

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

GO. No. 1015

Press
Mis.

Dated

12-8-

1970

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
12th August 1870.

No. 75. Read the following letter from the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Vice-President of the Municipal Commission, Conjeveram, dated Salem, 15th July 1870, C. No. 2 :—

With reference to my recent inspection of the town of Conjeveram and the interview I had with the Municipal Commissioners, I have the honour to record, for the information of the Commissioners, the principal suggestions made by me for the improvement of the public health of the town.

2. SURVEY OF THE TOWN.—In the course of my inquiries I became cognizant of the fact that no map or block-plan of the town existed. From the records of the Commission I learned that the subject of a survey had been under consideration, but that it had been postponed from time to time. As it is apparent that encroachments on the public streets (Municipal property) are constantly taking place, and as the Commissioners themselves must be much inconvenienced in the discharge of their duties from the absence of a trustworthy plan showing the holdings of the several proprietors of houses and garden-lands, I would recommend for their consideration the desirableness of having a reliable plan of the town executed without further delay. The expense would, I have no doubt, be reimbursed in part to the Commission by the sale to residents of lithographed copies of the plan showing the holdings of individual proprietors.

3. CONSERVANCY CARTS.—The seventeen conservancy carts at present hired by the Commissioners are the ordinary country carts with bamboo baskets, and the loads they carry are very small, thus increasing very considerably the difficulty of keeping clean the streets of so scattered a town. The Commissioners have built a single cart on an improved pattern; but the construction and material of this cart are not substantial enough for the kind of work it is subjected to. I would recommend the Commissioners to build gradually the number of carts they require for the scavenging of the town, and to adopt one of the patterns of which the Municipality now possess plans and estimates. To use carts of this description in a town which has no metalled road a better class of bullock will be necessary, and it may probably be necessary to secure such on contract even at advanced rates.

4. The supervision of the conservancy establishment, which is now entirely left to native overseers, would, I think, be improved by the employment of a respectable European or East Indian as Superintendent of the establishment and Inspector of Nuisances. Natives of respectable position and caste generally have a great repugnance to duties of this description, and in most of the Municipalities with which I am acquainted it has been found necessary to employ as Conservancy Superintendents a class of men who are not prevented by caste prejudices from discharging the duties of their not altogether agreeable office. In a town so widely spread out and so full of backyards and gardens in which cattle are located as Conjeveram is, the employment of a person who will see to the prevention of the accumulation of nuisances is a subject well worthy of the consideration of the Municipal Commissioners.

5. RUBBISH HEAPS.—As in most other towns, I find that a difficulty exists in Conjeveram as to the disposal of the town sweepings. The situation of some of the rubbish depôts, in the vicinity of springs of water from which many people

drink, is decidedly objectionable, and more convenient and less objectionable sites should be chosen. If periodical sales of the rubbish heaps could be effected, and the purchasers bound down to cart away the manure to their fields within a reasonable time, it would be much better than allowing the heaps to go on increasing from year to year. As the complete removal of old manure heaps is of more importance to the Municipality than obtaining a high price for the manure, I think it would be prudent to fix such a price for the several lots as would induce the neighbouring cultivators to remove them to their fields without unnecessary delay. As the season for active cultivation is now approaching, the Commissioners will, I trust, make efforts for disposing of the several collections within the town.

6. LATRINES.—The number of public latrines (six) would be altogether insufficient for the wants of the town but for the practice which so largely obtains of the people resorting to the numerous fields and gardens within Municipal limits. It is only due to the Commissioners to record that, so far as the public streets and waste places were concerned, I found the town much freer of excrementitious filth than is usually the case where a large number of people reside. Still, as the result of my observations, I am convinced that more latrines are needed, and that these should be put up, more especially for the convenience of women, children, and strangers, not on the outskirts of the town, but close to the most densely populated localities, in situations to be chosen by the Commissioners after duly weighing the requirements of the various localities.

