

THE PAUPER HOSPITAL IN EARLY SINGAPORE. (PART IV) (1850—1859)—Section 2

By Y. K. Lee

In May 1855, Governor Blundell who had just succeeded Major General Butterworth, paid his first official visit to Tan Tock Seng Hospital.¹ The Assistant Surgeon in charge of the hospital brought to the notice of the Governor that there was no quarters for the Apothecary as the house had been occupied by the Apothecary attached to the Seamen's Hospital. Dr. Cowpar also pointed out that the hospital had no suitable accommodation for what were called Police Cases and that he had no means of securing the persons of prisoners who were sent to him for medical or surgical treatment. The Governor's Secretary wrote to the Resident Councillor: ¹

"It seems to the Governor that both these objects might be attained by the erection of a suitable building on the vacant ground to the left of the Seamen's Hospital, and he would be obliged by your directing the Executive Officer to submit a Plan and Estimate (by convict labour) of a Building conformable outwardly with those on the same hill and frontage and combining accommodation for an Apothecary and his family and a ward for Police patients."

However, when the plan and estimate were submitted two months later, they were rejected as the sum of money and the large amount of convict labour involved were out of proportion to the objects sought to be accomplished. A more economical plan was suggested and that was to alter the Apothecary's Quarters to accommodate two families! ²

The 4th Annual General Meeting of Tan Tock Seng Hospital was called on 30th June 1855, but did not take place as there was no quorum. The Straits Times commented: ³

"The annual meeting of the subscribers to Tan Tock Seng Hospital did not take place on Saturday last as previously advertised, simply because the friends of that excellent charity did not muster in sufficient number to enable such of the Committee as attended to proceed with the current business. Such indifference on the part of the Community is very discreditable and highly discouraging to the few gentlemen who really take an interest in the Institution and devote time and attention as Visitors, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. to its concerns. If pecuniary assistance was requested, our liberal community would unhesi-

tatingly subscribe a sum of money fully equal to the exigency of the case. The Committee of Management cannot complain of any lack of money support but they are certainly entitled to expect that the subscribers will at least once a year personally identify themselves with the interest of the Institution and exercise that jealous care of its management which alone will ensure success. The meeting was adjourned sine die."

The Singapore Free Press was more charitable: ⁴

"A meeting of the Subscribers of Tan Tock Seng Hospital was called for Saturday last, but owing to the paucity of attendance, no business was transacted. We are certain that this proceeded from no indifference on the part of the community to this most excellent institution, but simply from everyone relying on his neighbour in a matter in which there is no difference of opinion. It should be recollected, however, that the Gentlemen who so generously devote themselves to the management of this Charity are entitled to the countenance of the Subscribers whenever it is desired, and we hope that they will not again ask in vain for a meeting of the supporters of the Hospital."

In his annual report for 1854/1855, the Senior Surgeon complained that patients who had run away from Tan Tock Seng Hospital were arrested by the Police and sentenced to the House of Correction which, of course, involved their immediate admission into the Convict Hospital. The Governor decided that "this practice is one that should not be countenanced" and he instructed the Resident Councillor: ⁵

"Any individual taken up by the Police for vagrancy or even for the committal of minor crime, and who is suffering from disease without any means of relief, should, I opine, be sent at once to the Pauper Hospital, there to be cured if possible before being taken before the Magistrate for trial, and more especially should this be done when a person so taken up by the Police is known to be an escaped inmate of the Pauper Hospital. I request that measures may be adopted to secure the Convict Hospital from having to receive pauper patients for whom another hospital is provided. . . ."

The adjourned meeting of the Subscribers took place on 24th July 1855.⁶ After the Secretary had read the annual report, several motions were put to the meeting and carried: the election of a new Committee of Management, thanks to the gentlemen who had served in the past Committee as the Honorary

Thomson Road General Hospital, Singapore.

Y. K. LEE, A.M., M.D., F.R.C.P. Lond., F.R.C.P. Edin., F.R.A.C.P.,
LL.B.
Senior Physician.

Secretary, Treasurer and Medical Officer; special thanks to Mr. Tan Kim Ching "for his liberal charity in defraying the funeral expenses of all paupers who die in Tan Tock Seng Hospital"; and that the new Governor, Mr. E. A. Blundell be invited to be the Patron of the Hospital.

The annual report was quite a cheerful one. With the exception of the high mortality rate, the Committee were able to report that ⁶

"... Since the additions and improvements have been made in the Hospital, the Committee cannot suggest anything further that they would deem advantageous to the destitute sick.

The main building and right ward are admirably suited to the class of patients that occupy them and the ventilation is as perfect as the site of the Hospital will allow. . . . The average number of inmates during the past year has been less than the two previous years and much less than the hospital can accommodate, so that the Committee can congratulate the public on having an Institution capable of administering in the full extent to the wants of the destitute sick in this increasing Settlement. . . . The Committee have much pleasure in testifying to the constant cleanliness of the Hospital, the perfectness of the ventilation in the main building and the general absence of foul smells except such as are unavoidable from putrifying sores, while the appearance of the inmates denotes more comfort than is to be found in the same class out of the Hospital. . . . At the suggestion of the Medical Officer in charge, the daily allowance of animal food to the inmates has been doubled, and beef has occasionally been substituted for pork. . . ."

The mortality rate was 43.16%. "... but the same cause still exists as in former years in the reluctance of the paupers to enter the Hospital until they are moribund, nor can the Committee suggest any remedy for this. A gradual enlightenment of the natives to the advantages of this establishment affords the only chance of remedy. . . . From 1st June 1854 to 31st May 1855, 691 paupers have been admitted, including 157 remaining from last year. The total number of cases treated is 848, of these 249 have been discharged, 366 have died, 91 have absconded, 1 has been transferred and 141 are on hand. The principal diseases that have carried off the paupers are: ulcers 79, sloughing sores 34, mortification 79, diarrhoea 27, debility 44, dropsy 38, all diseases indicating a decay of the vital powers. . . ."⁶

There was still no accommodation secure enough in the Hospital for prisoners sent in by the Police, and proposal to remedy this was recorded: ⁶

"... As cases under the surveillance of the Police are frequently sent to the Hospital for medical treatment, and as there is no ward set apart exclusively for them, they are frequently deported even when paralytic, thus defeating the ends of

the public justice. To remedy this, the Superintendent of Public Works, Capt. MacPherson, has proposed converting a part of the Left Ward now occupied by Dressers and as a storeroom, into a ward to be so protected as to prevent the exit of patients and the intrusion of those who have no right to enter. . . ."

"The tablet in Chinese commemorative of Tan Tock Sing's and his son Tan Kim Ching's liberality has been received from China but has not been placed in situ until the arrival of the English inscription which is expected daily." ⁶

In December 1855, Mr. Tan Kim Ching once again demonstrated his generosity by giving each inmate of the hospital four yards of thick cloth "from a feeling of compassion towards these poor people who were suffering from the cold weather consequent on the long continued rains."⁷

On 26th March 1856, Mr. Thomas Dunman, the Sitting Magistrate, wrote to the Municipal Committee bringing to notice the lack of hospital accommodation for sick females:⁸

"Repeated applications have been made to me for admittance into the Pauper Hospital of sick females, in many instances in the last stage of disease. Others have been found during the night by the Police in the streets, the friends of the sick women being too poor to support them, knowing that the Police would remove them. Some take this mode of saving themselves of trouble and expense attendant on their sick companions. These applications have been obliged to be refused, for the females who have been sent to the Hospital have been returned to the Police Office with a note from the Surgeon in charge stating there was no accommodation for females in the hospital. Here we have a hospital supported by contributions large enough to accommodate 300 men while the wretched women I speak of must almost die in the streets.

If the Government supply medical aid, will the Municipal Committee go to the expense of a small ward to be attached to the Pauper Hospital—a small room would be sufficient. . . ."

