M.R.O. 14—13,000—27-9-24.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 2053 Press ~~Mis.~~

2664-266

Dated 21—11—~~19~~1863

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Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 21st November 1863.

Read the following papers:—

I

From J. OUCHTERLONY, Esq., to P. GRANT, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, dated Ootacamund, 21st July 1863.

SIR,

1. I take the liberty of addressing you on a subject greatly affecting the public interests at this station, and while I believe that you have no power of yourself to apply a remedy, I indulge the hope that you may see reason to refer the question for the consideration of Government.

2. It is the much vexed question of a supply of Fuel for the use of the inhabitants of Ootacamund, to which I am alluding.

3. I hope it may not be considered presumptuous on my part to make a brief allusion at the outset to what may be called the proceedings for regulating the supply of firewood to this sanatarium in past years. In days long passed there was no restriction upon cutting firewood; the poorer classes had abundance of fuel at the cheapest rates, and it was the custom of the higher to keep a wood-cutter, who, at a moderate rate of wages, supplied all the wants of a household. Under this system, or rather no system, great destruction was, no doubt, done to some of the beautiful Sholahs in and around the station. But I presume that the unrestricted permission to cut wood was then accorded in order to the promotion and development of the station, and especially to encourage the resort of *natives* to the place with whom fuel in this climate is an absolute *necessary of life*.

4. But as Ootacamund grew, the authorities became alive to the evil that was done by the indiscriminate cutting down of trees, and a summary order prohibited this from being done, I believe at first except in particular Sholahs, but eventually within a certain radius of the Cantonment. This gradually extended; then by the time the nearer Sholahs were mutilated and destroyed, contracts came to be taken for remoter ones with a kind of seigniorage levied on the wood cut, until at last the present system has grown up, with all its (in effect) cruel restrictions, and having as its crowning act the present year's renting of the Deva Sholah.

5. I do not pretend to be a Forester at all, but I think it is impossible not to observe on these Hills how great a decay of forest trees there is without the work of the axe-men. Indeed in many Sholahs if the tangled and thorny and comparatively useless under-growth were removed, a very scattered forest and with few fine trees would alone remain. Besides in forests untouched by the axe, and where there has been no *destruction* of the saplings, I question very much whether any young trees of a good growth will be found to show that the soil is fitted to nourish again to maturity the same kind of tree.

6. On the other hand the perfect mass of luxuriant acacias grown by private individuals, and with which Ootacamund is, in their quantity, now almost disfigured, shows how another variety does flourish and grow quickly, and it may be worthy the inquiry of Government, whether a conservancy, which hitherto has only shown itself in the arbitrary form of prohibitions, restrictions, and now a monopoly, might not have been exercised in a manner more likely to realize the great aim of a continuous supply of valuable wood, by arrangements to allow existing Sholahs to be freely cut, on condition of the seedlings of trees known to thrive being planted in their place.

7. I venture to throw out the above view (the same that I have advocated, as a suggestion, for years past) to show that I am no advocate for indiscriminate cutting of the forests, and that I recognize a property of the State in these. But if I am right in presuming that the great object of the Government is to utilize all these forests not simply for the sake of some pecuniary advantage they may be made to yield, but to subserve the general interests of the Hills, and promote the welfare of their inhabitants, then the question may be raised whether a system, which can produce such consequences as I am about to bring under your notice, can be altogether a wise policy to adopt.

8. A portion of the Deva Sholah, estimated to afford sufficient firewood for the wants of Ootacamund for a year, was put up to auction and sold for above 3,000 Rupees. Perhaps if the cost of the road to reach it, calculated with the addition of the salary of the superintending Officer, with its maintenance, and the conservancy of the forests during the contract, were duly computed, it would be found that no pecuniary advantage resulted from the sale. The road is difficult in the monsoon; the distance at least 11 miles; and, I believe, no bullocks can take a cart there and return in one day. The value to the contractors is the *monopoly* that attends their purchase.

9. Now the effect of this monopoly is, that the price of a bandy load of firewood, and that generally in a green state, is Rupees 3-8-0. This nominally is 30 maunds or 750 lbs., but from all the information I can obtain it is very seldom any thing like that quantity. The price, however, even for the full quantity is almost a prohibition to the poorer classes.

10. In former days, the Burghers coming into the weekly market (and on such other occasions as they visited Ootacamund) were in the habit of bringing each a bundle of thorns and twigs, which they sold for a comparative trifle, which meet the wants of the poor, and which were admirably adapted for their cooking purposes. *Monopoly* now disallows this, and what is the consequence?

11. All the floating population of coolies principally Mysore men have been driven away from Ootacamund, and none came in their place. This latter is natural. The inability to obtain fuel for their want is certain; of immediate employment they cannot feel equally confident. The evil of this to the general interests of the station is very great. It has been pronounced very desirable in a sanitary point of view that the dense growth of acacias in private grounds should have their lower branches lopped within a certain height from the ground. I can speak from my own experience that coolies for this or any other purpose, are not to be had, and my neighbours echo the assertion. The deficiency has arisen since the Deva Sholah monopoly came into operation.

12. But while this class (of coolies) have mostly left a large proportion of the poorer order are compelled to remain, and *their* condition is deplorable. I have said that to natives in this climate fuel is a necessary of life. The present season has been a peculiarly inclement and bleak one, and therefore the suffering in their chill habitations from the inability to have a fire to warm themselves, must have been very great; add to this, as I am credibly informed, that the poorer native cannot now afford to cook two meals a day. He can only afford fuel for his morning's cooking, and has to keep a cold remains for the evening meal.

13. I feel well assured that such a state of things as this can never have been contemplated when the present arrangements were entered into; and I feel equally confident that when brought under the notice of Government it will be ready to sanction the application of a remedy even if a sacrifice should be involved therein.

14. I will only in conclusion say that I can confidently refer to Dr. Shaw, the Principal Inspector of Hospitals, in verification of what I have said regarding the sanitary expediency of lopping the lower branches of trees; to the highest native official, the Tahsildar, in support of what I have said of the cause of the exodus of coolies, and the sufferings of the poorer classes; and to the general voice of Ootacamund to echo the complaint of a want, and a startling want, of cooly labor.

II

Translation of an Urzi addressed to P. GRANT, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, by SOONDRA MUDALI, Tahsildar of Neilgherry Talook, under date the 13th August 1863.

I have received your Order dated 23rd July 1863, No. 260, informing me that you were given to understand that a great number of men (Mysore Kannadiers) have left these Hills on account of the difficulty experienced by them in getting firewood, and calling upon me to furnish you with my view on the subject.

The convenience which the people had enjoyed in former days in the way of getting their supply of firewood, and the difficulty which they experience by the present system of supply, are fully explained in the following paragraphs:—

1. Taking into consideration, the constant winds, the heavy rain and frost at certain periods, and the intolerable cold prevailing on these hills, the people inhabiting here were allowed during the time of Mr. Sullivan to get firewood for their use from whichever forest they liked without any restriction. This practice with much convenience to the people continued for a long time, the price of firewood per man's load at the time ranging only from 6 Pice to 1 Anna.

