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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

27th April 1877, No. 595.

Vital Statistics.

Read the following paper:—

No. 160. *From Surgeon-Major W. R. CORNISH, F.R.C.S., Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Officiating Chief Secretary to Government, Public Department, dated 10th April 1877, No. 252.*

I have the honor to transmit herewith, for publication in the *Fort St. George Gazette*, the abstract returns of births and deaths for the months of December 1876 and January 1877.

2. The January return is, I regret to state, incomplete owing to the non-receipt of the return of the South Canara District, but under the circumstances of the increasing mortality, more especially in the distressed districts, I have thought it advisable to submit the January figures to Government without further delay. It is very desirable that the district returns should be sent in promptly as they become due, so that the Government may be kept informed of the influence of the famine season on birth and death rates.

3. For the month of December 1876 there appears a decided increase in the rate of mortality, and in this month a total of 89,108 deaths were registered against an average of the preceding five years for the same month of 53,386. The death-rate for the whole Presidency rose from 23·7 per mille in November to 36·9. The ratios of mortality were high in most of the famine districts; thus 59·1 per mille in Nellore, Madras 62·2, Kurnool 148·3, Cuddapah 58·7, Bellary 53·5, Salem 42·9.

4. Out of the 89,108 deaths registered, 31,197 are returned as due to "cholera." Cholera prevailed epidemically in all the districts except Ganjam, Vizagapatam, Godavery, Nilgiris, South Canara, and Malabar, but it was most severe in Nellore, Cuddapah, and Kurnool. Small-pox is said to have caused a total of 2,821 deaths, fevers 24,952, and bowel-complaints 4,239.

5. These figures are not implicitly to be relied on. Much of the mortality put down to cholera and fever was, I think there can be no doubt, due to causes connected with the scarcity and distress in the famine districts.

6. *Births.*—The registered births in December amounted to 48,247 against an average for that month of the previous five years—42,532. The birth-registration was obviously low in Nellore—10·2 per mille, Kurnool 15·9, Cuddapah 14·1. The average birth-rate as registered for the whole Presidency was only 19·9 per mille.

7. *January's Return.*—For the month of January 1877 the total registered deaths (excluding the district of South Canara) had increased to 114,352 against an average of the five previous Januaries of 47,260. The death-rate for the population, of which returns have been received, was 46·9 per mille.

8. The highest district death-rates were in Madras, 112·9 per mille, Nellore 97·1, Chingleput 78·1, Kurnool 78·2, Cuddapah 118·7, Bellary 67·4, North Arcot 83·1, Salem 62·6. The chief causes of mortality according to the registers were "cholera" 58,735, "small-pox" 3,894, "fevers" 21,138, and "bowel-complaints" 5,875. During this month the six districts noticed in paragraph 4 as free of cholera in December continued to be comparatively unaffected, and the disease fell with especial severity on the famine districts and districts in which scarcity and high prices of food were existing. The increase of registered mortality during this month from "bowel-complaints" is very suggestive of the influence of famine. The chief increase in the registration under this head was in Madras, Chingleput, Bellary, North Arcot, Salem, and Coimbatore. I have no doubt that a large number of the deaths returned as "cholera" ought rightly to have been registered as famine diarrhœa.

9. That the death-registration is very defective, and especially in seasons of great pressure and distress like the present, is very apparent, and I need only call attention to the fact that the proportion of the sexes whose deaths are registered bear no relation to the numbers living of each sex as shown in the census to demonstrate that the female mortality especially must be very imperfectly registered.

10. In January, for instance, 63,746 male deaths, are registered, and only 50,606 females; whereas, if there have been any proportion between the numbers registered and numbers living of each sex, there would have been about 63,109 female deaths recorded.

11. *Births.*—The births registered in January (omitting South Canara) fell to 38,121 against an average of 41,247 in the five previous years. The birth-rate was excessively low in Nellore—5·9 per mille. Kurnool 12·8, Cuddapah 11·7, Chingleput 16·3, and for the whole population has averaged only 15·6.

12. I have already indicated to Government that one of the results of food-scarcity is a diminished fertility of the population, and the causes operating for months past would now appear to be beginning to tell on the birth-rate, and especially on the districts where distress is most marked.

13. In the town of Madras the birth-rate has gone down from 32 per mille in November to 29·1 in January notwithstanding the influx of a large immigrant population.

14. I must note that the district birth returns never approach to the real birth-rate any more than the death returns do; but, as they are recorded by upwards of 50,000 curnums, the errors of omission are a constant quantity, and the only explanation of so few births reported in the month of January is, I imagine, that fewer births have actually occurred.

No. 161. ORDER THEREON, 27th April 1877, No. 595.

The abstract of the vital statistics for the month of December 1876 will be published, as usual, in the *Fort St. George Gazette.*

2. The Collector of South Canara will be called upon to expedite the return for that district for the month of January 1877, and to explain, through the Board of Revenue, the delay in its submission to the Sanitary Commissioner.

3. The Sanitary Commissioner's letter will be communicated to the Revenue (Famine) Department, and, through the Board of Revenue, to all Collectors, whose special attention will be drawn to the necessity of securing as great accuracy and promptness in the preparation of the monthly vital statistical returns as possible.

(True Extract.)

D. F. CARMICHAEL,
Offg. Chief Secretary.

C. Kirwood
Under Secy. to Govt.

To the Collector of South Canara.
" Board of Revenue.
" Revenue (Famine) Department.
" Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.
" Sanitary Commissioner.

Exd. J. W. Fischer.

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Govt. of {1877} Madras.

PUBLIC.

To

THE COLLECTOR OF
SOUTH CANARA,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated April, 27th.

Issued 8/5

Recd. 9/5 Encl.

G.O., 27th April 1877, No. 595.

APRIL.
Nos. 160-161.

Vital Statistics.—The abstract of vital statistics for December 1876 to be published in the *Fort St. George Gazette*, and the Sanitary Commissioner's letter forwarding these statistics communicated.

P No 2815
Lodged

17 May/77