Manuscript and typescript of a draft summary of simple rules respecting personal hygiene and preservation of health of the families of soldiers in India, by Colonel E.A. Parkes and Professor M.G. Maclean

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MANUSCRIPT.

OF

COLONEL E.A. PARKES, M.D. F.R.S. (Professor of Hygiene).

AND

M.G. MACIEAN, M.D. D.I.G.H. (Professor of Military Medicine).

Dated: 8 MAY 1872.

(Being a DRAFT SUMMARY OF SIMPLE RULES respecting the personal Hygiene and preservation of health of the families of soldiers proceeding to India - written at the request of the Director-General, Army Medical Department).

Sir,

Sanitary 7626 614 26th, February 1872. We have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of a letter to your address from the Director General, Army Medical Department, No. and date as in the margin and an extract from No.121, Bombay Military letter which accompanied it.

In this letter you are requested to call on us to submit "suggestions for framing simple rules, calculated to convey useful information respecting personal hygiene and the management of adults and children proceeding to India, and for observance and practice during their sojourn in that climate".

We observe that the extract from the Military letter referred to above, points to "married people" as those who most need suggestions for the preservation of their health, because, we presume, they are less under direct Military and Medical control in domestic economy, than single men living in barracks.

The wives and children of British soldiers in India are a very helpless class, and from the nature of their position, require that much of that care which the authorities now so properly extend to single soldiers in barracks, should be bestowed on them. In other words, there are certain things essential to their health and well being which they cannot do for themselves, and these we shall first briefly indicate.

- For the preservation of health, the women and children of soldiers should have at least the minimum amount of cubical space allowed to soldiers, with the same attention to ventilation as in barracks.
- That the same care be taken to secure for them a pure water supply, and the proper conservancy of the latrines in use by them, as in the case of men in barracks.
- 3. That the quarters occupied by them should be as much under the regular inspection of the Regimental Sanitary Officer as the barracks, so that all defects in construction, surface and sub-soil drainage, in a word, all Sanitary defects may be at once brought to notice and remedied.
- 4. That means may be taken to mitigate the high temperature to which women and children are subjected during the hot season in their usually small and confined quarters, which is so injurious to the health, particularly of children.
- 5. That some measures be taken to secure to the families of soldiers the means of purchasing the first necessaries of life in such purity as is attainable in India. Milk, for example, which is notoricusly often sold to soldiers families adulterated with impure water, a frequent source of fatal diarrhoea, and, there is reason to fear, sometimes, of cholera, when that disease prevails.

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- 6. The families of soldiers should be inspected from time to time regularly, but with exceptional frequency and care during the prevalence of epidemics. In this way only can the Medical Officers secure the early detection of disease, so essential to effective treatment. This with a little tact could be done in such a way as not only to avoid offence, but to secure confidence.
- 7. As a rule, sick women and children in India should be treated, not as now in their own quarters, but in a part of the hospital set apart for them having at least one properly trained nurse.

 We regard this as essential to the proper management of the diseases of children who suffer from the ignorance of their parents.
- 8. In no case, where it is possible, should the children of English parents be kept on the plains of India after seven years of age. They should be sent to schools or depots, or in some way attached to regiments serving in healthy hill stations. This is a matter of obvious and well known necessity. It is no part of our duty to suggest the financial way of carrying out our recommendations, but as this last would be perhaps a costly measure it might be met by a change in the pay of the married soldier, and from that fund now understood to be growing up from fines imposed for drunkenness and other breaches of discipline.

With regard to the next part of the subject, viz, that we should submit "suggestions for framing some simple rules, calculated to convey useful information respecting personal hygiene and the management of adults and children proceeding to India, and for observance and practice during their sojourn in that climate".

We suggest the following are the most important points to be kept in view in preparing a brief manual of instructions for the guidance more particularly of soldiers wives -

lst a brief and simple account of the climate of India, pointing out the great difference between it and the climate of Britain and Ireland and the necessity of conforming to habits of life modified to suit te difference. That many things which can be done with impunity at home are dangerous in India.

- The necessity of scrupulous attention to personal cleanliness and the daily use of the bath both for tlemselves and children.
- That in like manner the house and all belonging to it should be kept perfectly clean. That no water or refuse of any kind should be thrown about, and allowed to stagnate near it. The barrack rules for the management of latrines should be strictly observed, and it should be explained that want of attention to this will surely breed bowel complaints, and render the inmates of the house more liable to Cholera should it attack the station. That beds and bedding should be often taken out and exposed to the air. That care should be taken frequently to search for and destroy bugs and other unclean insects in and about the beds, not only because all such insects are in themselves disgusting, but also because their attacks disturb rest, and are on this account hostile to health more particularly in the case of children.
- 4. Attention to ventilation should be insisted on, and the danger of breathing air made foul by respiration should be explained. That pure air is a first necessity of life us healthy and strong, and to blow away and destroy the invisible and dangerous poisons generated not only from putrid matters, but those given off from their own bodies.