The kind of latrine I recommend for this purpose is simply a square enclosure with a screened entrance, not more than an area of 12 by 15 feet, built of mud walls and sheltered from public view by fast-growing trees. An enclosure of this kind is easily kept clean, and, if not too far removed from the locality in which the people live, would be resorted to in preference to the streets and bye-lanes. It seems to me that there is room for ten or twelve such latrines in various parts of the town, and that the requisite sites should be chosen by the Commissioners, in consultation with the Medical Officer, and secured.

7. WATER-SUPPLY.—The adverse seasons of the past two years seem to have had a bad effect on the water-supply, especially upon that portion of it which the magnificent masonry tanks, constructed in the olden times, were intended to yield. The number of private and public wells throughout the town is, I think, unusually large, and the level of the water in such of them as are near the river would seem to indicate that the part of the town known as Little Conjeveram is by no means badly supplied with drinking water of fair quality. In addition to the wells there are perennial springs in the banks of the river, which throughout the year yield a remarkably pure water.

The part of the town known as Great Conjeveram, being on higher ground, is not so well off for water; the wells are fewer in number and the water further from the surface. It seems quite evident, from the great care and expense bestowed on the construction of large masonry tanks in connection with the pagodas of this part of the town, that the people depended greatly on these reservoirs for their supply of water. The existence to this day of masonry channels between one

reservoir and another testifies to the possibility that the reservoirs were laid out for the use of a much larger population than at present inhabits the town.

8. The channel which feeds these reservoirs is connected with a spring in the Vagapattee River, some miles to the west of the town. The reservoirs have apparently a claim to only one-fourth of the water flowing along the channel, the remaining three-fourths going to supply a tank in the neighbourhood. A masonry division in the channel near to the town marks the spot where the quarter share of water for the public use of the town is taken off. So far as I can understand, this share of water, which would appear to be the property of the Municipal Commissioners, has not of late years been let into the reservoirs, which have consequently become very low, and the water in them foul and offensive to an unusual degree. I would recommend, in regard to this important subject, that the Commissioners should call upon their Engineering Member to report professionally on the best means of securing for the town reservoirs such portion of water as they may be entitled to receive; and that, if possible, an arrangement might be made with the proprietor of the tank and lands irrigated therefrom for sharing in part with the Commissioners the expense of removing accumulated silt from the channel, so that a more regular and lasting supply may be obtained, both for the use of the townspeople and for cultivation. It has been suggested to me that, for an expenditure of 3 or 4,000 rupees, the channel might be deepened, the masonry conduits cleaned out, and the water-supply of the upper part of the town made independent of casual rainfall.

If the work could be done for anything like this sum, I need not say that it is a most desirable one for the Municipality to undertake. Many of these tanks have been cleaned out during the last dry season, as I understand, by the expenditure of funds privately contributed by charitably-disposed persons. All that is necessary, therefore, to secure an adequate supply of water during next monsoon, is the clearing of the channel and the examination and repair, if necessary, of the masonry conduits which feed the tanks.

9. While on the subject of the water-supply of the town, I must remark on what appears to me to be the very defective conservation of the tanks and springs. Those of the tanks within the precincts of pagodas it would doubtless be difficult to interfere with; but, as regards the reservoirs and springs which the Commissioners have the oversight of, the indiscriminate use of the water for drinking, bathing, and washing of foul linen ought most certainly to be prohibited. In one of the best springs of the river-bank I saw a man sitting in the little hole out of which the water was welling up pure and sweet, washing his dirty body and the still dirtier cloth covering it. Around him were a dozen others individually similarly engaged. At the lower part of the pool made by this spring a channel leads off to supply a neighbouring village, and the sand in this channel was stained of a red colour from the dyes washed out of the cloths. The water of the spring is so clean and pure that it should be reserved for drinking purposes, more especially as I am informed that it is the chief source of supply to a village near.

