

Marine (1899) Department.

G.O., No. 743 Marine

DATED 7th August 1899.

[Despatch Abstract.]

Plague - Letter from the Govt of India, forwarding for information a copy of the despatches relative to the case of a fireman who was rejected for service on the steamer "Caledonia" on acc of suspicious — symptoms, and who afterwards found his way on board again, but was discovered and removed, and subsequently developed plague, caused to the P. O.

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BACK PAPERS.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.
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FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

India Office,
London, 30th March 1899.

Revenue,
No. 9.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor
in Council, Bombay.

MY LORD,

I forward a copy of a letter from the Foreign Office, with five enclosures, relative to the case of a fireman who was rejected for service on the Peninsular and Oriental steamship *Caledonia* on account of suspicious plague symptoms, but who afterwards found his way on board again. After being discovered and removed a second time, he developed plague at the Bombay Hospital.

2. It may be desirable to take further precautions to prevent persons from returning to their ship after having been medically rejected, and I shall be glad to learn what action your Excellency may take, after enquiring into the facts.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,

(Signed) GEORGE HAMILTON.

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ENCLOSURES.

No. 1.

Foreign Office,
8th March 1899.

Sir,

I am directed by the Marquess of Salisbury to transmit herewith copy of a letter which has been received from the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, respecting certain alleged cases of plague which are stated to have occurred on board the steamship *Caledonia* last autumn.

There is one passage in the enclosures accompanying the letter from the Peninsular and Oriental Company to which his Lordship specially desires to call Lord George Hamilton's attention.

It appears, as will be seen from the enclosed copy of a letter from the Local Government Board, that, while the vessel was laying in harbour at Bombay, the crew were mustered for inspection on the 19th of November last. It was then discovered that a native fireman, who had been rejected at the examination held on shore on the previous day by the Bombay Port Medical Officer of Health, had again made his way on board. The man was sent to the Bombay Hospital, and afterwards reported as having developed symptoms of plague.

The Bombay Agent of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company points out that men rejected under similar circumstances are usually removed by the police and kept under surveillance for 24 or 48 hours. They are then set at liberty.

In the case of the fireman who was found to have returned to the ship at the second inspection on the following morning, no such precaution could have been taken, as he would not have been able to act thus if the usual procedure had been followed by the authorities concerned. It would seem, therefore, that the fault lay, to some extent at least, rather with the Bombay police than with the Officers of the *Caledonia*.

I am accordingly to request you to move Lord George Hamilton to favour Lord Salisbury with any observations he may have to offer on the statements furnished by the officers of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company in connection with this case.

I am, &c.,

MARTIN GOSSELIN.

The Under Secretary of State
for India.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

Local Government Board,
5th January 1899.

Sir,

I am directed by the Local Government Board to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th ultimo, enclosing a copy of a letter which the Foreign Office have received from the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company respecting the alleged cases of plague on board that Company's S.S. *Caledonia*.

The Board do not wish to make any observations on the reply of the Company to the letter of Dr. Morrison, but they desire me to refer to one circumstance in the case which is not mentioned by the Sanitary and Quarantine Board, but which appears to indicate a lack of proper precaution.

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BACK PAGE

This Department learn from the Report of their Inspector, Dr. Bulstrode, whom they directed to visit the *Caledonia* on her arrival at Plymouth, on the 7th ultimo, that when the ship's crew were mustered for inspection on board the ship at Bombay on the 19th November, it was discovered that a native fireman, who had been rejected at the examination made the previous day on shore by the Bombay Port Medical Officer of Health, had again found his way on board the ship. The man was removed to the Bombay Hospital, and was afterwards reported as having developed symptoms of plague.

An extract from Dr. Bulstrode's Report, dealing with this matter, is enclosed.

The Under Secretary of State,
Foreign Office.

I am, &c.,
H. C. MONRO.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

Extract from Dr. Bulstrode's Report.

* * * * *

It is important to bear in mind that the prevalence of plague in Bombay, from which place a large number of natives are constantly being shipped for service on homeward bound vessels, renders it extremely difficult to exclude men who may be incubating the disease, or who may be suffering from that slight and not easily recognisable form of it known as "Pestis Minor."

This fact renders it, of course, of the utmost importance that every possible precaution shall be taken at Bombay, and for that matter at other infected Indian Ports, to effect the exclusion from a ship about to sail of any suspicious case. It will have been noted that in the case of the *Caledonia* such precautions as were taken, and they seem to have been fairly thorough, were rendered nearly nugatory by the re-shipment of the once rejected native. Had not this man been discovered the consequences might have been far more serious as regards the *Caledonia* than they actually were. The occurrence points to the necessity for a better method of controlling the movement of the natives after inspection than was apparently exercised in this instance. It would seem to be necessary that some system of tickets should be instituted, and that a ticket, with the man's name attached, should be given to each man after examination, such tickets being collected as the natives pass on board by a person or persons having personal knowledge of the natives. Opportunities of clandestinely obtaining access to a vessel about to put off from the dock side should be reduced to a minimum by proper control of the gangways and by the infliction of a sufficient punishment upon offenders.

