

Title Prevalence of the mahamari plague at Kumaon
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HOME DEPT. PROCEEDINGS, FEBRUARY 1877.

Prevalence of the mahamari plague at Kumaon.

No. 55, dated Allahabad, the 23rd December 1876.

Nos.

From—The Offg. Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces.

19 to 21.

No. 19.

To—The Officiating Secretary to the Government of India.

N. 6/68
N. 6

I AM directed to forward for the information of the Government of India the papers noted on the margin regarding the outbreak of the mahamari plague in Kumaon, and to enquire if the services of any medical officer can be spared for deputation there to check the further progress of the disease, which is of a most deadly character and highly contagious, and wrought great ravages in Kumaon twenty years ago. The Sanitary Commissioner, North-Western Provinces, has in the mean time been deputed to take up this duty.

No. 888, dated Camp Bhabur, the 9th December 1876.

From—Colonel the Honourable Sir H. RAMSAY, K. C. S. I., C. B., Commissioner of the Kumaon Division.

To—The Offg. Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces.

It appears that during the last two months there has been a good deal of mahamari in Kumaon and Garhwal. When I returned from leave I found it had appeared in a village near Almora. It has since attacked a large village, "Balt", on the North-Eastern slope of the Kalimuttee range. It has also appeared in Athagoollee in the direction of Ranikhet, and it is reported to be in Boraran. I beg to submit copy of Mr. Beckett's letter on the subject and of my reply.

2. This mahamari disease creates such terror among the people that it is almost impossible to get any Native to go near a village where the disease has appeared, and it is most necessary that dead bodies should properly be disposed of, also some one must visit the villages to see the houses purified before they are again occupied. I have no confidence in putwarees doing this, and I have thought it necessary to authorize Mr. Beckett to entertain the man who was so useful under Dr. Pearson, "Moosa", on Rs. 25 a month, with two assistants (if procurable) on Rs. 10 each. I have also directed the district officer to carry out Dr. Pearson's sanitary measures as soon as possible. I now solicit the sanction of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor to the orders I have issued.

3. If it were possible I would recommend that a medical officer be deputed to Kumaon to assist Mr. Beckett in carrying out sanitary measures. Dr. Pearson at this season is engaged in vaccine duty in the plains and cannot come to the hills, and there is no available medical officer in Kumaon. Hitherto the mahamari has been almost entirely confined to the Northern patties of Kumaon, though occasionally it has appeared in Gungolee or Kutyur, and once in Puntgaon, in Kuklasaun, but as far as I know it has never before broken out as at present in Baramandel. Everything that is possible will be done to check the disease by clearing up the villages and the strictest quarantine.

No. 104, dated the 4th December 1876.

From—J. O. BECKETT, Esq., Senior Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon.

To—The Commissioner of the Kumaon Division.

I HAVE the honour to report that, accompanied by the Civil Surgeon and Tahsildar, I visited the Balt village to which the plague has been communicated from Binlota and find the people very dilatory in obeying the orders for moving. I have made arrangements for feeding them, and for separate encamping grounds and for

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16 fumigating with sulphur; but Moosa finds difficulty in disposing of the dead bodies. I had the men of the village before me, and they flatly refused to bury or burn the bodies, saying "I might hang them", and one man ironically saying "if I made over all the property of the corpse to him he would do it". The way that Balt became infected was from the heir of a man that died in Binlota went from Balt to perform the funeral ceremonies and caught the infection and infected his village. I have directed Moosa to try to get for hire two men for the purpose, and have the honour to request you will inform me what payment I should offer for this office, as but few men will be willing to undertake it. Copies of the proclamation will be printed and distributed to every village throughout the district, excepting only those who migrate to the Bhabur. Pending the distribution of the proclamation an order has been addressed to all putwarees to warn the Padhans when paying their December's kist to leave the village in case of rats dying. In Doogozawalla Althagoollee sunjur was reported a short time ago, it now turns out to be plague, and I have also unofficial intelligence that it has appeared amongst the Kousanee workpeople, some of whom went to and died in their own villages, but it is not certain that it was plague as buboes had not appeared.

No. 19.

