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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	397	Press Mis.
Dated	27-3-	19/8/88

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
27th March 1868.

No. 202. Read the following 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, 24th January 1868, No. 13.

The Despatches of your Excellency in Council, dated 10th of May and 15th of August, Nos. 80 and 150 of 1867, on the subject of the maintenance of the Madras Observatory, have been considered by me in Council.

2. In reply, I forward copies of two letters* received from the Astronomer Royal, and have to inform you that, on a full consideration of the whole question, I am willing that the Madras Obser-

* 20th September 1867.
19th October 1867.

vatory shall be maintained during the incumbency of Mr. Pogson. On the retirement of that gentleman, the question of the abolition or continuance of the Observatory will again be considered.

3. Adverting to the last paragraph of the letter of the Astronomer Royal, dated 19th of October, I desire that it may be ascertained whether Colonel Walker is willing to undertake the duty indicated by Professor Airy.

4. In the Despatch of your Excellency in Council, dated 10th May, No. 80 of 1867, it is stated that the reports of Mr. Pogson and Colonel Walker justify your Excellency's Government in giving your "fullest support to the recommendation urged by the Government of Madras for the maintenance in its present, if not on an improved, footing of the Observatory of that Presidency."

5. The improved footing to which allusion is made would seem to imply the increase of Mr. Pogson's salary and the grant to him of an Assistant. I do not consider that the latter application is based on sufficient grounds; but in recognition of "the disinterested and devoted spirit in which Mr. Pogson performs his duties," as testified by the Government of Madras, I have great pleasure in sanctioning the increase of this able Officer's salary from Rupees 672 to Rupees 800 per mensem.

The Astronomer Royal reports on the questions placed before him by direction of the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India on the future maintenance of the Observatory of Madras.

From G. B. AIRY, Esq., to J. COSMO MELVILL, Esq., Assistant Under Secretary of State for India; dated Royal Observatory, Greenwich, S. E., 20th September 1867.

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of August 30th (lately received by me on return from a journey), transmitting to me, by instruction of the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, the copy of a Despatch (Public, No. 80, dated 10th May 1867), with its accompaniments, and also a Statement in original (undated) from the Government Astronomer at Madras, entitled—"Short History of the Madras Observatory." I return the last mentioned Statement under this cover. I have also received by this morning's Post a copy of the "Administration Report upon the Madras Observatory for the official year 1866, May 1st, to 1867, March 31st." I have carefully considered these papers, as well as the preceding correspondence with the Indian Department, and have the honor to offer the following opinions upon the general questions of your letter:—

2. It will be seen that Mr. Pogson's "History," entirely supports the statement in my letter of 1866, October 2nd, Memorandum page 5, Article I, on the inutility of the Madras Observatory during a long period, and its honorable activity in subsequent years. But a statement in

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page 4 of Mr. Pogson's "History" corrects my impression regarding the present subjects of observation. I do not remark any other points, either in that Memorandum or in my letter of 1867, April 23rd, which require change.

3. With the view of facilitating a conclusion on the bearing of geographical position upon the utility of the Observatory, I enclose a Diagram,* showing the positions of the principal Observatories. It will be seen from this that, as regards

* To be found after page 3.

the interests of the Great Indian Arc of Meridian, Bombay is in a better situation than Madras, (I am not aware, however, that either Observatory has yet rendered any service to the Arc, though they may do so in future). But as regards the interest of Abstract Astronomy, and for the purpose of filling up to the celestial south pole the gap left by the Northern Observatories, neither of them is available, the old Observatory of St. Helena, or the Observatories of the Cape of Good Hope, Sydney, St. Jago, are sufficient.

4. These considerations do not set aside the importance of local uses, as the exhibition of local time signals, the distribution of districtal time-signals, the collection of Meteorological Reports, the "incentives to intellectual exertion and development," (J. Arbuthnot, Esquire, to E. C. Bayley, Esquire, No. 357, 1867, April 5th) all must be considered on an ultimate question of retaining the Observatory.

5. But with regard to present action, the Authorities in India have interpreted my words with greater force than I intended to give them. I ask permission to refer to my Memorandum of 2nd October 1866, page 7—"it appears to me that it would be difficult at the present time—when the Observatory is in so good a state and under the direction of so zealous an Astronomer, who is engaged on a definite plan of work—to decide on the suppression of the Observatory." The difficulty appears to be greatly increased by the expressions of opinion received from the Indian Authorities.

6. I think that, under present circumstances, and having regard both to the personal character of the present Government Astronomer, and to the effect of the agitation of the general question, the maintenance of the Observatory in vigour would be valuable to Astronomy, possibly also to Meteorology and to other local purposes, and would be esteemed through the world as creditable to the Indian Government. But on avoidance of the Office, I shall hold myself free entirely to re-consider the question of its permanent maintenance.

