



EAST AFR. PROT  
12758

12753

Helfeld 237  
1914  
13 Feb

Plague in ...

Sends report

The Fiddian  
L.S. 8/10/14

Dr Shompson apparently found no cases of plague, though the district is one in which it might spread rapidly.

I have marked certain passages in the report. These appear to show that a medical officer has very little notice taken of a very reasonable request for an interpreter, askari & chiefs retainer. He apparently had trouble with porters, and also a chief pointed out that the absence of askaris accounted for his non-success in getting people to submit to inoculation. No medical man should be expected to travel, without some one who can interpret for him, and he should also be accompanied by an askari, when he con-

iders this necessary. I have no doubt that D.C.'s have many attendants when they travel. H.S. 9/14/14

... 378 ...

subsequent Paper.

24855

Mr. Bottanby

This should go to the  
TAMS letter when Prof. Simpson will  
have an opportunity of expressing his  
opinion. The Gov. does not comment,  
but the fact is stated and not creditable  
to the common sense of the administration  
unless, of course, they simply could not  
supply what was wanted, if so, Sir H.  
Belfield should have said so

AT

15/4/14

Mr. Piddie

I am inclined not only to work  
for up on to these difficulties but also  
back for the TAMS view on it.

Thomson's report shall be sent to  
the TAMS. We have seen the report or  
not?

6 Oct. 16 1914

Mr. Bottanby

I think in that case I would ask  
above, I don't send to TAMS, I'll until the  
reply was received. But if you are going to refer  
back, why not specifically ask the Gov. for  
his views on Dr. Thomson's references to the  
inability of the authorities to supply an  
interpretation?

AT 16

Sept. Please refer to Mr. Piddie & Mr. Reid

6 Oct. 17 1914

Cover Circulated to TAMS Committee 21 May 1914

No done by Committee 1st 5/11/14

I meant for  
6 Oct.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
NAIROBI,  
BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE



March 13th 1914.

No. 237

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit herewith, for your information a copy of a report by Dr. J. H. Thomson, Medical Officer, on the recent epidemic of plague in the Maragoli section of the North Kavirondo District.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your humble obedient servant,

*Alawa Beyard*

GOVERNOR.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
LEWIS HARCOURT, P.C., M.P.,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,  
DOWNING STREET, LONDON, S.W.

INVESTIGATION REPORT ON PLAGUE

171

IN MARAGOLI, by Dr. J. H. Thomson.

February 1914.

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On the 8th February, I left Mumias for Maragoli for the purpose of investigating an epidemic of plague said to have been raging there. Before leaving I telegraphed to Kisumu to the District Commissioner for Chief's Retainer and Interpreter, also to the Assistant Superintendent of Police for an askari.

On the 9th I arrived at Malamis after about four hours march.

Next day I left for the Yala River marching about five hours. I sent porters back as promised to Mumias. Got telegram from the District Commissioner saying that Chief's Retainer would meet us there, and that Interpreter would meet us at Sarakas, a Chief further on. The Chief's Retainer never turned up, nor did I ever get him.

Next day, the 11th February, I left the Yala River, marching in a westerly direction, some to Sonow's, a headman of the Okissa tribe. The porters all left me. They did not exactly run away. They thought that they had only to carry loads for one day, and, as I had no interpreter, I could not make them understand differently. Owing to His Excellency the Governor coming to Yala River

next

next day, I could not get any porters, so had to stay the next day here. The Governor did not turn up until the day after, but I managed to get porters and left on the 13th. We only got about two hours away, when, on arriving at the next headman's, the porters threw down their loads and refused to go any further. When I tried to persuade them they all ran away except the headman.

Next day the 14th, I got porters from the Sub Chief Kuta of the Okissa. I had to promise him I would send them back the same day.

After about two hours journey, I got to Chief Shevache, who is the chief of all North Maragoli. I found there no interpreter waiting me. I sent a man on a bicycle with a letter to the District Commissioner and to the Assistant Superintendent of Police asking for men. The Assistant Superintendent said he regretted he could not supply me with one as he needed them all. I got no reply from the District Commissioner. At a big barasa this afternoon, I saw the Chief and all his headmen. The Chief said that no one was ill in his district. On being asked about the rats, he said that five months ago all the rats died in his district, no one took ill, since then new rats have come in. The new rats have commenced to die in house. A rat was brought to me. A spleen



