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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public Works DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1626	Press
348-399	Mis.
Dated 17-5-	1869.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No 398 Read the following letter from the Officer in charge of Public Works Operations in the Wynaad, to the Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, dated Luckadie, 8th May 1869, No 84 —

IN continuation of my letter, No. 73, dated 5th instant, I have the honour to report that sickness remains unabated at Luckadie, and, although amongst the men there do not appear any cases likely, if attended to, to be fatal, it is not the same with their families — children are now being daily carried off, and I am told that there is not one single woman or child in the Sapper Lines that has not been attacked. Naturally this has a most dispiriting effect, and the men seem cowed under the visitation. The majority, moreover, of them who have been suffering from fever, are so weakened that even after convalescence they will be of very little use, and be predisposed to a recurrence of similar attacks. I hope, therefore, that no time will be lost in removing the Company. Indeed, had I any authority in the matter, I would take the responsibility on myself to march them off without waiting for orders — so rapidly is the state of things becoming worse.

2 I may here mention a very great inconvenience, which is also attended with much suffering to the sick, that might be avoided. At this moment there are several men who have been recommended for sick leave, and for whom the sooner change of air is obtained the better, but they are obliged to wait until Railway Passes can be procured from the Brigade-Major at Cannanore. In one case in which the Sapper Officer acted on his own responsibility, and allowed a man to go at once, I understand he has been obliged to pay the Railway fare out of his own pocket. The delay caused by the above, as I said before, entails much avoidable suffering, and might make all the difference between life and death.

3 The severity, or rather I might say the universality of the disease this year, is difficult to account for, for, although it is as usual rather prevalent throughout Wynaad, it does not appear elsewhere to be anything like so much in excess of former seasons as it is here. The March and April rains have been rather lighter than usual at Luckadie and its neighbourhood, and the weather has been rather warmer, but the same state of things exists everywhere, whereas it is on a line extending some twenty-six miles inland from the head of the Tambracherry Ghaut, with a breadth of perhaps nearly the same, that this unusual amount of fever is found. Generally, new felling of forest is attended with sickness in its neighbourhood, but very little of that has this year been done, and altogether there is an absence of any apparent cause. The aggravated sickness amongst the Sappers is perhaps a good deal owing to the fact that both the B and K. Companies had suffered before they came to Luckadie; and though this was the second season in Wynaad for the former, the men had always been rather sickly. I must say, however that had the medical care of the detachment been entrusted to more competent hands, the extraordinary severity of the sickness, I am positive, would have been in a very great measure prevented. I take this opportunity of mentioning that the Hospital Assistant, who has lately been attached to the Public Works Department, accompanied the B. Company to Bangalore, and in such a state of health that I do not suppose he will return. I hope, therefore, that when the K. Company is removed, it will be borne in mind that some medical subordinate will be required to remain at Luckadie for the benefit of those whose duty compels them to remain at the place.