7. I believe that I can give my assent to every proposal in Mr. Pogson's paper of 1867, 25th February, in No. 80 of 1867, (referring to my letter of 1867, 25th May, paragraph 5, as explaining the extent to which I thought any Report to any scientific person in Europe ought to go, and which agrees precisely with that suggested by the Government Astronomer and by the Director of Public Instruction,) with one small exception,—Mr. Pogson (Administration Report, Article II.) considers that "suspension of current observations (for the completion of reductions) is only to be thought of in the event of the abolition of the Madras Observatory." I have had occasion, when weak-handed at Cambridge, to suspend current observations for this purpose, and have no hesitation in saying that this course contributed materially to my maintaining that Observatory in a reputable state. I advert to this, because I think that unyielding adherence to such a rule as Mr. Pogson seems to lay down may prove injurious to the Observatory, and very troublesome to the Department which provides the personal assistance.

8. The question upon which I find it most difficult to come to a decision is that of a European Assistant to Mr. Pogson. On the one hand, I do not doubt that it would contribute greatly to the personal comfort of Mr. Pogson and the efficiency of the Observatory; on the other hand, it would (as I suppose) introduce considerable expense, and would (unless severely guarded) produce difficulty in modifying or suppressing the Establishment. Feeling my inability to balance these considerations, I ask leave to refer them to the judgment of the Secretary for India.

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27th March 1868.

From G. B. AIRY, Esq., to Lord CLINTON, &c., &c., &c.; dated Royal Observatory, Greenwich, S. E., 19th October 1867.

I have the honor to acknowledge your Lordship's letter of the 12th instant, transmitting copy of a letter from the Government of India, (Public, No. 150, dated 15th August,) with its enclosure (Lieutenant-Colonel J. T. Walker, dated 23rd July,) both relating to the question of maintaining the Observatory at Madras, and requesting, by instruction of the Right Honorable the Secretary for India, my remarks on these papers. I have the honor to submit the following observations.

2. (Colonel Walker, paragraphs 4 and 5).—In my first Memorandum of 1866, October 2nd, Bombay, last sentence, I alluded to the necessity for a plant of instruments of a high class even though officially they should be destined for an inferior purpose. It was, however, always my idea that an Indian Observatory ought to be maintained in an efficient state, leaving its employment for the present undefined; but inclining rather to local scientific wants than to those of general Astronomy.

3. (Colonel Walker, paragraph 7).—The fact of determination of local time at Madras is urged rather pointedly. I do not learn that more is done than this,—that local time is ascertained within the Observatory, that by means of this the time of gun-fire is registered, and that this registered time is published in a newspaper the next morning. A Master of a ship who wishes to ascertain his chronometer error must, therefore, observe the gun-fire and register the chronometer time, and must refer the next morning to the newspaper for the corresponding Observatory time. I do not believe that it will often be used thus. If any stress is to be laid on the time determinations, they must be made more efficient and easier for general use.

4. (Colonel Walker, paragraph 8).—The point of difficulty and expense of telegraph communication raises one of those local questions on which I must defer to Colonel Walker.

5. (Colonel Walker, paragraphs 9 and 10).—The climatic meteorology is, or may be, valuable. I have no precise information on its extent; supposing it to be considerable, I assent to these two articles.

6. (Colonel Walker, paragraphs 12 and 13).—The observations for which I considered the Madras Observatory ill adapted, are those which are so vigorously taken up by Mr. Pogson for sweeping up all the stars to a certain magnitude south of those which have been collected by the Northern Observatories. I repeat that the location of the Madras Observatory is, for those, inferior to the locations of Observatories of the Cape of Good Hope and Australia; and the Madras work must be supplemented by the work of those Southern Observatories, whereas the work of those Observatories needs no supplement from Madras.

7. Omitting any further troublesome comment on Colonel Walker's letter, I will briefly refer to my letter of 20th September, paragraph 6, and repeat that I think it will be prudent at present to maintain the Madras Observatory in its present Establishment. But I think that it would be well that advantage should be taken of the present agitation for the better administrative arrangement. In the Royal Observatory of Greenwich its object are described in the latin inscription above the entrance door—*Astronomiae et nauticae artis in utriusque commodum*, and in the Royal Warrant "for finding the so-much-desired longitude at sea;" and official instructions are given by the Admiralty, generally embodying the spirit of these. I do not doubt that it is owing to the steadiness of plan, produced by these definitions of duty, that the Greenwich Observatory has been the most useful in the world. I would submit for consideration whether similar documents (*mutatis mutandis*), together with provision for periodical Reports, might not advantageously be put in force for the Indian Observatories.

8. Should the Secretary for India in Council think this suggestion worthy of consideration, I would ask leave further to submit that no assistance in drawing up such documents would be so valuable as that of Colonel Walker, not only for his official position and his local knowledge, but also for his personal claims to respect in reference to scientific matters of the class here discussed.