This matter was discussed at the April meeting of the Committee who concluded that although they recognised the need for hospital accommodation for females, it was not within their province to supply, it being a Government duty and not a Municipal one. They recommended that Mr. Dunman make immediate application to the Governor.⁸

Reporting this meeting, the Singapore Free Press commented:

"This is a matter which ought to be immediately remedied. We suppose there is hardly any other place in the world at which hospitals exist, where the benefit of these institutions is confined to males, save Singapore. The anomaly can only have hitherto existed from there being little practical necessity for such accommodation, but now

when it is required as shown by the statement of the Sitting Magistrate, no time ought to be lost in providing it. . . . ”⁸

The Opium Farmers, Low Joon Tek and Chung Sam Teo, had been supplying 16 taels of opium gratis each month to the hospital for the use of the inmates, but for the period from 1st January 1852 to 30th April 1856, the inmates consumed more than 832 taels (in 52 months). When the bill for the quantity supplied above and beyond that agreed upon as a contribution was presented, the hospital could not pay the \$1962/-. After discussion with the Resident Councillor and the Governor,⁹ the farmers decided to waive the payment of the bill and in addition to donate another \$1638/- to the Government:

“Our object in forwarding this Bill to your Honour is to place the amount thereof with a further sum of \$1638/- making a total of \$3600/- at your Honour’s disposal to be employed in the erection of some building that will be of permanent utility and advantage to the poor classes of this island and mark in a small way the interest we feel in this prosperous Settlement.”¹⁰

They moreover proposed to increase their monthly contribution of free opium to 30 taels from the 1st of May 1856.

The problem of the Police cases in Tan Tock Seng Hospital was temporarily solved by building a small plank and attap house near the Convict Hospital. “The Honourable the Governor has observed that these patients are mixed up with the diseased Chinese paupers for whom Tan Tock Seng Hospital is designed, and that there is no possibility of effecting a separation between them, and he has consequently resolved to remove them from that locality and to provide a temporary receptacle for them until other arrangements can be made.”¹¹

The fifth Annual Meeting of the Subscribers of Tan Tock Seng Hospital was held as scheduled on 27th June 1856.⁹ As usual, the Hon. Secretary read the report and motions were put to the meeting and carried thanking various gentlemen for their services and Tan Kim Ching for defraying the funeral expenses of all the paupers who died in the hospital. A new Committee of Management was elected. The Treasurer’s report showed a balance of only \$51.57 in favour of the hospital, and it was resolved that more energetic measures should be taken:⁹

“That Mr. Euchin be requested to make out a list of those who are able to subscribe but do not, and of those who are able to bestow more liberally, and that a Sub-committee be appointed to wait on these parties to stimulate their generousities on behalf of this most valuable charity.”

The annual report recorded, *inter alia*, that⁹

“. . . Since the additions and alterations have been made, the hospital has required nothing further except a few repairs and the opening of several windows in the roof of the new ward for the

sake of ventilation, all attended with very little expense.

The English and Chinese tablets commemorative of the liberality of Tan Tock Sing and his son, Tan Kim Ching, have been placed in situ. . . . (see Appendix for inscriptions)

. . . unless greater liberality be shown by the community, this most deserving charity will next year be in debt.

That Mr. Euchin, our Treasurer, who superintends all the details of the expenditure, has paid the strictest attention to economy may be inferred from the fact that in the Penang Poor House where the inmates are merely fed and not clothed or supplied with medical comforts, each inmate costs \$19/- per annum. In Singapore, where \$500/- have been expended in clothing and medical comforts, each inmate costs \$18.67.

The Committee have much pleasure in referring to Dr. Cowpar’s medical return for the past year showing a most marked decrease in mortality, being 13% less than last year, to which happy result the greater efficacy of the sanitary appliances has no doubt powerfully contributed, as on inspection of the table, the same dreadful diseases as gangrene, sphacelation and atrophy seem to be as prevalent as in former years.

In conclusion, the Committee request the public not to encourage street beggars who appeal to their sympathy by an exhibition of their diseases, as the hospital can contain 50 more patients who would be better taken care of than they can be in the wretched hovels that are used as lodging houses in Singapore, where misery, dirt and foul ventilation engender the diseases that carry off so many of the Chinese paupers, while the money bestowed on alms would be better appropriated if given to the hospital than to the paupers themselves who with it purchase a momentary gratification by the use of opium.

To support these additional inmates and prevent the hospital running into debt, \$1500/- a year would be required to be contributed in addition to the present subscriptions, and it is to be hoped that this appeal to the public will not be in vain or the usefulness of this most excellent charity must be curtailed.”

In August 1856, Mr. Thomas Church sent in his resignation, having served as Resident Councillor for nineteen years. Various addresses were presented to him, in which among other things his concern for the welfare of the paupers was acknowledged. The Committee of Tan Tock Seng Hospital in their address on 30th September 1856 said:¹²

“Honourable and dear Sir,

We, the undersigned Committee selected by the Government and the public of Singapore for the management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, beg

to express to you who have so long presided over our meetings, the very deep regret we feel at the prospect of your departure from us. The long period of your sojourn here, the protracted discharge of your official duties together with the honourable position which as local Chief Civil Authority, have placed at your disposal very extensive means of efficiently assisting in many ways the benevolent institution whose management has been entrusted to our care, and it is but due to you, to place on record our conviction, that the advantages thus enjoyed have been for a long course of years uniformly turned to the benefit of the hospital with that zeal for the public good and that earnest desire for the prosperity of every charitable effort that has signalled your whole career among us.

The Committee indeed are not unmindful of the circumstances that some years prior to 1847, the date at which the hospital commenced its present career of usefulness, efforts had been made by the benevolent, among whom you were the foremost, to relieve by means of temporary sheds and medical appliances that sad amount of sickness and the destitution among the Chinese paupers of the Settlement, and it must be gratifying to you now to survey the well-built and spacious edifice, well-stored with everything which can minister to comfort or health or alleviate pain in the poor sufferers who to the number of 170 or more, are daily accommodated in the spacious wards of the hospital. To the present high state of efficiency in which you leave it, you have contributed no small degree for no member of the Committee has been more punctual in attendance or more attentive in its interests. . . ."

Every opportunity was seized to drum up support for the hospital. In his reply to the address of the Chinese Merchants, Mr. Church stated:¹³

" . . . I feel satisfied that Chinese Merchants and especially yourselves are sensibly alive to the benefit enjoyed. A large amount of wealth has been accumulated, and I entertain sanguine hopes that you are anxious the poor and needy of your community should be relieved from actual want.

The lamented Tan Tock Sing erected at his own expense, a spacious and commodious hospital for the reception of destitute and diseased Chinese. The late Chan Cheng San bequeathed \$2000/- towards the support of this excellent institution. Tan Kim Ching and others have also been most liberal in extending and upholding the building.

In the Asylum there are at present about 170 Chinese who are fed, clothed and afforded medical aid gratuitously. Being about to quit forever, I venture to commend as my last request, Tan Tock Seng Hospital to the support and protection of the Chinese Merchants of this Settlement, and it will afford me much consolation in the evenings of my days in a far distant land to learn

from time to time that this appeal has been responded to in a liberal and becoming manner. . . ."

In June 1856, Governor Blundell inadvertently stirred up a hornets' nest. In a despatch to the Government of India asking for permission to re-organise the Medical Department in Singapore, he described, amongst other things, the condition of Tan Tock Seng Hospital and the fate of the Police cases in it, with no intention of casting aspersions on anybody.¹⁴

He described it¹⁵ as a place where no discipline was maintained, and as "crowded with horribly diseased Chinese paupers, beggars and abandoned outcasts of all descriptions and in the last stages of disease and loathsomeness", where "no friend of the poor patients will on any account come near them and money will not procure attendants, while the horrid sights around them and the foul air inside are most sickening and tend to bring on fever if not hospital gangrene". He added that the building was so unfortunately situated on the slope of a hill that the ventilation was very imperfect, that "police patients there looked very wretched and were very badly accommodated", that he had been assured by the Medical Officer "that the utter want of all comfort and convenience, the impossibility of preserving the property of those patients from the foul wretches and thieves around them, and the difficulty of inducing friends to visit or hired persons to undertake attendance on them, rendered the curative process most tedious and uncertain", and that there was no accommodation for females. He further informed the Government that he had taken measures to remove the Police patients "from the horrid contamination of diseased and decomposing Chinese beggars", and that in consequence of orders passed in 1848 directing that paupers admitted into the hospital "should be indulged with the means of smoking opium, gradually reducing the frequency and quantity until such time as the Medical Officer in charge may deem that it may safely be dispensed with altogether", opium had been supplied during the preceding 4 years and 4 months "on the requisition of the Surgeon" to the value of \$1962/- besides 832 taels presented gratuitously by the contractors.

The letter was referred by the Government of India to the Medical Board for their opinion, and the Board with reference to the state of things described observed¹⁴ "that more active exertion on the part of the Senior Surgeon and the Executive Medical Officer in communication with Local Authorities might probably have alleviated in degree the evils presented by Mr. Blundell as existing in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. The crowding together of wounded and sick persons with lepers and squalid beggars, outcasts and thieves in the Poor House not originally constructed with a view to its becoming a receptacle for the sick and not furnished with funds sufficient for the requisite alterations, has been an unfortunate arrangement which necessity can alone justify".

