Educational.
~~Financial~~ (1898) Department.

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 90

Dated 16. 2. 98

INDEXED. 4-4

[Despatch Abstract.]

Reading proc: Rev dept copy Resolution of the Govt of India making observations upon the preliminary narrative of the Famine of 1897 in India & directing publication with the Resolution in the Fort St George and all Dt Gazettes for general information.

BACK PAPERS.

G.O.	No	Department.	Date.	G.O	No	Department.	Date.

FURTHER PAPERS.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O	No.	Department.	Date.

Government {1898} of Madras.

REVENUE.

Order No 90 g 16.2.98.
Mis.

Recorded.

A.L.H. 15/2/98

7/2
4/2/98

Recd. 12 Feb
Regd. } 1898.

Enclosures

Spare copies 4

G.O., No. 64, 1st February 1898.

FEBRUARY.

Famine of 1897.

Communicating to certain departments and officers Resolution of the Government of India making observations upon the preliminary narrative of the — in India, and directing the publication of the Resolution in the Fort St. George and all District Gazettes for general information.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

Read—the following extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India, in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture, dated the 30th December 1897, No. 36-F—240-5:—

Read—

Preliminary Narrative of the Famine in India in 1896-97 by T. W. Holderness, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Secretary (Famine), to the Government of India.

Weather and crop reports for the various provinces published in the *Gazette of India*, dated the 1st January 1898.

Resolution.—The famine, which since the close of 1896 has grievously afflicted so large a part of India, is now virtually at an end; and an abundant autumn harvest and conditions favourable to the spring crops have, throughout the greater part of the distressed tracts, once more put the people into good heart. The calamity, in respect of its intensity and of the area and population which it affected, though fortunately not in respect of its duration, has been more severe than any other famine of the century, and probably than any other which Indian history records. The tracts in which distress was acute or severe covered an aggregate area of 270,000 square miles with a population of 50,000,000, while distress of less intensity, but which still amounted to famine, prevailed over a further area of 33,000 square miles, with a population of 13,000,000. Thus the area throughout which relief operations were required was two-and-a-half times that of the United Kingdom, while the population for whose relief they were undertaken fell only just short of double the population of Great Britain. And there was probably no part of India in which the poorer classes did not suffer severely from the abnormally high prices which have obtained during the past year.

2. In coping with such a calamity the hands of the Government have been stronger than at any previous period. Since the last famine of comparable magnitude that afflicted the country—that of 1877-78—the irrigated area in which crops are reasonably secure and for which returns exist has increased by 17 per cent., and the area watered from large works constructed by the State from seven to ten million acres, while some five million acres are watered from smaller works under Government control. In 1877 less than 9,000 miles of railway were open. In 1897 the mileage exceeded 20,000; and nothing in the experience of the past year has been more striking than the freedom with which grain has passed from place to place in accordance with fluctuations of prices, and the manner in which the prices of food staples have maintained a general level throughout large tracts, in parts of which the harvests have been excellent. The scarcity prices which obtained over considerable areas during former famines have, except for a very short time, over very limited tracts, and under very exceptional circumstances, never even been approached on the present occasion; and while the improvement of communications has probably operated to make high prices more general than they otherwise would have been, it has certainly done much to diminish the intensity of distress where distress was most acute. The experience of the past year has shown that the reserve of food stocks in India is, even when preceding harvests have been unfavourable, larger than could have been foreseen; and the external help that has been afforded amounts to under 700,000 tons, of which

600,000 were rice from Burma. In parts of the country, however, the local reserves were exhausted at an early stage of the scarcity; and the Government of India believe that the readiness with which the demand thus arising was supplied from the resources of other and more favoured tracts, is due in no small measure to the policy of absolute abstention from interference with private enterprise, which, save in the case of very limited areas of which the circumstances were most exceptional, has been scrupulously observed throughout. Nor is it only in material respects that the position has been stronger now than formerly. The experience of previous famines has not been thrown away; and the approach of scarcity found for the first time an organisation elaborated in readiness for the struggle, and the main principles on which it was to be conducted laid down beforehand. The Famine Codes of the various provinces have been subjected to the severest possible test; it has disclosed in them defects which will now be corrected; but on the whole they have borne the trial well.

3. In the relief of distress and the prevention of death from privation the Government of this country have incurred a direct expenditure of between seven and eight crores of rupees; they have distributed about two crores more in the shape of loans for the construction of wells, for the purchase of seed and bullocks, and for other agricultural purposes; and they have suspended over two crores of land revenue, of which a substantial portion will not be recovered. This public expenditure has been supplemented by private charity of the most splendid nature. Rupees 29,16,000 have been contributed to the Indian Famine Charitable Relief Fund by India itself, Rs. 1,22,51,000 by Great Britain, Rs. 11,23,000 by other British Colonies, of which more than half came from Canada, and Rs. 2,46,000 by Foreign countries, making, in addition to valuable gifts in kind, an aggregate of Rs. 1,65,36,000. The money has been expended in the relief of distress which refused from honourable motives to accept public aid, in supplying additional comforts to the aged, the infirm, and the diseased, in providing for children whom famine has deprived of their natural guardians, and (perhaps most important and most valuable of all) in giving a fresh start in life to those who had lost their means of livelihood in the struggle for existence. The good thus done has been incalculable, and has called forth the deepest gratitude from the inarticulate millions who have benefited by it. Nor do the public subscription lists by any means exhaust the tale of private liberality. Large sums of money have been sent from various parts of the world, especially to Missionary agencies, and have been applied to the relief of distress. In this connection the cargo of grain contributed by charitable persons in America and despatched at the expense of the Government of the United States deserves special mention. Gentlemen, both European and Native, who derive their wealth from the land, have expended large sums in assisting the cultivators of the estates in which they were interested; and throughout the country smaller people have exercised, according to their means, that private charity which so honourably distinguishes the people of India. In all, relief for one day has been given at the expense of Government to 834 million units. In operations of such magnitude, mistakes are inevitable. But the Government of India believe that they were seldom serious, either in their nature or in their extent, and that in all cases they were promptly detected and remedied.

