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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.

964

Press
Mis.

Dated

2-8-

1870

Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
2nd August 1870.*

No. 9. Read the following letter from the Acting Magistrate of the Madras District, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Sydapet, 10th June 1870, No. 116 :—

I have the honour to forward, for the consideration and orders of Government, a letter from the Acting Joint Magistrate of this District, dated 4th instant, No. 65.

2. Some time previous to the late Conjeveram festival notices were published in this district, and forwarded to all the neighbouring districts, warning persons against attending the festival on the ground of the probability that existed of an outbreak of cholera during its occurrence, and of the great scarcity of water in the town of Conjeveram.

3. In consequence of these warnings the attendance at the festival was comparatively small, being only about one-fourth of the usual number. Nevertheless cholera did break out during the festival, and has since spread over a great part of the Subdivision of the district. Mr. Crole considers that this outbreak of disease is distinctly to be traced to the late festival, and in this opinion I fully concur.

4. Arguing from these data Mr. Crole has arrived at the following conclusions: first, that the rules sanctioned in Government Order, dated 13th May 1870, No. 606, are not sufficient for preventing the spread of the disease from infected to healthy localities; and secondly, that no amount of warning avails to prevent these gatherings, and that it is out of the question to hope that the disease resulting from them will never be checked, unless measures are taken to prevent them when danger is imminent, and to confine the danger to the place where cholera breaks out, should they be allowed to take place. Mr. Crole further suggests that the expense of establishing a system of quarantine should be borne by the town that has caused the mischief.

5. Nothing could well be more unpopular than to prevent a festival—and that, too, the principal one of the year—from taking place at such a celebrated place of pilgrimage as Conjeveram. Nevertheless, it is possible to conceive the existence of such an extreme case as would lead the Government to consider itself justified in adopting such a course. That there was no such necessity in the present instance is evident from paragraph 5 of Mr. Crole's letter, in which he states that he was restrained from proposing that the Government should be addressed in view to preventing the festival from taking place, because he feared that the case that could be made out in favour of such a step would not be considered strong enough.

6. With regard to Mr. Crole's second proposal, I have to observe that, next to Madras, Conjeveram is the largest town in the district. Its estimated area is six square miles, and its population, according to the census of Fusly 1276, amounts to 40,228. At present there are sixteen toll-gates. Other outlets existed, but some of these have been closed by the Municipal Commissioners on the representation of the toll contractors. There are besides many places by which foot passengers can get out of the town, and the number of such outlets is greatly increased during the hot season when no cultivation is going on. It is obvious that it would be impossible to maintain an efficient system of quarantine around such a town except at an enormous expense, which might have to be continued for several months. Mr. Crole proposes that this expense should be borne by the town; but I think that it would be unfair to impose such a charge on the residents in a town when the

necessity for incurring it could be clearly traced to an outbreak of cholera consequent on a large influx of strangers into the town.

7. After careful consideration of Mr. Crole's proposals I cannot advocate their adoption. On the occasion of an outbreak of cholera in a large town it does not appear to me to be practicable to do more than to adopt measures similar to those which are now being carried out in the town of Madras.

8. Mr. Crole's letter exhibits the progress of the disease in Conjeveram up to the 29th ultimo. From the reports since received it appears that, from the 30th May to the 5th June, there were nineteen cases, of which eleven were fatal, and that from the 6th to the 8th instant inclusive, thirty-four persons were attacked, all of whom died. As the disease appears to be on the increase, I have this day applied to the Inspector-General of the Indian Medical Department for another medical subordinate to assist Mr. Chadwick, the Apothecary in charge of the Dispensary at Conjeveram.

From C. S. CROLE, Esq., Acting Joint Magistrate, to the Acting Magistrate of the Madras District, dated Chingleput, 4th June 1870, No. 65.

You are doubtless aware of the outbreak of cholera during the late festival at Conjeveram, and of its consequences to the health of the surrounding country. In redemption of the promise contained in my No. 60 of the 31st ultimo, I have the honour to address you on the general subject, and to request that the matter, as it relates to quarantine, be laid before the Government.

2. To establish the position assumed in this letter, and the proposition which it is its main object to submit for the consideration of Government, I shall briefly sketch the history of the present outbreak of cholera, and the measures taken to meet it.

3. From October 1869 up to February 1870 cholera had prevailed more or less in Conjeveram, and had lurked in here and there, an out-of-the-way village all over the Subdivision. Regular reports of all cases were ordered to be made to me.