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Enclosure 3 in No. 1.

Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company,
122, Leadenhall Street, E.C.,
28th February 1899.

Sir,

With further reference to the correspondence on the subject of the supposed case of plague on board this Company's steamship *Caledonia*, and especially to my letter of the 3rd instant, I have now to forward a copy of the statement made to us by the Commander and Surgeon of the *Caledonia* on reading the documents transmitted in your letters of the 11th January and 2nd February.

I am also instructed to forward to you a copy of the report made to the Directors of the Company by their Superintendent at Bombay, respecting the system under which crews are shipped in the Company's vessels at that port, with special reference to the case of the *Caledonia*.

I have, &c.,
W. JOHNSON.

The Under Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs.

Enclosure 4 in No. 1.

Extract from Letter received from Bombay Agency, dated
4th February 1899.

With reference to the statement made by Dr. Bulstrode, Local Government Board Inspector, and which is perfectly correct, he having obtained the information from Dr. Mitchell on board the *Caledonia*, the facts are as follows:—The Port Health Officer makes two examinations of the crew of the outgoing mail steamers, one in the dock shed alongside the ship as prescribed by the Venice Convention which explicitly demands an examination "on shore," and a final inspection in the stream just before the vessel sails. On the occasion in question the *Caledonia*, owing to the tide, left the docks at 12-30 p.m. on Friday, 18th November, and the usual examination was held, several members of the crew being rejected by the Health Officer as having high temperatures, which is considered suspicious. The usual procedure in such cases is for the police (who attend all medical examinations) to remove such rejected men, who are kept under surveillance for 24 or 48 hours to ascertain if further suspicious symptoms develop; if not they are placed at liberty. A Paniwalla was among those rejected on the Friday, but for some unexplained reason the native police did not keep the man in their care with the others, and he appears to have slipped on board undetected, and concealed himself in the fore-castle, where he was found by the ship's surgeon the following morning. The ship's officers could hardly be blamed in this instance, as there were a large number of stevedores, coolies, and others working on board at the time, the ship being allowed free intercourse with the shore until the final examination takes place, and indeed completing her loading subsequently. When the Health Officer went off on the sailing day, Saturday, the man whose symptoms had become serious in the meantime, was removed to hospital, where the case in a few days was diagnosed as actual plague. As you know, the patient ultimately recovered.

Before receipt of your letter I had inquired into the matter in conjunction with Major Crimmin, V.C., I.M.S., the Health Officer of the port, who was satisfied the blame for the native getting on board again rested with the police and not the ship. Dr. Crimmin, who is a most energetic official, has been shown the correspondence with the Foreign Office on this matter, and repudiates the idea that "there was a lack of proper precaution"; everything possible is done to make the medical inspection thorough and effective, and the Local Government Board officials can have no knowledge of the trouble taken here, both by the health officials and ourselves, in the way of precaution and the conditions under which the work is carried on, but where, as must at times happen, dependence has to be placed on natives, a solitary individual may, as in the *Caledonia's* case, slip through their fingers. The system of tickets, recommended by Dr. Bulstrode, is in force here.

Enclosure 5 in No. 1.

Notes by Captain Gordon and Dr. Mitchell, of the *Caledonia*, relative to the Correspondence with the Foreign Office as to the alleged case of Plague.

1. At the examination of the crew shipped by the *Caledonia* which was held on shore by Major Crimmin, Medical Officer of the Port of Bombay, on the 18th November, a fireman was rejected by that officer and was by him handed over to the charge of the police as a plague suspect, notwithstanding which at the inspection which was held the next morning, immediately preceding the departure of the *Caledonia*, the man was found to be on board, and was a second time handed over by Major Crimmin to the charge of the police. It is plain that the fault lies with the Bombay police, and that had they carried out their duty it should have been impossible for the man, so long as he remained suspect, to have passed from their charge.

A reference to the certificate of the ship's surgeon, which is in possession of the authorities at Suez, will show that the statement in Dr. Morrison's letter that he (the ship's surgeon) had certified to Dr. Ferrari that there had been "no sick and no death" on board is incorrect; such certificate states in fact that there was "no infectious or contagious disease" on board, and that no death had occurred, which is a totally different statement.