2. About ten or twelve years ago during the time of the late Collector, Mr. Thomas, it was ordered that no firewood should be felled nor dead wood removed from any of the Sholas within three miles from the centre of the Cantonment, the Jail hill being fixed as the central point. A Serjeant and six Peons were also employed for watching the above forests. Coolies and cartmen without any payment whatever were allowed to bring in firewood for sale from Pykara and Nunjanaud Sholahs situated beyond three miles. Burghers were also allowed to take any dead wood found in the Sholahs situated close to their respective villages, they being at the same time allowed the option of selling or keeping it for their own use. Thus the poor people in the bazar and in Kandul as well as the Burghers and cartmen were enabled to bring firewood for sale, when the selling rates were 1 to 2 Annas per cooly load and 1 to 1½ Rupees per cart load; these prices did not press hard upon the people; any trees fallen down in the Sholahs, within three miles of the Cantonment, were sold by the Forest Serjeant for the benefit of Government.

3. About three years ago orders were given by the Forest Department that no firewood should be cut in any of the forests on these Hills, and the present system of letting annually in public auction the forests, situated at distances varying from six to ten miles, introduced. The purchaser of the forest allows people and cartmen, to fell firewood both dry and green, on payment to him of the value prescribed by him.

4. The result of this system is that the price of firewood has risen so high that a cooly's load sells from 6 to 9 Annas, and a cart load from 3½ to 5 Rupees; these press hard upon people in low circumstances inhabiting this cold region.

5. Firewood is required on these Hills to a larger extent than in the low country, greater quantity being consumed in the cold climate both for cooking and basking purposes; for a poor man 1 Anna worth of firewood is not quite sufficient to prepare his meals for one time, and when this 1 Anna worth of firewood happens to be green, the man is put to greater difficulties in getting his meals ready. At Coonoor firewood used to sell at very low rates before the introduction of the present system, but people now resort to the Coffee plantations of Mr. Stanes, Colonel Woodfall, and Mr. Dawson, junior, where they buy at 4 or 6 Pice per cooly load and sell the same at Coonoor at 5 or 6 Annas; were it not for these Coffee plantations, firewood would sell dearer at Coonoor than in Ootacamund; the bazarmen complained to you in person of the high prices paid by them for this article, and showed to you the very small bundles exposed for sale in the bazar.

6. The gentlemen and Hotel-keepers on the Hills purchase at one and the same time 100 or 200 bandy loads of firewood, and store it up before the rainy season commences; although this course is expensive it is more convenient as the firewood becomes dry for use. People in low circumstances and servants receiving small salaries cannot afford to buy and store up firewood in the same manner; they are consequently obliged every now and then to buy small quantities of green firewood, and undergo much difficulty as it does not burn well.

7. In a climate like this, where firewood is so much required, public servants and peons on small salaries lose half their pay for firewood. Coolies also spend half their earnings for the article. On this very account many of the Mysore Canarese people and coolies from the Eastern Districts left the place. Getting coolies when required has consequently become a task of much difficulty. The domestic servants of gentlemen also now require high wages on this very acccount.

8. After the present system of selling firewood has been introduced the poor people here were for some time in the habit of bringing for sale the Hill Tobacco or "Lobia" sticks which has been put a stop to by a notice issued in English by Major Morgan to the effect that people cutting the above sticks should only take them for their own use, but not carry them for sale. I have already submitted the above notice to you with my Urzi, dated 13th July, No. 216. Besides this Major Morgan has ruled that a fee of 6 Pice per cooly load of bamboos and 3 Pice per do. of reeds should be paid whether the loads are brought from the forests of Seegoor or those of Burby; this is also very inconvenient to the people. If poor people through ignorance or from want proceed to the forests and bring small sticks of firewood, they are of course charged with theft, and convicted under Section 379 of the Indian Penal Code. The restriction which prevails on the Neilgherries with regard to cutting of firewood does not seem to exist in any other quarter.

9. In order to populate the Hills Mr. Sullivan at first gave every sort of encouragement to the people who came up, and the present populous state of the Hills is owing to the indulgence shown by that gentleman at that time. Fuel is a most essential article on these Hills, where the inclemencies of weather are severe. If such restrictions are enforced with regard to firewood (which though obtained on payment of high prices is green and do not burn well), how could people live comfortably.

10. Owing to the scarcity of firewood poor people instead of as usual cooking their rice twice a day prepare it only once and keep a portion which they eat during the night with their family and children, the meals so kept get cold, do not agree with them in this climate, and bring on them sickness which often proves fatal. Such are the troubles people are put to with regard to firewood. As to the veracity of the statements contained in this Urzee, I beg to refer you to the old residents General Douker, Mr. Lascelles, Mr. Ouchterlony, and Mr. Dawson, as well as to Shopkeepers Messrs. Schmidt and Etienne.

11. For the sake of public convenience roads, Chuttrums, and Moosaferkhanas are constructed, avenues planted and wells excavated, all at the expense of Government; and it will be great public benefit if no restriction whatever is made in getting firewood, which is so much required in this cold climate. Government spend a good deal of money for the sake of public convenience and the three thousand and odd Rupees they yearly get by this firewood contract will not be a great thing to them to sacrifice.

12. Under these circumstances it seems advisable that the present system should be abolished and the rule which obtained during the late Collector, Mr. Thomas's time be re-established. This rule was that no firewood should be cut in any of the Sholas within three miles from the centre of the Cantonment, the centrical point being the Jail Hills; that coolies and cartmen may bring in and sell firewood from any of the Sholahs beyond three miles of the Cantonment; that Burghers may take for their own use or for sale the fallen and dead trees found in the Sholahs in the neighbourhood of their villages; and that the fallen and dead trees in the Sholahs within three miles of the Cantonment disposed of by auction. If this is sanctioned it will be a great convenience to the public. The one great evil in the present system of letting the forests on contract is the total destruction of the forest, by Contractors. During a term of two years' contract the large forests known as Governor's Sholah and Cova Sholah have been entirely denuded. The very large Deva Sholah forest, which is now worked by the Contractors, will soon share the same fate. If permission is given to bring firewood from different Sholahs the dead and fallen trees in them will be taken for sale, and the forests will be saved from total annihilation. During the time this rule was observed not a single forest was entirely destroyed. I therefore beg that this rule may be re-established in supercession of the present system, and the people relieved from their sufferings. In conclusion, I beg to say that I will abide by the orders that may emanate from you on the subject.

III

Letter from P. GRANT, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, to W. HUDLESTON, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 29th September 1863, No. 178.

SIR,

1. No one residing on the Neilgherries for any time can escape having his attention directed to the question of the supply of firewood for the Station of Ootacamund. It attracted the attention of my predecessor, and now engages the anxious care of Major Morgan, whose vigilance no doubt has tended much to the preservation of the woods in and near the station from the axe. Mr. Ouchterlony, one of the oldest residents on the Hills, and one who always takes an interest in the station and its inhabitants, addressed me some time ago about the difficulties experienced by them in procuring firewood. He has stated things as they exist, and his suggestions for their remedy accord very much with my own ideas, as well as with those of the Tahsildar of the Neilgherries, for whose opinion on the subject I called. Copies of Mr. Ouchterlony's communication, and of the Tahsildar's Urzee are enclosed.