On receipt of this report, the Governor-General wrote on 31st October 1856,¹⁴ to express his strong disapproval of the state of affairs and asked the Governor to report further on the subject after calling upon the Senior Surgeon and Resident Councillor for any explanation they might have to offer, and to take steps for the better regulation and management of the Institution. The Governor-General also observed that the allowance of opium for smoking made at the cost of Government to the Chinese paupers had been permitted by the culpable laxity of the Medical Officer to degenerate into a gross abuse, and that the drug instead of being prescribed as a medicine had been used indiscriminately. He ordered that no opium be allowed in the hospital except as a medicine and that the Senior Surgeon be held responsible for expenditure on this account.

There was a flurry of activity when the Governor-General's despatch reached Singapore in December 1856. The Governor straight-away transmitted an extract of the despatch to the Senior Surgeon together with an extract of his own letter "in order that the Senior Surgeon may see that no complaint against the Medical Officer in charge of the Hospital or the Management Committee had been made, but simply the unsuitableness of the building for Police cases, and the unfortunate defect of ventilation brought to notice".¹⁶

By 11th December 1856, the Senior Surgeon had his statement ready in which he explained that there had neither been carelessness nor negligence on the part of the Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Hospital, and that the state of the Hospital was altogether different to what it had been described to be.¹⁷ In January 1857, the Governor in his reply, forwarded the Senior Surgeon's letter and expressed his belief that misapprehension existed as to the nature of the Hospital as well as the manner in which opium was administered to its inmates. He explained that the Hospital was really well managed and that its loathsomeness was a necessary consequence of the condition of the inmates, that opium was never prescribed except as a medicine for the diseased paupers who reached the Hospital in a state of exhaustion from the want of opium and to save their lives this drug had to be administered and reduced gradually.¹⁸

The matter would have ended then but for the extract of the Governor-General's letter falling into the hands of the Press. This was published in the Straits Times of 3rd February 1857:¹⁹

"The Governor-General expressed his strong disapprobation at the reported state of the Chinese Poor House and Hospital founded by the late Tan Tock Sing, for which an establishment is maintained at the public expense. The Governor will report further and especially on this subject after calling on the Senior Surgeon and Resident Councillor for any explanation which may be necessary and in which they may desire to offer some remark, and in the meanwhile take imme-

diately steps for the better regulation and management of the Institution."

Anticipating an outcry, the Governor on the same day ordered the Senior Surgeon to send an extract of his (the Governor's) reply to the Committee of Management of the Hospital and to the Medical Officer.²⁰

A meeting of the Committee was held on 6th February and the minutes of the Governor-General, the Governor's reply and the Senior Surgeon's report were studied, and it was unanimously resolved:²¹

"That his Honour the Governor be requested to furnish this Committee with a copy of that portion of his letter to the Government of India which called forth the above minute of the Governor-General-in-Council."

This request was sent to the Governor's Secretary on 9th February and an extract of the Governor's despatch was furnished the same day.²²

Several special meetings of the Committee were held and the matter was thoroughly thrashed out. A Sub-committee was appointed to draw up a memorial which was sent to the Government of India on 5th March 1857. In this long document, the history of the founding of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, why public subscriptions were needed, and the election and duties of the Committee of Management were dilated upon. The Committee also "most humbly protested" against the sweeping charges that the hospital was badly managed:¹⁵

". . . for excepting the site which might have been better selected, this hospital is most excellent and well-ventilated; in cleanliness it could not be surpassed and is not, by any public institution in Singapore; the inmates are better fed than they were before they entered the hospital, and better than the class of society to which they belong. Their clothing is good, kept clean and renewed often, and their medical wants are attended to by a most zealous, attentive and superior Medical Officer, Dr. Cowpar, and by an Apothecary who has frequently received the thanks of the Committee for attention to his duties. In fact, the hospital is well arranged and admirably adapted for its purpose, and all connected with it have often received the thanks of the public and the Subscribers, the proper judges.

To all this, there is only one drawback, and that is the wretched state of the inmates, many of whom are afflicted with leprosy in its most advanced stages. Some are brought in with ulcers that bare the bones and sinews, while many have their limbs dropping off from gangrene. No slight maladies are to be seen there, for none would enter who can crawl and beg unless compelled by the Police, and those who would enter for complaints easily amenable to medical treatment are repelled by the awful nature of the

diseases and amount of misery to be seen there. . . .”

There were many causes to account for this amount of disease among the poor Chinese, and in the opinion of the Committee, who had intimate acquaintance with the subject, the main cause was “the immoderate use of opium for which the Local Government is in a great measure responsible”. They then went on to describe how a poor Chinese was ensnared and eventually forfeited his health and life:

“From whatever cause the youthful Chinese may be induced to commence opium smoking, it soon becomes such a fascinating habit that he cannot leave it off. His wages at first ample to procure him the necessaries of life and a little opium are soon inadequate as the habit grows stronger. Receiving 10-20 cents as daily wage, one cent at first is laid out in ‘chandoo’ (the prepared extract of opium) to be gradually increased until the money that was at first allotted to the purchase of clothes and luxuries is laid out in opium. Next, the food is diminished in quantity and deteriorated in quality until at last the victim lays out almost every cent in the gratification of his passion. When without proper food and clothing and suffering from the effects of his vice, he can no longer earn sufficient wages to purchase the necessary amount of chandoo to gratify his craving, he then takes to ‘suite’, the refuse of chandoo, and then to ‘sye suite’, the refuse of that, until even that fails him and under what is called an opium fit, he steals, commits suicide or sinks under it. . . .

When to this depraved habit is added physical sickness, we have as the product, the miserable objects that crowd our hospital, to whom it is certain death to refuse opium that has been the cause of their trouble. In Singapore, the Chinese consist of merchants, traders, citizens and labourers. Few are wealthy, yet in 1847 when they amounted to nearly 50,000, the Government received from the Opium Farm \$7500/- monthly, and the opium smokers spent about \$417,000/- per annum. This has been gradually increasing and last year, the Opium Farmer paid above \$12,000/- monthly for the mere privilege of exclusively selling opium. To this add his profits, the expense of a large staff of officers to prevent smuggling, the purchase of opium, etc. and it is certain that the opium consumers do not at this present time spend less than \$60,000/- monthly or £135,000/- yearly.

To raise this immense revenue, the Opium Farmer has been allowed to extend his contaminating influence in every direction and retail opium all over the island. He has in every street in Town where Chinese live one or two smoking shops, and even in the suburbs and country, two or three houses cannot be built near one another without an opium shop being planted there. The tired labourer or a citizen has therefore every in-

ducement to continue his depravity when worried or seeking excitement. He can get rid of the one and obtain the other by just stepping next door into an opium shop. . . .

The Committee humbly think that the onus of supplying the opium to the wretched inmates of this hospital very properly falls on the Government, in promoting whose revenue, they have been brought to their present state of disease and misery.

The Committee of Management deeply regret that Dr. Cowpar, the Medical Officer in charge of this establishment, should have most undeservedly incurred the displeasure of the Governor-General-in-Council and that his permission for these dying wretches to smoke opium in the quantity prescribed, has been characterised as a ‘culpable laxity degenerating into a gross abuse’. . . .”

They then contradicted the statement of the Governor that opium smoking was not allowed. “His Honour the Governor must have been misinformed as it is the general way the Chinese consume the drug, and medicinally is the most efficacious, as by experience, medical men of this Settlement have found that when administered either as a solution or in the form of a tincture, it does not answer so well as when inhaled into the lungs.”¹⁵

They also mentioned that they noted “with feelings of indignation and astonishment” the Governor-General’s minute criticising them, and hoped that the Governor-General would deign in his reply ” to relieve them from the stigma cast upon their management”.¹⁵

The Governor-General did reply. He wrote to the Governor on 19th June 1857.¹⁵ He instructed the Governor to inform the Committee of Management that his remarks upon which they had commented, had reference only to Government officials and not to the Committee.

The Governor was also asked to furnish explanations of the inaccurate statements he had made regarding the hospital and opium smoking. He was also to call upon Mr. H. S. Mackenzie, the Resident Councillor, who as Chairman of the Committee of Management, had signed a document in which was stated that the Governor-General’s minute was viewed “with feelings of indignation and astonishment”. Civil Service rules were just as strict in the old days.

