

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 22/

Press
Mis.

436-437

Dated

28-1-1866.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

25th

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
25th January 1866.*

No. 436. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 6th January 1866, No. 96.

Read the following letter from the Collector of Salem, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 19th December 1865, No. 17:—

1. I have the honor to forward copy of a letter from the Sub-Collector, regarding the introduction of Singhara tuber into the Madras Presidency. I consider that the importation of the plant would be most desirable, and therefore request the Board will be good enough to obtain plants or seeds from Bengal.

2. A copy of letter from the Collector of Meerut, as to the usefulness of the plant, is herewith sent for the Board's information.

From the Sub-Collector of Salem, to the Collector of Salem, dated Camp, Thallavassil, 12th December 1865, No. 425.

1. Hearing from Mr. Shaw, Veterinary Surgeon attached to the Remount Depot at Ossoor, that the Singhara nut is an edible root largely used in Bengal; that it might be introduced and cultivated with advantage in the tanks in this Presidency, and that he had noticed it particularly at Meerut, I addressed the Commissioner of that place. The reply was the enclosed full and interesting letter from W. A. Forbes, Esq., c. b., Collector of Meerut.

2. You will observe that the Singhara is largely grown and extensively used as an article of food in Bengal, and Mr. Shaw assures me that it is much prized as an adjunct to the tables of the rich also, both European and Native.

3. Though the reservoirs of the Madras Presidency are admittedly far superior to those of Bengal, we do not use them except for irrigation. Apparently we might utilize them to a great extent by cultivating edible roots in them, as well as raising crops under them.

4. When I wrote, I was under the impression that a few roots could be sent me by banghy parcel, and I had intended to make the experiment of their culture myself, but Mr. Forbes evidently thinks such an attempt would be vain.

5. If you concur with me in thinking it would be a valuable product to have in our tanks, I shall be glad if you can propose that the Government should undertake the introduction of it, in the manner suggested in the 10th paragraph of Mr. Forbes' letter.

6. I presume the Agri-Horticultural Society had best be employed in the early propagation of it. I shall be glad, however, if some few roots can be sent me for trial in the Ossoor climate, where there are also a few tanks that are never dry, in which the plant might be permanently preserved—re-sowing itself perhaps, for it is apparently an annual.

7. If the public generally are invited to undertake the culture, some will doubtless come forward who have seen and known it in Bengal.

8. Though the Government has liberally spent a large amount on the acclimatization of Chinchona, its liberality is being rapidly re-paid; and it is not improbable that in like manner the Singhara might be made remunerative to Government, as well as to the cultivator, by farming out the right to cultivate it in the Government tanks all over Southern India.

9. Mr. Forbes says it yields an annual profit of from Rupees 8 to 12 per acre of water-surface. This is making the acreage in the tank valuable, as well as that under it. I should think it would also have the effect of decreasing the evaporation.

10. March is the month in which Mr. Forbes proposes to send the seeds, there is therefore no time to be lost in deciding on the desirability or otherwise of the undertaking; for the distance is very great, communication slow, and if we miss this season a year must be lost.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
25th January 1866.*

From the Collector of Meerut, to the Sub-Collector of Salem, dated 27th November 1865,
No. 216.

1. Mr. William, the Commissioner of this Division, has forwarded to me your letter, No. 314 of the 18th September last, with the view to my furnishing the information you require regarding the Singharas.

2. You have heard that it grows in a small pond near the east gate of Meerut, the fact is nearly every tank in the Bengal Provinces (I can answer for the North-West Provinces, the Punjab, and Oudh) is covered with the plant, and the fruit forms a considerable item amongst the articles of food of the people—like chesnuts in Italy.

3. The Rahars, or pukka bearer class, alone grow them, and the mode of "Aquaculture" is as follows. The edible tubercles are sown in March in shallow tanks, or beds, made for the purpose, with from a foot to fifteen inches of water; they throw up stems to the surface, and flourish until the rains set in, when the plants are removed to the deeper tanks with water to any depth. These plants lie on the surface, and from them grow downwards sucker-roots with the edible tubercles on them. The plants do not spread much; their strength goes downwards to the tubercles and should therefore be spread out close together on the deep tanks.

4. They may be called the aquatic potato; and when raised from the water they resemble that plant, with the tubercles hanging about their sucker-roots to the depth of, sometimes, a yard.