4. On the 17th March you wrote to me on the then approaching festival at Conjeveram, requesting to know whether I had any additional measures to propose over and above those which I had taken for two years past. I replied that notices should be widely circulated warning persons against attending the festival, as cholera might reasonably be expected to break out again on such palpable provocation as an influx of pilgrims into the town in its then circumstances. Further, when I went into the Conjeveram Taluk, a few weeks later, it was found that water was much scarcer than had been thought, and I again addressed you bringing to notice that as an additional objection to persons visiting the town. You issued notices in accordance with these suggestions.

5. Just before the festival I visited the place itself, and, finding things even worse than I had represented them to be, was restrained from proposing that the Government should be addressed in view to preventing the festival from taking place, only because I feared that such a request would be hopeless, as the case that could be made out in favour of such a step would not be considered strong enough. Besides this the whole arrangements were in your hands, and I had the best reasons for believing that the Sanitary Commissioner proposed to attend the festival. I, therefore, thought it better to leave the matter alone, and left the place on the night of 3rd May.

6. On the 13th ultimo a report of certain cases of cholera having occurred in a suburb of Conjeveram was forwarded to you with this office letter, No. 48. People were then, of course, assembling for the festival, and it is to be noted that those cases were the very first which had occurred in the Subdivision since 27th February 1870.

7. The returns forwarded to this office show that many persons refrained from attending the festival in consequence of the warnings issued by you. The attendance was comparatively a small one—about 10,000, or one-fourth of the average number. Others were scared away from the town

on finding that cholera had actually broken out in it. They further show that, from the 13th to the 23rd of May, thirty-six persons were attacked, of whom the whole died. Sixteen cases more occurred, but as the sick were removed from the town the result is not known. This shows that the disease was of the malignant type. From the 25th up to the 29th of May, (the latest date for which returns have been received,) twenty-three persons were attacked, of whom only two recovered. This shows a total of fifty-nine cases, (omitting the above sixteen,) of which ninety-six per cent. proved fatal.

8. Enough has been said to show that the festival was the cause of the outbreak in question, and that, as there existed reasonable grounds for predicting an outbreak, the executive, by preventing the gathering altogether, would have been enabled to save the town from the present visitation. I have the honour, therefore, respectfully to suggest that, in the interests of the public health, festivals should not henceforth be allowed to take place under like circumstances.

9. The festival having, however, been permitted, it seems to me impossible to evade the conclusion that, had the town been put under close quarantine on the appearance of the disease, the evil consequences to the country at large might have been avoided.

10. From the end of February up to the 23rd of May the Subdivision was entirely free from cholera. On that date began a series of reports of outbreaks on every side. Formal reports have already been received from twenty villages.

11. If the above facts do not supply convincing proof that this was not a coincidence, and that, had the feast been prevented or the town been put under effective quarantine, the persons who have died might still have been alive, it is easy to bring the proof closer.

12. On the night of the 20th of May a woman of the goldsmith caste, on her return home, started from Conjeveram for Chingleput (twenty-four miles) in apparent health. On reaching Patoor, a village seven miles from Chingleput, she had premonitory symptoms, and reaching her house about 6 p.m. was dead by 7 a.m. next day. In communication with the Civil Surgeon I took immediate steps for the fumigation and cleansing of the house and the destruction of soiled clothing. The appearance of success which attended those measures turned out to be deceptive. On the 29th two persons were attacked, and up to date there have been twenty-five reported cases, and the disease is still raging.* Further, the whole of the cases (except two near the jail) occurred in the same end of the town in which the old woman died. The other parts of Chingleput have continued free.

13. Another case of the same sort, this time in an out-of-the-way village called Kariamangalam above twenty miles from Conjeveram, and through which there is no thoroughfare. At the close of the festival four persons started in company on their return to the above village in apparent health. Before they reached home all had been seized, and only one survived. Cholera immediately broke out in this village, and, when I last heard three or four days ago, four persons more had died.

14. The conclusion seems irresistible, that had quarantine regulations existed in Conjeveram, all these persons would now, in the ordinary course of things, be living.

15. The above facts further show that the rules sanctioned in G. O., dated 13th May 1870, No. 606, are not sufficient for the purpose of preventing the spread of the disease from infected to healthy localities, for it strangely enough happens that persons apparently healthy when leaving, are afterwards attacked and become foci of disease all over the country.

16. Facts prove that no amount of warning avails to prevent these gatherings, and it is out of the question to hope that the disease resulting from them will ever be checked, unless measures are taken (1) to prevent them when danger is imminent, and (2) to confine it to the place where cholera breaks out, should they be allowed to take place.