Mr. Mackenzie’s reply was tantamount to saying that he had signed the memorial blindly. He stated that at a meeting of the Committee of Management at which the draft of the memorial was read out, various improper passages were altered and struck out, and that he attached his signature to the copy forwarded to Calcutta in the belief that it contained nothing objectionable, and expressed regret at the occurrence.²³

Mr. Blundell, the Governor, admitted that he had been in error in making certain statements. He

had been misinformed by his officials, and he had "never previously heard of opium being administered medicinally through the lungs and was ignorant of any such practice."²⁴

As a follow-up of this incident, when the bill for opium supplied in 1856/57 was submitted, the Governor wrote to the Senior Surgeon on 3rd August, 1857, to inquire if the amount of opium consumed in the hospital could be considerably reduced.²⁵

Dr. Cowpar stated that it would not be possible to reduce the consumption of opium, and the Senior Surgeon supported him:²⁶

"... I know that Dr. Cowpar is very careful in the use of this drug, and that it is never ordered except in cases urgently in need of it, and from my own experience, I have no hesitation in saying its use in the miserable creatures treated in this hospital is indispensable. If it is withheld or not given in sufficient quantity, an exhausting diarrhoea sets in with entire loss of appetite and the patient invariably sinks from sheer inanition, so that with such patients as at present crowd the hospital, I do not think the supply can with propriety be reduced."

He had also obtained the opinion of Dr. Little, a prominent medical practitioner and Hon. Secretary of the Committee of Management:²⁶

"I now give my opinion not as a member of the Committee, but as a medical man and one who has paid more attention to the use of opium amongst the Chinese than anyone in India, that the quantity of chandoo given to the patients in Tan Tock Seng Hospital cannot be reduced without adding to the miseries and retarding their cure, and that if the Medical Officer in charge had an unlimited supply of opium at his command, he would by increasing the supply alleviate the sufferings of his patients and strengthen his medical treatment."

The bill was passed for payment.²⁷

The Governor-General's minute and opium were not the only problems which occupied the minds and energies of the Governor and the Committee of Management during 1857. The decision of the Governor to reduce the staff of the hospital and Government's plan to take over the hospital for military purpose made 1857 a very hectic one for the Committee.

In February 1857, it was decided that the Hospital Apothecary should also do duty in the Police Hospital, where all the Police patients had been transferred to; that one Chinese Dresser/Interpreter should be employed on reduced pay; and one Dresser and one Toty to be dismissed.²⁸

A special meeting of the Committee was held on 4th March 1857 to take into consideration the proposed reduction in the Subordinate Medical Establishment of the Hospital. A letter of protest was sent to the Governor:²⁸

"The Committee deeply regret that his Honour the Governor should have suggested to the Government such a reduction in the Medical Staff of this hospital as it must hamper the Medical Officer in charge and deprive the inmates of sufficient medical attendance, and make it impossible to keep them and the building in a proper state of cleanliness.

The Committee do themselves respectfully request that the Honourable the Governor will be pleased to re-establish with as little delay as possible, the Subordinate Medical staff on the same footing that was formerly sanctioned by the Government of Bengal.

The Committee pending his Honour the Governor's decision have retained the discharged staff whose salaries will be paid from the Hospital funds."

The Governor's Secretary replied that he had been directed by the Governor to state "that the establishment sanctioned in 1851 for Tan Tock Sing's Hospital was conditioned on Police patients being therein attended to, but as the hospital was found to be totally unfitted for the reception of such patients and as the Assistant Surgeon in charge reported this unsuitableness to his Honour, he at once determined on removing them to a separate temporary building. It became consequently requisite to divide the establishment sanctioned for the combined hospitals in 1851, and the Governor considers that a very fair division has been made, and is not prepared to interfere with the arrangement that has been authorised. . . ."

An appeal was made in May 1857.³⁰ "If the funds of the hospital would allow, the Committee would not have troubled his Honour the Governor on this subject, but all the money they can raise is barely sufficient to feed and clothe the inmates, far less to pay for an Establishment they have always looked upon as the peculiar province of the Government to supply." This appeal was rejected.³¹

But the major crisis was the decision of the Government to take over the Hospital for military purposes and the resulting controversy between the Committee of Management and the Government. This ultimately led to more and more direct involvement of Government in the running of the Hospital. (vide infra).

In 1856, there were proposals to re-organise the land defence and fortifications of Singapore. Part of the plan was to fortify Pearl's Hill and concentrate some of the military resources there. The guns on Pearl's Hill together with those on Government Hill (Fort Canning) would be "sufficient to overawe the Town and to afford a refuge to the European community in the event of either internal disturbances or foreign attack". There had been serious riots among the Chinese inhabitants in 1854 and war with China had broken out again in 1856. The Chinese section of the Town was situated between Pearl's Hill and Government Hill, directly under the guns which

would be placed there. The plan was approved by the Government of India on 11th August 1856.³²

Before the Military could take over Pearl's Hill, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (and some other buildings) had to be vacated and alternative sites found for them. Some land in the neighbourhood of Pearl's Hill belonging to private individuals also had to be purchased. This caused considerable delay as the law empowering Government to acquire private property for public purposes had not by then been passed.³²

Tan Tock Seng Hospital was to be used as a Commissariat Store and the Jail as an Arsenal. Land near Serangoon Road (Balestier's Plantation) was purchased to erect the new buildings. The Governor in his report stated:³²

" . . . I propose removing them to an apposite quarter at a distance of about one mile from the Town, where I have lately concluded the purchase of a large extent of ground capable of comprising these and other buildings that will doubtless ere long come into requisition. This ground is of the extent of 263 acres, 2 roods and 8 poles, and was some years ago cleared and drained for a sugar estate, being offered to me at \$50 (112 Rupees) per acre, I considered it very unlikely that any arbitrators would decide on a less sum should the Bill before the Legislature become law, and I therefore deemed it most advisable to close at once. The sum expended amounting to Rupees 29,517-9-0 is large, but I trust that the Right Honourable the Governor General of India-in-Council will not consider it to be improperly expended considering the many advantages that now result from our possession of land in the vicinity of the Town for public purposes. Singapore is rapidly extending itself and the value of land around is yearly so much increasing that I entertain little doubt that in the course of a few years the portion of land now purchased by me which may then remain unoccupied, will realise a sum nearly equal to that now expended for the whole. . . ." (This decision was approved by the Government of India on 11.9.1857.)

In March 1857, the Executive Officer was ordered "to prepare plans and estimates for buildings to be erected on the ground recently purchased on the Serangoon Road, . . . a new Chinese Pauper Hospital on a plan better adapted to the requirements of this wretched class of the population. The Governor thinks that four separate wards, each with its appropriate outhouses and yard would be the best and most suitable plan of a building, but on this point his Honour requests that the wishes of the son of the late Tan Tock Sing, at whose expense the present Pauper Hospital was erected, be consulted. . . ." ³³

Mr. Tan Kim Ching was consulted and accepted the Governor's proposal that the new hospital should not cost less than the old one, on certain conditions, one of which was that there should be a female ward. As a proviso, he mentioned that if there

were not enough funds to build the female ward, his mother would be prepared to defray the cost. Mr. Tan Kim Ching's letter is quoted in full:³³

"Having taken into consideration the proposal of the Honourable the Governor to remove the Hospital from the present site to Balestier's Plain, I have determined to accept the offer made by the Governor, viz. to erect new buildings at a cost similar to that expended on the present ones, on the following conditions:

- 1st That the present buildings are not to be vacated until the new ones are completely ready to receive the inmates.
- 2nd That fifty acres of land be granted by the Government for the hospital purposes.
- 3rd That sufficient labour for the erection of the proposed hospital be granted by Government.
- 4th That the hospital premises shall consist of four separate buildings, one for severe diseases, one for convalescents and the blind, one for leprosy, and one for females.
- 5th That the site and plan be approved by me.
- 6th That medical establishment and medicines be supplied by Government according to the scale to be submitted by the Medical Officer in charge.
- 7th That the buildings be kept in repair by the Government.

If the above be approved by the Honourable Governor, my mother has offered, should the sum not be sufficient to build four hospitals (wards), to provide the funds for the erection of the female ward."