4 As I believe information on any subject connected with the prevalent diseases is always considered of interest, I may mention some particulars which militate somewhat against the usually received opinions on the subject of fever. In the first place, I may mention that, although very few people, who reside any time in Wynaad, escape the malady, to very few adults also, who have the opportunity of prompt treatment, does it ever prove fatal. It is sometimes unattended with ague, but generally that stage of the disease is the precursor, and from the severe vomiting that invariably accompanies it, its nature is decidedly belious. The localities where it occurs are capricious. The only description of jungle where it is always met with, and also in its severest form, is that bordering on Mysore where there is a good deal of teak and bamboo. The jungle is open, and foliage generally deciduous, ground covered with wild date and long coarse grass, with low swampy patches occurring between belts of jungle. In other places, I have known coolylines built close to a swamp at times quite free from fever, while in other lines on the same estate, situated on high ground, almost every inmate would be prostrated, and *vice versa*. The Nairs and Chetties, the principal land-holders, generally place their houses close to paddy flats, and I observe that they never choose hill tops, and that all they seem to attend to is thorough drainage, and to keep the wind off, for which purpose they surround their houses with trees of the thickest foliage. As for Luckadie, I have observed that since the heavy forest, which formerly surrounded it, and acted as a complete shelter, has been cleared away, it has become more unhealthy. Whether there is any connection between the two I do not offer any opinion, but the coincidence is undeniable. Perhaps, the most extraordinary contradiction of all popular idea on the subject of fever is, that last year having some work to be done on the lower part of the Tambracherry Ghaut, for which I required Sappers, and the distance being rather far for the men to pass over daily, going to and from their work, I determined to try the experiment of keeping them on the ghaut itself, and a party of twenty men were huttet at a place about 900 feet only from the foot of the ghaut, in the heart of forest of the heaviest description. At first the men were relieved every third day, and it was determined to withdraw them altogether at the very first symptom of probable ill-results. The period for relief was then extended to a week, and throughout the whole of last season, only one case of fever occurred amongst all the men who were from time to time sent there. The experiment was repeated this season with nearly as favorable results, the fever cases being invariably relapses of attacks experienced above the ghaut. The men, however, were a short time ago entirely withdrawn, as they did not like being separated from the sick members of their families, who could not be accommodated below. I find the coolies who are employed at the same place, and who live there, are at the present time tolerably healthy; while those above are suffering a good deal. In this the opinion as regards the foot or places near the foot of hills being so peculiarly unhealthy, is quite at variance with what has been experienced; and I do not know that I have ever heard it averred that thick heavy forest where neither sun nor wind can penetrate, would be anything but downright deadly, yet the fact remains, though to act on the belief that it is anything more than a temporary and fortuitous state of things, and to risk trying the change on a larger scale, is more than I venture to encounter the responsibility of; for were any mischance to occur, whether it were really a consequence or not, I fear it would be

laid at my door for such total disregard of such a long-established and such a universal opinion as is held on the subject

5. I take this opportunity of the Sappers being temporarily withdrawn to mention what I would propose as to future arrangements. I will premise that Sapper labour is one that I consider quite exceptional, and what I would never care to employ, except under absolute necessity. Without it there have been two or three years in which nothing could have been done on the Tambracherry Ghaut. Labour of the commonest kind was very hard to get, while anything of a better description was quite unattainable. The men have, therefore, done right, a good public service here; and it is with no view of depreciation that I say I would not employ them, except as an absolute necessity. The fact is, that there is so much more trouble entailed on their account than is required in the case of hired labour, and the evil of divided authority that exists between the Public Works Officer and the Officer in Command of the Sappers is so great that the value of the services of the latter are much less appreciated than they would be otherwise. I must say, in connection with this, that I think it would be as well if all Sapper Officers were to be better informed as to the amount of time and attention they are bound to give to the works on which their men are employed, and if their position, as regards their responsibility in connection with such work, were more clearly understood. With reference to the Luckadie Detachment I proposed demi-officially to the Commandant of Sappers that he should let me have a body of twenty-five men, selected with reference to their knowledge of certain trades that I named, under a good energetic Native Officer, and with the proper complement of Non-Commissioned Officers, and that the strength of the Detachment should be reduced accordingly. Lieutenant-Colonel Prendergast, however, replies that compliance would disorganize the Sappers; and from what he says besides, I think that he has somewhat misapprehended my proposal, and is under the idea that I wish to pick out the best men in a Company, but that is not the case. I propose selection simply with reference to the knowledge of the men in particular trades, and in all other respects, there is no reason why the remainder of the Company should not be as good or better than the selected twenty-five. An inconvenience might be felt if it were done in the case of a Company, the remainder of which was required for Public Works elsewhere, but if the selection were made from a Company serving at the head-quarters of the corps, I do not see that any harm could ensue, as the men at head-quarters are all supposed to be under instruction, and the fact of the absence of a certain number of tradesmen, already acquainted with their work, could in no way militate against the teaching of the remainder. The work still required of the Sappers on the Tambracherry Ghaut is, as before, revetment building; but as work is not now necessary at the same high pressure as before the ghaut was opened for traffic, a smaller number would suffice, but the objection to the smaller number is this, that frequently in connection with the work, the services of tradesmen are necessary, and there are times when skilled hired artizans cannot be obtained on any terms, and when the want of them is most seriously felt, it is then that the Sappers are most useful, while there would be a great chance of not finding such as are required in a small detachment. The only way, therefore, unless the composition of the latter is such as I have proposed, is to ensure getting the men really required, by keeping a whole

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
17th May 1869.*

Company I think that probably a reconsideration of the subject might enable the Commandant of Sappers to see his way to meeting my views, without the evil results he anticipates. In any case, whether a whole Company or a selected number is sent, I propose that they should be at Luckadie on 1st September next, and I hope that at the close of the next working season, I shall be in a position to report that the services of Sappers are no longer required in Wynaad.