district, and said there had been none. I had a long conversation with him over the quarantine rules. He came to me afterwards, and told me about two cases of dysentery, one his own child. He had lost one two days ago with the same trouble. I saw the two. Being not satisfied about Manubi's answers, I called upon Mr. Reiss, an American Missionary, who had a station about a couple of miles away. He assisted me as much as he could. He had been stationed there since 1906, so he knows a good deal about the natives. He said that the plague, or as the natives call it "the disease of the rats", had been there for a few years. It breaks out each year in a small district, then next year in another. I found the same thing among the Watsita, round Voi. It never is a big epidemic, just takes a small section, dies out, then breaks out miles away. He said that there was usually an outbreak after the rains started. He said that there was no plague before 1908. In that year the black rat came over the hills ranging the South of Maragoli, about one mile from Malamis. In 1911, when he went away, there was no black rat in his house. When he came back last year they were overrunning it. The natives say the rat got to the Yala, but has not crossed it yet. This is not true, as I got a black rat drowned in my bath at Malamis, fifteen miles beyond the Yala.

I found out through his boys, that five

people

people had died last week in Mbete's district, one the day before. Mbete had told me that no one was ill in his district. A person from another house, who had lifted the man who died the day before, was also ill, so it looked like something infectious. Mr. Reiss told me that the disease sometimes takes the ordinary bubonic form. At others like a severe pneumonia. In the third kind they take it in the morning, in the evening they vomit blood and die.

Next day, the 17th, I left Manubis, and went to a place about a mile from Mbete's, where the sickness was said to occur. When we arrived there, Mr. Reiss, who kindly accompanied me, and I went round the huts within a radius of about two miles, and were taken to all the places where sick people were. In the first hut we visited there were four people who exhibited some symptoms, but no one had died. The water in the stream in many places was black and slimy. It was on a slope about thirty yards from the stream supplying water to the natives, and will undoubtedly prove a fertile source of dysentery in the near future. In the next hut, about thirty yards away, a young man was ill. He looked very ill, temperature high and signs of pneumonia on right side. He had been ill for three days. I took a sputum slide which showed pneumococci but no plague bacilli. The

man who died of dysentery and this man only came back from Kisumu, where they had been working at the Decks, last week. In nearly every hut I visited there was some one ill. About ten people complained of a disease I could not understand. They complained of a great pain in the pit of their stomach, and no other symptoms. Bowels as usual. Temperature normal. In fact no other sign physical or otherwise. They said that a few have died of it, and that they die in three days. I took blood slides but they were entirely normal. In other cases in which there have been six deaths lately, they first took a great pain in their stomach, then in the afternoon of the same day in their chests, then vomit blood and die. At Kisumu the last case of plague on the boats had the same symptoms. I was unfortunate enough not to see any cases of the last, as they were said to be all dead, but I saw their newly finished graves. In the afternoon, I inoculated forty eight people, mostly men and children. I inoculated Muta, also a deposed headman who is the real leader. All the porters ran away this evening again. And until I arrived at Kisumu, I had fresh porters every day.

Next morning I remained at the same place, and inoculated 102 people in the forenoon. I could not get any women, only men and children. In the afternoon, I had a long baraza with the chief

chief M'bete. I tried to tell them something about dysentery, and how it was caused. I tried to make them understand, that they should make a person with blood in his motion pass them all in one place, so that they could burn them. I told them that it was principally the water, and that they should boil it, and then they would not take the disease. They said that they required a lot of water. What should they do if they were thirsty and required a drink at a friend's house? I said I always boiled it, carrying it in a bottle, but they said they needed more water than I did. They instanced the man who came from Kisumu and died last week. They said that it was a change from the warm water of Kisumu to the cold here. They said my 'talk was good', but that they were sure it was caused by living in dirty huts, eating dirty food, and breathing smoke. I inoculated about 20 more who came with M'bete. Having heard that a girl, who lived about a mile and a half away, had a pain and swelling in her groin I went there afterwards. I found the girl, aged about eighteen, complaining of pain in her right groin. She seemed little the worse. The femoral glands on the right side were a little swollen. I inoculated her and the rest of the people in the house, but she would not allow me to do a gland puncture. I took a smear of her blood which was negative. In the late afternoon I inoculated about other thirty.

I stayed here the next day also, and

inoculated

inoculated about other fifty. The people here are always after medicine, and seem all to have colds. They are of dirty habits, continually spitting, especially the girls. I discovered no new cases. One person, whom I saw, died of dysentery. The woman with the enlarged glands was better to-day.