The man supposed by the medical officers at Suez to be suffering from plague had been under the surgeon's observation and treatment for four days suffering from an inflamed and axillary gland. With reference to Dr. Morrison's statement that the man had been ill for two days suffering from fever and an enlarged gland the size of a mandarine orange, and that he had all the clinical symptoms of plague, the ship's surgeon states that he had none of the symptoms, unless with the exception of one enlarged suppurating gland in one axilla (decidedly less in size than a mandarine orange); the slight temperature which the man exhibited was due to the suppuration in the gland. There was, moreover, direct evidence of a septic wound to cause the inflammation in gland. Plague is one of many diseases in which enlarged glands are a symptom. During the four days the man was under the surgeon's treatment his temperature ranged from normal to 99.4, the latter being recorded on the 26th November, on the morning of the 27th November, the day of arrival at Suez, at 11 A.M. and again at 3 P.M., it was 99.8; thenceforward the man was isolated in the surgery until shown to Dr. Ferrari about 6 P.M. of the same day, when Dr. Ferrari took the man's temperature and found it to be 101.4. It is of course assumed that Dr. Ferrari's thermometer was a reliable one.

From the outset the ship's surgeon did not for one moment consider this a case of plague, but the possibility was not excluded from his mind, and to make doubly sure, he called in Surgeon-Colonel Greany, I.M.S., the Principal of the Sassoon Hospital at Poona, who confirmed his opinion. While in Bombay in January, the surgeon saw the man (who had returned thither on his discharge from the custody of the authorities at Moses Wells) and questioned him, with the result that his opinion that the man had never had plague remained unshaken.

Dr. Morrison in his letter says, "It is not enough to invite the Serang to bring along the invalids daily to the surgery." This is certainly not the routine adopted on board the *Caledonia*. The whole of the native crew, lascars, coal trimmers, and firemen are mustered every morning by the Chief Officer and Second Engineer, who report to the surgeon which men, if any, are off duty, and such men are then sent to the surgeon in charge of their respective serangs, so that it is impossible for a man to be on the sick list without the knowledge of the surgeon. In addition to this daily inspection which, as has been said, is part of

the regular routine of the ship, the entire native crew were, during the eight days which elapsed between the ship's departure from Bombay and her arrival at Suez, specially mustered and examined individually by the surgeon on two occasions, one on the day before arrival at Aden, and on the day before arrival at Suez.

Dr. Morrison declares the case to have been plague, but did Dr. Morrison himself go down to Moses Wells and examine the man, or did he in order to arrive at this opinion rely solely on the diagnosis of Dr. Ferrari, who, as Dr. Morrison himself states, required close questioning before the truth could be elicited from him?

E. GORDON,

Commander, *Caledonia*.

C. MITCHELL,

Surgeon, steamship *Caledonia*.

No. 47-P. of 1899.

GENERAL DEPARTMENT (PLAGUE).

Bombay Castle, 3rd June 1899.

TO

HER MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY,
OF STATE FOR INDIA IN COUNCIL.

L O N D O N.

MY LORD,

WE have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's Despatch No. 9, dated the 30th March 1899, forwarding a copy of correspondence relative to the case of a fireman who was rejected for service on the P. & O. Steamship *Caledonia* on account of suspicious plague symptoms, and who afterwards found his way on board again, but was discovered and removed, and subsequently developed plague in one of the Bombay hospitals. Your Lordship desired to know what action we might consider it necessary to take after enquiring into the facts of the case as regards further precautions to prevent persons from returning to their ship after having been medically rejected.

2. In reply we beg to forward for your Lordship's information a copy of the marginally noted letters from the Health Officer of the Port of Bombay and to invite attention to paragraph 8 of his letter No. 872, dated the 27th April 1899, in which the measures in connection with the medical inspection of persons proceeding by a vessel bound for a port out of India are fully described.

3. It will be seen from Major Crimmin's letter quoted above that the fireman was *set at liberty* after being medically rejected and this accounts for the fact that he managed to find his way on board again. Had he been detained in a camp of observation for such period as was necessary to discover whether he was developing plague, this would not have occurred. The camp of observation, which has since been established for the detention of all crews rejected at the medical inspections prior to embarkation, will effectually prevent a recurrence of cases of the kind referred to above, and we are of opinion that no further precautions are necessary in this direction.

4. The matter dealt with in paragraph 9 of Major Crimmin's letter quoted above has received the attention of this Government, and after careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that detention of crews prior to sailing is impracticable, and that the thorough and strict medical examination

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now enforced, coupled with the disinfection of clothing and kit, is showing itself to be a very effectual safeguard. We beg to point out that the arrangements at present enforced are in accordance with the principles of the Venice Sanitary Convention and no departure from them is at present called for, and to add that the results of the past two years are a sufficient guarantee of their efficiency.

We have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble Servants,

SANDHURST.

J. NUGENT.

H. E. M. JAMES.

Letter from the Health Officer of the Port of Bombay, No. 872, dated the 27th April 1899.