No 393.

ORDER THEREON, 17th May 1869, No 1,626.

ESTABLISHMENT, No 44

COMMUNICATED to the Military Department with a view to the necessary orders being issued for a competent Medical Subordinate being posted to Luckadie, and to its being considered in that department whether a party of twenty-five selected Sappers, with its complement of Native Officers, might not advantageously, as proposed by Major Kennedy, be detached to Luckadie after the rains instead of a full Company.

(True Extract)

(Signed) CHARLES A. ORR, Colonel, R E,
Secretary to Government.

To the Military Department
To Major R B Kennedy

Exd F. R Bantleman.

*Special Engr Engineer's Office
Luckadie Wynaad, 8th
May 1869.*

No 84.-

*From, The Special Executive
Engineers Wynaad.*

*To, The Secretary to Government
Department Public Works
Madras.*

*Sir, In continuation of my
letter No 73 dated 2nd Instant, I have
the honor to report that Lieutrop
remains situated at Luckadie,
and although amongst the men
there do not appear any cases likely
if attended to, to be fatal, it
is not the same with their families;
children are now being daily
carried off, and I am told that
there is not one single woman or
child in the Sapper Series, that
has not been attacked; naturally
this has a most dispiriting ef-
fect, and the men seem bowed
under the visitation; the majority,
moreover, of them who have been
suffering from fever, are so weak-
ened.*

mentioned that even after convalescence they will be of very little use, and be predisposed to a recurrence of similar attacks. I hope, therefore, that no time will be lost in moving the Company; indeed had I any authority in the matter, I would take the responsibility on myself to march them off without waiting for orders, so rapidly as the state of things becoming worse.

2. I may have mentioned a very great inconvenience, which is also attended with much suffering to the sick, that might be avoided; - at this moment there are several men who have been recommended for sick leave, and for whom the former change of air is obtained the better, but they are obliged to wait until Railway papers can be procured from the Brigade Major at Calcutta. In one case, in which the ^{Supper Officer} acted on his own responsibility, and allowed a man to go at once, I understood he has been obliged to pay the Railway fare out of his own pocket, - The delay caused by

by the above, as I said before, entails much avoidable suffering and might make all the difference between life and death.

3. The severity, or rather I might say the universality of the disease this year, is difficult to account for; for although it is as usual rather prevalent throughout Wynd, it does not appear, to be any thing like so much in crops of former seasons, as it is here; the month and April rains have been rather lighter than usual at Suakhe, and its neighbourhood, and the weather has been rather warmer; but the same state of things exists everywhere, whereas it is on a line extending some 26 miles inland from the head of the Tanhercherry Ghaut, with a breadth of perhaps nearly the same, that this unusual amount of fever is found. Generally, newfelling of Forest is attended with sickness in its neighbourhood; but very little of that has this year been done; and altogether there is an absence of any apparent cause.

The

The aggravated sickness amongst
the Sappers, is perhaps a good deal
owing to the fact that both the
B and H Companies had suffered
before they came to Suakarie; and
though this was the second season
in England for the fever, the men
had always been rather sickly.
I must say, however, that had
the medical care of the Detachment
been entrusted to more compe-
tent hands, the extraordinary se-
verity of the sickness, I am positive,
would have been in a very great
measure prevented. I take
this opportunity of mentioning
that the Hospital Assistant who
has lately been attached to the Public
Works Department, accompanied
the B. Company to Pangloss, and
in such a state of health, that I do
not suppose he will return, I hope,
therefore, that when the H Company
is moved, it will be borne in
mind that some medical Subordi-
nate will be required to remain at
Suakarie, for the benefit of that whole
detachment, Compels them to remain at
the place.

