

1. Number of pages.
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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.

1254

Press
Mis.

Dated

11-12-1866

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
11th December 1866.

No. 28. Read the following Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, to His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor in Council, Fort Saint George; dated India Office, London, 31st October 1866, No. 37.

With reference to your letter, dated 26th March (No. 8) 1866, on the subject of appointing an European Assistant to the Government Astronomer, and of an increase of the salary of the Astronomer himself, I forward, for your information, a copy of

* Dated 31st October 1866, No. 91.

a Despatch*, which I have addressed to the Government of India, respecting the

maintenance of Government Observatories in India; and I have to state that I am unable, under the circumstances, to accede to either of the recommendations which you have submitted to me.

2. I should be very sorry that so zealous an Officer as Mr. Pogson should be deprived, by want of efficient assistance, of that annual period of recreation provided for by the Rules of the Service; but I cannot doubt, from the information which I have received from the Astronomer Royal, that the work performed at the Madras Observatory is, to some extent, a repetition of what has been sufficiently performed elsewhere, and is, therefore, capable of considerable curtailment. If such curtailment takes place, it will be in the power of the Astronomer to absent himself from his duties, for the purpose of enjoying his annual leave, without serious detriment to operations of the Observatory.

3. It is also Professor Airy's opinion, in which I entirely agree, that Mr. Pogson should exert himself, as far as is consistent with attention to the special subjects which he has chosen for himself, to bring up arrears in the reduction and discussion of observations already recorded.

4. I consider it to be of great importance that there should be a close connection between the Observatories in India and Her Majesty's Observatory at Greenwich; and I have to request, therefore, that the Government Astronomer at Madras may be instructed to place himself in official correspondence with the Astronomer Royal, and to carry on his operations in communication with that Officer.

Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, to His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor General of India in Council; dated India Office, London, 31st October 1866, No. 91.

The recommendations submitted to me by your Government*, and by the Government of Madras,

* Financial Letter from Government of India, 27th June (No. 134) 1866.

† Public Letter from Government of Madras, 26th March (No. 8) 1866.

‡ Marine Letter from Government of Bombay, 21st July (No. 27) 1866.

for the increase of the salary of the Government Astronomer at Madras, and for the appointment of an European Assistant to the Astronomer, and the submission of various proposals by the Government of Bombay† for increasing the efficiency of the Observatory at Colaba, have led

me to take a comprehensive view of the objects for which those Observatories have hitherto been kept up, and the advantages, scientific or practical, which might be expected from their continued maintenance, either on their past footing or at the increased expenditure to which sanction has been solicited.

2. Without going back to the original establishment of the Observatory at Madras, it may be sufficient to remark that the principal attention of successive Astronomers, at least for many years past, has been given to the accumulation of astronomical observations on a systematic plan,

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and especially that Mr. Pogson, the present Astronomer, has thrown himself into this work with great earnestness, and is carrying out the scheme of investigation which he marked out for himself with the greatest zeal and intelligence. It is at the same time to be observed that the work of the Madras Observatory has not been limited exclusively to scientific objects, but that it has, through its connection with the Great Trigonometrical Survey, and by its notification of the local time by time-ball or gun-firing, proved of direct practical benefit, while it has indirectly afforded important assistance in the prosecution of the Hydrographic Survey of the Coasts of the Indian Peninsula.

3. It does not appear that any attempt has ever been made at the Bombay Observatory to carry astronomical observations far beyond the point necessary for the determination of the mean local time, which has been notified to the shipping by a time-ball, and by means of which it has been the practice to rate all the chronometers which may be brought to the Observatory for the purpose—a service of no ordinary value at a port of such great commercial importance as Bombay.

4. The Observatory appears to have been tolerably well supplied with the instruments requisite for investigations in terrestrial magnetism, but though a considerable mass of magnetical observations seems to have been obtained, it would appear that little has yet been done in their reduction or discussion, or in turning them in any way to good account. The report of the Committee appointed by the Bombay Government, in 1864, to inquire into the condition of the Observatory, showed, indeed, that its operations, probably from the want of a separate Officer to superintend it, had not, in any department, been of a satisfactory character, and it is quite clear that, if the institution is to be continued, effective measures must be taken for remedying the evils pointed out by the Committee.

