M.R.O. 1—39,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1700 Press Mis—
1-2

Dated 21—12— 1925

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department, for the month of December 1859.

No. 1. Read the following letter from THEODORE T. FORD, Esq., Secretary to the Church Mission Society, Madras; to the Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated December 15th, 1859, No. 8.

I have the honor to solicit attention to the enclosed extracts from a letter lately received from the Reverend F. N. Alexander of Ellore, having reference to the late sacrifices there made in honor of the so called Cholera Goddess.

In bringing before you the occasion of this large and needless destruction of animal life, I would wish to draw the attention of Government to the implied sanction given on its part to these cruel and inhuman proceedings, with their attendant impalement of lambs, pigs, &c., by the permitting their occurrence on the public highway under the eye and indeed the protection and guidance of its local Police. Feeling sure that it can never be the intention of a Christian Government to lend the color of authority to such proceedings as those narrated in the enclosed communication, I have ventured on behalf of the Church Missionary Society to submit the whole matter for its consideration.

Extracts from a letter from Reverend F. N. ALEXANDER; to Reverend P. S. ROYSTON, Secretary Church Missionary Society, dated Ellore, November 7th, 1859.

You are perhaps aware that Cholera has been very prevalent in the Northern Circars during the year, Bunder especially has been severely visited and very many have been carried off there by that dreadful disease. Ellore has to a great extent been spared this scourge, and comparatively few have succumbed to the disease. Falsely ascribing this to the favour of Ammavárá and wishing to procure a continuance of her regard, it was determined to have a grand offering on the Jatera or festival of the goddess which happened on last Sunday week. For months in all the villages round and most probably all over the country peculiar worship has been offered to the goddess, little sheds were erected in each village, and some 5 or 6 persons, men and women of the very lowest castes, poor ignorant and depraved creatures, danced before the idol shed in a manner peculiar to this worship, or taking large poles covered with margosa leaves, which from their bitter taste are supposed peculiarly grateful to the goddess, preceded by tom toms, they marched round the town to receive the offerings of money and rice and to have their feet watered by copious libations poured out upon them by matrons and maidens of the place. But last Saturday, Sunday and Monday week were the great climax of this worship. On the first of these days an immense crowd gathered from the town and out villages into the bazaar and leading streets of Ellore, and with great noise and uproar brought out the idol of the goddess in procession, drawing it in a car made up for the occasion and concerning which I shall have to relate more hereafter. On the Sunday about 4 in the afternoon the horrid work of sacrificing began. The temple of Ammavárá is on the east of the town, and besides this for many months there has been a shed of palmyra leaves, such as those described above, erected to her honor and for her worship in the west street immediately under the Fort, and that is as you are aware THE LEADING THOROUGHFARE of the town, being the high road connecting Bunder with Ellore, and Ellore with Rajahmundry and the north, passing right through the bazaar. In both these places sacrifices were offered, in the last mentioned 900 sheep and 20 head of buffaloes and in the east street perhaps 500 sheep and 30 or 40 buffaloes. I wish particularly to call your attention to the fact that this was in the public highway and performed in a way necessarily producing the worst possible effects upon the people, the sacrificers were ten Vetti men, with countenances rendered demoniacal by the fierce excitement, the flowing blood and the shouts of the people.

When I arrived at the western station, I saw what I will attempt to describe. Before the shed there was a huge pile of heads severed from the sheep that had just been slaughtered, this pile was about 5 feet high and 20 feet round, upon it was burning a single lamp, around it a fringe of carcasses, the remaining carcasses being taken away to supply a feast to the offerers. Around this hideous pile the ground was quite slippery with the blood of the sheep killed there.

About 200 yards off a dense body of people were gathered and in the centre were the Vetti men (appointed for sacrificing) going round and round in their horrid dance, brandishing aloft

weighty scimetar-shaped knives, some two feet long, at their feet in a sort of hole or pit lay the carcasses of 4 buffaloes already slaughtered, bleeding and horrid to behold. The heads had been taken and placed in a row before the idol shed, each with one of its own feet cut off and placed in the mouth, for I should have mentioned that head and feet were both cut off and that a huge pile of boiled rice was placed beside the pile of heads above mentioned. After dancing some time, another buffaloe was led out, my heart bled for the poor thing. I felt at that time that I would have given any thing to save it from the cruel fate coming upon it, but I could do nothing, whilst the loud tom tom was continued. Two men fastened a rope round the head and horns and kept it distended with all their might and two men caught hold of the tail, and in like manner dragged it outwards, then the heavy knife was lifted high up by another man and the poor thing would have ceased to breathe in another moment when a dreadful altercation took place amongst the offerers, each claiming for himself the right of immolating the victim, high words were used, sticks began to fall and soon I believe these fearful knives would have been used too, when *peons and the directors* of the sacrifice rushed in and sent them all in a procession to meet their brother worshippers of the east street. I had before this been able in lulls of the storm on the outskirts of the crowd to witness against this awful and degrading impiety against the only true God. Not much could be said on either side, the people were too much excited and I myself was stupified with the sight, mounting my pony I went with the people towards the east street where the temple of the goddesses is, that I might raise up my voice there too against these shocking rites. This second place presented the same appearance as the other, only it was on a more extensive scale, some fifteen buffaloes were already slaughtered with the heads ranged in a long row before the goddess and the same huge pile of sheep heads and another of boiled rice as in the other place and in addition some fifty or sixty people (lighted by many torches) were engaged in turning model spinning wheels in favor of the goddess, why I have not been able to learn.

This place was much more extensive than the other and at the time of my arrival the people were a little quiet, so I had a better opportunity of conversing with numerous groups on the awful and tremendous consequences of these bloody rites. Next morning, Monday, I went down at an early hour to the idol temple feeling that such scenes are necessary to impress the preacher properly with the condition of the people and wishing as publicly as possible to witness against such fearful idolatry. They were then preparing to set out with the car mentioned before, for it is customary to take this and leave it at the Póleméru, or limit of the village, but I suppose on the principle of not going empty-handed, new sacrifices were offered up and *on each corner of the top of the car, which was surmounted with sharp wooden spikes, a lamb was impaled alive and along with them in the middle, four sucking pigs.* It was horrible to hear the agonized struggles of the poor animals which I believe remain alive for hours and to see the horrid gloating satisfaction of the crowds that went before and followed. The car was thus carried about the town for about 3 hours and then as always preceded by tom toms it was dragged by the willing people, passed the Collector's house and out into the open country about a mile north of the Mission house, to the village boundary, there a secret tope was selected, the people gathered round, the dance again commenced, the knives were brandished and another unfortunate buffaloe slaughtered. * * * *

The worst of this matter is that the people without any exception claim the countenance and the favour too of our rulers for the performance of these rites, although many people have assured me that the Collector's mandate alone is requisite to put a stop for ever to such practices.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. BOND, for
THEODORE T. FORD,
Secretary Church Mission Society.

No. 2. ORDER THEREON, 21st December 1859, No. 1700.

Referred for the report of the Magistrate of the Krishna Division.

(Signed) T. PYCROFT,
Chief Secretary.

Exd. F. Cartledge.

Order thereon 21 December 59. No. 1700.
Referred for the report of the Magistrate of the Krishna Division.
J.P.
Chief Secretary.

The Magistrate of the Krishna Division. Dis/24