Next day, the 20th, I left for chief O'Dunga's home, about three hours away, travelling in a North Easterly direction. He told me before that no one had been ill in his district, but now he says that they had had the plague, and that everyone was better three months ago. I inoculated twelve people. They had strong objections to being inoculated. The chief said that they might die, and that would frighten people. I could discover no cases of illness. On the 21st I stayed at the same place, and went over to see chief Sindu. I found that one man had died with a swelling in his groin yesterday. He had been ill for a fortnight. It was said to have been the only case. Sindu denied all knowledge of it, but the interpreter was told by boys. He was buried before I got there. No one would allow himself to be inoculated. In the afternoon I inoculated about ten more of M'Dangus people. One man after I had painted the iodine, and picked up the syringe belted, I saw him still running over a mile away.

Next day, the 22nd, I went a march over the hills, by native paths, of about five hours into

Teriche. His Excellency the Governor was encamped there. I saw Mr. Ainsworth, the Provincial Commissioner, and he kindly lent me a chief's retainer to accompany me into Kisumu.

Next day, the 23rd, I left Teriche and, after <sup>about</sup> three hours march, reached Kisumu.

Maragoli is a district composed of hills and valleys. It is very densely populated. I should say that actually two thirds of the land is under cultivation, except in the South where it is too rocky. The huts are usually single, each one in its little shamba; and with the habits of the people the ground must be in filthy state, especially when diseases (such as dysentery) occurs, and with the objectionable habit of continually spitting, though I saw no phthisis. The huts are usually overshadowed by the banana patch, which does not allow the sun to penetrate. The huts in most cases are little, very old, and dirty. The grass on the roof is usually rotten, and very old. A serious state of affairs is that in a great part of this district there is no grass, and practically no timber, so that it is practically impossible for them to re-roof their huts. The rats inhabit the thatch of the roofs, and old roofs are practically rat warrens. Though I saw no actual plague there, it is undoubted that there is plague at times, but I think that other diseases, such as dysentery, kill as many people. I found out as much as I could, mainly thanks to Mr. Reiss, the American missionary, but probably there was a good deal I missed

missed. Mr. Orloff, Assistant Surgeon, who was up about a month before, found no plague either. I could probably have done better if I had <sup>had</sup> more assistance, especially askaris. The people won't believe you have any power, or have any connection with the Government, unless you show some outward sign. Indeed chief O'Danga told me, or rather asked me, why I did not have askaris. He told me to come again and bring askaris, then he said the people would be inoculated. As regards preventative measures, it is very difficult to say. The great mass of the people have a great objection to inoculation, and, unless they are actually forced, will refuse. Grass is so scarce that you cannot make them burn the huts or the roof. And the grass they have on is so old and rotten that if once off could not possibly be put on again. The rats are very difficult to catch, as they live in the thatch. You cannot make them leave the hut, as the place is so thickly populated that there is nowhere for them to go, even if they could get fresh materials to build with. Mr. Raiss told me that he had on order three hundred rat traps, asked by the natives. As far as it goes this is alright, but after the first rat or two is caught the trap will be neglected, as happened in Bambasa. Unless the native is forced to do anything for his own protection he won't, partly through laziness, and partly because he does not understand the need

need. I cannot help thinking that a district like Maragoli is just like a large smouldering fire, the flame suddenly lights up in one place, then dies down, only in a short time to light up in another.

Ed. James H. Thompson

Medical Officer.

February 28th 1914.

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Gm 12758 EAP



DRAFT

EAP No 378

For his to help in Kenya

24th Ep. 1914

MINUTE

- Mr. Fiddes
- Mr. Fiddes
- Mr. Anderson
- Lord Emmott
- Mr. Harcourt

10/10/14  
10/10/14  
10/10/14

Have the honor to ask: the receipt of your slip No 257 of the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, enclosing a copy of a report by Dr J. H. Thomson on the recent epidemic of plague in the Maragoli section of the North Kavirondo District, & to request that I may be furnished with the

views of the P.M.O. on  
this report.

2. I learn from the  
report that S. Thomson  
had much difficulty  
with his porters owing, partly at any rate,  
to the absence of an  
interpreter, & that  
he was not given  
an askari or a chief's  
retainer to accompany  
him. I have to request  
that in replying to this  
Dep. you will explain  
[Why these apparently  
reasonable requests  
made by S. Thomson  
were not complied with]

Because these  
requests were  
to comply with  
the Thomson  
requests.  
AT

(Signed) J. BARCOURT.