M.R.O. 14-5,450—22-10-5

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No. 2769 Press Mis.

315. 316

Dated 12 — 10 — 1866.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
12th October 1866.

No. 315. Read the following Proceedings of the Madras Government in the Public Department:—

Passing orders on Minute by the Right Honorable the Governor on the subject of his recent tour in the famine-stricken portions of the Ganjam District. } (Here enter 5th October 1866, No. 1,015.)

No. 316. ORDER THEREON, 12th October 1866, No. 2,769.

Miscellaneous.

Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. GROSE,
Under Secretary to Government.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

Read the following :--

No. 63. MINUTE by the Right Honorable the PRESIDENT, dated Ootacamund, 1st September 1866.

In conformity with the practice of my predecessors, I think it right to communicate to the Council the impressions which I have received on my recent tour in the portions of the Ganjam District, which are affected by famine. I am sensible, however, that I have little information to impart, which is not already known from the reports of the local Officers. My visit to the District was prompted by the desire to show sympathy and encouragement to those who were laboring or suffering, and to stimulate the application of remedial measures which were already commenced or contemplated.

2. The Council is aware that the famine is confined in Ganjam to a limited and tolerably defined area. It is most severely felt in the coast region extending from Berhampore northwards to the southern end of the Chilka Lake ; then along the winding shores of the Lake to where it is struck by the frontier of Cuttack ; from the Lake westwards over a dry, hilly, diversified country, to the basin of the Ganjam River ; throughout that valley with varying intensity wherever permanent channel irrigation is not applied to the land ; and again with extreme severity in the parts around Suradah, between the river and the Khond Hills. The area thus affected may contain about 250,000 inhabitants, but the portion in which the scarcity has risen to the pitch of starvation does not embrace more than 120,000. By far the greater share of the afflicted country belongs to Zemindary estates, in which the revenue relations of the Government and the people are not direct. Some of these estates happen fortunately to be in charge of the Court of Wards ; some belong to Native proprietors, not deficient in intelligence and liberality ; others, again, are in the hands of families ruined or ill-disposed, and in these the burden of relief has fallen altogether on the Government.

3. The population may be divided into four categories :—(1). The Ryots. (2). The Coolies, or people without land, engaged in rural labor. (3). The mendicant, vagrant, outcast, or criminal class. (4). The small Traders and Mechanics in the Towns.

4. Of these classes, the Ryots are the most meritorious and the most to be pitied. They have suffered with great resignation and self-respect. The decency of their caste prevents them from appearing at the relief-houses, as sharers of promiscuous charity. The necessities of agricultural labor bind them to their holdings and homes, where it is difficult to search them out. There can be no doubt of the extremities of distress which they have endured and still endure. Some of the Ooryah cottages I have myself visited, where destitution and starvation might be seen in every pathetic and terrible form. The same story was told by the multitudes of persons gathering a precarious and unwholesome sustenance from half edible roots, berries and leaves, of which Mr. Forbes, the Collector possesses a variety of specimens. The miserable condition of whole villages was attested by the emaciated appearance of their leading inhabitants, sent in numerous deputations to solicit help from the Collector at Chetterpore. The roads were full of wretched creatures prostrated on the earth. In many places I was pursued by clamorous crowds which might be likened to flocks of skeletons or ghosts. To an unpractised European

eye, the distinction between the ryot in his ordinary garb or ordinary nakedness, and the landless laborer, is scarcely perceptible; but there is no doubt that the substantial ryot, especially on Government lands, feels his social elevation as much as the farmer in England. It was pitiable to see the reduction and ruin of an industrious order of men, invested in primitive forms with all the duties and obligations of property, and to reflect that nothing less than a succession of prosperous seasons, combined with considerate usage on the part of the Revenue Department, can restore these people to physical vigour and material welfare. While the peasant farmer starves, his cattle thrive. Repeated showers had fallen in the country, and the forage was abundant. The Hindoo peasant will perish by hunger beside a fat bullock. The prescriptions of superstition, which appear cruel to the individual, are conservative for the community; and the preservation of the laboring cattle secures the power of cultivation, and the sources of future life and wealth. It may sound harsh and sad to say so, but in India it is more easy to replace a man than an ox. The chastisements of nature are rarely universal. There will still be some feature of consolation and promise. In the condition of the live stock I saw the "attenuating circumstance" of the Ganjam famine. It was reported that the pastoral ryots, who would under no pressure kill their cows, drink the blood of their living goats, and reserve the animals for successive depletions.

5. The impoverishment of the ryots, and the general absorption of money for the mere purchase of food had naturally arrested every kind of labor demand; and the cooly class, who have no savings and no credit, must have suffered, in the first instance, even more than the ryots. The scarcity would touch them sooner and more sharply. The cooly has, however, fewer ties, fewer scruples and a greater habit of migration. He can resort, without degradation, to the alms-house, and can travel further in quest of employment. Government food and Government wages will henceforward be sufficiently operative to save persons habituated to unskilled rural labor from the worst degrees of suffering, and from death. The recipients of public charity in the cooly class will diminish, but those from the ryot class will increase in number, between the present time and next harvest.

