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CHOLERA IN SEOUL.

THE report that Cholera had broken out in the Japanese army in Manchuria and among the soldiers, returned to Japan, sent a thrill of fear through this land, for it was seen to be highly improbable that the scourge would fail to follow the line of travel from the northern country into Korea overland by way of We Ju and from Japan by boat via the Korean ports. Nor was it long before the fear was realized, for reports of its arrival soon came from We Ju.

At this juncture the writer, during a conversation with the Prime Minister, suggested urgent need of instituting strict quarantine with a view to prevent the further advance of the disease, and he said he would lay the matter before the government. Had immediate steps been then taken, the scourge might have been stayed, but I heard nothing further about it for some time and then it transpired that the Japanese had undertaken the work and sent a doctor to the north and set up a commission at Chemulpo. *What they did is not known to me but it appears that no quarantine was instituted at Chemulpo and there being therefore no barrier to the entrance of the disease there, it was only a short time until we heard of its ravages in that port, followed immediately by the news that it was devastating the city of Pyeng Yang.* Within a few days suspicious deaths occurred in Seoul and then the government became really alarmed and set about devising a scheme for fighting the disease in the capital.

About July 24th. I received a note from Hon. J. M. B. Sill, U. S. Minister, introducing Mr. Namkung, Secretary of the Sanitary Board, who said the Korean Home Minister wished me to assist them in establishing a Cholera Hospital and taking other steps towards restricting the disease.

Glad to find the government moving in the matter, though at a late stage, I willingly consented to help, and next day was summoned to a conference with the Home Minister on the subject, a Japanese physician being also present. It was decided that we

should call a meeting of all the physicians in Seoul and organize a Sanitary Board, which should elect one of its number to supervise the work, the one thus chosen to then receive appointment by the government. It was stated that \$20,000 was available for the use of this Board.

During the next two days, the organization was completed, both Japanese and Western physicians being included. The officers elected were, Pres. Dr. Avison, Vice Pres. Dr. Kozió, Sect'y. Miss Dr. Cutler. Mr. Namkung entered into the work with much energy and His Excellency the Home Minister personally consulted with the Board and on behalf of the government endorsed its proposals. Committees were appointed to carry on the work under the following heads—Literature Hospital, Quarantine, Inspection, and Supply.

Literature—The excellent regulations issued by the New York Board of health at the time of the Cholera scare of a few years ago were translated and changed to adapt them to the conditions here and 50,000 copies in native character and 1000 in Chinese character were printed and distributed.

The information thus scattered broadcast was a revelation to the people and it is known that a great many tried, however imperfectly, to carry out the regulations. This probably had the effect of considerably limiting the spread of the disease.

Quarantine.—A completed system of quarantine was planned and submitted to the Home Office, but rejected owing to the fear that the ignorance of the people would cause a riot if such restrictions were placed upon them.

Later on, however, the Japanese Minister requested the Koreans to cooperate with them in quarantining against Chemulpo which they agreed to do and at the same time asked us to establish quarantine against Pyeng Yang.

Although we knew it was now too late as the disease was already in Seoul, remembering that our work was as much educative as otherwise, we consented and for about a week carried on quarantine efforts at a station just beyond the Pekin Pass.

Hospital.—The vacant buildings near the East gate known as Ha Do Kam being on a hill and well separated from other houses were selected for hospital purposes and by July 27th. carpenters were at work preparing them. The first patient was admitted July 28th.

There were no walls to the rooms and there was time to put in only rough board floors, but as they would be used only temporarily and the weather was warm, these were scarcely thought to be drawbacks; however they proved to be not only serious hindrances but almost complete obstacles to success, for the rainy season set in and the weather was raw and cold and it was impossible to keep the patients warm, a most serious matter when we consider the great need of external heat for patients already cold, blue and pulseless with such a disease. As a result in spite of as faithful work as was ever done by doctors and nurses the majority of the patients died.

This difficulty could have been surmounted by the repairing of the rooms, but a still more serious matter was the prejudice of the people on account of some previous associations connected with the building not known to us when we chose it. As a result practically only those who were homeless would consent to be taken there and they only did so when it became evident that it was the one hope left to them.

After 135 patients had been treated, with a death rate of 75% the place was closed.

Much more encouraging was the work done at the Hospital known as "The Shelter" situated in the district known as Mo Ha Kwan outside the West Gate. There all necessary conveniences were obtainable, comfortable rooms, warm floors, &c. and the patients received were of a better class and as a rule were admitted at an earlier stage and therefore were more amenable to treatment. This does not apply to all for many cases admitted during the stage of collapse, rapidly recovered under the treatment. Here up to the time of writing 173 cases had been admitted with the remarkably low death rate of only 35%. The hospital is still running for the reception of the odd patients who are brought in.