As the outbreak of plague appears to be spreading, I think it would be advisable that a medical officer should be deputed, as in former times, to deal with the infected villages.

No. 887, dated Camp Bhaleur, the 9th December 1876.

From—Colonel the Honourable Sir H. RAMSAY, K. C. S. I., C. B.,
Commissioner of the Kumaon Division.

To—The Senior Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge your No. 104, dated 4th December, about the mahamari.

2. I have learned with regret, though I can find no reports from Captain Reade, that mahamari has appeared in several villages in Garhwal, and you now report its existence in Athagoolee. I have heard that it has also broken out in Boraran, but I have no official report of this. It is quite clear that the disease, which may be said to have been confined formerly to particular parts of Kumaon and Garhwal, has appeared where it has hitherto been unknown; and to prevent its spreading the most stringent sanitary measures must be carried out. I have, therefore, the honour to request that you will use every exertion to have the villages cleaned, and the houses washed inside with whitewash or *kunner*, and all the dung-heaps removed from the *auguns* or fronts of the houses. In fact, Dr. Pearson's circular, which has hitherto been considered applicable to those pergunnahs where mahamari was common, must be carried out wherever the villages are inhabited in Baramandel and Kutyur, because these measures were found sufficient to check the disease when it was so prevalent about twenty years ago; and there is no reason why the same remedial measures should not be effectual now.

3. It will not be sufficient to leave this duty to putwarees as they are not equal to meet the opposition which may be expected from some, and it is absolutely necessary that the evil be met by the most vigorous measures. I hope you will move about the palties where your presence may be most required until the disease has disappeared, and make the people understand why they are required to do what to them is so unpleasant and may appear so unnecessary. You should make them understand that as regards villages which have the disease the strictest quarantine should be observed, at the same time arrangements must be made for food for the people of such villages where they cannot draw supplies from their own houses. I have no confidence in putwarees managing this unless you are at hand to exact compliance with your orders. Putwarees guilty of any neglect of duty should be promptly punished. I authorize you to entertain Moosa (formerly in Dr. Pearson's employ) on Rs. 25 a month, and if he can find two men who are not afraid of the disease, you are hereby authorized to entertain them on Rs. 10 each.

4. This establishment is not intended to relieve district putwarees of their duty as police officers; and I shall be quite ready to dismiss any whom you find guilty of shirking their work because they are afraid of the disease.

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A.6 5. I have forwarded copy of your letter as well as copy of this to Secretary to Government, North-Western Provinces, and have solicited sanction to the expenditure I propose till further orders. No. 19.

No. 1, dated Fort William, the 6th January 1877.

Endorsed by the Home Department.

FORWARDED to the Surgeon General, Indian Medical Department, with a request that it may be stated whether a medical officer can be spared for the duty specified.

A.7 No. 1370, dated Fort William, the 8th January 1877. No. 20.

From—J. F. BEATSON Esq., M. D., Surgeon General, Indian Medical Department.

To—The Officiating Secretary to the Government of India.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge your No. 1 of 6th instant, with enclosures, herewith returned, and to say that I believe a medical officer from civil duties in the North-Western Provinces can be spared for the special work of assisting the civil authorities in Kumaon in dealing with the measures necessary to check the progress of the disease mahamari, Surgeon Major Harris having been within the past fortnight relieved of the Officiating Civil Surgeoncy of Meerut.

A.8 No. 81, dated Fort William, the 10th February 1877. No. 21.

From—ARTHUR HOWELL, Esq., Offg. Secretary to the Government of India.

To—The Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces.

I AM directed to acknowledge your letter No. 55, dated the 23rd December last, enquiring whether a medical officer can be spared for deputation to Kumaon owing to the prevalence there of the mahamari plague.

2. In reply I am to say that the Government of India think it would be well to await the report of the local Sanitary Commissioner who has already been deputed by the Lieutenant-Governor to Kumaon. But if after local inspection Dr. Planck should find that the disease is so severe as to require a special medical officer, His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor can depute an officer, the charge involved being Provincial. With regard to a medical officer being available, it is believed that Surgeon Major Harris, who has lately been relieved of the Officiating Civil Surgeoncy of Meerut, would be available for this special duty.