

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Indrial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	1378	Press ~~Mis.~~
Dated	3 - 9 -	191866

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Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
3rd September 1866.*

Read the following papers:—

No. 29. From the Principal Inspector General, Medical Department, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Fort Saint George, 16th August 1866, No. 302.

I have the honor to forward a letter* from the Medical Officer of the Penitentiary, asking the Government to modify, in the cases of deaths from Cholera, the law which requires that, on the body of

* No. 60, dated 11th August 1866.

every prisoner dying in Jail, an inquest must be held.

2. I fully coincide in Dr. Harris' remarks, and, if it be in the power of Government, respectfully suggest, upon sanitary grounds, that the law be modified, so that the body of a prisoner dying from Cholera may be buried at once, without an inquest, upon a certificate of the Medical Officer as to the cause of death being supplied.

From Surgeon W. H. HARRIS, M. D., in Medical charge Penitentiary, to the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, Presidency Division; dated Madras, 11th August 1866, No. 60.

I have the honor to request that you will have the goodness to represent the following matter for the consideration of the proper authorities.

2. I take the present opportunity of bringing it to notice, as it is now, during the prevalence of an epidemic of Cholera, that the evil of the present system is felt to be real, and not an imaginary or contingent one.

3. I am given to understand that, by law, as it now stands, an inquest must be held on the bodies of all prisoners who die at the Presidency, and as the Coroner holds his Court at the Penitentiary when a prisoner dies within its precincts, it has been customary to keep the body there until it has been "viewed" by the Jury.

4. It is most advisable that the bodies of Cholera patients should be removed and buried without any delay; but when a death takes place in the afternoon, as it sometimes happens, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to assemble a Jury before the following morning. Unavoidable delay in these cases necessitates the retention of the dead body of the Cholera patient from 12 to 15 hours, and, in my opinion, exposes the other inmates of the Jail to considerable additional risk.

5. The additional risk thus incurred is, I believe, needless, and I consider it as much my duty to represent this matter, as I would any other which is open to objection on sanitary grounds. Therefore, I trust it may not be deemed beyond my province to urge that some better arrangement may be adopted, with a view to a better care for the living.

6. The only arrangements which suggest themselves to me are either to provide a place at some distance from the Penitentiary and other inhabited localities, in order that the corpses of Cholera patients may be removed immediately, and there await the inquest, or to modify the law, so as to admit of the burial, without an inquest, of prisoners certified by the Medical Officer to have died from Cholera. Of the two, I would strongly advise the latter, for reasons which must be obvious.

On my visit to the Penitentiary on the 10th instant, I met Dr. Harris and the Coroner, and talked over the purport of this letter, and requested the former to address me on the subject. I fully concur in all that he has stated, and respectfully solicit immediate orders on a matter of so vital importance.

(Signed) H. W. PORTEOUS,
Dy. Insp. Genl. of Hospitals,
Presidency Division.

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