“Black Measles” in 19th/early 20th century medical texts

[my emphasis in bold and underlining]

*A Handbook of Hygiene and Sanitary Science*

1889.

In the severe type of the disease, known as *black measles*, there is generally haemorrhage from the mucous surfaces, **and death may occur before the rash is thrown out.**

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*The Medical and Surgical Reporter*

1890.

During an attack of measles, if at the latter period the respiration should become accelerated, the temperature rise, and especially if there should be some blueness around the finger or toe nails, the greatest apprehension may be warranted. These symptoms indicate that pneumonia is developing. The occurrence of blueness is evidence that oxygenation of the blood is defective, and is of the gravest omen. The aspect of the patient when the blueness has spread to the face and other parts of the body has given the name "**black measles**" to this severe form of the disease. **As everyone knows, black measles is extremely fatal.**

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*A Text-book of practical medicine: Designed for the Use of Students and Practitioners of Medicine.*

By Alfred Lebbeus Loomis. 1895

There are two forms of black measles – one in which the eruption consists of petechial spots scattered over the surface, and dependent upon a hemorrhagic tendency; **in the other form the eruption assumes a dark appearance on account of changes which have occurred in the blood, the result of a very high temperature at an early period of the attack.**
Article in *The Sacred Heart Review*

May 12, 1900

In many cases it [the rash] is hardly to be seen at all. A malignant form known as "black measles" exists, **which is extremely dangerous**. The severity of the attacks of measles varies greatly with the epidemic. As a general thing, most cases of measles recover, and if death results it is from the complications which follow measles and against which one should guard. In the black measles all the symptoms are greatly increased in severity. The prostration is great. The patient is dull or delirious. **The eruption appears slowly and imperfectly, and the temperature is very high. The measles are dark in color, and the skin is mottled.**

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*THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE -- A text-book for practitioners and students with special reference to diagnosis and treatment*

By James Tyson, M. D.

5th edition, Philadelphia, 1911

a malignant form of measles sometimes occurs, called "**black measles**, which is very serious - often indeed fatal. It is generally epidemic, occurs in institutions and camps, and its presence is characterized by subcutaneous extravasations of blood and haemorrhages from the mucous membranes. Hoarseness is especially found in black measles."

**The vast majority of cases of measles get well. It is only in epidemics of the malignant form, in hospitals, camps, and foundling asylums, that death occurs as a direct result of the disease. In these the mortality is sometimes very high.**

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*Measles: its pathogenesis and treatment*

by Charles E. de M. Sajous, MD

in: *Monthly Cyclopedia and Medical Bulletin* vol. 1, page 63. 1908

In the haemorrhagic forms, we have clear evidence of intense passive congestion to which capillaries are subjected; the body may even be covered with purple blotches, blood ooze through the gums, the nasal mucous membrane, etc. **constituting the so-called black measles.**

**Fortunately, such cases are now [1908] seldom encountered.**