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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 569 Press ~~Ms~~

32-33

Dated 19 — 3 — ~~19~~1887

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Fort St. George, Judicial Consultation, 19th May 1857.

No. 32. Read the following letter from Surgeon A. LORIMER, Secretary Medical Board; to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated 8th May 1857, No. 96.

SIR,

With reference to Extract from Minutes of Consultation, Judicial Department, No. 220 of date 21st February, forwarding copy of Despatch from the Honorable the Court of Directors, relative to the Jails of this Presidency, and requesting the Medical Board to state the grounds upon which they recommended an allotment of space to the extent of 500 cubic feet for each Prisoner in Jail, I have the honor by desire of the Board to observe, that their reasons for such recommendation were fully placed before Government in my communications marginally noted. For easy reference Extracts from the communications referred to, are appended.

No. 177, 14th August 1850
No. 4, dated 9th Jany 1851
No. 82, ,, 15th March 1855

2. I am instructed by the Board respectfully to observe further on this subject, that the experience of the Medical Authorities in Europe, seem to have fixed 800 cubic feet as the minimum space that can be safely assigned to individuals confined in Prison or work houses, except where ample provision is made for the constant renewal of the air by ventilation. The ventilation in the Jails generally, until lately was very imperfect, and hence the atmosphere in the cells became exceedingly noxious and offensive, so much so as to occasion faintness and sickness to any one standing at the door when being opened in the morning, and in the forenoon when inspected long after the inmates had left, a heavy sickening, loathsome smell pervaded them; such an atmosphere must be deleterious to health, the blood becomes deteriorated and disease follows. Dr. Carpenter in writing on this subject, the effects of impure air upon individuals, observes "but one of the most terrible instances of the continuance of a high rate of mortality which is almost entirely attributable to an insufficient supply of air, is that which is furnished by the Gaols under British control in India. In these are usually confined no fewer than 40,000 Prisoners, chiefly natives, and the average annual mortality of the whole was recently 10 per cent, and is easily accounted for, when it is known that in no case is there an allowance of more than 300 cubic feet of air space for each individual, while in some instances 70 cubic feet is the miserable average."

3. The Board in fixing 500 cubic feet as the allowance of space for each Prisoner were influenced by their knowledge of the fact, that the Prisoners were employed in the open air during the day, and but for this consideration, a larger space would have been recommended, and they beg leave respectfully to repeat, that 500 cubic feet even with the improved ventilation now being provided for each Jail, will not be found excessive.

Vide para. 169, Board's letter No. 177 of 14th Augt. 1850.

(Signed) A. LORIMER,
Secretary Medical Board.

Extract from the Medical Board's report to Government No. 177, dated 14th August 1850.

164. It is an acknowledged fact that in a body of men deprived of liberty and freedom, sickness and mortality are greater, than amongst the free inhabitants of a country; it is a necessary consequence of that state of mind inseparably attendant upon this punishment of guilt, and cannot be wholly obviated, by any human power; even in Britain where Jail economy and discipline have been so much attended to, the necessary evil still exists.

165. It is however clear from the same table that the mortality of the several Jails differs very greatly, and therefore it is requisite to ascertain what this may be owing to; the diet generally speaking has been of the same kind, so also has been the employment of the prisoners, therefore it became requisite to look for other causes for so great a discrepancy on this point, and the Board consider that the following table* shewing the extent of accommodation will throw some light on the subject.

* Table not given.

166. The table embraces only those Jails which have been occupied during the entire ten years; it would appear that the original calculation as to the extent of space to be set apart for

each prisoner has been pretty nearly the uniform ratio of 220 cubic feet; this undoubtedly is too small a space, for though in some of the Jails the average has been less even than this, yet as a whole in the 13 Jails wherein the ratio of mortality to strength has been under 4 per cent, the extent of accommodation allowed to each prisoner has been calculated at 371 cubic feet, whereas in the nine Jails where the mortality, it will be observed, has averaged 10 per cent on the strength, the space allotted to each has been only 315. In both cases it has been taken for granted that the *whole extent of the Jail accommodation* was occupied during the entire period.

168. It will be observed that the space allotted to each man has varied greatly in the several Jails and for both classes of prisoners from 117 cubic feet, amongst the convicted in the Combaconum Jail, to 615 in that of Cochin; and still more amongst those waiting for trial, from 179 in the Combaconum Jail, to 2390 in that of Chicacole; the average for the convicted class has been 310; and for those waiting trial 506.

169. For the convicted a greater extent of accommodation would appear to be requisite in most of the Jails; in the opinion of the Board the space set apart for each person should not be under 500 cubic feet; and but for the consideration that the prisoners are employed out of doors throughout the day, a still further extent of accommodation would be requisite.

171. Again Government are aware that in all the Jails the inmates sleep on the *floor* on mats, and *for which* almost none are provided with the requisite ventilation. It is known that respired air containing much of carbonic acid gas is rendered specifically heavier than atmospheric air, and therefore falls to the bottom of any apartment; but in these Jails generally there are no openings for ventilation nearer than 3 feet and even more from the floor, and the doors being shut at night, the prisoners of course must breathe air vitiated in proportion to the number of the inmates of the cell. The influence of this impure atmosphere for any time on the system must be highly pernicious in sapping the constitution of the most vigorous, but it is an evil, to obviate which, is of easy accomplishment, the construction and placing of iron grated openings along the leeward floor of the cells with openings above to windward, would ensure the requisite circulation of air.