10. I am aware that it is a very difficult matter to persuade unenlightened men that water can be fouled, so as to be dangerous to health, by the bathing of

human bodies and washing of soiled cloths in it. The common oriental idea is that water purifies everything it touches, and that it receives no pollution itself in the process. While such a notion prevails amongst a community, I feel that the task of keeping a water-supply pure and wholesome is almost a hopeless one; but I earnestly trust that the native gentlemen composing the Commission may, by example and precept, do all in their power to combat so dangerous a fallacy, and that they will exercise the powers they possess to set apart certain sources of water-supply exclusively for drinking purposes, and insist upon the observance of any regulations they may devise for the better conservancy of the public reservoirs and springs.

11. ROADS.—I observe that no attempt has yet been made to metal any of the roads of the town. These roads have, in the course of many centuries of wear and tear, cut down considerably below the level of the surface soil, and are now the chief drainage channels of the town. In the rains these roads become rivers, and, in the dry weather, beds of heavy sand, fatiguing alike to man and beast travelling on them. An estimate has been shown to me of Rupees 30,000 for the metalling of some of the more important thoroughfares only. The work if undertaken will be very costly to the Commission, and I apprehend that, from the fact of the existing roads being cut so deep below the surface, the expense of up-keep and repairs after the heavy floods will be very considerable. While admitting fully the utility of good roads and the duty of the Commissioners to provide them for the people who pay tolls and add considerably to the Municipal income, yet, according to the best of my judgment, such a work as this might be well deferred until the place is better provided with the essential requisites of an efficient conservancy establishment and a sufficiency of good water.

12. Conjeveram, from its historical associations, will always attract a crowd of pilgrims (upon whom the prosperity and wealth of the place must greatly depend) so long as it preserves its popular reputation for salubrity. The public health of the town, therefore, should be the first consideration, leaving works of public utility, but not of absolute importance, to be completed gradually as funds become available.

13. I beg you will be so good as to thank the members of the Commission for their patient attention to the remarks I made to them at our meeting on the 11th instant, of which the above is a brief summary.

C. No. 13.

Forwarded to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras for information.

1st August 1870.

(Signed) W. R. CORNISH, F.R.C.S.,
Sanitary Commissioner for Madras.

No. 76.

ORDER THEREON, 12th August 1870, No. 1015.

To be recorded.

(Signed) R. S. ELLIS,
Chief Secretary.

Exd. A. S. Rodgers.

64

water.

12. Conjevaram, from its historical associations, will always attract a crowd of pilgrims (upon whom the prosperity and wealth of the place must greatly depend) so long as it preserves its popular reputation for salubrity. The public health of the town therefore should be the first consideration, leaving works of public utility, but not of absolute importance, to be completed gradually, as funds become available.

13. I beg you will be so good as to thank the members of the Commission for their patient attention to the remarks I made to them at our meeting on the 11th instant, of which the above is a brief summary.

I have the honor to be
Sir

Your most obedient servant

/Signed/ W. R. Cornish F.R.C.S.
Sanitary Commissioner
for Madras

True Copy

Ct. No. 13-

Forwarded to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras for information.

W. Inforiush F.R.C.S.
Sanitary Commissioner
for Madras

1st August 1870.

Govt. of Madras

PUBLIC.

Dated August, 19th.

Recd.

Recd.

G. O., 12th August 1870, No. 1015.

AUGUST.
Nos. 75-76.

Recording Sanitary Commissioner's letter containing the suggestions made by him for the improvement of the town of Conjevaram.

1870

Public Department

Am

Sanitary Com:

: ~~unofficial~~

Dated 1st

Decr 6. & signed/ps.

No 13.

No 1227

Forwards for information

suggestions made to the Municipal
Commission at Cojoceroam for
the improvement of the town.

Order. Othman N. Chyus/ps

L.O.S. Recorded 10/15

R.S.E

19/12/70

Govt. of 1870 Madras.

Public

Dated Aug. 12.

Recd.

Encl.

G. O. 12 Aug.

1870, No 1015

Nos. 75-76.

Re. Mr. King's letter (comm. 1870) letter
containing the suggestions
made by him for the improve-
ment of the town of Supracam.

19/8/70