Mrs. Tan Tock Seng's gesture was highly praised by the Press:

" . . . We also hear that the widow of the late Tan Tock Sing has offered to construct on the new site at Serangoon, a hospital for females at her own expense, an act of munificence which cannot be too highly appreciated. At present, none of our hospitals has any accommodation for females, so that the charitable intentions of Mrs. Tan Tock Sing will supply a want severely felt by nearly all classes of females." ³⁵

" . . . In building the new Tocksing's Hospital, we understand considerable improvements are to be made on the present plan. There are to be three or four separate wards, and in addition, the widow of Tocksing has very generously proposed giving the sum of \$3000/- to build a ward for females." ³⁶

The Tan family's co-operativeness and generosity were reported by the Governor to the Government of India:³²

" . . . The Chinese Pauper Hospital, the Government is aware, is a building erected by a private individual and delivered by him to the Govern-

ment for the purpose of establishing an asylum for Chinese diseased paupers. The heirs of the munificent Chinaman who erected the present building are quite alive to the inappropriateness of the site and have not only cheerfully joined me in sanctioning the removal, but have volunteered to erect at their own expense, an additional building for the accommodation of diseased pauper women, the understanding being that the Government shall expend in the new building a sum equal to that expended by the founder on the present building. The advantage to the wretched paupers will be very great as they will have ample room for gardens and other amusements, whereas at present, they are confined within bare walls."

It had cost 29,120 Rupees to build the old hospital.³²

The Governor however did not keep to his part of the agreement with Tan Kim Ching that the present hospital was not to be vacated until the new one was ready for occupation. On May 5th, 1857, he informed the Officer Commanding the Troops³⁷ that he had given orders for the erection of temporary wood and attap sheds for the reception of the inmates, which would be completed within a few weeks, when the present building would be handed over for the reception of the Commissariat stores. And the Resident Councillor was informed that as he was "aware of the arrangements that had been made with the heir and representative of Tan Tock Sing, it was unnecessary to say more than that the Governor wishes that as soon as the patients can be removed from the present building it may be given up to the Commissariat. . . ."³⁸

The Governor was pleased with the steps taken. "All parties will benefit most materially by these arrangements. The Military will have suitable buildings under the guns on Pearl's Hill, . . . while the wretched Chinese diseased paupers will be removed from a site wholly unsuited for them to a fine open healthy space with abundance of room, of air and of water. . . ."³⁹

In the meantime, mutiny had erupted in India and the Government of India ordered all public works except those that were absolutely necessary to be stopped. The Singapore Free Press welcomed this order as it had objections to the removal of the hospitals:⁴⁰

" . . . We hope this will prevent the Singapore Government from carrying out its ill-advised scheme for scattering the hospitals at distances apart from each other and away from the Town. . . ."

Let us inquire what will be the effect of locating these hospitals in the places proposed by the local Government. The European Seamen's Hospital is to be erected on the Race Course not far from the Kandang Kerbau Thannah (Police Station), while Tocksing's Hospital is to be

situated on the ground lately bought by Government, known as Balestier's Plantation. The two sites are more than a mile from each other and the latter is upwards of three miles from Town. In either case, the distance from Town is too great, but when their wide separation from each other is added, the objection to their positions becomes still more serious. It must be recollected that these hospitals are not merely receptacles for patients labouring under diseases the progress of which is gradual, and which in general can be attended at stated hours and seasons. They both receive surgical as well as medical cases—the European being chiefly confined to seamen while Tocksing's although ostensibly for Chinese, is open to the poor of all nations. In all cases of accidents or wounds, it would inflict great suffering on the patients, and in some, probably ensure death, were they to be conveyed for some miles to the hospital. The distance from the residence of the Medical Officer would also operate very prejudicially in emergent cases, and it would ultimately lead to its being found necessary to have resident Medical Officers at the hospitals, an expense which will no doubt be grudged. Besides, in the case of Balestier's Plantation, is it well ascertained that the locality is perfectly salubrious? . . ."

The Committee of Management felt slighted. In their Annual Report for 1857, they stated that "the Committee understand that overtures have been made by the Local Government to Mr. Tan Kim Ching, the son of the founder, to take over the present hospital for Government purposes and build one on what is known as the Balestier's Plantation, 2½ miles from Town. This proposal, however, has never been officially brought to the notice of your Committee who were by the late Governor and the Public appointed to the entire management of the Hospital and its inmates and think they ought to have been consulted."⁴¹

So when the Resident Councillor wrote to them on 3rd October 1857 for co-operation in the transfer of patients to the temporary buildings erected by Government, the Committee called for a special meeting. The Resident Councillor had written:⁴¹

"The Government having made an arrangement with the representative of the founder of the Asylum, the internal economy of which is carried out under your supervision, for the erection of a more capacious and appropriate building on a better site, the present hospital being required for military purposes, I have the honour to request your co-operation in the removal of the patients to the temporary accommodation prepared for them, the proposed new building being expected to be completed in one year."

The special meeting of the Committee was accordingly held on the 15th October 1857, the Hon. H. S. Mackenzie, Esq., the Resident Councillor himself, presiding when the following agreement was drawn up and acceded to by the Resident Coun-

cillor with the exception of that paragraph referring to the grant.⁴¹

“The following arrangement is hereby proposed to be entered into between the Local Authorities and the Representative of the late Tan Tock Sing.

That Government in consideration of the present Hospital being transferred to them in terms of the arrangement already agreed upon between them and Tan Kim Ching, Esq., to Balestier’s Estate, engage to pay towards the erection of the New Hospital \$13,000/- by instalments of \$5000/- now, \$4000/- when the walls are up and the \$4000/- of the balance when the Hospital is finished.

That Tan Kim Ching, Esquire, erects the building according to the plan to be decided upon between Government and Tan Kim Ching and approved of by the Committee, the Government providing a foundation of granite 3 feet high for the Hospital and building a surrounding wall, furnishing lime and sand, supplying water for the hospital, draining and otherwise preparing the ground.

That Government further engages to execute these works within six months from this date, and to furnish a grant for the ground on which the hospital stands, with sufficient medical attendance and medicines for the patients.

When these terms are agreed to, the patients can be removed with the approval of the Committee of Management.”

When this was sent to the Government for official approval, the authorities did not deign to reply nor even acknowledge receipt, the Committee were considered to be too presumptuous. Whereupon the Committee decided to withhold “their sanction to the removal of the patients”, and matters came to a head, when they informed the Governor of this.⁴¹

On 23rd November 1857, the Governor instructed the Resident Councillor as follows:⁴²

“ . . . I am directed by the Honourable the Governor to state that he cannot admit any right on the part of the Committee to interfere with the arrangement that may be made with Mr. Kim Ching for giving up the present Building and building a new one on another and more eligible site. So long as Mr. Kim Ching is satisfied with the arrangement proposed, the Governor does not consider that the views and opinions of others should be consulted, but if Mr. Kim Ching refers you to the Committee of Management as empowered by him to make the requisite arrangements, you will of course be glad to attend to his wishes. . . . ”

At the same time, the Resident Councillor was told to postpone any action to remove the paupers to Balestier’s Plain consequent on the Government of India’s orders to stop all public works.

It was later decided that the requisition of Tan

Tock Seng Hospital and its conversion for military purposes did not come under the orders to curtail unnecessary expenditure of public money.

On 23rd February 1858, the patients were transferred to the temporary sheds on Balestier’s Plain, despite the fact that Mr. Kim Ching had written to the Resident Councillor on the previous night to ask for postponement as he considered that the Committee of Management’s permission should be obtained first. The Resident Councillor however refused to rescind his orders, and wrote to the Committee as follows:⁴¹

“After everything had been arranged for the removal of the patients from the Pauper Hospital to the wooden buildings prepared for their accommodation on Balestier’s Plain, I received late last evening a note from Mr. Kim Ching stating that after thinking over the matter (which I concluded from previous conversations with him had been already settled), he considered Government should have the sanction of the Committee of Management before removing the patients. And though I am not of that opinion, I would have again postponed moving these poor wretches to a pure country atmosphere against my own judgement and that of the Medical Officer in charge, till I had again stated to you the intention of the Government to convert the present building into an Arsenal or Commissariat godown, had not final orders been given. . . . ”

There was a howl of protest at what was considered to be high-handed action of the Government. At a special meeting of the Committee held on 6th May 1858, it was resolved to petition the Governor. This was not carried out until 27th July 1858 as the Hon. Secretary fell ill.⁴¹

“ . . . The Committee consider that they have not only been treated with the utmost want of courtesy, but that their existence and rights have been completely ignored, and that the Resident Councillor in the removal of the patients has usurped a power to which he had no title and assumed a responsibility belonging only to the Committee of Management.

That your Honour may be satisfied as to the powers and rights of the Committee in the internal management of the Hospital, it is only necessary to look back to its original foundation and to the entire history of the connection between the Government and the public in its management. . . . Soon after its completion and the removal into it of the patients, a public meeting of the Subscribers to the support of the paupers was held in the Court House on the 24th June 1851, the Hon. Thomas Church in the chair, when a Committee was chosen, consisting partly of representatives of Government as members ex-officio, partly of representatives of the Subscribers to be elected annually, and Tan Kim Ching as the representative of the founder. To this Committee thus representing the three interests involved were en-

trusted according to the 3rd resolution of the meeting 'the sole and uncontrolled management of the Hospital and its inmates and the power of passing all its rules'.