When the Eastern hospital was closed a portion of the Methodist Mission Hospital in Sang Dong was offered and accepted but it was found that the disease was already declining and one place was able to accommodate all the applicants.

Inspection.—A central office was opened and placed in charge of both Japanese and Western Physicians, while another near the South Gate manned by the Japanese and still another at Mo Ha Kwan by the Westerners. At these places reports were received and every case of diarrhoea reported was

investigated, medicines were administered, the houses and premises disinfected as well as the circumstances permitted, and all who could be persuaded to go were sent to the hospital. The great majority refused to leave their homes. When we urged compulsion, the government met us with the report from Chemulpo saying that they had tried it there with the result that reports ceased to come in, inspectors were met with a denial that any cases existed, the dead were buried secretly during the night, the doctors were threatened with mob violence, and the work was completely blocked.

In the face of this it seemed wise to go on as we were doing, win the confidence of the people as much as possible and work, as much in the hope of educating the people for the next epidemic as for the amount of good to be done at this time under such difficulties.

After a week or ten days, the Japanese, not enjoying working under the supervision of a Westerner, withdrew from the organization and devoted themselves to the one office near the South Gate. I have no knowledge of the character or amount of work done by them after that time.

During the progress of events, the necessity of getting government sanction, by the roundabout methods inseparable from government transactions, for all our proposals before carrying out plans which needed prompt action to make them effective, rendered many of our efforts useless, so we laid the matter plainly before His Excellency the Home Minister, who authorized us to carry on the work thereafter without consulting any one, giving us \$2000 to meet running expenses with the promise of more if needed, and full control over a special force of policemen detailed from the regular force to assist us. Re-encouraged by this mark of confidence, we divided the force of workers between different sections of the city. Each foreigner took with him several Korean helpers who went in advance of him and made a house to house canvas, reporting all cases of diarrhoea to him. He then visited these places administered medicines and when he met with true cholera, disinfected the premises as well as possible. Much good done was in this way for many cases of diarrhoea were cured which might indeed have been the beginning of true cholera and imperfect as the disinfection was it doubtless was a help. At the same time people were instructed as to the true nature

of Cholera and how it could be avoided and it is impossible to estimate how much that did towards limiting the spread of the disease.

Much alarm was caused by the report that some cases had occurred within the Palace walls. At the request of His Majesty we established a medical station within the Palace. Here a great many cases of diarrhoea amongst the soldiers and servants were treated while those showing symptoms of Cholera were immediately sent to the Hospital and in this way the spread of the disease was effectually prevented. Nearly all thus sent to the hospital, being sent before collapse set in, recovered.

At this date the disease has almost ceased within the city but is extending to the villages round about.

Full statistics are unavailable because reporting was not compulsory and the majority of the cases were unreported. I can give only the following:—

Treated at Ha Do Kam 135 with 102 deaths.

“ “ Mo Hoa Kwan 173 with 61 “

Cases reported, investigated and treated in their homes—

Central Inspection office	“
Mo Hoa Kwan	“
S. Eastern District	“
N. “ “	“
Northern “ “	“
North Western District	“ 215.

Some results worth noting.—

In the hospitals nearly all well recommended methods of treatment were tested and the experience of the physicians greatly widened so that they feel that should another epidemic occur they will be in a position to show even better results from treatment.

We believe the people have learned to trust the missionaries as never before and a greater portion of the city than ever before has been brought into contact with the missionaries and through them we trust with Christianity—or perhaps we had better say with Christ. The people have also learned something concerning the true nature of disease and how to avoid it. The close connection between dirt and disease has once more been demonstrated by the great preponderance of the number of cases which occurred amongst the poor and badly housed class over those which occurred amongst those living in better circumstances.

The Missionary cause has been helped for the missionaries have demonstrated the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, spending the warm weeks, when they had hoped to be resting in the mountains, caring for the sick Koreans in the disease stricken city, and they have thus strengthened themselves and have magnified the Grace of God before this people. The government has manifested such a growing confidence in the integrity and good judgement of the missionaries that it turned over to them without restrictions the work of fighting the epidemic, \$2000 in cash, and the full control of a portion of the police force. It is I believe the first time money has been thus placed in the hands of foreigners.

I desire to thank the Hon. J. M. B. Sill, U. S. Minister for his valuable assistance and support and also W. C. Hillier, H. B. M. Consul General, who issued orders to the Chinese residents who are under the jurisdiction of the British Consulate, to abide by the regulations of the Cholera Board. Personally I am deeply indebted to all the physicians and other missionaries, whose names I have not mentioned, for the prompt and hearty response they made to the call for workers, giving me that support without which my promise of help to the government would have been unavailing.

As a body of missionaries we are grateful to God that he preserved our lives throughout all our close contact with the disease, giving us necessary strength to carry on the work and so blessing our efforts as to make them much more abundantly effective than the means used would warrant us to expect.

O. R. Avison.