

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue

DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1300	Press Mis
28-29	
Dated 26 - 9 - 1859.	

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
from 24th September to 4th October 1859.*

No. 28. Read the following letter from E. B. THOMAS, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore ;
to J. D. BOURDILLON, Esq., Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated
15th September 1859, No. 43.

Enclosures.

- 1 Copy of letter to the Conservator of Forests,
25th May 1859, No. 19.
- 1 Dg. to do. 13th September 1859, No. 40.
- 1 Do. of do. to Joint Magistrate of Ootaca-
mund 13th do. 1859, No. 283.

Feeling the subject to be one of im-
portance to Government, (especially with re-
ference to Jackatallah as a Military station,
and the Neilgherries as a rapidly increasing
and general sanatorium), I take the liberty
of bringing to the notice of Government a
subject I have already mentioned to Dr. Cleg-
horn, "the Forests and fuel of the Neil-
gherries." That officer seems impressed with the idea, "that no sanction for any farther
"expense for conservancy, can be entertained." I therefore beg to point out, both the urgent
necessity, and the practicable means, for such Forest Conservancy; if something is not speedily
done, these valuable woods will be entirely ruined.

From E. B. THOMAS, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore; to H. F. C. CLEGHORN, Esq., M. D.,
Conservator of Forests; dated Coonoor, 25th May 1859, No. 19.

I have taken an opportunity while here of inspecting the woods near Coonoor and its neigh-
bourhood, where I heard great mischief was going on. I regretted to observe extensive injury
and sad spoliation of the Government Forests. I would beg your immediate, and if possible,
personal attention to it. Unless some system is at once organized (both for selling and preserv-
ing wood) and the Forests preserved, they will, under the present depredations, be entirely ruin-
ed: the wholesale robbery of Government wood now going on is really lamentable.

2. I found trucks, ratters, poles cut up and ready to be carried away, on all sides. Corporal
Hall in charge of the large Forest, and the Tahsildar, are both aware of the evil going on, and
can inform you; new woods where no leave to cut had been given, are being destroyed; the
timber is going to Jackatallah, not for public Government works, but for private sale, to build-
ers, bakers, private firewood contractors, and such people; and chits professing to give license
to cut, are given by various unauthorized subordinates at Jackatallah. The Forests and woods
of these Hills, (of whose value you are aware,) are, as you also know, fast disappearing; the pre-
servation of what remains, is of vital importance, both for timber, and for preserving the
springs on which the low country greatly depends. I shall be happy to meet and consult with
you, if possible, having long taken an interest in the matter.

3. Wood of all kinds and sizes, is now cut and carried off, as follows; for Government
buildings, kilns, &c., at Jackatallah, legitimate objects; also improperly, by firewood contractors,
by private wood merchants and builders, by bakers, and other contractors; paying *nothing*
for the Government wood, but only their own various coolies and wood cutters, whose practice
is, to cut as best suits *them*, where and how they choose, old trees and young saplings alike.

4. The remedy and rules I would propose are these, all trees and Forests near Jackatallah
should be put under Corporal Hall, or other respectable man (they have now no conservator);
dead and dry wood, for fires, should be taken *only* from *certain* woods appointed by him; wood
cutters of all kinds, to pay one anna per cooly's load, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a Rupee per *bandy*, little enough; but
better than the dead loss to Government as now existing; all wood cut *elsewhere*, without due
leave, to be stopped and seized; when one locality is cleared of all the dry wood, another to be
fixed by the Corporal; and no green trees, whether for fuel or building, to be felled, till
marked by *him*; this alone will check the sad devastation now going on; the sale will of course
raise the cost of wood somewhat, but it is unavoidable, fuel *must* rise in the market, like every
other supply, and Government is justly entitled to some return from its forests. I suggest what
occurs to me; *something* should be done, as I have long ago advocated; the best mode I leave for
your consideration; I speak on 30 years' knowledge of the Hills, and I see the forests are fast dis-
appearing. Ten or 15 years hence, when the mischief is *irreparable*, the evil will be better known;
some immediate and stringent preservation with a suitable Establishment, is indispensable.

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from 24th September to 4th October 1859.*

From E. B. THOMAS, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore; to H. F. C. CLEGHORN, Esq., M. D.,
Conservator of Forests; dated Coimbatore, 13th September 1859, No. 40.