The Committee of Management have from that time until the Resident Councillor assumed the authority, conducted the entire details of the Hospital except in the medical treatment of the patients. This authority has been recognised again and again by the Government and the Public. . . .

We now respectfully solicit your Honour's attention as to this reference on our part and on the receipt of your Honour's reply, it will be laid before the Subscribers at a Public Meeting." (vide infra)

After calling on the Resident Councillor for his explanation and views on the matter, the Governor replied to the Committee of Management through his Secretary: ⁴³

" . . . The Governor cannot suppose that it is a ground of complaint on the part of your Committee that the inmates of Tan Tock Seng Pauper Hospital have been removed from a building notoriously ill-adapted to the purpose of their reception to temporary quarters on a fine, healthy open plain, abundantly supplied with water and affording ample room for air and exercise. It must be therefore of the manner of the removal the Committee complain and he much regrets that the Committee should deem they have cause for any such complaint. This removal of the inmates of the hospital had for some months been contemplated and he had always imagined that the Committee were agreeable to it provided Mr. Tan Kim Ching, the representative of the founder of the Hospital was satisfied with all the contemplated plans and arrangements. The Governor certainly understood from Mr. Tan Kim Ching that he was so satisfied and the exigencies of the public service together with the very dilapidated state of the building rendered it being vacated a matter of necessity.

The Governor cannot agree in considering your Committee to be vested with any power over the disposal of the building itself. (The Resident Councillor had informed the Governor that the duty of the Committee was merely to see that the funds collected were properly applied towards the maintenance of the inmates.) When completed at the expense of its munificent founder, it was formally handed over to the Government on condition of its being kept in proper repair and medical skill and attendance duly provided. If the representative of the founder agrees to the removal of the building, i.e. to its being devoted to other purposes and another erected, better adapted as a Pauper Hospital in a more eligible site sanctioned by the medical authority of the Hospital, the Governor is of opinion that the sanction of your

Committee to the removal is not absolutely necessary though in all respects highly desirable, and he laments that there should be any disposition to withhold the sanction.

The inmates of the Hospital were removed in February last, since when the Governor has been assured by the Medical Officer in charge that the number of deaths has very greatly decreased, that the inmates seem far more stout, healthy and contented than they used to be, while their only complaint is one that the public in general will no doubt gladly hail as a permanent complaint, vizt. the distance from the Town.

In conclusion, the Governor desires me to assure your Committee that in arranging for the removal of Tan Tock Seng Hospital to another site, he has been solely urged by considerations of a military nature connected with the fortifications of the place and with the location of a body of European soldiery. He has deemed it a fortunate circumstance that in complying with a State necessity, he has been enabled greatly to improve the state of the Chinese paupers, to promote the recovery of the Sick and to relieve the community to a great degree of the disgusting objects that used to infest the public streets. He had hoped that all this had been effected in concert with your Committee, and he wishes to assure you of his regret at finding that such had not been the case."

In January 1858, there was an article in the Singapore Free Press on the need of hospital facilities for females. The Rev. Beurel of the Roman Catholic Church had plans for establishing such a hospital during the year and funds were required. It was suggested that Mrs. Tan Tock Sing who had indicated that she would donate money for a female ward in the new Tan Tock Seng Hospital, might want to give her money for Rev. Beurel's project.⁴⁴

"The want of some proper asylum for sick and destitute females in Singapore has long been very apparent, but no means as far as we are aware, have hitherto been adopted for supplying such an institution. We are glad therefore to find that the Rev. Beurel intends during the course of the present year endeavouring to establish an asylum for the above purpose. This gentleman, as our readers are aware, has already organised an academy for the education and training of young ladies under the direction of six nuns. The same ladies have under their superintendence an orphanage for destitute female children, who already amount to nearly fifty, and they also propose to take under their charge the projected asylum into which will be admitted old, sick and destitute widows and any females in distress found on the island without reference to religion or nation.

For carrying out this plan, considerable funds will be required. . . . appeal for aid to the public of Singapore . . .

The widow of the late Tan Tock Seng, we have been informed, proposes to devote a considerable sum of money to build a female ward in the hospital that is about to be erected in lieu of the present Tocksing's Hospital which is required for Government purposes. It has been suggested that the persons for whose benefit this ward in Tocksing's Hospital is intended would be far better cared for and more comfortable in the asylum under the charge of the Sisters of Charity, and that the funds set apart for the female ward might therefore be more usefully employed in helping to establish the asylum. This is a matter the decision of which must depend altogether upon the feelings of the party concerned, but we have little doubt that due consideration will be given to any representation which may be made of the comparative advantages or disadvantages of the two places."

Mrs. Tan's offer to pay for the erection of a female ward was made with the intention of perpetuating the memory of her late husband. She was not going to give her money to some foreign Christian mission, and in February 1858,⁴⁵ she promptly paid 7,500 Rupees to the Resident Councillor in order to forestall any attempt to persuade her to change her mind. This gesture was reported by the Governor to the Government of India on 4th March 1858:⁴⁵

"... The donor of this liberal sum is the widow of the late Tan Tock Seng and the mother of Tan Kim Ching whose liberality has already been twice noted by the Government of India.

It is extremely gratifying to have to report these instances of remarkable beneficence on the part of a Chinese family, and I am sure the Honourable the President of the Council will be greatly pleased to find a female thus coming liberally forward to provide for the wants of her reduced and distressed fellow countrywomen. It is an excellent feature in the Chinese character that the unfortunate females of their race should thus be provided for. While these and other instances of liberal charity amongst the Chinese afford a pleasing proof of the confidence placed by them in the Government under which they live."

The President in Council in his reply dated 30th April 1858 stated that he noted with much satisfaction the liberal donation and was of the opinion that this was "proof that this lady is actuated by the same spirit of humanity and munificence for which her late husband was so remarkably distinguished".⁴⁶

In February 1858, construction work on the new Tan Tock Seng Hospital commenced, the Resident Councillor being in overall charge. Soon after the removal of the inmates on 23rd February 1858, the plans for converting the old hospital for military purposes were also put into action. The hospital had fallen into great disrepair.⁴⁷ Things were speeded up when the Officer Commanding the Troops informed the Governor that a Company of European Artillery

had arrived at Penang in March 1858 and that two-thirds of the detachment were to be stationed in Singapore.⁴⁸ There being no accommodation for them, it was proposed that Tan Tock Seng Hospital be prepared for their reception until new barracks were built at Pearl's Hill.⁴⁸

The Executive Engineer was ordered to take the necessary steps,⁴⁹ and the Resident Councillor was instructed to prevent "any further deposit of the Town sweepings in the swamp at the foot of that Hill. As these deposits are much complained of and reported by the Medical authorities to be unhealthy, the order to discontinue them should be strictly enforced and the attention of the Commissioner of Police be called to the subject."⁵⁰ The decision to fill the swamp below the hospital had been made by the Municipal Committee with the intention of selling the reclaimed land later. The Hospital authorities had repeatedly complained about this—about the nuisance caused by the decomposition of the rubbish and the danger to the health of the patients, but without the evil being remedied.⁵¹

When the Executive Engineer inspected the building, he found that the decay was so extensive that the whole roof and flooring had to be replaced together with the doors and window frames. He also proposed that granite roads be built strong enough for vehicles carrying military stores. The estimate of the repairs and alterations was \$3956.93.⁴⁷ By September of that year, the wings of the hospital were being used as a Gun Shed and as a Library and Married Quarters, while the main building was still under repair and when ready was to be used as Quarters for more European Artillery or for Commissariat stores.⁵² The neighbouring Seamen's Hospital which had also been vacated was already in use as Artillery Barracks.⁵³

In his 2nd Quarterly Report for 1858, the Senior Surgeon reported that on his visits to the temporary hospital on Balestier's Plain, he had found the wards in good order, the patients more cheerful and more comfortable than in their former abode. Their only complaint was of the long distance from Town and the Opium Shops. He again complained that the House of Correction was still full of paupers who had run away from the Pauper Hospital and committed by the Magistrate for vagrancy.⁵⁴