17. The force of the old arguments against quarantine—expence, and annoyance, and the interference with the liberty of doing as one chooses—must, of course, be admitted *quoad tantum*; but they appear to me to be far more than counterbalanced by the good to be effected by overlooking them, and adopting the most stringent precautions possible. The expense should, in a case like that of Conjeveram, be borne by the town which has caused the mischief. The latter argument

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
2nd August 1870.*

sinks into insignificance before the fact that, in order to save annoyance to a small section of the community, who choose in the teeth of warnings to propagate a deadly and infectious disease, a whole country, whose public health had up to that moment been perfect, should be allowed to become desolated and plague-stricken.

18. The difficulties of establishing a quarantine would be insuperable, and the advantage small, after cholera has broken out in several places at once; but in the case under notice, which is not singular, where there is only one plague spot, everything points to the advantages of the measure.

19. The necessity of the application of the same principle in a much weaker case has so impressed the Government that it has been determined to make the enforcement of "the Contagious Diseases' Act" a charge against Local Funds by the new Bill. I trust that it has now been proved that the disaster which attended the late festival at Conjeveram might have been prevented by the application of quarantine regulations to that place, and that the facts and arguments in favour of such a measure are such as to secure for it at all events a fair trial.

20. The extension of Act No. I. of 1870, so as to meet such cases, seems to be all that is required.

21. I am aware that this letter is open to the charge of having travelled over old ground, and that I may be accused of having insisted over much on what may appear self-evident. I trust to be pardoned on the ground that it would be hard to imagine a case better fitted to form the basis of a decision on the general advisability or otherwise of the measure proposed, and because I am sincerely convinced of its necessity, and believe that the Government should be at once put in possession of the circumstances which it has been my unfortunate duty to relate.

P. S.—The opinion of the Civil Surgeon is enclosed.

From the Zillah Surgeon of Chingleput, to the Acting Joint Magistrate, dated Chingleput, 6th June 1870, No. 62.

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter, No. 64, dated 6th instant, with its accompaniment, herewith returned, and to state I concur with your suggestion of enforcing quarantine at Conjeveram at the time of the festival.

2. Had strict quarantine been carried out last month, I believe many cases of cholera, which have been evidently the result of importation of the disease from that station into Chingleput and other villages during last and the present month, would not have occurred.

3. As far as my experience goes cholera does not appear to be endemic in Chingleput; last year cholera proved fatal in some cases during the months of September, October, and November, but upon inquiry it was clearly traceable to importation from Madras.

No. 10. ORDER THEREON, 2nd August 1870, No. 964.

The Government are not prepared to recommend any general legislative measure having for its object the enforcement of inland quarantine. The question of preventing, by law, pilgrims resorting to a place where cholera in an epidemic form is known to prevail will receive consideration.

(True Extract.)

To the Acting Magistrate of Chingleput,
" Inspector-General of Police.

Edw. J. Wright.

Under Secy. to Govt.

Public Department.

Memorandum.

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This correspondence relates to the outbreak of Cholera which has recently occurred at Coimbatore on the occasion of the annual festival and to the manner in which cholera was disseminated by the Coimbatore pilgrims to the greater part of the subdivision of the Madras District.

1. In the case of Coimbatore it can hardly be said that there were grounds for preventing the festival. At best, if there were, in 1870, might be alleged of every place & every festival. He must therefore be prepared to stop all future religious festivals & pilgrimages, and especially those at the

2. It seems probable also that the Cholera was introduced in the same manner into the Town of Madras.

3. The A.D. Collector Mr. Croft suggests that these pilgrimages should be forbidden when it is known that a place of

Govt. of Madras

To

PUBLIC.

THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF
CHINGLEPUT.

cc.

cc.

cc.

Dated August, 2nd.

Recd.

Encl.

G. O., 2nd August 1870, No. 984.

AUGUST.
Nos. 9-10.

Considering a general legislative measure to enforce inland quarantine to be undesirable; but by law, the resort of people to places where epidemic Cholera is known to prevail.

of pilgrimage has become infected with Cholera shortly before the usual date of pilgrimage.

2nd That an epidemic disease manifesting itself in any town or place of pilgrimage, such place should be placed in strict quarantine. The expense of such quarantine being borne by the infected place.

4. The Collector Mr. Blair does not consider that under any circumstances should pilgrimages be absolutely prohibited, and that a strict inland quarantine would be enormously expensive, and that it would be unfair to charge any particular place with the cost thereof.

5. No immediate action could be taken on Mr. Baker's suggestions

most sacred places of resort.