5. After being thus spread over the surface of the deep tanks in July (our rains set in then) the people begin to gather the fruit, or tubercles, about the beginning of October, or the end of September, and the whole crop is gathered in by the end of November.

6. The seed-tubercles for the next year's sowing are selected from the latter pickings—the first pickings being only used for food, and are eaten raw or roasted: either way they taste exactly like chesnuts. You may see the vendors with a little brazier of wood ashes roasting and selling them in the bazaars, just as they do chesnuts in Italy. Heaps and heaps are piled up in the market places, and they sell at the rate of from one and a half maunds to two maunds per Rupee. An acre of water surface will produce sixteen maunds as a fair crop, giving from Rupees 8 to 12 per acre income.

7. You will thus observe, which is a point put in your letter, that whilst your tanks are full, these plants will be growing, and their fruit will be harvested just as irrigation begins to draw off the water. Although in these Provinces we do not depend upon tanks for irrigation to the extent you do; yet our village tanks have to do their part, and I should fancy are drained of their water much sooner than those in the Madras Presidency, for they are not so artistically made for catching and retaining the rain fall.

8. The latter pickings besides supplying the seed for the following year's crop are stored for use during the year, being taken from the husk or outer skin; the kernel, which splits up into two, is dried in the sun until the pieces are as hard as chips of dried leather. These when required for use are ground into flour, made into cakes and chupputies, and fried in ghee. The Hindoos are permitted to eat these cakes on their "fast" days, which always ensures a large and constant demand for the Singhara fruit.

9. The tubercles have their enemies: the monkey, the jackal, and a little dull red beetle which devour them like blight. These beetles can fly, and the people inland declare that they are bred and migrate from the low marshy lands on the Ganges which bounds my District on the north-east. Jackals come to the edge of the tank, pull out and eat all the tubercles within their reach, and so do the monkeys. The owner of the crop always has a man on the watch near his tank to guard his property from such depredations. Of the monkeys they tell a curious anecdote as to their mode of robbing tanks. Like school-boys in an orchard, they are not content with eating all they can, but they want to carry some away; each tubercle, however, has two little prickly hooks on its husk, which hurts the hands; to avoid this the monkey-thief is said to plaster his

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25th January 1866.*

own head with the sticking mud of the tank, and in that mud he embeds the Singharas, and away he runs. I cannot vouch for the truth of this story; but I will not throw doubt upon it.

10. It would be most advantageous if Singharas do not grow in your Presidency that they should be introduced, and if you desire it, I will forward seed in March next. From November until March when they sow out the seed tubercles, the latter are stored in sand, or water pass, and the water is changed once a week; they keep quite fresh in this way and could thus be sent by rail direct to Calcutta, and thence by Steamer to Madras, if you desire it; but I would recommend that you permit me to engage a man to go down with the seed to your District, and there for one season, or eight months, instruct some men in the mode of operation from first to last. No doubt in these days of Agricultural Associations and Shows you could raise funds for the purpose; and for 10 or 12 Rupees per mensem I could induce a man to venture abroad from his village to foreign parts; his travelling expenses of course being paid in addition.

1. Submitted to Government with the Board's recommendation that steps be taken, in communication with the Bengal Government, for introducing the Singhara cultivation in this Fusly in March next, as proposed by the Collector of Meerut.

2. The Board are much obliged to Mr. Thomas for directing attention to so valuable a product.

No. 437.

ORDER THEREON, 25th January 1866, No. 221.

Miscellaneous.

The Government concur with the Board, and application will accordingly be made to the Government of the North-West Provinces.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. D. SIM,

Secretary to Government.

To the Horticultural Society.

„ the Farm Committee.
„ the Board of Revenue.
„ the Editor's Table.

Ed. S. T. Augustin.

No. 96.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 6th January 1866.

Read the following letter from the Honorable D. ARBUTHNOTT, Collector of Salem, to W. HUDLESTON, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 19th December 1865, No. 172:—

1. I have the honor to forward copy of a letter from the Sub-Collector regarding the introduction of Singhara tuber into the Madras Presidency. I consider that the importation of the plant would be most desirable, and therefore request the Board will be good enough to obtain plants or seeds from Bengal.

2. A copy of letter from the Collector of Meerut as to the usefulness of the plant is herewith sent for the Board's information.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From H. S. THOMAS, Esq., Sub Collector of Salem, to the Honorable D. ARBUTHNOTT, Collector of Salem, dated Camp Thallavasil, 12th December 1865, No. 425.