3. The importance of pure water should be carefully explained. The authorities will of course supply the best available; but families must be careful to purify it still more by using a filter such as t e one recommended below, which is cheap, simple and easily made. It should be explained that water is almost sure to become impure whenever many human beings are gathered together. Impure matters are apt to be thrown about; the rain dissolves them, carries them into wells and tanks, and other sources of water supply, and water thus made impure causes bowel complaints, some dangerous fevers and often Cholera. Food - In India animal food is cheaper than it is at home, and as a rule Europeans eat more of it than is good for them. As a rule animal food should not be taken more t an once a day - neither should it be over-spiced, made too hot with peppers and condiments and too rich by too large a quantity of butter. Indulgence in too much food of this kind is sure sooner or later to cause looseness of the bowels and dangerous liver complaints. For children, milk should be largely used, with water boiled rice, arrow root, which is cheap and abundant in India. The greatest care should be taken to secure it pure. If possible the families should see it taken from the cow, the native cow men often add water to it taken from the nearest at hand, which may be impure, and in this way children are often injured. If the milk of the Buffalo be used, it should be diluted with pure water as it is rich and apt to disagree with delicate children. Pork in India is an unwholesome and unclean and even dangerous food. The pig is an uncleanly feeder, and its flesh is certainly to be avoided, it often causes violent sickness and purging and symptoms like those of Cholera. Natives of a superior class never eat it, and are sure to despise those who do. Drink - Spirit drinking is a bad and permicious habit. Everywhere in India it is a short and sure road to the grave. It has destroyed more British soldiers than all the diseases of India. Wholesome beer in moderation, tea, coffee and such like should be the only drinks used in India. Respectable women should never cease by precept and above all by example to discourage spirit drinking in every shape. Clothing will of course be adapted to the season. In the rainy season children should wear light woollen clothes. The practice of sleeping outside the house exposed to might air and night dews is to be avoided. It often results in chills followed by fevers, rheumatism, liver complaints and such like diseases. Needless exposure to the sun is to be avoided. Sunstroke is a dangerous affliction and often follows careless exposure. When the hot land winds blow, the means used in India to reduce the temperature should be used, more particularly when there are children, but it is not safe to put children to sleep as is often done too near the wet tatties, their beds should be at some distance. It cannot be too much insisted on that many lives are lost in India by too long delaying to apply for medical assistance. The course of many diseases there is so swift and remedies to be effective must be used early. This is particularly the case with the bowel complaints of children.

We have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servants,

(signed) M.G. MacLean M.D. D.I.G.H. Professor of Military Medicine.

(signed) E.A. Parkes, M.D. F.R.S. Professor of Hygiene.

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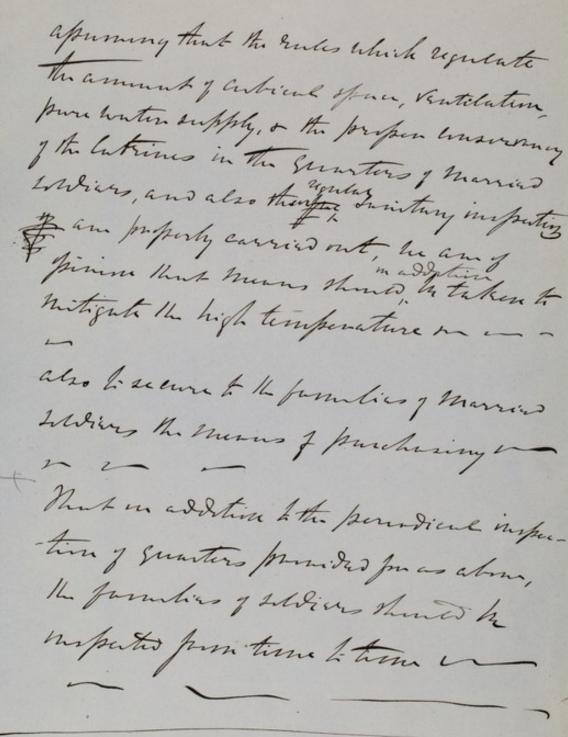
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