As I have information

on any subject connected with the
prevalent diseases is always confident
of interest, I may mention some
particulars which militate somewhat
against the usually received opinions
on the subject of Fever. In the
first place, I may mention that
although very few people, who reside
any time in England, escape the
malady, to very few adults also,
who have the opportunity of prompt
treatment; does it ever prove fatal;
it is sometimes unattended with
a cure, but generally that stage of
the disease is the precursor, and from
the dangers attending that invariably
accompanied it, its nature is
decidedly bilious; the localities where
it occurs are capricious; the only
description of jungle where it is al-
ways met with, and also in its
severest form, is that bordering
on a hypos, where there is a good
deal of Teak and Bamboo; the
jungle is open, and foliage gene-
rally deciduous; ground covered
with wild date, and long coarse
grass; with low swampy patches
occurring between belts of jungle,
In other places, I have known

Cooley.

Coaly pines built close to a swamp
at times quite free from grass,
while in other places on the same
estate, situated on high ground,
almost every immediate neighbor
is a tree, and Chitties, the principal
land holders, generally place their
houses close to Paddy fields; and
I believe that they must choose
hill tops; and that all they seem
to attend to is, through drainage;
and to keep the wind off; for which
purpose they surround their houses
with trees of the thickest foliage.
As for Sickness, I have observed
that since the heavy forest which
formerly surrounded it, and which
was a complete shelter, has been cleared
away, it has become more un-
healthy; whether there is any
connection between the two, I do
not offer any opinion, but I can
evidence as undeniable. - Perhaps
the most extraordinary contradiction
of all popular ideas on the subject
of fever, is that, last year having
some work to be done on the lower
part of the Lumbacherry Ghaut,
for which I procured laborers,
and

11
and the distance being rather far for
the men to pass over daily, going
to and from their work. I de-
termined to try the experiment
of keeping them on the Ghaut itself;
and a party of 20 men were sta-
tioned at a place about 900 feet only
from the foot of the Ghaut, in the
heart of forest of the heaviest de-
scription; at first the men were
relieved every third day, and
it was determined to withdraw
them altogether at the very first
symptoms of probable ill result.
The period for relief was then
extended to a week; and through-
out the whole of last season,
only one case of fever occurred
amongst all the men who were
from time to time at there.
The experiment was repeated
this season, with nearly as favor-
able results; the fears of being
invariably pelagies of attacks in-
creased above the Ghaut; the
men, however, were a short
time ago entirely withdrawn,
as they did not like being sepa-
rated from the sick members
of their families who could not
be

be accommodated below, I find the
Cookies who are employed at the
same place, and who live there are
at the present time, tolerably healthy;
while those above are suffering a
good deal. In this ^{the} opinion
as regards the food or places near the
foot of Hills being so peculiarly unhealthy,
is quite at variance with what
has been experienced; and I do
not know that I have ever heard
it asserted that thick heavy forest
when neither sun nor wind can
penetrate, would be any thing
but downright deadly; yet ⁱⁿ
the fact remains; though
to act on the belief that it is any
thing more than a temporary,
and fortuitous state of things,
and to ^{practise} trying the change
on a large scale, is more than
I venture to encounter the responsibility
of; for were any mischance to
occur, whether it were really a con-
sequence or not, I fear it would
be laid at my door for such total
disregard of such a long established,
and such an universal opinion as is
held on the subject.

I take this opportunity
of

of the Sappers being temporarily
withdrawn to mention what I would
propose as to future arrangements;
I will promise that Sapper labour
is one that I consider quite in-
-essential, and what I would
never care to employ, except in-
-des absolute necessity. Without
it, there have been times as there
yet in which nothing could
have been done on the Trenches
except by the ^{kind} labours of the com-
-mune ~~men~~ ^{men} working
hands to get, while any thing of
a better description was quite
unattainable; the men have there-
-fore done right good public ser-
-vice here, and it is with no
view of depreciation that I say I
would not employ them, except
as an absolute necessity. The fact
is that there is so much more
trouble entailed on their account,
than is required in the case of
hired labour; and the evil of
divided authority that exists between
the Public works officer, and the
officer in Command of the
Sappers, is so great, that the
value of the services of the latter

are much less appreciated than they
would be otherwise. I must
say in connection with this, that
I think it would be as well if
all Sappers officers were to be
better informed as to the amount
of work, and attention they are
bound to give for the work,
on which their men are employed;
and if their position as regards their
responsibility in connection with
such work, were more clearly
understood. With reference
to the Suakhe Detachment, I pro-
posed (semi-officially) to the Com-
mandant of Sappers, that he
should let me have a body of
25 men, selected with reference to
their knowledge of certain trades,
that I named, under a good sur-
geon's status of officers, and with
the proper complement of non com-
missioned Officers; and that the
strength of the Detachment should
be reduced accordingly. Lt.
Col. Pendergast, however, re-
plies that compliance would dis-
organize the Sappers; and from
what he says besides, I think
that he has somewhat misappre-
hended