With reference to your No. 2754-P. of 21st April 1899 and accompaniments (herewith returned), I have the honour to state that the first examination of the crew of the S.S. *Caledonia* took place on shore in the Docks at 8 A.M. on the 18th November 1898. The vessel was timed to leave the Dock at 11-30 A.M. the same day and anchor in the harbour until 2 P.M. next day, the time fixed for the sailing of the homeward mail.

2. At our first examination of the crew the man referred to in the correspondence accompanying your memorandum was found to be suffering from a slight rise of temperature (it was under 100° F.). I did not like his look, so he with three others was rejected, but I did not consider I was justified in depriving him of his liberty in addition. I may mention that we find about 25 per cent. of all native crew have a temperature above normal.

3. The man referred to in the correspondence was a "paniwalla," otherwise a greaser. This class of crew are more or less mechanics and they are difficult to replace at the last moment. The native brokers who take contracts for providing native crew may not have heard me say that the man was not to be allowed to proceed, or if they did they did not strike him off their list.

4. It was certainly not the fault of the police that the man found his way on board the steamer as he was never handed over to them for removal to a segregation camp.

5. At the final examination which took place immediately before the vessel sailed, he fell in with the remainder of the crew for examination and he was found to be suffering from a temperature of 103.2° F. He was removed to one of the hospitals from where he was reported to be suffering from plague.

6. Even if the man had been segregated immediately after the first inspection, it would not have saved the *Caledonia* from being classed as an infected ship because the man had already been on board of her as one of her old crew.

7. The information that one of the crew removed from the *Caledonia* in Bombay developed plague was telegraphed by Government to Suez, where the authorities appear to have made the most of the information. It appears they held a very rigorous inspection of the native crew and removed two of them as "suspicious." Reuter telegraphed, as an item of news, that they were plague cases. I immediately wrote to Egypt for details of the cases, and at the same time asked for a list of plague cases imported from Bombay during the year 1898. The President of the Quarantine Board replied that neither of the men, removed from the *Caledonia*, could, in his opinion, be considered to have developed plague, and further that no genuine case of plague had been imported from Bombay during the year.

8. Every person—crew or passenger—proceeding by a vessel bound for a port out of India is examined on shore. If the vessel is in Dock and is about to proceed direct to sea, she is moved about 20 feet off the wall and left in charge of a European Police Constable until she is taken over by the Pilot, who takes her out of Dock. The Constable has orders not to allow any person on board except the Dock officials. If the vessel is loading cargo and goes out of Dock during the night or does not proceed direct to sea but remains in the Harbour to take on passengers next day as in the case of the *Caledonia*, a second medical examination of the crew is held on the vessel, and if the vessel does not proceed to sea immediately after the inspection is over, the gangways are taken up and she is left in charge of a European Police Constable with orders that no person except the Pilot is to be allowed on board without a pass. If any member of the crew with a suspicious temperature or other suspicious

symptoms is found, he is now invariably removed to camp under police escort where he is kept until his temperature falls to normal, or until we are certain that the fever from which he is suffering is not due to plague.

9. Short of absolute quarantine of crew and passengers for a specified time before they go on board of a vessel, it would appear to be almost impossible owing to local conditions to devise a more careful or successful system of medical examination as well as police supervision to prevent the export of plague from Bombay by sea.

Letter from the Health Officer of the Port of Bombay, No. 972, dated the 10th May 1899.

With reference to your letter No. 3122-P. of 9th instant, I have the honour to state that in the old days we turned rejected people into the town unless they were reasonably suspicious, when we sent them to a plague hospital for observation.

2. In January last we got an observation camp placed at our disposal and since that date all rejections among the crew are sent to the camp where they are detained until the ship has sailed, or until we are certain that the symptoms from which they are suffering are not due to plague.

No.

GENERAL DEPARTMENT (PLAGUE).

Letter to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India, dated the 3rd June, No. 47-P. of 1899.

Relative to the case of a fireman who was rejected for service on the P. & O. Steamship *Caledonia* on account of suspicious plague symptoms and who afterwards found his way on board again, but who being discovered was removed and developed plague at one of the Bombay hospitals.

No. 1915



From

R. Nathan, Esq.,

Under Secy. to the Govt. of India.

To

The Secretary to the Government of Madras,
Local and Municipal Department.

Home Department.

(Sanitary)

Simla, the 13th June 1899.

Sir,

I am directed to forward, for the information of the Governor in Council, _____

a copy of the Despatches noted in the margin relative to

From the Secy. of State to the Govt. of Bombay
No. 9 (Revenue), dated the 30th March 99
and enclosures.

From the Govt. of Bombay to the Secy. of State
No. 47 P., dated the 3rd June 1899 and
enclosures.

the case of a fire-
man who was rejected
for service on the

P. and O. Steamer

Caledonia on account of suspicious plague symptoms, and who afterwards found his way on board again, but was discovered and removed, and subsequently developed plague in one of the Bombay hospitals.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

R. Nathan

Under Secretary to the Government of India.

H.L.B.