

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	150	Press ~~Mis~~
²⁴⁵⁻²⁴⁶ Dated	27-1-	19/8.65

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
27th January 1865.*

No. 245. Read the following letter from J. ROHDE, Esq., Inspector General of Jails, to the Honorable A. J. ARBUTHNOT, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Ootacamund, 22nd November 1864, No. 332.

In forwarding to you my notes on the Coimbatore Jail, I must beg the Government to defer all notice of what I have said as to the removal of ailing and infirm prisoners generally, till it receives my notes on the Bengal Committee's Report on Jails.

2. The subject of the 1st four paragraphs will probably be communicated to the Public Works Department.

3. The rest requires no order, all matters noticed being within my own control.

COIMBATORE.

I visited the new building with Colonel Walker, Superintending Engineer, on the morning of the 21st August. Mr. Smith who has recently joined as an Assistant was in charge of the work and lived on the ground. Several discrepancies in the plans and estimates, bearing my countersignature, were pointed out to me and adjusted. These plans were also in several points defective, and the estimates not in all cases in accordance with the specifications agreed on with Colonel Ouchterlony, and which Colonel Walker subsequently suggested as improvements; indeed, in carrying on the work, it is even found to be a measure of economy to use stone, in preference to brick, to a much greater extent than was proposed, and this change has my concurrence.

2. In designing the building, neither Colonel Ouchterlony or I were aware of the facility with which an excellent stone, with a smooth and parallel fracture, could be obtained; and under the impression that the rubble work would be neither safe or economical to a greater height than four feet from the floors, it was resolved to limit the building in stone to that height. The plan and estimates were subsequently sent for revision and remarks to the District Engineer, and the stone work was restricted to the foundations and base. Experience has shown that the whole may, with economy and advantage, be constructed of stone, and I have authorized this change in the design.

3. Three times since last January, when I visited these works, has a change been made of Assistants in charge, with every one of whom I have been in communication, partly with the view to aiding in getting timber, iron, and iron gates for the building. On these points my intercourse has of necessity not been strictly official, and the result has been that the suggestions to each have not been acted on before a change took place. I have again, at Colonel Walker's request, written to bespeak Mr. Kohloff's promised advice and assistance to Mr. Smith in procuring timber. I have also secured the assistance of the Ordnance in furnishing the iron doors to the cells, and I trust now that there will no longer be delay on these accounts. I may, however, suggest that, considering the difficulty of getting straight grained "jungle wood" of good quality in sufficient length, the extra expense in working it, the great advantage of using continuous pieces extending over several points of support, and the great saving of timber (as in purlins, bressummers, &c.) thus allowable, it would be better to purchase teak, which can be had seasoned in any quantity at any moment, to delaying the work for Vengy. Colonel Walker himself suggested this, and if the suggestion is approved, bressummers 8' x 6', resting on 3 pillars of the workshops, instead of Vengy bressummers in lengths resting on two pillars only 12' x 8", will be cheaper and better, for rafters, door and window frames, and venetians, &c. I think the Vengy (*Ptercarpus marsupium*) equal to teak, as venetians, perhaps better.

4. For tie beams, I should not object to the use of *Kurri Mardoo*, the *Nalla Maddé* of the Circars.

5. In the old Jail, I found an abominable atmosphere in all the wards, though I visited the building in the evening, when the wards had been all day unoccupied. I have generally visited this Jail in the morning, soon after the wards were vacated, but have never found them so offensive. This was accounted for by the experiment in dry earth conservancy, which in the case of the urinals

