on the north bank of the Endeavour River was proclaimed on that date as a lazaret for the quarantine of this ship's company.

"Somerset."—According to a report in the Australian Medical Journal, 1879, p. 144, "A telegram from Brisbane, dated 12th February, says virulent smallpox has broken out amongst the passengers of the "Somerset."

1883.—The "Western Monarch," from Liverpool, was ordered into quarantine at Moreton Bay, on 2nd October, on account of typhoid fever. The ship and crew were released on 9th October, but the passengers were not finally released till 31st October.
A steamer, the “Duke of Westminster,” was presumably quarantined at Brisbane for smallpox. It is referred to in the presidential address to the Victorian Medical Association by Dr. James, as follows:—“Not long ago a steamer infected with smallpox came down by Torres Straits, landing passengers at port after port.” The Australian Medical Journal, of 1833, states: “Two fresh cases of smallpox have occurred on board the ‘Duke of Westminster,’ at Brisbane, the patients being the chief officer and a young lady, a second class passenger. The other two patients are doing well.” The outbreak of smallpox was traced to the presence of two single girls shipped in London, nine and eleven days respectively after their discharge from the smallpox hospital.

1887.—The steamship “Goalpara,” from Plymouth, was ordered into quarantine at Moreton Bay, on 7th January, with enteritis among the passengers. All were finally released on 15th January.

1885.—The steamer “Dorunda” was quarantined for cholera. The records are completely preserved in the report and proceedings of a board to enquire into the circumstances (Queensland Parliamentary Papers Votes and Proceedings, 1886). This quarantine is particularly interesting as it is the only occasion on which cholera has been known definitely to have reached Australian waters.

S.S. “Dorunda,” an immigrant vessel, sailed from London with some 290 passengers, on 20th October, 1885. The vessel called at Malta, Port Said, Suez, Aden and arrived at Tandjong Priok, the port of Batavia, on 27th November. Cholera was endemic in Batavia, and special precautions were taken to prevent communication with the shore and to keep off boats bringing fruit or foodstuffs. It would appear, however, that some of the immigrant passengers succeeded in obtaining fruit surreptitiously from the shore boats, and two ships constables, who subsequently died, seem to have gone ashore for a brief period. No water or ice was taken on board at Batavia.

On 29th November, the day after leaving, an elderly individual became ill and was isolated for some days. A definite opinion was subsequently expressed that the case was not cholera. This man recovered but his attendant died of cholera, shortly afterwards. A
considerable number of cases of diarrhoea occurred about this time.

The "Dorunda" reached Thursday Island, on 7th December, received pratique and left the same day. Cooktown was reached on 9th December. The surgeon reported a few cases of diarrhoea, but stated to the health officer that no infectious or contagious disease existed on board. The vessel again received pratique and left for Townsville later the same day. On this day, 9th December, a male immigrant reported ill about 10 a.m. He grew worse and died at 7.30 p.m. with well marked symptoms of collapse. This was the first case logged as cholera. Two of this man's children developed the disease and both died on the following day.

On the day of arrival at Townsville (10th December) the surgeon's log recorded three fresh cases of cholera, six choleraic diarrhoea and fourteen of diarrhoea. The health officer at Townsville held the vessel in quarantine, but permitted the burial of a body on Magnetic Island.

The local quarantine station was not equipped to deal with such a serious emergency and it was decided to send the vessel on to Moreton Bay. Three new cases of cholera were logged while at the Townsville anchorage on 11th December. The vessel left Townsville on 12th December, sixteen cases of cholera or diarrhoea were reported on 12th, fifteen on 13th and twenty-five on 14th December. The quarantine station at Peel Island was reached on 15th and patients and passengers were landed in quarantine.

The last recorded case of cholera occurred on 17th December, at Peel Island.

The surgeon superintendent logged 148 cases of intestinal conditions during the period 28th November to 7th January. It may be reasonably assumed that at least fifty cases of cholera occurred amongst these. Seventeen persons in all are certified as having died of cholera. The outbreak appears to have been limited entirely to the immigrant quarters.

The Board which fully enquired into the circumstances of the voyage did not elicit anything definite as to the source or entry of infection on board. No complaints were made concerning the meat on board which was drawn from the refrigerators installed on
the “Dorunda.” The first shipment of frozen meat from Brisbane to England had been made on this vessel in 1885.

1896.—The last record of a ship quarantined in Queensland before the end of the century is contained in a note in the Australian Medical Journal, 1895, p. 539. “Smallpox has appeared on the s.s. “Duke of Devonshire” which arrived at Queensland ports in November.”

The first vessel to arrive in Australian waters infected with smallpox (if the first fleet and La Perouse’s fleet be excepted—and in those the evidence of infection is extremely doubtful) was the convict ship “Bussorah Merchant” on 26th July, 1828.

Up to the end of the century seventy-one ships are recorded as arriving at Sydney infected with this disease. Of this number twenty-one arrived from Hongkong or the Dutch East Indies, and it is likely that many of these ships called at Queensland ports on their way. The only records of these, however, excluding the four previously mentioned as having been quarantined in Brisbane only, are to be found in the records quarantined in New South Wales.

There is no record of any case of smallpox having occurred amongst the resident population of Queensland until 1892, when a quarantine official resident in Queensland contracted the disease from one of the passengers of the “Oroya,” which had landed cases at Melbourne before proceeding to Sydney. Here four more members of the ship’s company were discovered to be infected but in the meanwhile many of the passengers to Queensland transhipped to Brisbane in the s.s. “Buninyong.” One further case in a passenger was notified from Brisbane and it was from this case that the quarantine official was infected. The disease did not spread any further.

In Australia the first extensive outbreak of smallpox amongst the resident white population occurred in Sydney in 1881. Following this there were scattered cases and in 1884 the disease became extensively prevalent. Prior to this there had been several definite outbreaks, in Melbourne, 1857 and 1868, Sydney, 1877, and the danger of smallpox was much before the minds of those in authority. As each of the States had its own law and practice and these differed
materially, considerable confusion and obstruction to commerce, especially by sea, was found to result.

The New South Wales Government invited the Governments of other States to send representatives to confer and report as to the best means of establishing a uniform and effective system of quarantine for Australia. A first conference was held at Sydney, in 1885. This was not productive of any immediate result, but it was of great value in establishing an understanding between the health officials of various States.

A second conference, in 1896, was held for the purpose of arriving at some uniformity of practice in quarantine administration and the discussions were entirely with reference to smallpox, two disastrous epidemics, of which had occurred in Launceston 1887, and in Perth in 1893.

A third conference, in 1900, was known as the International Plague Conference, and the only subject discussed was plague. The world spread of plague and the appearance of the disease in Queensland and New South Wales had rendered a conference imperative.

The fourth conference, in 1904, drew up a number of recommendations, most of which was subsequently embodied in the Quarantine Act 1908—now in operation. The Quarantine Act for the Commonwealth of Australia was assented to on 30th March, 1908, and came into force in 1st July, 1909, and by this Act the aims of Australian Sanitarians, begun in 1884, were achieved.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The information in the above paper has been extracted from Service Publications dealing with the history of Infectious Diseases in Australia, written by Dr. J. H. L. Cumpston, Director-General of Health, and by Dr. F. McCallum, Senior Commonwealth Medical Officer. Quotation from these publications has been free and extensive.