GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

FINANCIAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper:—

Proceedings of the Government of India, Department of Finance and Commerce (Accounts and Finance—Stores), dated Simla, 10th October 1883, No. 3639.

Read—the following despatch from the Secretary of State for India, to the Government of India, dated 26th July 1883, No. 213:—

I have considered in Council your Excellency's letter, dated the 16th of April last, No. 88, forwarding a resolution issued on the 10th of January, slightly modified by another dated the 16th of April last, regarding the rules for the supply of European stores required for the public service in India, and the method of exhibiting the financial effect of substituting, when practicable, articles of local manufacture for imported stores.

2. I approve of the orders which seem well calculated to ensure the objects desired. It will, of course, be borne in mind that, in the comparison of cost, due regard must be had to the quality as well as to the mere price of the articles compared.

3. I request your special attention to the enclosed report by Dr. Macnamara, the Examiner of Medical Stores in the Stores Department of this office, respecting the necessity for great caution in the purchase of drugs.

ENCLOSURE.

Report by Dr. MACNAMARA, Examiner of Medical Stores, Stores Department, India Office, dated 12th June 1883.

I beg to offer the following remarks in connection with two sets of papers which have, within the past few days, been sent to me for report—one, that which includes the annual Bengal indent for medical stores, and the other, the papers regarding the purchase of stores in India.

I am, I believe, correct in stating that the demand from Bengal for medical stores has been, in respect to the greater number of articles included in the indent, very much smaller during the past two or three years than formerly. This has, I believe, resulted, not from the needs of the medical services having diminished, but in consequence of a ruling of the Bengal Government which encourages dispensary committees throughout the province to make their own arrangements with druggists' firms in Calcutta or elsewhere for supplies of medicines, and it is this change in the mode of supply which introduces the second set of papers to which I have alluded, namely, those connected with the purchase of stores in the local markets. I do not know the grounds which decided the Bengal Government to make the change in question; the change may have been an outcome from the last movement towards the extended purchase of stores in local markets; but, however this may be, as the matter has been brought before me by the papers sent to me for report, I venture to record some reasons which appear to me to oppose it.

My very extensive official dealings with the London drug market during the past seven years has convinced me that as regards no kind of stores can there be greater necessity for caution in the purchase than that of drugs. The range of prices for almost every drug and preparation is immense, and corresponds with as great a range of quality, with the degree of care exercised in making the preparations, and with the purity or otherwise of the ingredients.

I very much fear that if the purchase of drugs be left to local committees, necessarily ignorant of the ways of the trade, they may be tempted by low prices to purchase almost worthless drugs, or even if paying fair prices will very probably have drugs of poor quality foisted on them. Nor is it an answer to this objection that the drugs will be inspected by the medical officers in charge of the dispensaries, for not one medical officer in a hundred is educated to distinguish good from bad drugs; and if he has the training, it will not be of much use to him unless he has also a laboratory and a museum of standard samples to aid him in his examination. The following is an example which has come to my knowledge of the practices by which a dispensary committee may be victimised. Not long since one of the leading firms in London received from a Calcutta (Native) firm of druggists an order for one thousand ounce bottles of citrate of iron and cinchonidine, with the provision that the bottles were to be labelled "Citrate of iron and quinine" (the two preparations can be distinguished only by a chemical expert, and the price of one is about one-third that of the other); the London firm refused to label as required, and the result was the withdrawal of the order. The preparation in question must have been needed for supply to dispensaries. No firm could possibly need such a supply for its own dispensing, or would think of keeping a stock of the drug, as it is very apt to spoil, and the medicine is not a domestic one. I am satisfied it was required for the supply of public or private dispensaries.

Another reason which appears to me to militate against the local purchase of medical stores is that a very large class of preparations, such as tinctures and liniments, ought unquestionably to be prepared under official superintendence, not only because, being very bulky, the cost of importing them would be great, and because they can be made, as in Government medical stores in India, at prices vastly cheaper than those at which they can be brought, but because it is impossible for any one, short of experiment on the living subject, to decide whether they have been carefully manufactured from pure materials.

I think I may find another reason against the change in the method of drug supply in the fact that the plant of the Government depôts in India has lately been considerably increased by the addition of machinery, and that the cost of the outturn will, of course, increase if supplies are obtained from other sources.

Order—

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All Departments of the Government of India.
All Local Governments and Administrations.
The Comptroller-General.
All Accountants-General and Comptrollers.
The Head Commissioner of Paper Currency.
The Mint Masters, Calcutta and Bombay.
The Director-General of the Post Office of India.
The Commissioner, Northern India Salt Revenue.

(Signed) J. E. O'CONOR,
Asst. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

ORDER—dated 26th October 1883, No. 2465, Financial.

Recorded.

(True Extract.)

C. G. MASTER,
Chief Secretary.

To all Departments of the Secretariat.
„ Heads of Departments.

Exd. J. W. Fischer.

Govt. of {1883} Madras.

FINANCIAL.

No 3319 Way 21st Nov.r/83.
Recorded with
reference to G.O. No. 2060a
dated 2nd July 1883.
S/ C.B.

Issued

Recd. *Encl.*

G.O., 26th October 1883, No. 2465.

No 3319 Way 21st Nov.r/83

OCTOBER.

Secs
C. E. for I.
C. A. to Govt.
Ex. P.W. accts
Genl. Supt P.W.S.
Supdt. M&W.
Cong Supt. for Rys.
Supt in chief S. Rys

Stores.

Recording resolution of the Government of India forwarding copy of a despatch from the Secretary of State approving of the rules for the supply of European — required for the public service in India, and the method of exhibiting the financial effect of substituting, when practicable, articles of local manufacture for imported stores.

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(True Extract.)

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Chief Secretary.

To all Departments of the Secretariat.
" Heads of Departments.

Exd. J. W. Fischer.

No 3319 Way. 21st Nov. 83

Recorded with reference to G.O. No. 2060 w dated 2nd July 1883

S/C B

Govt. of {1883} Madras.

FINANCIAL.

Issued

Recd. *Encl.*

G.O., 26th October 1883, No. 2465.

No. 3319 Way. 21st Nov. 83.

OCTOBER.

Stores

C. E. for I.

C. A. to Govt.

Sp. P. W. Accts

Secy. Dept. P. W.

Dept. M. & S.

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Exd. J. W. Fischer.

20.P.C.

No. 3319 W dt Nov 21st 1883.

Recorded with reference to G O No. 2060 W dated 27th July 1883.

8/11

No 469. M. 12.2.83
1081 M 11.4.83
Govt Kerala 187 Mis
21.6.83
B No 2060 M 27.7.83

Supt Engrs
Chief Engr for Irrign
Comg Architect to Govt
Exr PW Accts
Genl Supt PW Stores
Supt Mr A W
Com Engr Rlys
Engr on Chief State Rly

Dms 21/11

Withdrawn

M. Che. 9778

Govt. of {1883} Madras.

FINANCIAL.

20. 2. C.

Issued

Read. 7/11/83 Encl.

G.O., 26th October 1883, No. 2465.

No. 3319 W dt Nov. 21st 1883.

OCTOBER.

20

Stores.

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