With reference to my letter 25th May 1859, No. 19 and others, and to facts which have come under my notice both before and since, I would once more strongly advise some stringent measures of conservancy, and definite system and supervision, ere the woods and Forests of the Neilgherries, entirely disappear; as they certainly will do, within 10 or 15 years from the present time, when the great want of this favored Sanatorium, will be timber and firewood.

2. As the Hills become more and more frequented, supplies of all kinds are liable to rise in price and do so; but in grain, meat, bread, oil, and all ordinary articles of consumption, the demand and supply soon regulate themselves, and conform to circumstances. Good prices, induce extra cultivation, and produce, of the things required. But firewood and timber cannot (unfortunately) be so easily and rapidly reproduced; it must be a work of time; the several 1,000 fires daily burning in Ootacamund, Jackatalla, Coonoor, Kotagherry, &c., soon consume a small forest; besides brick-kilns, lime burning, burnings for coffee land, and other destructive processes, to replace the very slow growing timber of the Neilgherries, requires 50, 70, 100 years, meantime the Hills are denuded, firewood, and building timber, fail; and the decreasing rain and springs, as certainly follow the disappearing Forests.

3. I am not putting a fancied case, but stating plain facts, on 30 years careful observation and experience. I believe the matter is a serious one now, and will be more and more so hereafter, and needs your timely and serious consideration, as "Conservator of Forests;" your own observation will, I am sure, bear me out in my remarks: but unless something is speedily and practically done, rules and suggestions, however correct in theory, will do very little to preserve the rapidly failing Forests of the Neilgherries.

4. I would not point out the danger, without suggesting a remedy. I see no alternative or remedy, but a stringent and systematic conservancy, while there is yet time, and ere it is too late; and, if I understood you aright, you are of the same opinion; but think "that Government will require the forests to pay for their own preservation, and will grant the necessary establishment on no other conditions." I see no difficulty in carrying out such a view, though I would at the same time observe, that an unwise saving now, in this matter, will prove suicidal policy, and costly economy, in the end, and that Government ought and must conserve and renew its Forests, at any cost, so long as troops are to be fed, houses built and sanatory stations maintained, in India.

5. The Government Forests are now open to every wood cutter (with trifling and unavailing restrictions,) and the whole community, European and Native, get their fuel for nothing, except the paid labour for cutting; while they buy and pay for every other article of household consumption, why should Government wood be plundered gratis? people pay for Government land and water, why not for wood? I would, as I have long ago suggested, fix, a moderate price on all wood cut in Government Forests so much per bundy or cooly load. Let each wood cutter pay for his load and sell to the community freely as he likes and can; the price of fuel will of course, rise somewhat, as it must, and ought, (to prevent waste.) Competition will prevent excessive prices; but any attempt to keep down fuel to its present price, (as I understood to be your wish), will totally fail; it cannot be otherwise, unless Government are content, (which will save much present trouble,) to let the forest go, and future communities find fuel and timber how they can.

6. I would suggest therefore a small trustworthy European establishment, like Corporal Hall at Coonoor to watch and mark out certain forests and limits; no others to be entered, all wood cutters to cut only in allotted woods, on tickets purchased or other system, (easily devised): seizure of all faggots cut elsewhere, and punishment occasionally, would be sufficient check the sale of the wood would far exceed the pay of the conservancy establishment and avail for replanting. The sales of fallen wood already credited to your office will go some way to pay for

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ther conservancy, which would seem its legitimate and best application; but even if it did not, it is urgently and unavoidably necessary and delay in the matter now, will cause evil eventually irremediable.

7. If the Troops at Jackatallah must have their firewood at present prices, let them be exempted from all Conservancy Rules; or a fuel allowance be made to them; but let all others pay for their firewood, as they do for every thing else; there is no alternative between some such charge and system, or the rapid extinction of the woods and Forests of the Neilgherries; you are aware of the fact I lately brought to your notice of certain Burghers having taken a contract for 500 Rupees per annum, to supply a fuel contractor at Jackatallah; he of course would also realize his profit also, and all to come from plundered Government wood cut recklessly, and wastefully, as you have yourself seen; old trees and fine young sapling Timber alike. Let any one observe, as I have done for 30 years, the mere skeletons of many woods now to be seen, where once a noble dense Forest showed an unbroken head. I need scarcely add, that not only will fuel be scarce and the beauty of the Hills disappear, but the springs and rivulets will of course suffer, and the plains (they supply) in like manner. Having now and before done and said all I can in the matter, at the risk of being thought troublesome, I leave it in your hands; so long as I was, as Collector, in sole charge of the Forests, I did my best to preserve them, the duty now devolves upon you, and unless something is speedily done, the evil will be past permanent remedy.

