

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1446

Press

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28-29

Dated 13 — 10 — 19 1858

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See
1446

Fort St. George, Judicial Consultation, 19th October 1858.

No. 28. Read the following letter from J. W. CHERRY, Esq., Acting Magistrate of Coimbatore; to T. PYCROFT, Esq., Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated 25th September 1858, No. 45.

SIR,

1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Extract from Minutes of Consultation of the 9th July 1858, No. 937, which reached me through the Session Judge of Coimbatore, on the 28th Idem, and in which explanation is called for as to the increase of highway and gang robberies in this District.

2. As the increase remarked upon by Government, refers to a period during which I had not had the charge of the District, and as the prevalence of crime is more prominent in the Talooks under the control of the Joint and Head Assistant Magistrates as will be observed from the accompanying statement, I thought it proper to call upon those Officers to afford any explanation they may have it in their power to offer on the increase of crime in their own divisions in particular as well as in the District generally.

3. Mr. Walhouse the Joint Magistrate assigns three principal operating causes.

1st. The unbroken series of exceedingly bad seasons with prices of all grains rising higher year by year.

2ndly. The want of all resources and occasional means of employment in the sub-division.

3rdly. The nearness of frontiers of several other Districts, from whence gangs are attracted to the rich villages on the banks of the Cavery and Ambravaty when the rivers are low.

4. With regard to the first of the above causes, Mr. Walhouse explains that the rates of prices of grains prevailing during the last and present year far surpass any previously on record in his Talooks, that doles of food are now being issued by private charity to the most destitute in the chief towns, which can reach but a small proportion, and that scarcity, trenching on famine, inevitably stimulates crime.

5. As to the 2nd cause, he states that the Railway that employs so many, does not run near the sub-division Talooks, that there are no extensive Public Works, and even ordinary works are stopped, and that the Neilgherries which in various ways afford the means of living to numbers of the poorer, are far distant.

6. On the 3rd point Mr. Walhouse explains that from the Cusbah town of Caroor (the head quarters of the sub division) the Salem border is but 7 miles distant, the Trichinopoly border but 8, and the Madura only 12, that the above three Districts lie all along the eastern and southern boundary of the sub division; that when the rivers are low, gangs are attracted from the bordering Districts to the rich villages on the banks of the Cavery and Ambravatty; and that these gangs passing over the boundary close at hand, commit depredations, and escape back to their own villages beyond the cognizance of the local Police of this District. Mr. Walhouse states that he has reason to believe the bulk of the offenders come from very considerable distances in other Districts. He adds that there may be other causes more or less active, such as the occasional appearance of an unusually bold and influential leader; that in too many cases there is an understanding more or less direct, between the robbers and the village Police, especially the Mo-nigars, and that this is very difficult to detect, but as strict a watch as possible is kept, and no instances of apparent collusion, neglect, or want of promptness are passed over.

7. Mr. Sullivan the Head Assistant Magistrate agrees with Mr. Walhouse in assigning the adversity of the season as one of the causes for the increase of crime, and adds to it the inefficiency and perhaps connivance of the village Police. He is of opinion that unless the seasons become more favorable than they have been for the last five or six years, crime cannot but increase, especially where no means of artificial irrigation exist.

8. The Talooks under the control of the Head Assistant Magistrate are four, viz., Errode, Perindoray, Andioor, and Colligaul. In the first of these Talooks, which is traversed by the Calingaroyen channel, Mr. Sullivan says there is but little crime. In Perindoray on the contrary, a high and dry Talook, where there is but little nunjah cultivation, it is steadily on the increase.

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9. He states that in the Talook of Andioor the villages are scattered and isolated, and are exposed to the inroads of the organized gangs of thieves who reside in the adjacent Talooks of the Salem District; that the Lumbadies also who bring in merchandize from the Mysore country by the Caverypooram pass, are nearly all professed thieves, but owing to the inaccessible nature of the country and scattered position of the villages, it is almost impossible for the Police to prevent their depredations, or to apprehend the perpetrators of a robbery; and that these robbers immediately after plundering a village, escape beyond the boundary into an equally wild and inaccessible country, or if the pursuit be hot, conceal themselves in jungles from which it is next to impossible to unearth them. Mr. Sullivan states that the Colligaul Talook also suffers much from the depredations of those semi-traders, semi-rogues.

10. These explanations of Messrs. Walhouse and Sullivan appear to be satisfactory, and as regards the Talooks under the control of the Magistrate, I can only say that the continuous unfavorable character of the season seems to me to be the chief cause for the prevalence of crime, and that a recurrence of good seasons with plentiful harvests and favorable prices are alone likely to diminish it.