The Senior Surgeon's 3rd Quarterly Report for 1858 mentioned again that the paupers in the sheds on the Serangoon Road were well cared for. One of the sheds was nearly blown down in a recent squall. Vagrants and paupers with immense ulcers and gangrene were still being sent to the House of Correction. This was in face of an order to the contrary from the Governor.⁵⁵ Stern action was asked for and the Commissioner of Police received instructions from the Secretary to the Governor—" to request your assistance in diminishing the evil complained of by Dr. Rose, vizt. the reception into the House of Correction of prisoners with bad sores on their bodies who must necessarily be almost imme-

diately be admitted into the (prison) hospital. These prisoners are generally vagrants or petty offenders confined for short periods under the sentence of the Magistrate. It appears to the Governor to be advisable in such cases not to send the prisoners before the Magistrates but at once to consign them to Tan Tock Seng Hospital".⁵⁶ A similar order had been issued in 1855.⁵⁷ These orders however could not be implemented because of legal obstacles. Prisoners had to be brought before a Magistrate to have charges against them investigated and decided upon. The Magistrate had no authority to commit offenders to the Pauper Hospital.⁵⁸

In September 1858, the Governor intervened in the construction of the new hospital. The Authorities had promised to pay \$13,000/- or the equivalent in Rupees, the cost of erecting the old hospital, and "also to supply convict labour for the purpose of levelling, draining and otherwise preparing the ground, to supply water and to build the enclosing wall for the new Tan Tock Seng Hospital".⁵⁹ This was to ensure that the sum of money would be adequate for the purpose. On 7th September because of increased and increasing demands on convict skilled labour for other public projects in Singapore, the Governor limited the assistance to be given by the convicts to digging foundations and supplying granite and bricks for the basement. He also placed the entire charge of erecting the hospital in the hands of the Public Works Department but instructed the Chief Engineer to "extend all practicable deference to the wishes and suggestions of Mr. Tan Kim Ching, the son and representative of the munificent founder of the Hospital".⁶⁰ The Resident Councillor was ordered to transfer to the Chief Engineer "the whole of the plans, agreements and other documents in your possession connected with the erection on Balestier's Plain of a new Chinese Pauper Hospital, together with copies of your official correspondence on the subject with Mr. Tan Kim Ching".⁶¹

On studying the plans of the hospital, the Chief Engineer noted that the buildings would be much larger than the old hospital and would cost much more, namely \$25,800. A contract had already been signed for completing the two front buildings with the out-buildings, for \$8,800/-.⁶²

Mr. Tan Kim Ching had to come to the rescue again. On 14th September 1858 he promised to donate another \$3,340/- on the completion of the foundation of the other three buildings.⁶² With this sum added to the original \$13,000/-, there would still be a deficit of \$9,460/- which would have to be made up by convict labour and this was not forthcoming as promised.

The Chief Engineer explained to the Governor that when his Executive Engineer had pointed out that there would not be sufficient funds, he had been ordered by the Resident Councillor to proceed with the building.⁶²

The Governor's solution to the above problem was to order the Chief Engineer to modify "the plan

in consultation with Mr. Tan Kim Ching so that the above sum of \$13,000/- added to the subsequent donations from Mr. Tan Kim Ching and his mother may suffice for a building adequate to the objects in view, though of course less elaborate and ornamental than originally intended".⁶³ He also sanctioned an additional \$1,000/- from Government funds. (This was later withdrawn.)

In the 4th Quarterly Report of 1858⁶⁴ and the 1st Quarterly Report of 1859,⁶⁵ there were still complaints by the Senior Surgeon about "the miserable creatures sent by the Sitting Magistrate for vagrancy and larcenies committed for the purpose of getting into jail. These men know from former experience that they will at once be sent to hospital as they are unfitted by chronic disease and broken-down constitutions for any kind of labour. They come in fact to die with the comforts around them which an hospital affords but which poverty denies them outside its walls. . . . and I regret exceedingly to add that such admissions are very much on the increase." He also reported on Tan Tock Seng Hospital. "The paupers in the sheds at Serangoon are much in the same condition. The attaps at the corners of the sheds have been carried away by the late winds, so that they leak in several places, particularly at the Dresser's Quarters. This can easily be remedied at a trifling cost. At my last visit, there were 189 patients under treatment, the sheds are cleanly kept and every care is taken as to their welfare and comfort. . . . It will however be much more satisfactory when the new buildings are finished, which will soon be the case as great progress had been made there lately. We shall then be able to keep the patients from escaping and wandering abroad, a nuisance to the whole community."

The Government Gazette of 4th March 1859 published the list of "Donors, European and Asiatic, to whom the Government of the Straits Settlements is indebted for liberal contributions towards works of public utility or charity, during the years 1857 and 1858".⁶⁶ Mr. Theodor August Behn had donated 4,400 Rupees to the Seamen's and Pauper Hospitals. There is no record of what proportion of this amount went to the Pauper Hospital.

The Progress Report of the Public Works Department for 1858/1859 (dated 2nd May 1859) recorded:⁶⁷

". . . . New Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Two front buildings have been completed with the exception of painting, and two of the rear buildings have been erected but not roofed; of the third building, foundation and basement are completed. This work is not entered in the Budget of 1858/1859, but has been sanctioned since by the Local Government on funds provided by private individuals, with convict labour.

Estimate: \$8,800.00. Expended: \$7,695.07."

The Chief Engineer was able to report on 7th

June 1859 to the Governor "that the New Pauper Hospital has progressed of late very satisfactorily, and that it will be completed within the estimated sum of \$17,000/-" ⁶⁸

The Governor's reply was to reiterate that he would not be willing "to sanction any addition to the estimate for the erection of the new Tan Tock Seng Hospital except under circumstances of urgent necessity," and that he considered "the Pauper Hospital to be a military work and one of urgency . . . and that the full strength of the convict body or artificers may be placed on it in order to avoid any additions being made to the money estimate". ⁶⁹

In July 1859, the Commissioner of Police collected \$1,200/- as licence fees for permission to erect temporary Theatres in various parts of the Town by a band of Chinese actors. The Governor directed that of this sum, \$800/- was to be given to the funds for the erection of the Seamen's Hospital and \$400/- to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. ⁷⁰ This was very timely as the \$1,000/- promised by the Governor had been withdrawn. ⁷¹ The new hospital was expected to be completed by the end of 1859. In September 1859, there were 218 patients under treatment in the temporary sheds. ⁷²

Some mention must be made again of the Committee of Management of Tan Tock Seng Hospital. On receipt of the Governor's reply, dated 17th September 1858, to their complaints, (vide supra), an emergency meeting of the subscribers was called on Monday 27th September 1858 "to take into consideration the present state of the Hospital and its prospects". This notice appeared in the Straits Times of 25th September. ⁷³

Owing to a meeting of the Municipal Commissioners being held on the 27th, the Hospital meeting was put off to the following day, when the Committee and several subscribers attended. The Resident Councillor did not attend. After the election of a deputy Chairman, the Hon. Secretary informed the subscribers of the matters to be discussed. After making some preliminary and explanatory remarks, he read the correspondence which had taken place between the Executive of the Government and the Committee. A desultory discussion took place and several present condemned in strong terms the conduct of the Executive authorities in usurping the functions of the Committee and in treating them in so discourteous and disdainful a manner. It was ultimately proposed and resolved that the correspondence submitted to the meeting be published for the general information of the Subscribers and the public, and the matter fully discussed on a future date after the questions at issue had been ventilated. Dr. Little announced that owing to his approaching departure to Europe, he was compelled to resign the office of Secretary. The Editor of the Straits Times reporting this meeting in his paper of 9th October 1858 severely criticised the Government: ⁷⁴

"The conduct of the Executive authorities towards the representative of the Founder and the

Managing Committee has manifestly been discourteous. The precipitate removal of the patients and the usurpation of the internal economy of the hospital has been most indecorous, and must naturally raise suspicion in the mind of every subscriber to the Institution, that the future prospects of the charity are precarious, and its existence dependent on the irresponsible *fiat* of the Local Government. . . .

Doubtless, the exercise of absolute power by the Executive is superior to the power of the Committee of Management to resist, but surely it is ridiculous to talk about management where control does not exist. It were more candid to set the Committee at defiance and say, 'I have done it and will do it again. I ignore your right to the internal management of the hospital's affairs'. The power and functions of the Committee may be controlled by absolute authority, but the latter cannot control the voluntary contributions of the Subscribers who look more to the matter suggested in the unauthorised removal of the patients than 'the manner of their removal'. Such an act of interference on the part of the Executive with the internal management of the charity sufficiently indicates that the Subscribers are only useful in providing funds necessary to defray the current charges of the hospital, while the Committee of Management elected by the Subscribers have as little to do with the management of the hospital as those who never contributed a single cent. . . ."