Again, when Cholera broke out - what would have been the effect

of a Quarantine Law? He should have beened some 30,000 extra people in the place - for weeks - and probably decimated the population -

In the case of Mr. Blair's Mr. Blair - Cholera is in it now - Could he work any Quarantine Law? Could he back all in order are in, and all stand out? It is a railway - ship to

Ship - Quarantine is given to a different place - If the disease is on board, we have

to deal with a few hundred of people at the outside - then time because in most cases how can we taxed to do the work.

ful with all our resources here!

A Quarantine Law is *prima facie* desirable - but, being as I think, impracticable, we should turn all our attention to other preventive measures.

If enquiry is to be made in to the subject I think it should extend up country as well as here. The medical men there are busied with off cases from the quarantine - but they can tell us nothing of the feelings of the people as

J. D. S.

because the Govt. have not the necessary legal powers. It does not seem however unreasonable that the power to forbid a pilgrimage for the protection of the Public Health should be acquired by legislation.

6. It is not incompatible with Asiatic custom.

The Hady or pilgrimage to Mecca and Kerbelah has been postponed more than once on account of epidemic disease, and the people in India would accept without reluctance a Govt. prohibition to go on pilgrimage to an infected place. Indeed, as shown by Mr. Blair, the notifications issued by him warning people not to go to Conjevaram

detested

deterred a very large proportion of the usual pilgrims from going there.

7. As regards inland quarantine in the present state of the law the Govt have not the power to put an inland town in quarantine.

8. Act of 1870 provides only for maritime quarantine. It was passed with the object of expressly conferring on the Govt the power of making quarantine rules; the Advocate General at Madras and Calcutta having both been of opinion that without such an Act there would be no legal authority to promulgate such rules.

I agree with the general sense of Mr. Sain's observations. Pilgrimages, fairs, festivals & the like are satisfactions to the people and should be respected as far as is consistent with the public health. By looking after the Sanitary State of the Churches, & resting places and sacred places we can do much to make these open places innocuous. I would labour in that sense and ask to much lightened by means of regulations of Cholera which have lately been of a mild character. I would not hesitate any general measure for quarantine. If there was any immediate outbreak of Cholera at the site of a pilgrimage I would stop the affairs of the place turn them back but I would not segregate the infected crowd absolutely. V.

I agree with Lord Cairns & Mr. Linn in 9. The Bill as introduced into the Governor's Council provided for both inland and maritime quarantine. It was however found when the Bill came to be considered by the select Committee, that in order to secure effectual sanitary rules for the multitudes resorting to fairs and sacred places, it would be necessary to pass a far more comprehensive measure. Thus, it would not only be necessary to meet the case of places where infectious diseases prevailed, but also the case of places where there were grounds for apprehending an outbreak of such diseases. Above all, it would be necessary to authorize the

A. J. V.

the levy of taxation to cover the expenditure on account of the medical and other arrangements that would have to be made. On these grounds, the Select Committee came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to limit the Bill to seaports, leaving for further consideration, either by the Governor General's Council or the Councils of the several Local Governments, the question of inland quarantine. The Hon^{ble} Mr. Chapman, the mover of the Bill, stated that he believed that a law to regulate inland quarantine was greatly needed and that it would be found to interpose an effectual barrier

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barrier against the inroads of Cholera" that it was with extreme regret that the Select Committee found themselves obliged to confine the operation of the Bill to the establishment of a system of quarantine in the seaport towns; but that the subject of inland quarantine would not be lost sight of."

10. No further action appears to have been taken in this matter by the Supreme Govt.

11. The subject is very important, and I submit that it is very desirable that it should be brought forward without delay, with a view to local legislation.

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I venture to suggest
that a Committee be
appointed to report
on the provisions which
should be contained
in a Draft Bill for
Island Quarantine.

The Committee might
be composed of the ^{a member of the Board of Revenue,}
Inspector General
Indian Medical Dept.,
the Sanitary Commissioner
the Inspector General
of Police, the Honble
V. Ramalingam, Venka-
taswamy Naicker (Bar),
Mutuswamy Iyer.

WV

13 May 170 from 58 c 60
29 June 169 - 162-163
17 June 168 - 86-87

At the City of London
Sup. of Police

Order - As a consequence of the
the fact are not prepared to recommend
any general legislative measure having
this object the enforcement of a law
Quarantine. The question of preventing
by laws, persons coming to a place where
children in an epidemic form is known to prevail
will require consideration -
1895.

Public 1870 Department

From
The Magistrate of the
Madras Dist.
To The Chief Secretary to
Government
Dated 10th June 1870
Recd 13th 1911

(2 enclos)

N. 905.

Enclosing with
remarks letter from the
Magistrate regarding
the enforcement of
quarantine at Coimbatore
during the festival.
With new order.