2. Firewood is now obtained at the rate of Rupees 3-12-0 per bandy load of (nominally) 750 lbs., but less in reality, from Deva Sholah distant from the Ootacamund Church eleven miles. So far as the Europeans and wealthy native classes are concerned, this probably cannot be helped, but it bears very heavily on the poorer resident classes and low country coolies, and has been, I believe, the means of driving many of them off the hills. To such an extent has this taken place, that ordinary coolies are often not to be had. It is easy to understand how this has taken place. From the best information I have been able to obtain, there is reason to believe that a cooly's expenditure on account of firewood comes to 1 Anna at least per diem, the price of provisions of the ordinary kinds on the Hills is very high, and work is not always certain during the rains, and even when it is, a cooly has to support his wife or pay the person who cooks for him, and in addition to provide shelter and clothing for himself and wife. Granted that all the above wants are supplied, the condition of the poorer classes without a little extra fire, during the wet months of the year at Ootacamund, is wretched in the extreme. Most of them have to gain their livelihood by out-door labor, and if after they have worked in the cold and wet, they have to return to a damp fire-less hut, it is not to be wondered at that they are the subjects of cold and fever, or that to avoid these they escape to the low country, as has been the case during the past season. It is no doubt easier to point out evils than to remedy them. However, in the present case, I submit that the evils may be modified without the chance of any great loss to Government by allowing people to collect and sell or use for private consumption, all fallen wood and brushwood in the Sholahs. Under the present system not a twig, I believe, is permitted to be taken except on payment. Existing Sholahs would not be injured, as green wood would not be touched, and the object of Government, the preservation of the woods, as I believe it to be, and not the raising of Revenue by their sale, would be attained. If it was found that a general permission as above indicated led to abuse, it might be limited to a certain number of Sholahs at a time; thereby rendering the supervision by the Conservator's Department easier and more complete. Any steps that can be legitimately taken to relieve the condition of the poor should be adopted. The higher classes must draw their supplies of firewood from the Deva Sholah, which from its distance renders it a very expensive article of domestic economy. This can not be helped; in fact, as the number of residents on the Hills increases, the evil will increase, until the only true remedy, a supply of wood from plantations raised by private individuals coming into the market, begins to operate. The subject of planting Australian trees has been discussed a good deal, and on the part of some individuals has taken a practical turn, for several of them have commenced to plant.

IV

No. 264. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 14th October 1863, No. 178.

1. Ordered that the foregoing letter be submitted for the consideration of Government in view to the application of such remedy as they may deem proper. The Board fully recognize the

importance and urgency of the case, and it appears to them that the present system of supply is capable of much improvement.

2. The renting system, which gives to one person a monopoly of the article, is never a satisfactory one, when, as in the present instance, the supply of *a daily necessary of life* is concerned; and the Board would suggest that the plan of individual license and voucher, combined with pre-payment, is far more likely to produce satisfactory results. In combination with this might be allowed a trial of the Collector's proposal regarding dead wood, for it appears to the Board that restrictions must have been carried on this point considerably beyond what was legitimate for conservancy purposes.

3. The Board are also of opinion that systematic thinning out of the more distant and overgrown Sholahs might be carried out, with ultimate advantage to the woods and with perceptible relief to the present pressure, the wood being stacked on the spot and sold by auction.

4. These proposals would doubtless involve some additional expense, but the Board believe that they would be ultimately remunerative, and that they should be combined with the widest extension of the planting operations, for which means are available.

5. The Board are decidedly of opinion that the Neilgherry Sholahs should in no respect be regarded as a source of revenue, but that the object in view should be a system of efficient supply to a most pressing demand; and if that system pays its own expenses, the result should be deemed satisfactory in a pecuniary point of view.

6. The Board find that on the average of the last three years the gross receipts from the Sholahs have been Rupees 4,971 yearly, and that at present the annual expenses connected with them seem to average little more than Rupees 1,800, although until lately, in consequence of the expensive plan of employing a highly paid Officer in sole charge, there has been an annual deficit.

7. The Board think that a couple of foresters of the stamp of the person employed in Malabar would form a very efficient establishment under Major Morgan, and that such aid would enable him to carry on operations on a wider scale than has hitherto been attempted.

8. The urgency and importance of the subject are unquestionable, and the facts stated by the Collector in his letter and in its enclosures, afford strong evidence that the plan of supply hitherto pursued is a very defective one, especially as it regards the poorer classes.

V

No. 265. From Captain R. H. BEDDOME, Officiating Conservator of Forests, to J. D. SIM, Esq., Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, Fort Saint George, dated Ootacamund, 20th October 1863, No. 731.

SIR,

1. In answer to your Official Memorandum, No. 220 of the 17th October, forwarding Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 14th October 1863, together with three enclosures,* I have the honor to forward a full report upon the subject of the firewood question from Major Morgan, Assistant and Conservator in charge of Neilgherry Sholahs.

* Herewith returned.

2. I can corroborate the statements contained in Major Morgan's report, and must remark that both the Collector and Mr. Ouchterlony have taken rather an exaggerated view of the question. An advertisement has appeared for sometime past in the Ootacamund Newspaper that the Contractor will supply firewood at Rupees 3-8-0 the bandy load of 750 lbs., and 5 Annas the load of 50 lbs.

3. On the 9th of this month I requested Major Morgan to allow the Contractor to fell all brushwood in the Sholahs in and around Ootacamund, the Sholahs to be cleared in detail and the foresters to attend periodically to see that the trees and saplings were not injured. Some of the Sholahs have a dense growth of underwood, chiefly large Acanthaceous shrubs with woody stems of considerable size, this plan will I hope yield a considerable supply of small wood for the poorer classes, and if the foresters do their duty the Sholahs will only be improved by the removing of

the scrub. The firewood Contractor has raised objections to this, but his objections cannot hold good, and I hope to be able to put this plan into operation immediately; it will be easy to arrange that this underwood is cut and brought into the market chiefly during the rains and cold season when the requirements of the poorer classes are largest.

4. The Department are in the habit of felling dead wood in the Sholahs in the immediate vicinity of Ootacamund, and it is put up to auction and sold on the spot.

5. I have already written officially to Government on the subject of the timber in the Sholahs about to be felled for the planting of Chinchona. I consider that the Forest Department should be allowed to fell the timber in these Sholahs before they are handed over to the Superintendent of the Chinchona Plantations; it would be stacked and sold on the spot by the Department.

6. The public will probably never be contented unless they are allowed to fell indiscriminately in all the Sholahs in and around Ootacamund; if this however were to be allowed every indigenous tree near the station would disappear in the course of two or three years, and the supply would eventually have to be drawn from the Deva Sholah as it now is.

7. The Deva Sholah must be looked upon as the chief supply of firewood for Ootacamund, though with judicious management a large supply of underwood, &c., can be brought into the market for the poorer classes, without any detriment to the woods in the vicinity of the station. The Sholahs to be felled for Chinchona Plantations will yield a large supply of firewood at a short distance only from the station.

8. The Board of Revenue seem to think that the Voucher and License system would be an improvement upon that at present pursued; it might be tried next year, but I feel certain that it would prove a failure; we should require a very large Establishment to check smuggling and to prevent parties from felling in Sholahs which it is desirable to preserve for the beauty of the station.