From E. B. THOMAS, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore; to Colonel J. R. BROWN, Joint Magistrate of Ootacamund; dated Coimbatore, 13th September 1859, No. 283.

1. In reply to your's* of the 7th Instant, already partly answered by mine of the 8th idem, No. 277, I O'Brien, stopped Burghers and others have only to observe, that the Forest Serjeant does nothing more than his duty, and than what he has done for several years past, under Dr. Cleghorn's orders and my own.

2. You are perhaps not aware that three-fourths of the firewood brought into Ootacamund for sale in bundles, (especially by the Burghers) is cut in forbidden limits, and stolen from the Government Forests all around Ootacamund; and I have no hesitation in assuring you from many years experience in the matter, that if you will, any day, casually, seize all the Burghers found coming into Ootacamund with wood for sale, and require them, (as in duty bound,) to show where they gathered the wood on their shoulders, not one-tenth of them would be able to prove their innocence, or escape conviction of having robbed the Government Forests. It is to stop this spoliation, fast ruining the Government woods, that the Forest Serjeant was appointed.

3. I am quite aware that firewood is becoming scarce in Ootacamund; and fear the evil must and will, inevitably, increase, as the demand yearly increases, and the supply, (as it is rapidly doing,) decreases. I see no alternative, if Burghers and others are to pass free of all "interference," but the speedy ruin of the Government Forests, which Dr. Cleghorn and I, are under stringent orders to preserve. The only course is, for wood to come in from a distance, and increase in price, as all others scarce supplies will and must; it may be an "inconvenience" to the community, but I fear it is the inevitable penalty of having the luxury of a fire, where wood is scarce. From 30 years' knowledge and experience of the hills, I am convinced, that 10 years hence, (after your time and mine,) the supply of firewood will be the want and difficulty of the hills; to anticipate and hasten this difficulty, by laxity of conservancy now, would be suicidal policy. Immunity to the wood stealers in and about Ootacamund, is also unfair and unjust to the woodmen who honestly and fairly go out with bandies to "Pykara," and bring in wood, 6 miles, for sale; while the bundle sellers, pilfer it from all the woods within a few miles of the station. The whole subject, (the supply of firewood, to Ootacamund and Jackatallah, &c.) is a difficult one, and has for some time past been under anxious consideration by Dr. Cleghorn and myself; meantime, the conservancy cannot safely be relaxed.

4. To order or expect the Forest Serjeant to go out and catch the wood stealers in the Forests only, East, West, North and South, is simply to devolve on him, an impracticable and

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hopeless task; like all other smuggled or pilfered goods, (spirits, opium, toddy &c.) they can best and only be caught at the place of rendezvous, but if you find, in any one instance, the Forest Serjeant stopping fuel fairly coming in from the appointed woods, (which I have never yet found,) I shall be obliged by your immediately informing me. I am as anxious as yourself to further the "convenience" of the hill community, if it can be done without sacrificing Government interests and property; but I much fear that in the present matter, the real truth is, that three-fourths of the fuel now used by the hill residents, is nothing more nor less than *stolen* Government property; which neither you nor I, nor Dr. Cleghorn, can properly connive at, and I appeal to your own observation of the Hill Forests some years ago, if they are not now fast becoming mere *skeletons*, in place of the thickly wooded and close headed forests, to be remembered 10 or 15 years ago. I think you will accede to the truth of the observations I have now made, and both Dr. Cleghorn and myself must look to your aid, as a resident local officer, in supporting, in our absence, the conservancy so greatly desired and strictly enjoined by Government. I have for years advocated to the utmost the use of *peat*, which I always use (*with* wood), when myself on the hills; and I could wish it were much more adopted, it is the only substitute and remedy to save the declining Forests, required not merely for fuel, and appearance, but as preserving the springs and water sources, on which the plains depend. When the *Forests* of the Neilgherries disappear, the rain and *springs* will too surely follow them, and it will be then too late to regret, or to remedy, the result.

No. 29. ORDER THEREON, 26th September 1859, No. 1300.

Ordered to be referred to the Conservator of Forests for report.

(Signed) J. D. BOURDILLON,
Secretary to Government.

See 28-29.

24/9/59

*The Forests of the
Neilgherries. My report to
the Government of the
Forest Department, 26th
September 1859.*

26th September 1859

26/9/59

26th September 1859

Revenue 1859. 26th Sept

Revenue Department

The Commission of 1870
and 1871
on the 12th of March 1871

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