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proved a most decided failure. I desired that the coal tarred English enamelled urinals might again be used, and coal tar freely expended in their neighbourhood, and that in the double range of wards, openings should be made in the party walls, and windows put in the ends; for the Jail is decidedly over-crowded, and is becoming more and more unhealthy. The unhealthiness of the building was manifested in the way in which the numerous prisoners, who returned with fever from the Metapolliem road gangs, succumbed to the ordinary Jail diseases with which they were attacked after admission into Hospital. Of 103 prisoners transferred to the Asylum works, the deaths were from dysentery 1, from diarrhoea 3, scurvy 4, and other causes 3, in a period of about six months. When it is remembered that with certainly equally hard work, when the European Jail was in progress, the mortality was, from such complaints, *nil*; that the buildings in Lovedale are quite as likely, in themselves, to be healthy as the Zillah Jail at Ootacamund; that the food at the Asylum works is better, and the clothing more abundant; it must be that the seeds of disease were brought up by the gang from the Coimbatore Jail, when it was in a very unhealthy state, or that the disease has been contracted by communication with others, particularly the Cuddapah gang, to which the scurvy is undoubtedly due. But when it is shown that of 124 Salem prisoners there have been only two deaths, while they have been subjected to precisely the same influences, the cause of the unhealthiness of the Coimbatore gang must be attributed to the taint communicated by that Jail, at the time the transfer was made. The previous health of Coimbatore prisoners on the Hills, both in 1832, and during the last four years in the Zillah Jail, and the health of a party removed to Palghaut before the Jail became unhealthy, precludes all other supposition.

6. I had requested the Zillah Surgeon, when I went to Coimbatore, to have a list prepared for me of the cases transferred from the Hills, and I returned after its preparation and inspected them. I was struck with the very large proportion of aged men among them, and have since been particular in directing the selection for the Hill gang to be made from Convicts in the prime of life. I have delayed this report, and have since, at the urgent desire of the Medical Officer, supported by the Zillah Judge, relieved the Jail by the transfer of 100 prisoners to the Ootacamund Zillah Jail; though, to enable the Jail at that Station to receive them, I have been obliged to occupy additional buildings for the reception of a gang selected from the prisoners next to be released. This step had already been proposed in my letter to

Order of Government, 10th October.

Government of the 8th October, and now sanctioned.

7. There still (November 14th) remain in the Coimbatore Jail 343 prisoners, nearly double the number that, in considering its very unhealthy state, can be with any propriety in it.

8. In the first four months of the present year 1864, cholera broke out in this Jail and was accompanied by and left, (no unusual occurrence) taint that proved fatal to many of those who most unfortunately had at the same time been attacked by an unusually severe fever that attacked the gang placed under the Engineer at Metapolliem. These succumbed, not to the fever brought in, but to the Jail disease, which supervened.

9. I had an application from the Superintending Engineer to place a gang of the Coimbatore convicts in a house erected for another purpose in the neighbourhood of the new Jail; but in so dry a climate as Coimbatore, I did not feel justified in placing them in a thatched building, even for what may be called the rainy months.

10. It is my intention to keep the number confined in this jail as low as possible, the strong healthy prisoners being transferred, as opportunity offers, to the hills; those less strong to Palghaut, a station which has hitherto proved healthy for Coimbatore prisoners. As soon as the worksheds of the new Jail are finished, and one yard is enclosed, I hope to transfer the Zillah prisoners to it; but every addition to my experience induces me to deprecate the contiguity of the sick and healthy in our Jails, and in using the term "sick" I do so in a much more extended sense than in its application to those in hospital only. There can be no doubt that the large number of scrofulous prisoners, committed to this Jail, has tended much to the large annual death rate; but I am inclined to think that not only is this mortality among those so admitted, but that the taint is communicated to those in association with them, if not to the building itself. With only six prisoners in a

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ward in the new building, the separation of the ward into six spaces, for sleeping, by battens—three such spaces on each side and a current of air down the centre—I hope this taint may be, with proper precaution, avoided; but I am disposed to urge that, as in my new plans for the prisons at Madura and Tanjore, there shall be a more complete separation of the hospital. This will form the subject of a separate letter, as the building is further advanced.

OOTACAMUND,
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL OF JAILS.

(Signed) J. ROHDE.
Inspector General of Jails.

No. 246.

ORDER THEREON, 27th January 1865, No. 150.
Communicated to the Department of Public Works.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Inspector General of Jails.
" Public Works Department.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

From 20th Sept 1864 - Oct 1884
10th Nov 1864 - 10th Nov 1867

For the Inspecting Genl of Gaols

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Judicial Mr. Dept-
From 100 3

The Inspecting
of gaols

The Chief Secy,
to Government
Fort St George

Dated 22nd Nov 1864
Recd 29th

No 332
No 2475

Forwards
his notes on the
Bombay gaols & begs
to defer notice of his
further ~~letter~~ on the
Bengal Committee's
Report on gaols received

with an order

245. 246.