9. A large nursery of Australian tree seedlings has been formed by the Forest Department, and planting to a considerable extent has been carried on in several Sholahs; these operations may however be extended still more, and I would recommend that the Collector be urged to have the Todas' claims to portions of the Sholah known as the Governor's Sholah clearly defined; this Sholah is by far the most favorable site for a large firewood plantation, and if the portion belonging to the Todas be fenced off and their buffaloes prevented from roaming over the remainder, we might form a very fine plantation there; it would be a still better plan however if the Todas could be persuaded to take another piece of land in exchange for this.

10. Major Morgan's report fully explains the rise in the price of firewood complained of by Mr. Ouchterlony and the Tahsildar; when the price of labor and grain have risen a hundred per cent. within the last few years it can hardly be expected that the price of firewood should be the same as it was several years ago.

From Major MORGAN, in charge of Neilgherry Sholas, to Captain R. H. BEDDOME, Acting Conservator of Forests, dated Ootacamund, 19th October 1863.

SIR,

1. In reply to your letter No. 727 of 19th October 1863, with enclosures, I have the honor to inform you that agreeably to your letter of 9th of October last, I ordered the Head Overseer to arrange with the Contractor for selling head loads to poor people from the brushwood to be cut in a large Sholah in Lovedale close to Ootacamund. Several objections were urged by the Contractor; first, that the wood was green; second, that he ought to be paid 10 Rupees an acre for cutting it, and in fact he did not think people would take it in its green state.

2. To remedy the state of matters complained of by the Collector, Mr. Ouchterlony and the Tahsildar, I would recommend that any Sholahs Mr. McIvor may require for planting with Chinchonas in the vicinity of Ootacamund should be pointed out to this Department, that we fell and sell the wood, and then hand over the Sholah to Mr. McIvor for planting purposes.

3. In this manner this Department will be able to bear the expenses of supervision, which at present it cannot do if Mr. McIvor is allowed to take Sholahs in charge of this Department and sell the wood.

4. Should the wood from these Sholas not be sufficient, then the Overseers to clear Shola by Sholah of brushwood and dead wood, selling the same to poor people.

5. At the same time the Deva Sholah to be put up annually to auction for the sale of woodand charcoal, with the proviso that wood and head loads would also be sold by the Forest Department.

6. These measures I think would in a great measure alleviate the present dearness of wood, though I cannot agree either with the Collector, Mr. Ouchterlony, or the Tahsildar.

7. I shall first deal with the Collector's letter. In paragraph 2 it is stated that wood is sold at Rupees 3-12-0 the load of 750 lbs.; the Contractor advertises its *delivery* at Rupees 3-8-0 the load of 750 lbs.; this I maintain is a reasonable rate, and not much in excess of the price for the last five years, as I am well aware that in former days a load of only 350 lbs. was charged Rupees 1-8-0. If people do not demand 750 lbs. agreeably to the Contractor's advertisement, the fault is their own.

8. Firewood is hardly the cause that ordinary coolies are not to be had: the cause is that many coolies have taken to growing potatoes, and the increased demand for labor in the various Coffee Plantations.

9. If a cooly requires one Anna's firewood (10 lbs.) to cook his food, then he requires four times as much as a Soldier, whose allowance is 2½ lbs. per diem.

10. As a rule coolies have no wives here, as the Canarese leave their wives in Mysore.

11. Again, a cooly here receives 6 Rupees a month, in Mysore 3 Rupees.

12. A cooly here can buy at the Deva Sholah 80 lbs. of wood for one Anna, this he retails in the bazaar for eight Annas, so that he has his wood cheap or he can convert it into money.

13. Women can in one day with ease collect six Annas worth of dry cow-dung (ooplies) or the same amount of wild Tobacco stalks (Lobelia).

14. As for letting the people indiscriminately into the Sholahs to collect dry wood, I can only say that not a sapling would be left in a short time, the people would soon make dry wood of them.

15. As it is, under pretence of bringing in Lobelia stalks, they conceal wood (cut in the Sholahs) in their bundles.

16. If firewood is to be rendered very cheap, Mr. Grant's remedy for planting is not clear to me, as people will not plant unless it is likely to be remunerative.

17. Mr. Ouchterlony's objections to the present state of things, are so similar to those urged by the Collector, that to notice them seriatim would only be a repetition of what I have already advanced.

18. In paragraph 10 Mr. Ouchterlony speaks of the Burgher supply of firewood. The damage done by these men to Sholahs is enormous; what with saplings for fences, saplings for houses, annual encroachments on the Sholahs by the felling of trees on the edges for *dry* wood, and then ploughing up the ground, the Sholahs in the neighbourhood of Burghers bid fair to disappear. Burghers if they do not now bring "twigs and thorns," bring large bundles of Lobelia stalks.

19. The Tahsildar, in paragraph 1, states that the price of fuel in Mr. Sullivan's day was, for a man's load, half to one Anna; he might as well have stated that the cooly hire from Mettapolliam to this was then some 4 Annas and is now 14 Annas.

The fact being that the price of everything has risen, both labor and materials. For instance, the Burghers twenty years ago sold thirty measures of Barley for a Rupee, they now sell eight measures.

20. In paragraph 4 the Tahsildar omits to state that the Contractor advertises 50 lbs. of wood for 5 Annas, the selling price is not 9 Annas, as he states, so the cart load is 3-8-0 not 5 Rupees.

21. In paragraph 5 the Tahsildar states that it requires more wood to make water boil at this elevation, than in the plains; I believe science says the reverse; he also states that four times the Soldier's allowance is not enough for a poor man.

22. That a public Officer like the Tahsildar, should be permitted to write such gross exaggerations to the Collector as the following surprises me, "that public servants and peons lose half their pay for firewood."

23. In paragraph 3 the Tahsildar says that years ago the price of a cart load of wood was Rupees 1-8-0, but he omits to show the weight; four years ago a gentleman weighed two of these loads, one was 250 lbs., one 350 lbs.

24. In paragraph 8 the Tahsildar omits to notice the fact that the Coimbatore rules expressly states that poor people may gather fuel for themselves, but not for sale; in fact in this place many poor people make much money by the sale of firewood.

It is true that many people have been brought up to the Sub-Magistrate for damaging Sholahs, but the punishment awarded, one day's imprisonment, is not sufficient to deter people.

25. In paragraph 12 the Tahsildar would once more let loose the Burghers upon the Sholahs; at the present rate of consumption in Ootacamund (about 100 Acres annually) it will not be long before the Sholahs left by the Burghers disappear if the Tahsildar's suggestions are adopted.

26. The Revenue Board in their Proceedings have not had the advantage of receiving any explanations from me regarding the supply of firewood during the past year, if they had, I do not think they would in paragraph 2 have stated it as their opinion "that restrictions had been carried on this point considerably beyond what was legitimate for conservancy purposes."

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28. In paragraph 8 the Board give it as their opinion that the plan of supply hitherto pursued is "a very defective one," to this I can only reply that if the Tahsildar's statement to is be accepted, as the true state of the case, then undoubtedly the supply of firewood to the poorer classes has been a failure; but unfortunately it is not so much that the price of wood has increased, but the price of labor has enhanced the price of wood: only five years ago the pay of a Burgher was 2 Annas a day, they now get 4 Annas.