15
misapprehended my proposal,
and is under the idea that I wish
to pick out the best men in a
Company; but that is not the
case; I propose selection, simply
with reference to the knowledge
of the men in particular trades;
and in all other respects, there is
no reason why ^{the} remainder of
the Company should not be as
good, or better, than the selected
25. An inconvenience might
be felt if it were done in the case
of a Company the remainder of
which was required for Public
works elsewhere; but if the detach-
ment were made from a Company re-
siding at the Head Quarters of the
Corps, I do not see that any
harm could ensue, as the men at
Head Quarters are all supposed
to be under instruction; and
the fact of the absence of a certain
number of tradesmen already re-
acquainted with their work, could
in no way militate against
the teaching of the remainder. The
work still required of the Sappers
on the Lumscherry Ghaut, is, as
before, re-erectment building; but

Q 422.

No 1626

Proceedings of the Madras Government,
Under date 27th May/69

17

1st Sept. 1869. Sir, I hope that at the close of the next sailing season, I shall be in a position to report that the services of Sappers are no longer required in Wynnad.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,
Yours most obedient
M. W. Kennedy. Major
Lt. Col. Eng. Wynnad.

whether a party of twenty
five Sappers, with its
complement of Native
Officers, might not
advantageously, as

as it is not now necessary at the same high pressure as before, the Ghaut was opened for traffic, a smaller number would suffice; but the objection to the smaller number is this, that frequently in connection with the work, the services of tradesmen are necessary; and there are times when skilled skilled artificers cannot be obtained on any terms, and when the want of them is most seriously felt, it is then, that the Sappers are most useful, while there would be a great chance of not finding such as are required in a small detachment; the only way, therefore, unless the composition of the latter is such as I have proposed, is to insure getting the men really required, by keeping in whole Company. I think that probably a reconsideration of the subject might enable the Commandant of Sappers to see his way to meeting my views without the evil results he anticipates; in any case, whether a whole Company or a selected number is sent, I propose that they should be at Suva on 1st

Q17 1626

Proceedings of the Madras Government.
Undersigned this 7th May/69

Communicated
to the Military Department,
with a view to the ne-
cessary orders being
issued for a competent
Medical subordinate
being posted to Luckadoo,
and to its being considered
in that Department
whether a party of twenty
five Sappers, with its
complement of Native
Officers, might not
advantageously, as

as work is not now necessary at
the same high pressure as before.
the Guard was opened for traffic,
a smaller number would suffice;
but the objection to the smaller
is - here is this, that frequently

27th Nov 99
 25th of Nov 99
 22nd Nov 99
 The 11th Nov 99

1922

P. h. - 488

Edw George

Noted 8th Aug 1869

22

11-10-84

Dearest Mother

of the as the as

all, & secured them

25 de febreiro de 1909

do not as I do not want

Qno 1626 1375 Q. 207.

1809-1811

the Commandant of appears to see his way to meeting my views without the evil results he anticipates; in any case, whether a whole Company or a selected number is sent, I propose that they should be at Suvaivai on 1st.

Q. 111

as proposed by Major
Kennedy, he detached
after the rains instead
of a full company.

AB

To The Military Dept
Major R. B. Kennedy
Sept. 18th May 1869.

as proposed by Major
Kennedy, be detached
after the rains instead
of a full company.

Dec 1968
Govt. of Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

To
The Military Department

Doc

For

G.O. 17th May 1907 No. 1626.

Nos 248-249

Miscellaneous Subordinate The Sub. Secy.
requested to give the necessary orders
for a Company Sub. Secy. being posted to Sub. Secy. and to con-
sider whether a party of 25 labourers
with its camp and native of the
might not advantageously be de-
tached after the rains instead of
a full company.