1. Hearing from Mr. Shaw, Veterinary Surgeon attached to the Remount Depot at Ossoor, that the Singhara nut is an edible root largely used in Bengal; that it might be introduced and cultivated with advantage in the tanks in this Presidency, and that he had noticed it particularly at Meerut, I address the Commissioner of that place. The reply was the enclosed full and interesting letter from W. A. Forbes, Esq., C. B., Collector of Meerut.

2. You will observe that the Singhara is largely grown and extensively used as an article of food in Bengal, and Mr. Shaw assures me that it is much prized as an adjunct to the tables of the rich also, both in the country and in the city.

3. Though the reservoirs of the Madras Presidency are admittedly far superior to those of Bengal, we do not use them except for irrigation. Apparently we might utilize them to a great extent by cultivating edible roots in them, as well as raising crops under them.

4. When I wrote, I was under the impression that a few roots could be sent me by banghy parcel, and I had intended to make the experiment of their culture myself, but Mr. Forbes evidently thinks such an attempt would be vain.

5. If you concur with me in thinking it would be a valuable product to have in our tanks, I shall be glad if you can propose that the Government should undertake the introduction of it, in the manner suggested in the 10th paragraph of Mr. Forbes's letter.

6. I presume the Agri-Horticultural Society had best be employed in the early propagation of it. I shall be glad, however, if some few roots can be sent me for trial in the Ossoor climate, where there are also a few tanks that are never dry, in which the plant might be permanently preserved—re-sowing itself perhaps, for it is apparently an annual.

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(True Copy.)

(Signed) D. ARBUTHNOTT,
Collector.

1. Submitted to Government with the Board's recommendation that steps be taken, in communication with the Bengal Government for introducing the Singhara cultivation in this Fall in March next, as proposed by the Collector of Meerut.

2. The Board are much obliged to Mr. Thomas for directing attention to so valuable a product.

(True Copies and Extract.)

Secretary.

To J. D. Sim, Esq., Secretary to Government, R. D.

Copy to the Honorable D. Arbuthnott, Collector of Salem

Erd. R. H. Lee.

10. March is the month in which Mr. Forbes proposes to send the seeds, there is therefore no time to be lost in deciding on the desirability or otherwise of the undertaking; for the distance is very great, and communication slow, and if we miss this season a year must be lost.

(True Copy)

(Signed) D. ARBUTHNOTT,
Collector.

ENCLOSURE No. 2.

From W. A. FORBES, Esq., C. B., Collector of Meerut, to H. S. THOMAS, Esq., Sub-Collector of Salem, dated 27th November 1865, No. 216.

1. Mr. Williams, the Commissioner of this Division, has forwarded to me your letter, No. 314 of the 18th September last, with the view to my furnishing the information you require regarding the Singhara plant.

2. You have heard that it grows in a small pond near the east gate of Meerut, the fact is nearly every tank in the Bengal Provinces (I can answer for the North West Provinces, the Punjab, and Oudh) is covered with the plant, and the fruit forms a considerable item amongst the articles of food of the people—like chesnuts in Italy.

3. The Rahars, or palkee bearer class, alone grow them, and the mode of "Aquaculture" is as follows. The edible tubercles are sown in March in shallow tanks, or beds, made for the purpose, with from a foot to eighteen inches of water; they throw up stems to the surface, and flourish until the rains set in, when the plants are removed to the deeper tanks with water to any depth. These plants lie on the surface, and from them grow downwards sucker-roots with the edible tubercles on them. The plants do not spread much; their strength goes downwards to the tubercles and should therefore be spread out close together on the deep tanks.

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Recd: 1866. Department.
W. A. Forbes Esq.

No. 101.
PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

Dated 6th January 1866.
Salem.

No. 96.
From Mr. Forbes Esq. to Mr. Thomas Esq.
Salem 27th Nov 1865.

Recommending that steps be taken for the introduction of the Singhara cultivation in March next and thanking Mr. Thomas, Sub Collector of Salem for directing attention to so valuable a product.

W. A. Forbes Esq.

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the first and a half

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To Mr. Forbes Esq.
Salem 27th Nov 1865.
From Mr. Thomas Esq.
Salem 27th Nov 1865.