

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

217-218	G.O. No.	1295	Press
			~~Mis.~~
	Dated	21-8-19	1866

Not to be folded or roughly handled

4/4

21st August 1866.

No. 217. Read the following letter from the Officiating Principal Inspector General, Medical Department, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Fort Saint George, 7th August 1866, No. 292.

It having been reported to me that five cases of Cholera had occurred at the Penitentiary during the last two days, accompanied by Dr. Cooper, Officiating Secretary, and Dr. Harris, the Medical Officer of the Penitentiary, I visited the Institution yesterday afternoon.

2. When within the Jail enclosure, and proceeding to the Hospital, my attention was attracted by a strong and offensive ammoniacal smell emanating from an open drain which commences at the Jailer's house. This drain, which was offensive in its whole course, runs round the outer side of the inner wall of the Jail, embracing a large portion of the building, and then empties itself into the Coom.

3. The smell from the drain pervaded all the Wards of the Hospital. The upper Ward of the Hospital is appropriated to the sick European Prisoners. The verandah, to the south-west, and consequently to the windward, of the Ward, is used as a necessary; the stench from this was considerable.

4. I visited the Cells occupied by the European Prisoners, and found that in the privy for their use, there are no seats, and the prisoners are obliged to squat like Natives.

5. The second Jailer, who accompanied us, said that, at times, the smell from the Coom was most offensive; it could not be otherwise, as much of the filth from between 4 and 500 persons passes into it. The large Latrine which the Natives use is kept very clean, being frequently flushed, but the whole of the water with which this is done passes direct into the river.

6. It is not only from the Jail drains that the stench complained of is generated, but at little more than 80 or 100 yards from the building, and near the Chintadrepettah Bridge, there is a large drain which apparently conveys the sewage from New Town, and discharges its contents into the river. The last portion of this drain is uncovered for some yards. Near to this, there is also a large cess-pool, the smell of which was overpowered by the stench of the drain. This cess-pool appears to be about 15 or 16 feet deep, but for what purpose it is there I am ignorant.

7. It is evident that from this state of matters the river must be contaminated and injurious, not only to the health of the prisoners, but also to the patients in the General Hospital and the inhabitants in the neighbourhood.

8. I am no Engineer, and do not offer an opinion as to the manner in which the obnoxious drain is to be got rid of, but I strongly recommend that the dry earth conservancy system, which is not in use in the Penitentiary, be introduced into all the Latrines. To effect this, a small pandal of corrugated iron, or something similar, must be carried round the large Latrine—it need not extend more than six or eight feet from the wall—and the platform arranged according to the present system.

9. I beg to point out that this filthy state of the drain near the Hospital was brought to notice in paragraph 2nd of a letter from Dr. Harris forwarded to Government with my Memorandum, No. 83, of the 1st March 1866. The suggestions

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in paragraphs 1st and 3rd of this letter have been carried out; but with reference to paragraph 2, I am not aware that any orders have been passed.

No. 56, dated 7th August 1866.

10. I called upon Dr. Harris for a Report which I have the honor to forward.

From Surgeon W. H. HARRIS, M. D., in Medical charge, Madras Penitentiary, to the Secretary to the Principal Inspector General, Medical Department, Fort Saint George; dated Madras, 7th August 1866, No. 56.

At the inspection of the Penitentiary by the Officiating Principal Inspector General last evening, in consequence of the recent out-break of Cholera, attention was directed to the following points, which I have now the honor to submit to you, direct, under the verbal instructions of the Principal Inspector General, for submission to Government.

Outbreak of Cholera.

1. *Hospital European Privy.*—This is a small room leading out of the European Ward on the west side. It is thus situated on the side of the prevailing winds; and for the greater part of the year the effluvia are blown directly into the Ward containing the sick. The European Ward being on the upper floor, it is impossible for patients who are very sick to go up and down stairs, for the purposes of nature, to the general privy in the hospital compound; and more especially when they are suffering severely from Diarrhoea, Dysentery, &c. There are, however, two sets of stairs leading up from the ground floor, one of which might be closed without inconvenience, and a Latrine could be constructed at small cost by laying a floor down above the stairs, if the Engineer Department cannot suggest a better arrangement. If that were done, the window opening from the Ward upon it should be closed, and another opened in its place, in the north wall of the proposed latrine.

2. *Open drain at the entrance of the Hospital Compound.*—This is the greatest nuisance in the Jail, and the defective drainage at this point has been brought to notice in the Annual Reports of the Medical Officers for the last 5 or 6 years, and it was also one of the subjects of a special communication, addressed by me to the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, on the 28th of February last, No. 32. The drain comes out from the Jailer's Quarters at this point. The effluvia from it often pervade the Hospital compound; and it must prove prejudicial to the sick in Hospital, more so when, as at present, any epidemic is prevailing. Moreover this drain passes around three sides of the Jail, carrying the same offensive odours along its whole course. It has been proposed to construct another drain from it by a shorter, and direct, course to the Coom, but this, I conceive, would not obviate the nuisance, and the only effectual remedy which suggests itself to me, is to close it entirely, and insist upon the observance of the dry system of conservancy within the Jailer's quarters.

3. *Dry System of Conservancy.*—I have attempted to introduce the dry earth system into the Jail, but as it is said to involve a permanent expense, as yet it has only been partially carried out. I beg that the orders of Government may be solicited for it throughout the Jail, and for sanction of any expense which its introduction may involve; but with ample labor at command, if the prisoners could be employed in removing the pondrette and bringing earth, the system would entail no additional expense. Seats are now required in the European privy, and Iron pails for all the privies. It would be highly desirable also to construct a light pandal, with a corrugated iron roof, around the general latrine, for which the sanction of Government would also be necessary.

4. *Cesspool and open drain at Lawe's bridge.*—I beg also to point out that at certain times when the wind is from the south-west, very offensive effluvia are brought into the Jail from the direction of Chintadrepettah, and these have been supposed to emanate from a covered cesspool close to Colonel Lawe's bridge. I have examined the spot myself, and have found a very sickening

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ing odour in its immediate neighbourhood. There are covered drains leading into it, and at certain times, I understand, the contents are cleared out; but there is also a large drain running into the Coom close by, and at all seasons, except when the river is full, it is open for some distance between the end of the drain and the margin of the water, and there is no doubt that this is the source of the nuisance complained of. The odour is so bad, that it is impossible to remain near it, and as it is calculated to prove prejudicial to the health of all the inmates of the Penitentiary, and especially to favor the outbreak and propagation of any epidemic, I beg the Principal Inspector General will take such steps in the matter as he may deem necessary.

ORDER THEREON, 21st August 1866, No. 1295.

No. 218.

The only remedy for the state of things *inside* the Penitentiary seems to be the complete introduction of the dry earth conservancy system, and this will be carried out at once.

2. The attention of the Municipal Commissioners will be called to the drain and cesspool mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Principal Inspector General's letter.
(True Extract).

Secretary to Government.

To the Principal Inspector General, Medical Department.

" Commissioner of Police.
" Sanitary Commissioner.
" Municipal Commissioners.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

No 1295 of 21 August 1866.

The only remedy for the state of things
inside the Penitentiary seems to
be the complete introduction of
the dry earth condensation system
and this ^{will} ~~should be adopted~~
be carried out at once.

The attention of the Municipal
Commissioners ^{will} ~~should~~ be
called to the drain & air pool
mentioned in para 6 of
the P.D. letter.

J.P.
W.D.

The P.D. Sec. Report: deep 22 1/2 in low
Corner of Office
Sanitary Commission deep 23 1/2
Municipal Council