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2. In March 1860 the Government prescribed the following course of action:—

First.—The whole of the Sholahs, or woods, in the neighbourhood of the station to be absolutely reserved, not only for their beauty, but also from fear of injuring the water springs; their limits to be marked; no private cutters to be allowed inside; old trees to be felled by servants of the Department, and brought outside, and to be sold there by public auction. Trees to be planted where required in vacant spaces.

Secondly.—Suitable woods at a distance from the station to be selected and marked out in lots of moderate size; and a number of these lots, amply sufficient for a year's supply, to be put up to auction annually. The Contractor to be permitted to clear the ground entirely within his lot or lots, with the exception of such trees as may be marked by the Conservancy Department previously to the sale.

Thirdly.—The cleared lots to be planted, as required, by the Conservancy Department.

Fourthly.—No private felling of any kind, or for any person, to be allowed in woods or on land belonging to Government.

3. This system is now in operation, and so far as preservation of the remaining forests is concerned has evidently been fairly successful, though of necessity it has caused a rise in the price of fuel. During the present year a portion of the Deva Sholah (to which a good hill road has been constructed by Government) has been sold for the supply of firewood to Ootacamund, the purchaser or Contractor being bound to supply wood at the rate of 750 lbs. for 3½ Rupees at the

4. Should the wood from these Sholas not be sufficient, then the Overseers to clear Shola by Sholah of brushwood and dead wood, selling the same to poor people.

5. At the same time the Deva Sholah to be put up annually to auction for the sale of woodand charcoal, with the proviso that wood and head loads would also be sold by the Forest Department.

6. These measures I think would in a great measure alleviate the present dearness of wood, though I cannot agree either with the Collector, Mr. Ouchterlony, or the Tahsildar.

7. I shall first deal with the Collector's letter. In paragraph 2 it is stated that wood is sold at Rupees 3-12-0 the load of 750 lbs.; the Contractor advertises its *delivery* at Rupees 3-8-0 the load of 750 lbs.; this I maintain is a reasonable rate, and not much in excess of the price for the last five years, as I am well aware that in former days a load of only 350 lbs. was charged Rupees 1-8-0. If people do not demand 750 lbs. agreeably to the Contractor's advertisement, the fault is their own.

8. Firewood is hardly the cause that ordinary coolies are not to be had: the cause is that many coolies have taken to growing potatoes, and the increased demand for labor in the various Coffee Plantations.

9. If a cooly requires one Anna's firewood (10 lbs.) to cook his food, then he requires four times as much as a Soldier, whose allowance is 2½ lbs. per diem.

10. As a rule coolies have no wives here, as the Canarese leave their wives in Mysore.

11. Again, a cooly here receives 6 Rupees a month, in Mysore 3 Rupees.

12. A cooly here can buy at the Deva Sholah 80 lbs. of wood for one Anna, this he retails in the bazaar for eight Annas, so that he has his wood cheap or he can convert it into money.

13. Women can in one day with ease collect six Annas worth of dry cow-dung (ooplies) or the same amount of wild Tobacco stalks (Lobelia).

14. As for letting the people indiscriminately into the Sholahs to collect dry wood, I can only say that not a sapling would be left in a short time, the people would soon make dry wood of them.

15. As it is, under pretence of bringing in Lobelia stalks, they conceal wood (cut in the Sholahs) in their bundles.

16. If firewood is to be rendered very cheap, Mr. Grant's remedy for planting is not clear to me, as people will not plant unless it is likely to be remunerative.

17. Mr. Ouchterlony's objections to the present state of things, are so similar to those urged by the Collector, that to notice them seriatim would only be a repetition of what I have already advanced.

18. In paragraph 10 Mr. Ouchterlony speaks of the Burgher supply of firewood. The damage done by these men to Sholahs is enormous; what with saplings for fences, saplings for houses, annual encroachments on the Sholahs by the felling of trees on the edges for *dry* wood, and then ploughing up the ground, the Sholahs in the neighbourhood of Burghers bid fair to disappear. Burghers if they do not now bring "twigs and thorns," bring large bundles of Lobelia stalks.

19. The Tahsildar, in paragraph 1, states that the price of fuel in Mr. Sullivan's day was, for a man's load, half to one Anna; he might as well have stated that the cooly hire from Mettapolliam to this was then some 4 Annas and is now 14 Annas.

The fact being that the price of everything has risen, both labor and materials. For instance, the Burghers twenty years ago sold thirty measures of Barley for a Rupee, they now sell eight measures.

20. In paragraph 4 the Tahsildar omits to state that the Contractor advertises 50 lbs. of wood for 5 Annas, the selling price is not 9 Annas, as he states, so the cart load is 3-8-0 not 5 Rupees.

21. In paragraph 5 the Tahsildar states that it requires more wood to make water boil at this elevation, than in the plains; I believe science says the reverse; he also states that four times the Soldier's allowance is not enough for a poor man.

22. That a public Officer like the Tahsildar, should be permitted to write such gross exaggerations to the Collector as the following surprises me, "that public servants and peons lose half their pay for firewood."

23. In paragraph 3 the Tahsildar says that years ago the price of a cart load of wood was Rupees 1-8-0, but he omits to show the weight; four years ago a gentleman weighed two of these loads, one was 250 lbs., one 350 lbs.

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2. In March 1860 the Government prescribed the following course of action:—

First.—The whole of the Sholahs, or woods, in the neighbourhood of the station to be absolutely reserved, not only for their beauty, but also from fear of injuring the water springs; their limits to be marked; no private cutters to be allowed inside; old trees to be felled by servants of the Department, and brought outside, and to be sold there by public auction. Trees to be planted where required in vacant spaces.

Secondly.—Suitable woods at a distance from the station to be selected and marked out in lots of moderate size; and a number of these lots, amply sufficient for a year's supply, to be put up to auction annually. The Contractor to be permitted to clear the ground entirely within his lot or lots, with the exception of such trees as may be marked by the Conservancy Department previously to the sale.

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Fourthly.—No private felling of any kind, or for any person, to be allowed in woods or on land belonging to Government.

3. This system is now in operation, and so far as preservation of the remaining forests is concerned has evidently been fairly successful, though of necessity it has caused a rise in the price of fuel. During the present year a portion of the Deva Sholah (to which a good hill road has been constructed by Government) has been sold for the supply of firewood to Ootacamund, the purchaser or Contractor being bound to supply wood at the rate of 750 lbs. for 3½ Rupees at the

Cantonment and of 750 lbs. for 12 Annas at the Sholah side. Of course there is, as indeed there can be, no restriction on private individuals cutting and selling their own wood on any terms they please.

4. The papers now before Government on this subject are —

I. A letter addressed to the Collector by Mr. J. Ouchterlony.
II. An Urzee addressed to the Collector by the Tahsildar of the Neilgherries.
III. A letter from the Collector to the Board of Revenue.
IV. The Proceedings of the Board of Revenue on the above three communications.
V. A letter from the Acting Conservator with the Assistant Conservator's report.