4. No measures of relief, however perfect and extensive, can prevent privation and distress at a time such as the past year has been; and privation and distress, when continued for long months together, must of necessity affect the death-roll, if only by increasing the susceptibility and weakening the power of resistance to disease, and by hastening the decease of those whose natural term was in any case approaching its close. Some of the parts of India in which distrsss was most acute are inhabited by passive and timorous forest tribes, habitually suspicious of Government interference; some are traversed by the great highways along which enormous numbers of the poorer classes annually pass from province to province in search of that employment which the varying agricultural seasons afford; in some provinces the re-establishment of the normal rainfall has been accompanied or followed, as often in former famines, by a wave of malarial fever. But the Governor-General in Council believes that the task of preserving human life which has for nearly a twelvemonth taxed the energies and the resources of the administration of almost every province in India, has been performed with conspicuous success.

5. No mere expenditure of money, however lavish, could have secured that success, unless accompanied by untiring devotion to duty on the part of those charged with its administration. The functions of the Supreme Government have necessarily been confined to providing the necessary funds when provincial resources were exhausted, and to exercising the most general supervision over the broad principles upon which relief was administered. Upon the heads of the Provincial Governments and their advisers devolved the heavy responsibility of watching the pulse of local distress, of instantly adopting measures varied to suit the varying conditions, and of holding an even balance between the claims of the unfortunate and the duty of public economy. The Governor-General in Council desires to recognise most cordially the manner in which that responsibility has been discharged, and the high sense of duty which has animated those upon whom it fell. Upon the Divisional and District officers, working in concert with the local officers of the Public Works, Medical, Police, Forest and other departments, has lain the task of carrying into effect the scheme of relief, the success of which was mainly dependent upon their watchful and active care. It is these officers and their assistants, European and Native, Civil, Military and non-official, who have most literally borne the burden and heat of the day; and some indeed have sacrificed their own lives in the successful effort to save the lives of others. There are many also who hold no official position, who have laboured with assiduity and self-devotion to save life and relieve suffering. All have done their duty nobly under the most trying circumstances; and His Excellency in Council desires publicly to express his admiration of the manner in which their fight to save life has been conducted. It will be found that the customary means of rewarding merit have not been overlooked, but the number of those who can be thus individually distinguished is necessarily small. The knowledge that they have done their duty and have earned the gratitude of the poor and helpless will remain with all who have done good service in the struggle, and His Excellency in Council is anxious to add this recognition of their work, which he is sure that public opinion will emphatically and universally endorse.

6. Finally, the Governor-General in Council desires to express his admiration of the manner in which the people of the country have endured the calamity. When prices rose at the first approach of scarcity, there were a few unimportant cases of local disturbance; and the amount of petty crime has no doubt been generally increased by the prevalence of famine. But, as a whole, the inhabitants of the tracts affected have endured the suffering which no efforts either of public or of private charity could do more than mitigate, with a patience and a fortitude that are beyond all praise. The marvellous power of recuperation which the population of India possess has often been the subject of remark; and His Excellency in Council earnestly hopes that, within the next few years, favourable seasons will have restored the people to prosperity, and have obliterated at any rate all material traces of what they suffered during the famine of 1897.

Government of Madras.
" of Bombay.
" of Bengal.
" of North-Western Provinces and Oudh.
" of Punjab.
" of Burma.

Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces.
" Assam.
" Coorg.
" Ajmere-Merwara.
Resident at Hyderabad.

Order. — Ordered that copies of the above Resolution be forwarded to the Local Governments and Administrations noted in the margin for information.

Ordered also, that copies be forwarded to the Finance, Public Works, Home and Foreign Departments for information.

Ordered also, that a copy be published in the *Gazette of India* for general information.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) DENZIL IBBETSON,
Secy. to the Government of India.

Order—No. 64, Revenue, dated 1st February 1898.

Miscellaneous.

Communicated to the Departments of the Secretariat, the Board of Revenue, the Superintendent, Madras Survey and the Lieutenant-General Commanding, Madras Command, for information.

2. The Resolution will also be re-published in the Fort St. George and all District Gazettes for general information.

(True Extract.)

Ag. Under Secretary to Government.

To the Financial Department, with one copy of Narrative.
" the Public Works Department, with one copy of Narrative.
" other Departments of the Secretariat.
" the Board of Revenue (Revenue Settlement, Land Records and Agriculture), with five copies of Narrative.
" the Board of Revenue (Land Revenue), with one copy of Narrative.
" " " (Separate Revenue).
" the Superintendent, Madras Survey.
" the Deputy Adjutant-General, Madras Command.
" the Superintendent, Government Press, Madras.

Exd. Shaik Karim.

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READ AGAIN G.O., No. 189 DATED

CURRENT No.

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ORDER OF GOVERNMENT	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
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STATEMENT WITH DITTO.								
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