Extract from the Medical Board's letter to Government No. 4, dated 9th January 1851.

5. On the point of "extent of accommodation" remarked on in para: 22, I am instructed by the Board to observe that, that statement is open to the objections noticed by Government, but still the general truths and facts remain the same; they are of opinion that no comparison can be made with even the most wretched of the poorest hovels in the country, and confinement in any one of the Jails; in the former the doors if any are always open, and the circulation of air is free, without at all alluding to the fact that the inmates are much in the open air even during the night and with a free and easy mind; whereas in the Jail the Prisoner is as it were hermetically sealed, and the mind and body worked upon by the depressing passions necessarily arising from his state, and wholly inseparable therefrom.

6. The extent of accommodation allowed to Prisoners in solitary cells in Britain is 13 feet by 7 and 10 feet high or say 900 cubic feet, and this with all the means of due ventilation; the space for the soldier in barrack is about the same, while the buildings more recently erected in this country give 1000 cubic feet or even more; the Board therefore having these facts before them, and taking into consideration the employment out of doors of the Prisoners throughout the day, were induced to mention 500 cubic feet as the allotment of accommodation for the convicted native Prisoner, and but for the fact of their being at work in the open air during the day, a greater space would have been recommended.

Extract from the Medical Board's letter to Government No. 82, dated 15th March 1855. Being modified report on the Jails for 1853.

62. During the year, and for the most part throughout the Presidency, causes have been in operation, which undoubtedly have exerted a baneful influence over the public health generally, and to a more or less extent such causes must have operated prejudicially against the health of the inmates of the Jails, but it will be observed, that the sickness and mortality amongst the entire body of Prisoners do not exceed the average of the last eleven years. The alteration in diet,

and the greater amount of accommodation and improved ventilation have been productive of good effects, but Government will perceive, that in certain Jails, especially those in which the mortality continues high, increased extent of accommodation is requisite, and more free ventilation.

63. In a former report* the Board recommended that not less than 500 cubic feet should be allowed to each Prisoner in Jail. In many of the Jails, the amount of accommodation does not much exceed one half of this space, and moreover the ventilation is imperfect.

64. The respiration of impure air is highly detrimental to the system, and in many of the Jails, the ventilation in the night time is only by windows several feet above the floor of the cell, and by apertures at the top, but respired air is from its nature heavy, and remains at the bottom of the cells, this acts as a slow poison upon the blood, deteriorates it, and undermines the health generally; one or more of the doors should be provided with bars from top to bottom, and grated apertures one foot square should be inserted at certain intervals of space on a level with the floor of the cells on both sides, a raised frame-work for sleeping on would be desirable.

65. Another point to which the Board respectfully beg leave to call the attention of Government is, the desirableness and necessity for having a privy outside each cell, but so constructed, that the inmates of the cell can have access to it during the night, at present almost every cell in the various Jails throughout the Presidency is polluted by Prisoners obeying the calls of nature within it, this practice is objectionable, not only as injurious to health by the contamination of the atmosphere thereby occasioned, but in a moral point of view it is highly objectionable, and ought to be suppressed at once.

66. In apartments where free ventilation does not exist, the air soon becomes greatly altered by respiration, and the exhalation from the skin of the individuals located therein, and the extent to which this must take place may be conceived when it is understood, that not less than ten ounces of carbon are eliminated from the lungs and skin of an adult in 24 hours. This is discharged in the form of carbonic acid, which from its great specific gravity, keeps at the bottom of apartments, and becomes highly deleterious to the inmates, and its injurious effects must be increased by the offensive effluvia arising from the ordure and urine of the Prisoners, which cannot but be detrimental to health, by deteriorating the blood by a slow but certain process of poisoning.

(True Extracts.)

(Signed) A. LORIMER,
Secretary Medical Board.

No. 33. ORDER THEREON, No. 569; dated 15th May 1857.

Ordered to be communicated to the Honorable the Court of Directors with reference to the Despatch from this Government dated 21st April, No. 12 of 1857, para. 25.

(Signed) E. MALTBY,
Acting Chief Secretary.

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* No. 177 of date 14th August 1850.

No 569

Ordered to be communicated to the Hon'ble the Court of Directors with reference to the Despatch from this Government dated 21st April No 12 of 1857 para 25.

E Maltby

Fort St George
15th May 1857

Copy to the Medical Bd. Sep 21st

Ind Dy to Conr. 24th Feby 1857.
No 30.

Judl Lr to Engd Dd 7th Octr
No 26 of 1857

Para 48.–

Repd to in No 5 of 1858 P 40

Pw Dy Cons: 19 May
Judicial 1857 ~~Depart~~
Departt.

No. 764

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From
The Secy Medical Board
Fort St. George

To
The Chief Secretary
to Government
Fort St. George

Dated 8th May.

Received 9th

1 enclosure

No. 96.

Submitting the grounds upon which an allotment of space to the extent of 500 cubic feet for each Prisoner in Jail was recommended by the Board with observations.

With an order

C. [illegible]
P 15

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