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27th March 1868.

No. 1234.

COPY forwarded to the Government of Madras, with reference to its Chief Secretary's letter, No. 357, dated the 5th April 1867, and accompaniments.

FORT WILLIAM,
HOME DEPARTMENT,
10th March 1868.

(By Order),

(Signed) J. GEOGHEGAN,
Under Secy. to the Govt. of India.

No. 203.

ORDER THEREON, 27th March 1868, No. 397.

Ordered to be communicated to the Government Astronomer and to the Accountant General. The increase to Mr. Pogson's salary will take effect from the date of the Secretary of State's Despatch.

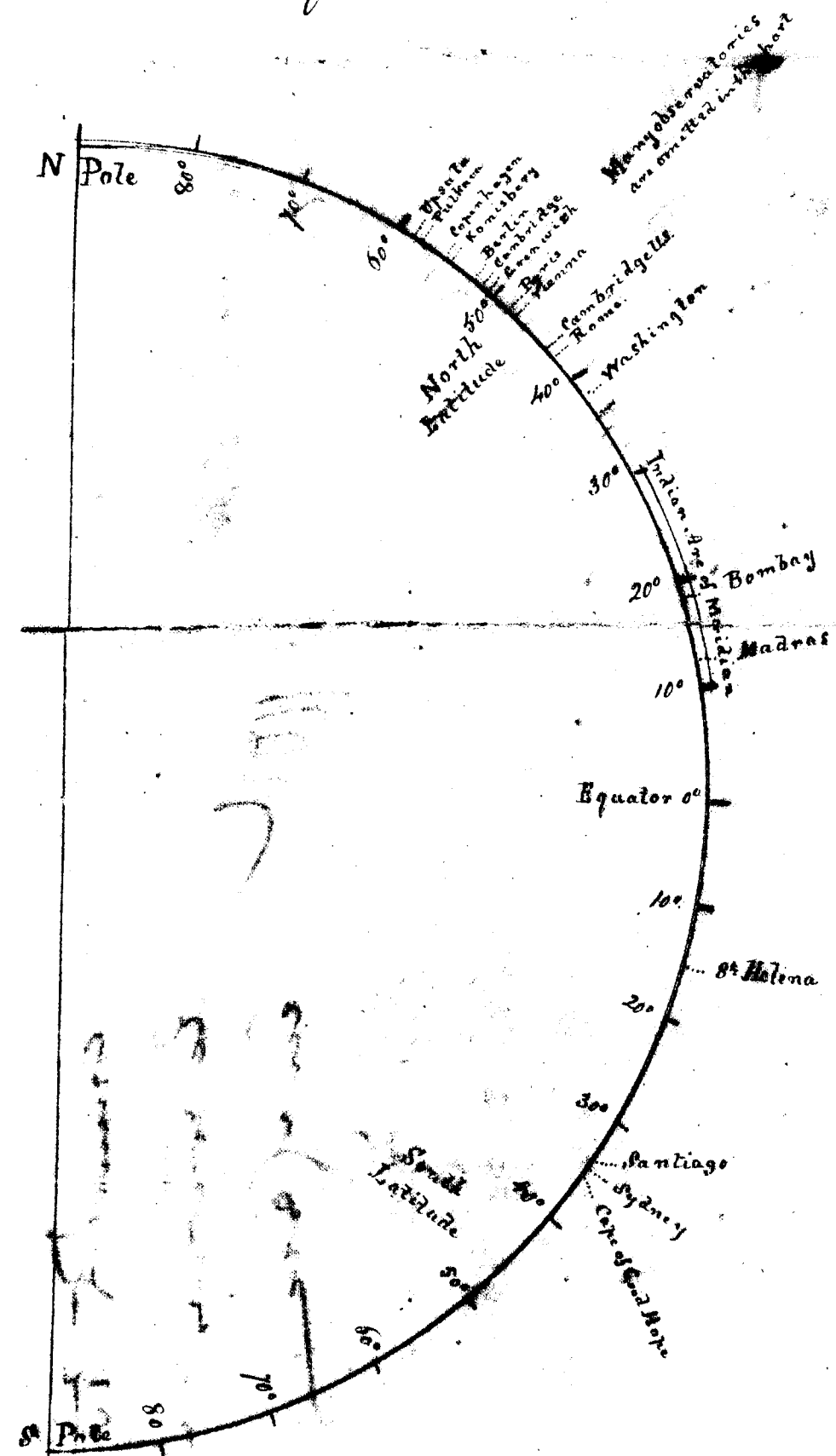
(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Government Astronomer, with diagram.
,, Accountant General.
,, Examiner of Claims.

Ed. F. R. Bantleman,

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Diagram showing the Latitude of the principal
Observatories and the position and Extent of the
Subsidiary Arc of Meridian



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