11. Since the commencement of the cultivating season for the present Fusly, there has been no rain at all in some Talooks. The early rains in April and May 1858, were but partial and scanty, and the southwest monsoon in June, July and August, has entirely failed, the dry cultivation has mostly perished for want of it, and nunjah lands have not as yet even been cultivated except in places bordering on the Bowany and Ambravaty rivers. The seasons for the last four years have been extremely bad, and the present making the fifth of the kind, causes no ordinary distress. Under such a state of things, and taking into consideration the fact that the lower classes of the Native population, who have been reduced to live upon roots and berries, and whose very appearance shows the hardships, bad seasons and high prices have brought them to,

I have just inspected in company with the Zillah Surgeon the 420 and odd convicts in the Jail and their sleek appearance contrasts greatly with that of the famished people outside.

find themselves comfortably housed and fed in Jail, with not near the work to do on the roads that they had in the fields, but however, without the belly full of good rice to do it upon; considering I repeat, this fact, I do not think the increase of crime is so much to be wondered at.

12. The inefficiency and undoubted connivance of the village authorities may also be assigned as another cause. I have made it a practice to dismiss all heads of villages in cases in which I have reason to believe that crimes have been perpetrated from carelessness or connivance on their part.

13. To an Officer anxious to have well in hand all his Native subordinates, and to make them look alone to him for promotion or punishment, it is not a little discouraging to find either a mitigation or remission of the punishments he inflicts, and though I would be the last to shut the door of appeal against any one, I think there should be less enquiry called for into the particulars of cases that can be seldom satisfactorily proved, and a greater confidence placed in the judgment of those on the spot, and who have better means of information as regards the characters and conduct of their subordinates, and which can never be given in detail in a report; thus, efforts at reform are paralyzed, and the head of the district placed in a false position.

14. Half an hour's conversation with a ryot on the road-side will often put the Collector in possession of information that a most rigid enquiry will fail to elicit and yet unless there is a satisfactory conviction in a case, the parties often escape only to take another advantage of their official position to plunder.

15. It is computed that there are no less than 10,000 Native Officials, Village and Talook Sibbendy, in this District, where there is such an amount of crime as now so properly attracts the notice of Government, I do not think it unreasonable to conclude that most of these 10,000 servants of Government have a great deal to say to it, and should certainly be held answerable where it occurs in their neighbourhood. Their ignorance cannot be treated otherwise than culpable.

16. The reorganization of the Police force proposed by Mr. Robinson the Commissioner, who has lately been here, and with whom I have cordially co-operated, will I hope place the Village Police on a better footing, and under its operation the perpetration of crimes will not only be

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prevented but more frequently detected, nothing I admit can be worse than the Police of this District now, and I for one shall gladly welcome the proposed change.

17. Cases of petty cattle stealing, committed by more than one person, have also been included by Police Officers in the returns under the head of gang robberies, which have consequently swelled the entries in some degree under the latter mentioned head, I have now issued a Circular to distinguish such cases from those which may be more properly designated "gang robberies" or as they ought to be called "dacoities."

Statement shewing the number of Highway and Gang Robberies reported to have been perpetrated in the District of Coimbatore, during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Quarters of 1857, and the 1st Quarter of 1858.

	2nd Quarter of 1857.			3rd Quarter of 1857.			4th Quarter of 1857.			1st Quarter of 1858.			Comparison between the 4th Quarter of 1857 and the 1st Quarter of 1858.	
	Highway robbery.	Attempt at do.	Gang robbery.	Highway robbery.	Attempt at do.	Gang robbery.	Highway robbery.	Attempt at do.	Gang robbery.	Highway robbery.	Attempt at do.	Gang robbery.	Increase.	Decrease.
Total number of cases..	11	0 40	2 53	18	0 59	1 78	24	1 54	5 84	14	0 51	3 68	0	16
Deduct cases in the Joint Magistrate's Dn	2	0 16	0 18	2	0 26	0 28	1	0 19	2 22	2	0 21	3 26	4	0
Do. in the Head Asst. Magistrate's Dn.....	3	0 11	0 14	2	0 12	0 14	3	0 8	2 13	4	0 8	0 12	0	1
Total...	5	0 27	0 32	4	0 38	0 42	4	0 27	4 35	6	0 29	3 38	3	0
Remainder in the Talooks in the Magistrate's Dn.....	6	0 13	2 21	14	0 21	1 36	20	1 27	1 49	8	0 22	0 30	0	19

Coimbatore,
25th September 1858.

(Signed) J. W. CHERRY,
Acting Magistrate.

No. 29.

ORDER THEREON, No. 1446; dated 13th October 1858.

Ordered to be communicated to the Chief Commissioner of Police for the Madras Presidency.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

No 1446.

Ordered to be communicated to
the Chief Commissioner of
Police for the Madras Presidency
To be S. George
13 October 1858. J

To the Chief Comr of Police - 21st
" Mayor of Combatore 3