5. Mr. Ouchterlony states that the present price of firewood places the article beyond the means of the laboring classes, who are consequently leaving Ootacamund, and is productive of much suffering and sickness among the resident poor. Mr. Ouchterlony adds that coolies cannot be procured by the residents of Ootacamund even for the purpose of cutting down the over-growth of Acacias in their gardens, and as this deficiency of labor has arisen since the "Deva Sholah monopoly" came into operation, it is attributed to the latter.

Mr. Ouchterlony suggests that arrangements should be made for allowing existing Sholahs to be freely cut on condition of the seedlings of trees known to thrive being planted in their place, and inferentially that the "Deva Sholah monopoly" be discontinued.

6. The Tahsildar dwells more at length on the evils of the present system, and urges reversion to the former plan of conserving only the Sholahs within three miles of the Jail hill at Ootacamund, and leaving all others open to the public. He mentions also that at Coonoor, the wood-cutters buy wood from the neighbouring Coffee Estates at 4 or 6 pice per cooly-load and sell it at Coonoor at 5 or 6 Annas.

7. Mr. Grant shares the views of Mr. Ouchterlony and the Tahsildar, and recommends that people should be allowed to collect and sell, or use for private consumption, all fallen wood and brushwood in the Sholahs. "The higher classes," he says, "must draw their supplies of firewood "from the Deva Sholah, which from its distance renders it a very expensive article of domestic "economy. This cannot be helped, in fact, as the number of residents on the Hills increases, "the evil will increase, until the only true remedy, a supply of wood from plantations raised "by private individuals coming into the market, begins to operate."

8. The Board of Revenue consider that "the renting system, which gives to one person a "monopoly of the article, is never a satisfactory one when, as in the present instance, the "supply of a daily necessary of life is concerned," and "they suggest that the plan of individual "license and voucher, combined with pre-payment, is far more likely to produce satisfactory "results." In combination with this they would also try the Collector's plan in regard to dead wood, and carry out a systematic thinning of the more distant and over-grown Sholahs, the wood of which should be stacked on the spot and sold by auction. These proposals, they remark, would doubtless involve some additional expense, but they believe that they would be ultimately remunerative, and "they should be combined with the widest extension of the planting operations "for which means are available." The Board further "are decidedly of opinion that the "Neilgherry Sholahs should in no respect be regarded as a source of revenue, but that the object "in view should be a system of efficient supply to a most pressing demand; and if that system "pays its own expenses, the result should be deemed satisfactory in a pecuniary point of view."

9. The Assistant Conservator mentions various measures which he has adopted, and proposes to adopt, for the relief of the poor. He considers that 3½ Rupees for 750 lbs. of firewood delivered in Ootacamund is a reasonable rate, and not much in excess of the price for the last five years: he maintains that the scarcity of coolies is owing to many of them having taken to growing potatoes and to the increased demand for labor in Coffee plantations: and he points out that Mysore coolies get 6 Rupees on the Hills against 3 in their own country, that the estimate of 10 lbs. of firewood, daily, or four times the Soldier's allowance, is preposterous, and in fact, that the rise in firewood is mainly owing to the enormous rise in the price of labor.

Finally, he deprecates most strongly the course proposed by the Board and Collector of allowing wood-cutters into the Sholahs to collect dry wood.

10. The Officiating Conservator corroborates Major Morgan's statements and adds, "when "the price of labor and grain have risen a hundred per cent. within the last few years, it can "hardly be expected that the price of firewood should be the same as it was several years ago."

11. These complaints seem based in a great measure on erroneous assumptions.

It seems to be held that there is something peculiar about wood on the Neilgherries, taking it out of the category of articles the price of which is regulated by the cost of production, the relation of supply to demand, and the other circumstances that determine the price of commodities; that it is the duty of Government to supply the community on the Hills with firewood, now and hereafter, with but little reference to its value; that the forests of the Hills are not to be regarded as a source of public revenue, though forests elsewhere, and even pasturage on the Hills themselves, may be so regarded; and that the local rate of wages being insufficient to attract labor should be supplemented to the necessary extent by a contribution of cheap firewood from the State forests.

12. That firewood is dearer than it was some years ago is undoubted: and this is the result of the improvidence of past years, of an increased demand unaccompanied by increased sources of supply, and of the great rise in the price of labor and every commodity. A relaxation of the conservancy now enforced would surely enhance the evil, would remove the wholesome check on wasteful use which a high price naturally imposes, and would lead, at no distant date, to the destruction of the remaining forests. The true policy of Government is to husband present resources, and to induce private planting by rendering it profitable.

13. The present system of conservancy was adopted, after full consideration, with the object of meeting present wants without improvidently forestalling future resources.

14. Year by year fresh tracts, estimated to suffice for the requirements of each year, are selected and sold by public auction, the purchaser being bound to sell to all comers at prices not exceeding a fixed maximum. This condition is of questionable expediency, as by arbitrarily limiting the profit on wood it tends to discourage private planting, but it is adopted in the interest of present consumers and cannot be withdrawn until, as private plantations approach maturity, protection is afforded to the public against extortionate charges. The sale of the Sholahs by auction precludes all partiality and jobbery, and is the fairest course for all concerned. The Sholahs, as thus cleared, are being re-planted, with fast growing Australian Acacias to meet future wants.

15. Experience has proved that the admission of wood-cutters into the Sholahs is a most destructive course. It is impossible to restrict them to dead or fallen wood, and in spite of precautions they ring and kill trees for future appropriation when dead. The only safe course is for the foresters to remove dead trees and thin crowded Sholahs, selling the wood outside to the highest bidder. This is now being done and, with the re-planting of vacant spaces, should in future be regularly and systematically carried on.

16. To allow free cutting in Sholahs more distant than three miles from Ootacamund would simply lead to their destruction, and would entail on future residents greater evils than those from which the present residents suffer: for the natural supply would fail while private planting would be impossible so long as wood could be procured for the mere cost of felling and carriage.

17. The scarcity of labor is obviously owing to the rate of wages being too low. On the Hills the laborer needs warmer clothing, better shelter, and more nutritive food than in the plains; higher wages must therefore be paid. Firewood is not more a necessary of life than food, and it is difficult to understand why Government should be expected to supply the one more than the other.

18. The Board's suggestion that the forests should not be regarded as objects of Revenue is clearly wrong in principle, and certainly would be injurious in practice. It is not easy to understand why Government should not realise a revenue from the wood of a Sholah, merely because it is used as fuel; and to sell firewood at prime cost would effectually preclude all plant-

ing in future. A private individual must necessarily realise a profit on his plantation, and he can never compete with Government selling wood, out of forests which have cost nothing to plant, at the mere expense of felling and carriage, he being obliged to incur the whole of the former charge and the latter to a greater or less extent.

19. It is this, in fact, which has prevented people hitherto from growing wood for fuel as they grow coffee, grain, and other commodities. Prior to conservancy wood could be had for the mere felling, and of course it was not worth any one's while to grow it: now, however, that it has to be paid for, planting has commenced, as Mr. Grant reports; and there can be little doubt that in a few years fuel will be abundant, and competition will bring prices to their proper level.

20. It may be that the Forest Officers have, as the Board think, carried their conservancy too far; as for instance, to the extent of forbidding the collection of Lobelia stalks and the like; if this be the case the prohibition should be withdrawn.