5. In considering the question of the necessity, either on scientific or on practical grounds, of maintaining the Observatories of Madras and Bombay, I have availed myself of the advice of the Astronomer Royal. From the information with which Professor Airy has furnished me, I have come to the conclusion that it is not necessary, in the interests of science, to maintain permanently in India any Observatory for the purposes of general astronomical investigation. In his opinion, systematic observations may be more advantageously taken at other Observatories in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

6. Although, however, it may be unnecessary to carry on astronomical investigations in India for strictly scientific purposes, it will always be necessary that such investigations should be prosecuted to a limited extent, with a view to the practical objects which have been spoken of already. It would not be requisite, for such a restricted prosecution of the science, that a separate establishment should be maintained on such a scale as the present Observatory at Madras; and a second conclusion, therefore, at which I have arrived, is that it will eventually be sufficient to maintain one Observatory in India, in which may be combined all necessary investigations in Astronomy, Magnetism, and Meteorology.

7. In considering the point at which this single Observatory shall be fixed, there is little doubt that, if the decision depended on the relative state of efficiency with which the work in which they are respectively engaged is at present discharged at the existing Observatories, the Observatory at Madras would be the one selected for permanent maintenance. On the other hand, there are cogent reasons for preferring the locality of Bombay. The work of the Madras Observatory is peculiarly that which it is thought unnecessary to continue; while at Bombay, not only have the means now been supplied for the effectual prosecution of that branch of science which it is of great importance should be carried out in India on a complete and systematic plan in connection with the magnetical investigations which are in progress in other parts of the world, but, as already remarked, such a practical character has been given to the general operations of the Observatory as seems to fit it for rendering valuable service at a great and rapidly increasing commercial port. It appears to me, therefore, that the best ultimate arrangement would be to close the Observatory at Madras, and to restrict that at Bombay to magnetic and meteorological observations, maintaining only so much of an astronomical establishment as may be necessary for the determination of true local time.

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11th December 1866.

8. With these observations I am desirous of leaving the subject for your further consideration, after such communications with the Governments of Madras and Bombay as you may deem necessary to assist you in coming to a conclusion on the different questions involved in it.

9. I should not think it absolutely necessary, however, in the event of Bombay being fixed on as the site of the future Observatory, that the present Madras Observatory should at once be abolished. On the contrary, recognizing the intelligence with which Mr. Pogson has formed his plans, and the zeal with which he is working them out, I should be prepared to acquiesce in the maintenance of the Observatory till he shall have executed the work which he has in hand. It is not improbable, however, that he would be found fitted for, and would be willing to undertake, the superintendence of the single Observatory, as it is proposed to be constituted; and as the present Acting Superintendent of the Bombay Observatory was placed in charge of the duties as a strictly temporary arrangement, there would be no objection to the appointment of Mr. Pogson. Even if this arrangement should not be found practicable, it is not improbable that Mr. Pogson might be glad to withdraw from the charge of an institution on which, if kept up for a time from a regard to his individual interests, the Government could not be expected to incur any increased expense, either in the salary of the Astronomer or in additions to the establishment. I need not say that, if Mr. Pogson wished to resign his appointment, the pension assigned to him should not be limited to that to which he might be entitled under his covenants, but should be fixed at a rate calculated to afford him reasonable remuneration for the loss of an appointment, the duties of which he is discharging, and may long be competent to discharge, to the full satisfaction of Government. It is the opinion of Professor Airy that whoever is appointed to superintend the Observatory at Bombay, for the future, should be instructed to report to the Astronomer Royal, from time to time, the results of his investigations. Such an arrangement would, in his opinion, be the means of saving unnecessary labor, and would conduce to regular and systematic observation.

10. I request that I may be furnished with the conclusions to which you may come on the points above noticed, and on any other aspects of the case which may present themselves to you.

No. 29. ORDER THEREON, 11th December 1866, No. 1254.

Ordered that copies of the foregoing Despatch and of its enclosure be furnished to the Government Astronomer, who will keep in view the instructions contained in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Despatch.

2. The Governor in Council will await a communication from the Government of India, with reference to the several questions treated of in Lord Cranborne's Despatch to that Government, of the 31st October last.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Government Astronomer.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Read the following
Despatch from the Right
Honorable the Secretary of
State for India.

(Here entered 21st October 1866 No 27)

Order thereon 11th Decr 1866 No 1252.

Ordered that copies
of the foregoing Despatch
and of its enclosure be fur-
nished to the Government
Astronomer who will
keep in view the instanc-
tions contained in paragraphs
3 and 4 of the Despatch.

2 The Governor in
Council will await
a communication from

the Government of India
with reference to the several
questions treated of in
Lord Cranborne's Despatch
to that Government of
the 31st October last.

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To the Government Astronomers.

1857/12

Adopted Dec.

28-79

Public 1866. Department.

No. 1257

PROCEEDINGS OF GOVERNMENT.

Dated. *11th* December 1866

*7th 56 of 1867 -
11th 76-11th 85 of 1867 -
11th 81-11th 82 of 1867 -*

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