

1790.
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removing all the provisions, that was done, and many casks of flour and rice were found to be damaged or totally destroyed. The loss in those two articles by the rats since landing has been more than twelve thousand weight.

Robbery of stores.

While the stores were under examination the Commissary one morning found that a key had been broken in a lock. This had been done in the night, and a convict, Smith, knew the wards of the key left in the lock to belong to a marine, who, being confined with several others on suspicion, one of them offered himself as an evidence for the Crown, and accused six of his comrades, who were tried, and the charge being fully proved the six were executed. One of those who suffered accused two others, but no proof could be brought against them.

These men had for many months robbed the stores of provisions and spirits, and in a manner that did not expose them to any great risk; for having procured keys for all the locks, they never attempted to rob the store but when one of the party was sentinel at the door. The key was in the lock when they unexpectedly heard the patrol, and, in the hurry, they turned the key the wrong way, and not being able to get it out broke it, knowing that the locks were always examined by the patrol.

The night watch.

Vegetables and provisions having been frequently stolen in the night from convicts and others, twelve convicts were chosen as a night-watch,* and they have effectually answered the end proposed, no robbery having been committed for several months, and the convicts in general have lately behaved better than I ever expected.

Executions.

Only two convicts have suffered death in the last year; four were executed the first year. A marine tried for committing a rape on an infant was found guilty; but being particularly recommended for mercy by the criminal court, his sentence was changed to transportation to Norfolk Island for life.

Climate.

As near two years have now passed since we first landed in this country, some judgment may be formed of the climate, and I believe a finer or more healthy climate is not to be found in any part of the world. Of 1,030† people who were landed, many of whom were worn out by old age, the scurvy, and various disorders, only seventy-two have died in one-and-twenty months; and by the surgeon's returns it appears that twenty-six of those died from disorders of long standing, and which it is more than probable would have carried them off much sooner in England. Fifty-nine children have been born in the above time.

Stragglers.

Since the last ship sailed (November, 1788) two marines and two convicts have been lost in the woods. One convict has been killed by the natives, and ten wounded—for it is impossible to

* Note 113. † Note 52.

prevent the convicts from straggling, and the natives having been robbed and ill-treated, now attack those they meet unarmed.

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Not succeeding in my endeavours to persuade some of the natives to come and live with us, I ordered one to be taken by force, which was what I would gladly have avoided, as I knew it must alarm them; but not a native had come near the settlement for many months, and it was absolutely necessary that we should attain their language, or teach them ours, that the means of redress might be pointed out to them if they are injured, and to reconcile them by showing the many advantages they would enjoy by mixing with us. A young man, who appeared to be about twenty-four years of age, was taken the latter end of December [1788], and unfortunately died of the small-pox in May [1789], when he was perfectly reconciled to his situation, and appeared so sensible of the advantages he enjoyed that, fully persuaded he would not leave us, I had for some time freed him from all restraint. He had lived with me for the last two months, and his behaviour gave good reason for showing a more favourable opinion of the people of this country than what has been drawn from the report made by those who formerly touched on this coast.

The natives.

Whether the small-pox,* which has proved fatal to great numbers of the natives, is a disorder to which they were subject before any Europeans visited this country, or whether it was brought by the French ships, we have not yet attained sufficient knowledge of the language to determine. It never appeared on board any of the ships in our passage, nor in the settlement, until some time after numbers of the natives had been seen dead with the disorder in different parts of the harbour, and two men, with a boy of about eight years of age and a girl of eleven, had been brought to the hospital, in the small-pox.

Small-pox.

Both the men died, but the boy and girl recovered. These people were brought up the middle and the latter end of April, and the small-pox never appeared in the settlement until the 2nd of May, when a man belonging to the Supply was seized with the disorder and died a few days afterwards; nor has it ever appeared in the settlement except on that man and the native who caught the disorder from the children.

In addition to the loss of provisions which we had sustained by the rats, a very considerable quantity of flour, rice, &c., had been lost and damaged in the passage by the badness of the casks and by a quantity of oil and tar having been put on board of the store-ships.

Loss of provisions.

Although there could be little doubt but that supplies would arrive before the provisions we had in store were expended, it was necessary to guard against accident. I therefore directed