A state of malaise, apathy and disgust had set in. No interest was shown by the public. Another article appeared in the Straits Times of 16th April 1859 inciting them to action: ⁷⁵

"What has become of the charity known as Tock Seng's Hospital? Since the publication of their annual report for the year ending in July 1857, we have heard little or nothing of the operations of the Committee. . . . Since September last, the Honorary Secretary has sailed for Europe, one of the most active members of the Committee is about to proceed to the same destination, and another member has already departed to Pinang, so that the affairs of the Society appear to be unrepresented and uncared for. Are subscriptions collected, and if so, how and by whom are they applied, are the questions which some members of the Committee are bound to answer. Or has this very useful institution fallen into decay in consequence of the improper treatment of the Committee by the Executive? The public having contributed largely to the hospital has a just right to ask for some explanation and account of the present state and prospects of the charity, and whether the expenses of the establishment are to be wholly defrayed by Government or the charity to die out. The public cannot be called on to contribute unless the internal management is left to a committee chosen in part at least by those who subscribe in aid of the very charitable object contemplated

by the founder and so liberally responded to by the European and Native communities. No institution in the place has such strong urgent and constant claims on the community as Tan Tock Seng Hospital, and on this account we deeply regret to see no steps taken to renew the struggle with the local authorities to wrest from them the power they have usurped, and once more secure for the hospital a popular Committee of Management, without which it must inevitably dwindle down into a mere Government building, wanting all the vitality of a public institution. The interference of the Executive in our charitable associations has proved almost fatal in every instance. Instead of affording free and consistent aid, a withering policy is pursued and its results are patent to all. When the Executive departs from its legitimate duty and descends to mix itself up in the social affairs of the community, the invariable result is decay and dissolution, but when the members of the Executive in their individual capacities take part in our social institutions, the advantages become readily apparent. We trust the hint will be taken in the proper spirit?"

The meeting which was adjourned *sine die* on 28th September 1858 remained adjourned. On 28th May 1859, the Straits Times suggested that the Grand Jury should visit and report on the Hospital, and tried again to stimulate action by the public:⁷⁶

"... What is doing in the latter institution (Tan Tock Seng Hospital) we cannot learn, but we do most sincerely trust that subscribers will not pay their annual contributions until some explanation is offered respecting the prospects of the institution, nay more, we deem a satisfactory explanation absolutely necessary, and have no sympathy with the close borough system in any department of the body politic. The public has a full right to know what is doing by the Government and what individuals are about our local and domestic institutions, of whatever nature so ever, and we recommend the public to be jealous of their rights before parting with their money."

The public remained apathetic and all attempts to whip up interest failed. The adjourned meeting of the Subscribers was not re-convened in 1859.

The next article in the series will show how over the next decade Government's control over the Hospital became firmer.

APPENDIX

This Hospital
For the Diseased of all countries
was built A. D. 1844
at the cost of
Seven Thousand Dollars,
wholly defrayed by
Tan Tock Seng.

The wings were added,

and large improvements effected,
at a cost of
Three thousand Dollars,
wholly defrayed by
Tan Kim Ching,
son of the founder.

This Tablet is erected
By The
Committee of Management
1854.

此醫院之立由居士陳篤生自捐洋銀七千圓
於癸卯年構成以備寰瀛各國疾病者安受施
濟醫藥之區其兩所耳舍及原院諸房宇皆重
加修飾完美而精固俱出於令嗣君陳金鏡自
捐洋銀三千圓鳩工修理爰書諸貞珉以垂不
朽歲在甲寅董事人同鑄石。

REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS USED:

S.F.P. = Singapore Free Press. Microfilm. National Library Holdings. Singapore.
S.S.R. = Straits Settlements Records. Microfilm. National Library Holdings. Singapore.
S. T. = Straits Times. Microfilm. National Library Holdings. Singapore.

1. S.S.R., Z. 30.(162). 31.5.1855.
2. S.S.R., U. 29.(276). 18.7.1855.
3. S.T., 3.7.1855.
4. S.F.P., 5.7.1855.
5. S.S.R., U. 29.(276). 18.7.1855.
6. S.T., 7.8.1855.
7. S.F.P., 27.12.1855.
8. S.F.P., 10.4.1856.
9. S.T., 1.7.1856.
10. S.S.R., W. 22.(119). 28.5.1856.
11. S.S.R., Z. 32.(50). 30.5.1856.
S.S.R., V. 20.(305). 30.5.1856.
12. S.T., 30.9.1856.
13. S.F.P., 25.9.1856.
14. S.S.R., S. 23.(220). 31.10.1856.
15. S.S.R., S. 25.(152). 19.6.1857.
16. S.S.R., X. 12. 4.12.1856.
17. S.S.R., X. 12. 11.12.1856.
18. S.S.R., X. 12. 10.1.1857.
19. S.T., 3.2.1857.
20. S.S.R., V. 22. 3.2.1857.
21. S.S.R., W. 24.(94). 9.2.1857.
22. S.S.R., V. 22.(125). 9.2.1857.
23. S.S.R., X. 14. 7.7.1857.
24. S.S.R., R. 31.(262). 21.7.1857.
25. S.S.R., V. 23.(142). 3.8.1857.
26. S.S.R., W. 25.(362). 8.8.1857.
27. S.S.R., U. 33.(272). 10.8.1857.
28. S.S.R., W. 24.(130). 5.3.1857.
29. S.S.R., V. 22.(177). 7.3.1857.
30. S.S.R., W. 24.(224). 6.5.1857.
31. S.S.R., V. 22.(303). 7.5.1857.

32. S.S.R., R. 31.(139). 27.4.1857.
 33. S.S.R., V. 22. 24.3.1857.
 34. S.S.R., W. 24.(194). 22.4.1857.
 35. S.T., 31.3.1857.
 36. S.F.P., 2.4.1857.
 37. S.S.R., V. 22.(283). 5.5.1857.
 38. S.S.R., Z. 33.(72). 6.5.1857.
 39. S.S.R., R. 31.(286). 22.7.1857.
 40. S.F.P., 10.9.1857.
 41. S.S.R., W. 27.(236). 27.7.1857.
 42. S.S.R., U. 34.(129). 23.11.1857.
S.S.R., Z. 34.(99). 23.11.1857.
 43. S.S.R., V. 25.(222). 17.9.1858.
S.S.R., X. 15. 17.9.1858.
 44. S.F.P., 21.1.1858.
 45. S.S.R., R. 33.(19). 4.3.1858.
 46. S.S.R., S. 26.(80). 30.4.1858.
S.S.R., Z. 35.(89). 30.4.1858.
 47. S.S.R., W. 27.(158). 25.5.1858.
 48. S.S.R., W. 26.(86). 5.3.1858.
 49. S.S.R., U. 34.(313). 8.3.1858.
 50. S.S.R., Z. 35. 6.4.1858.
S.S.R., X. 15. 6.4.1858.
 51. S.S.R., Z. 34.(81). 12.11.1857.
S.S.R., W. 25.(456). 12.11.1857.
 52. S.S.R., R. 33.(229). 3.9.1858.
 53. S.S.R., W. 27.(231A). 9.7.1858.
 54. S.S.R., W. 27.(211). 1.7.1858.
 55. S.S.R., W. 28.(77). 21.10.1858.
 56. S.S.R., V. 25.(292). 25.10.1858.
 57. S.S.R., X. 18. 29.6.1859.
 58. S.S.R., X. 17. 29.6.1859.
 59. S.S.R., W. 28.(7). 4.9.1858.
 60. S.S.R., V. 25. (160). 7.9.1858.
 61. S.S.R., Z. 36.(44). 7.9.1858.
 62. S.S.R., W. 28.(31). 14.9.1858.
 63. S.S.R., V. 25.(216). 16.9.1858.
 64. S.S.R., W. 29.(14). 11.1.1859.
 65. S.S.R., W. 29.(183). 14.4.1859.
 66. Straits Settlements Gazette. 4.3.1859.
 67. S.S.R., W. 29.(214). 2.5.1859.
 68. S.S.R., W. 30.(285). 7.6.1859.
 69. S.S.R., X. 17.(180). 9.6.1859.
 70. S.S.R., U. 38.(211). 27.7.1859.
 71. S.S.R., Z. 37.(179). 22.9.1859.
 72. S.S.R., W. 32.(534). 1.10.1859.
 73. S.T., 25.9.1858.
 74. S.T., 9.10.1858.
 75. S.T., 16.4.1859.
 76. S.T., 28.5.1859.
-