21. The distance of the Deva Sholah also renders it desirable that a nearer source of supply, if such there be, should be selected for next year's operations. This point will receive Captain Beddome's early attention. The Government are averse, moreover, to a large section of a Sholah being made over to a single individual. Lots containing each a few acres should be marked out and each lot put up separately.

22. The Government are willing to adopt every legitimate mode of meeting the wants of the people, without trenching on the supply of future years or discouraging private planting. A judicious system of forest conservancy fairly carried out offers the readiest means of carrying this intention into effect, and on a review of the whole question the Government see no reason for abandoning the position which they have taken up.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.
„ Conservator of Forests.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

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Rev: 1863 Despatch
Rec: of Govt Fort St. George
No. 2484.

Proceedings of the
Board of Revenue
Dated 14th October 1863.
Read 14th
Con. 15th
Encl with 20 Letter Rec'd

No 2093. 21 Nov/

Submitting with re-
marks letter from the Col-
lector of Coimbatore sug-
gesting certain modifica-
tion in the rules framed
regarding the supply of fire
wood on the Neilgherry
Hills.

ing Letter to Govt dated 21st January 1861 No 1

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L.N.S.

No 264.

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Mr. Auchterlony suggests that arrangements should be made for allowing existing Sholahs to be freely cut on condition of the seedlings of trees known to thrive on being planted in their place - and inferentially that the "Devah Sholah monopoly" be discontinued.

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cally carried on.

16. To allow free
cutting in Sholas more
distant than 3 miles
from Ootacamund would
simply lead to their
destruction, and would
entail on future residents
greater evils than the
present residents suffer -
for the natural supply
would fail while private
planting would be impossible
so long as wood could be pro-
cured for the mere cost of felling
and carriage.

17. The scarcity of labor is
obviously owing to the rate of
wages being too low. On the
Hills the laborer needs warmer
clothing, better shelter and
more.

more nutritious food than on the plains, and higher wages must therefore be paid - Firewood is not more a necessary of life than food, and it is difficult to understand why Govt. should be expected to supply the one more than the other -

18. The Board's suggestion that the Forests should not be regarded as objects of Revenue is clearly wrong in principle, and certainly would be injurious in practice - It is not easy to understand why Govt. should not realise a revenue from the wood of a Sholah, merely because it is used as fuel; and to sell firewood at prime cost would effectually preclude all planting in future. A private individual must necessarily realise a profit on his plantation, and he can never compete with Govt. selling wood, out of forests which have cost nothing to plant - at the mere expense of felling and carriage, he being obliged to incur the former charge (usually) and the latter to

19 - It is true, no doubt, that Govt. has prevented people both from growing wood for sale as they grow coffee, grain, and other commodities - Prior to conservancy wood could be had for the mere felling, and of course it was not worth any one's while to grow it: now however that it has to be paid for, planting has commenced, as all the reports; and there can be little doubt that in a few years fuel will be abundant, and competition will bring prices to their proper level -

20 - It may be that the Forest Officers have, as the Board thinks, carried their conservancy to the extent of forbidding the

[illegible]

the collection of habitation
stacks and the titles;
and if then let the case
the prohibition should be
withdrawn.

Q. 1. The inclosure of
the Forests which also pro-
duce it desirable, that a
nearer source of supply,
of such there [illegible] should be
selected, for next years opera-
tions. This [illegible]

Q. 2. The Government
certainly ought to adopt every le-
gitimate mode of meeting
the wants of the people,
without touching on the
supply of future years or
discouraging private planta-
ting (but the premises that
they will scarcely abandon)
Conservancy & except
the duty of supplying the

- [illegible] Conductor in this Island & am not prepared
to recommend that any Schedule arrange-
- ments & Forest Conservancy should be aban-
- doned - Private plantations are the speedy
& proper remedy for the scarcity in demand
of fuel - At present it would not be
safe to risk the chance by which the water
supplies are found to well worth retain
a certain price but as private planta
tions approach maturity & afford protection
to the public against extortionate charges
the chance can be withdrawn

J. D.

Jr

I truly doubt I have in any the taking a
large section yet there is a simple individual
I should be disposed to make it part with this &
buy a few acres just round there separately

J. D.

No 2098

Proceedings of the Madras Government

Under date the 21st November 1863

Read the following Papers-

From the Board of Revenue

Submitting with reference to the letter from the Collector of Coimbatore suggesting certain modifications in the rules framed regarding the supply of firewood on the Nilgherry Hills. (Herewith 11 in 1 letter 1863)

From the Officiating Collector of Coimbatore

On the Nilgherry Firewood question- (Herewith 20 " " " 5731)

Copy communicated

1 The question of the supply of Firewood at the Hill Stations has been under the consideration of Govt on various occasions since 1859 in which the then Collector Mr. C. B. Thomas brought to their notice the extensive depredation of

of the forests and shelter
about Belconnen, Cannon
and Jerrabomberra and
urged the necessity of
immediate and effective
conservancy to prevent their
destruction -

In March 1860
the Government previded
the following course of action -
"First - The whole of the
shelter, or woods, in the
neighbourhood of the
station, to be absolutely
reserved, not only for
their beauty, but also
from fear of injuring
the water springs, their
limits to be marked;
no private settlers to
be allowed in such selected
trees to be felled by
servants of the depart-
ment

outside, and to be sold
there by public auction.
Trees to be planted
where required, in
vacant spaces -
"Secondly Suitable woods at
a distance from the
station to be selected,
and marked out in
lots of moderate size,
and a number of
these lots, amply sup-
-ficient for a year's sup-
-ply, to be put up
to auction annually.
The contractor to be
permitted to clear the
ground entirely
within his lot or lots,
with the exception
of such trees as may
be marked by the
Conservancy Report
previously to the sale
The

Thirdly - The cleared lots to be planted, as required by the Conservancy Department.

Fourthly - No private felling of any kind, or for any person, to be allowed in woods or on land belonging to Govt."

3. This system is now in operation and as far as preservation of the remaining Forest is concerned has evidently been fairly successful - though of necessity it has caused a great rise in the price of fuel. During the present year a portion of the Dry Shola (in which a good Hill road has been constructed by Govt) has been sold for

to Coles and by the pur-
-chaser for contractor being
bound to supply wood at
the rate of 7 50 lbs for 3 pieces
-ces at the Cantonments and
of 7 50 lbs for 12 Annas at
the Sholas sold - Of course
there is - as indeed there can
be, no restriction on private
individuals cutting and de-
-selling their own wood on
any terms they please -

4 The papers now before
Govt on this subject are -

I A letter addressed to the
Collr by the Archdeaconry.

