

M.B.O. 1-32,400-28-11-80

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No.	<u>1185</u>	Press Mis. _____
Dated	<u>24-9-</u>	<u>1867</u>

Not to be folded or roughly handled

102

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
24th September 1867.*

No. 193. Read the following letter from Surgeon Major W. J. VANSOMEREN, in charge of 1st District, to the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, Indian Medical Department, Presidency Division; dated Madras, 16th September 1867, No. 139.

In obedience to G. O., No. 851, dated 18th July 1867, I have the honor to forward this report upon the causes of the high death-rate in the Idiot Asylum during the first four and a half months of the current year.

2. For several years past, my annual reports have contained notices of certain unsanitary conditions under which the Insanes in the late Asylum have been living and dying. Sleeping without cots or matrasses on the low-lying floors of the Institution certainly cannot be regarded as favorable to the health of its inmates; but when it is borne in mind that every night those inmates used to micturate, and some even defecate, on the very floors on which they reposed, and that every morning these floors had to be washed with water to remove all traces of the urine passed on them during the previous night, thus maintaining a chronic dampness in the wards, it will be seen that, to original defective construction, two objectionable and unhealthy practices added the operation of as many positive morbid causes.

3. But, while acknowledging the long continued deleterious action of the fore-mentioned causes, I very much doubt if they only were concerned in producing the mortality from the 1st January to the 11th May 1867. This doubt is suggested by the dates on which the deaths principally occurred. Of the *eleven* fatal cases, *one* was the result of *accident*, leaving *ten*, of which *four* were caused by *Epilepsy*, and *six** by *Diarrhoea*. Of these

* One of these was admitted with *Dysentery*, but lapsed into *Diarrhoea*.

ten cases, *two* died in January, *five* in February, *two* in March, and *one* early in April. And from the 5th April to the 11th May, there was not a single casualty! But, permit me to solicit attention now to the very high death-rate throughout Madras during the first quarter of the current year. That death-rate exceeded the average of *ten* years by 730, and, hence, I submit that seasonal and atmospheric influences probably contributed in great measure to the production of fatal disease in the Asylums—a conjecture corroborated by the fact that miasmatic diseases show an increase of 508·6, while other diseases discover an excess of 222·1 deaths on the *ten* years' average in the city! During the *first* half of the quarter there were *six* casualties in the Asylum, and during the *second* half there were but *three*, the last of which occurred on the 14th March! The tenth death on the list did not take place till *twenty-two* days had elapsed, and that was the only casualty in the first half of the second quarter!

4. The opinion which I have expressed regarding the connection of the high death-rate of the first quarter of this year with unfavorable seasonal and atmospheric conditions, is still further supported by a retrospect of the mortality in the Asylum for several years back. From the year 1858-59, when the number of casualties was *thirty*, the mortality gradually reduced until 1865, which was throughout Madras a very unhealthy year; and during that twelve-month the number of deaths rose to *forty-two*. It is true that a great part of this mortality seemed due to a defective dietary, which was, therefore, recast and improved with immediate benefit; but during even 1866 the casualties numbered twenty-eight, a death rate which must be considered high.

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5. There are still, however, a few points explanatory of the ordinary high mortality in the late Asylum, to which I beg to refer:—

a. All the lives in that Institution were diseased lives.

b. Epilepsy, as a proximate cause of death in insane patients, is common, and (as Dr. Evezard has stated) incidental to the disease on account of which those patients were originally admitted into the Institution.

c. Observation and experience have led me to form the opinion that Diarrhœa is another direct result of the cerebral disease of many insanes.

d. The *ages* of the patients who died deserve noting. Only *one* of the cases was a young man of 18, and the ages of the other *nine* ranged from 33 to 60. Five of them were above 40.

—
No. 373.

MEMORANDUM.

Forwarded to the Chief Secretary with reference to the Proceedings of Government, Public Department, No. 851, of 18th July last, paragraph 3.

FORT SAINT GEORGE,

19th September 1867.

(Signed) W. MACKENZIE, M. D.,
Insp. Genl., Indian Med. Dept.

No. 194.

—
ORDER THEREON, 24th September 1867, No. 1185.

To be recorded.

(True Extract).

A. J. ARBUTHNOT,

Chief Secretary.

hnt of 1st Sect.

AP 373

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Forwarded to the Chief
Secretary with reference
to the General Order of 1861
Public Dept 11833 of 18
with last para 3.

W. McAlister

Enclosed are the 1861
with the 1861
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11833 1861
Public 1867. Sept

From

The Depy. Insp. Genl. of Hospitals,
Indian Medical Dept. Presidency Division,

To

Chief Secretary to Government
Indian Medical Dept.
with change

No. 3526

Dated 17th September

Received

18 11/11

we are

Reference.

Letter No. 139 dated 13th Sept 1867
1867 dated 13th Sept 1867

Subject.

1523.

Forwarded with reference
to your Memorandum
No. 34, 2 dated 13th Sept

W. McAlister
Deputy Inspector General
Indian Medical Dept.

1905.194
1867 Sept 1867
Recorded.

1905.194