II An urzee addressed to
the Collr by the Tahsildar
of the Neilgherries -

III A letter from the Collr
to the Board of Revenue -

IV The Pro of the Board of Re
on the above three communica

V A letter from the Acting
Conservator, with the Asst
Conservator's report -

5 Mr Archdeaconry states
that the present price of Fire
-wood places the article b
-yond the means of the lab
-ring classes who are conse
-quently living only, and a
productive of much suffer
and sickness among the
resident

resident for - Mr Ouchterlony adds, that nobles cannot be procured by the residents of Coty even for the purpose of cutting down the over growth of Nettles in their gardens - and as this deficiency of labor has arisen since the "Devah Sholah Monopoly" came into operation, it is attributed to the latter -

Mr Ouchterlony suggests that arrangements should be made for allowing existing shrubberies to be freely cut on condition of the seedlings of trees known to thrive being planted in their place - and in the event that the "Devah Sholah Monopoly" be discontinued -

6 The Tahsildar

dwells more at length the

on

in the evils of the present system and urges reversion to the former plan of conserving only the Sholas within 3 miles of the Jail still at Coty - and leaving all others open to the public - He mentions also that at Coonoor, the wood-cutters buy wood from the neighbouring coffee estates at 4 or 6 rupees per cart load and sell it at Coonoor at 5 or 6 annas -

7 Mr Grant shares the views of Mr Ouchterlony and the Tahsildar and recommends that people should be allowed to collect and sell, or use for private consumption, all fallen wood and brushwood in the Sholas - "the higher classes" "of fuel" must draw their supplies of firewood from the Deva Sholah, which "from

"/ from its distance ren-
"-ders it a very expensive
"article of domestic eco-
"-nomy. This cannot be
"helped, in fact, as the
"number of residents on
"the hills increases, the
"evil will increase, until
"the only true remedy - a
"supply of wood from planta-
"-tions aided by private
"individuals coming into
"the market - begins to
"operate -"

8. The Board of Reve-
-nue consider that "the
"existing system, which
"gives to one person a
"monopoly of the article,
"is never a satisfactory
"one when, as in the
"present instance, the
"supply of a daily necessary
"of life is concerned" and
"they suggest that the
"plan of individual
"license and voucher, com-
"-bined with prepayment,
"is far more likely to
"produce satisfactory re-
sults."

In combination
with this they would also
by the Collectors' plan
regard to dead wood an
carrying out a systematic
thinning of the more de
-fault and over grown
scholars, the wood of whi
should be stacked on
the spot and sold by
auction - These propos
they remark would do
-less involve some ad
-tional expense, but t
believe that they would
be ultimately remune
-tive, and "they should
"be combined with the
"widest extension of
"planting operations
"which means are pos
"ble" The Board furt
are decidedly of opi
that the Neilgherry
-las should in no
-pect be regarded a
source of revenue,
that the object in v
"sho

should be the same as it was several years ago."

11. These complaints seem based in a great measure on erroneous assumption.

It seems to be held that there is something peculiar about wood on the neighbouring hills, taking it out of the category of articles the price of which is regulated by the cost of production, the relation of supply & demand, and the other circumstances that determine the price of commodities; that it is the duty of Govt to supply the community, on the hills with firewood, now and hereafter, with

but little reference to its value; that the forests of the hills are not to be regarded as a source of public revenue, though forests elsewhere, and even pasturage on the hills themselves, may be so regarded; and that the local rate of wages being insufficient to attract labour it should be supplemented to the necessary extent by a contribution of cheap firewood from the State forests.

12. That firewood is dearer than it was some years ago is undoubted: and that is

is the result of the im-
providence of past
years, of an increased
demand unaccom-
panied by increased
sources of supply, and
of the great rise in
the price of labor and
every commodity. A
relaxation of the con-
strict conservancy now
enforced would surely
enhance the evil, or
would remove the un-
wholesome check on
wasteful use which
a high price naturally
imposes; and would
lead, at no distant
date, to the destruction

Government is to husband
present resources and to in-
duce private planting by
rendering it profitable.

13 The present system
of Conservancy was adopted
after full consideration with
the object of meeting present
wants without improvident
ly forestalling future re-
sources.

14 Year by year fresh
tracts, estimated to suf-
fice for the requirements
of each year, are selected
and sold by public auc
tion, the purchaser being
bound to sell to all comer
at prices not exceeding a
fixed maximum. This
condit

condition is of questionable expediency- as by arbitrarily limiting the profit on wood it tends to discourage private planting- but it is adopted in the interest of present consumers and cannot be withdrawn until, as private plantations approach maturity, ~~xxxx~~ protection is afforded to the public against extortionate charges. The sales of the sholahs by auction precludes all partiality and jobbery, and is the fairest course for all concerned. The sholahs, as thus cleared, are being replanted, with fast-growing Australian Acacias to meet future wants.

15 Experience has proved that the admission of Woodcutters into the sholas is a most destructive course. It is impossible to restrict them to dead or fallen wood, and in spite of precautions they ring and kill trees for future appropriation when dead. The only safe course is for the Foresters to remove dead trees and thin crowded sholahs, selling the wood outside to the highest bidder. This is now being done with the replanting of vacant spaces and should in future be regularly and systematically carried on.

16. To allow free cutting in sholas more distant than 3 miles from Ootacamund would

would simply lead to their destruction, and would entail on future residents greater evils than those from which the present residents suffer: for the natural supply would fail while private planting would be impossible so long as wood could be procured for the mere cost of felling and carriage.

17. The scarcity of labor is obviously owing to there rate of wages being too low. On the Hills the laborer needs warmer clothing, better shelter, and more nutritive food than on the plains: higher wages must therefore be paid. Firewood is not

more a necessary of life than food, and it is difficult to understand why Govt. should be expected to supply the one more than the other.

18 The Board's suggestion that the Forests should not be regarded as objects of Revenue is clearly wrong in principle, and certainly would be injurious in practice. It is not easy to understand why Govt. should not realise a revenue from the wood of a the lab[illegible] merely because it is used as fuel; and to sell firewood at prime cost would effectually preclude all plantings in future. A private individual must necessarily realise a profit on his plantation, and he can never compete with

Gov

Govt. selling wood, out of forests which have cost nothing to plant at the mere expense of felling and carriage, &c. being obliged to incur the whole of the former charge and the latter to a greater or less extent.

19 It is this, in fact, which has prevented people hitherto from growing wood for fuel as they grow coffee, grain, and other commodities. Prior to conservancy wood could be had for the mere felling, and of course it was not worth any one's while to grow it: now however that it has to be paid for, planting has commenced, as Mr. Grant reports; and there can be little doubt that in a few years fuel will be abundant, and competition will bring prices to their proper level.

20. It may be that the Forest officers have, as the Board think, carried their conservancy (so far as for instance) to the extent of forbidding the collection of labelia stalks and the like; if this be the case the prohibition should be withdrawn.

21. The distance of the Ewah scholah also renders it desirable that a nearer source of supply, if such there be, should be selected, for next year's operations. This point will receive Captain Beddome's early attention. The Govt. are averse, moreover to a large section of

a

a Shola being made over to a single Individual. Lots containing each a few acres should be marked out and each lot put up separately.

22. The Govt. are willing to adopt every legitimate mode of meeting the wants of the people, without trenching on the supply of future years or discouraging private planting. A judicious system of Forest Conservancy fairly carried out offers the readiest means of carrying this intention into effect and on a review of the whole question the Govt. see no reason for abandoning the position which they have taken up.

To C. Jones Esq. Collr. & Ex. Officio Conservator of Forests

...il 21st January 1861. A. 4

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...ceived 1862 2/6d.
...s of your Conclusion

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...n. of the Madras Post
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