6. Mixed with the settled and industrious population of the Indian Village, whose morals are not worse than those of any other people, and whose habits and actions are governed by inflexible social and religious laws, there exist vile and criminal castes or miscellaneous outcasts, objects of propitiation, aversion and fear to the other inhabitants. A numerous tribe of this sort reside in Ganjam, called Dundassis, who are both hereditary thieves and hereditary detectives, levying, in either quality, contributions from the villagers. They do some menial services; they practice some casual industry in the jungles; they live on carrion; and do not scruple to eat the flesh of the sacred animal—in fact, they are apt to steal and kill him. The whole of these people seemed to fasten upon the relief-houses, in part, no doubt, from destitution, but, in part, from their habits of idleness and mendicancy. They appeared in general the least emaciated of the miserable assemblage, offering a vexatious contrast to the laboring classes who sat beside them, and to the ryots who stood afar off. I need scarcely add that the aged, infirm, deformed and helpless persons, who live in ordinary times by begging from door to door, the poorer parasites of the poor, had all recourse, under present circumstances, to the charity of the State.

7. It is obvious that the same causes, which suspend the employment of labor in the country, must also affect the welfare of those who live by small trades and manufactures. In this climate, the necessaries of life may almost be restricted to fire and food, and the purchase of its simple comforts and ornaments can easily be deferred or abandoned. The dearth and dearness of provisions would alone account for the depression of industry in the towns, but this local and transitory cause is, no doubt, aided by other general influences of a more permanent character. The hand-looms of Chicacole and Berhampore were, for the most part, idle, and the weavers subjected to unusual privations. The dearness of the raw material and competition from abroad are, however, powerful adversaries to native domestic fabrication, and this interest has been for years past in a languishing condition.

8. The remedial measures adopted by Government are adapted to the character and the wants of the suffering population.

9. The ryots have been detached from the other classes, and are dealt with, in some degree, apart. For their benefit, the Government has sanctioned (1) the refund of surplus collections; (2) remissions of assessment; (3) a distribution of seed grain; (4) a distribution of uncooked grain in the villages for food; (5) the improvement of certain small irrigation works; (6) employment on extraordinary public works.

I am not enabled to state what amount of revenue will be sacrificed, and what amount of expenditure will be incurred by these measures, which are still in progress, and all of which will not be brought to a close, even by the approaching harvest; for, in some localities, where the soil has remained unsown, the famine will leave a long arrear of distress. About 12,000 ryots, of whom 3000 belong to the Zemindary Estates, are now receiving sustenance from the State, the Court of Wards, or the Relief Fund. The number will undoubtedly increase, but, whatever amount may be eventually expended, there can be no question, even in a merely interested point of view, that the outlay is, in fact, a wise economy; for, if the people had perished, the revenue would have vanished with them.

10. The rural laborers and other miscellaneous paupers are supported (1) by distributions of cooked food; (2) by employment on public works.

Relief-houses have been established by the Collector or by the Zemindars, at fourteen stations in the District. Of these, I had occasion to visit ten. They generally consist of an open space of ground enclosed by a slight fence. In this area, a cook-house is erected, and sometimes a large open shed, to shelter the people from the rain. The recipients are seated in rows upon the ground, divided according to their castes, ages and sex. The food, consisting of cooked rice and raggy, is carried round in large pots, and is received in earthen dishes and on leaves. It is, for the most part, consumed on the spot. The Native Magistrates, the village authorities and the Police keep order. For the general multitude, the distribution takes place once a day. Some children and feeble persons are exceptionally treated, and receive two doles. Persons affected with small-pox and other contagious or disgusting diseases are ranked apart. I trust that they will soon be all accommodated in hospital sheds. A more affecting spectacle than these receptacles of destitution, it would be difficult to conceive. The physiognomy of the famine was most painful at Ganjam, Rumbah, Calycota and Russelcondah. In places

where relief had been longer organized, some amelioration in the physical condition of the poor was already apparent, and, going southwards, the most distressing features gradually faded away. At Chetterpore, there was some improvement. At Berhampore the change for the better was still more apparent. At Chicacole, the worst symptoms of actual famine had almost disappeared, and the relief-house was chiefly filled by the beggars of the Town. The number of persons receiving food at the relief-houses varies from day to day with the accidents of the weather, and from other causes. It has certainly reached 13,000. It may at present be set down at an average of 10,000. The number will probably decrease as the season advances.

The extraordinary public works set on foot for the benefit of the starving people, comprise (1) the repair of roads; (2) the excavation of tanks; (3) the excavation of wells; (4) the formation or improvement of water channels; (5) the more important undertaking of the Chilka Lake Canal. It may be apprehended that a good deal of the labor employed, especially at the outset, has been directed to trifling or unprofitable purposes—an evil inseparable from such a crisis, when it is necessary to get the people to work, and place them in the receipt of wages, directly, so as to preserve their physical strength and their habits of exertion. The money will, however, not be entirely wasted, even in regard to minor works, and the Canal will prove an enterprise of durable usefulness. In these various undertakings, employment and sustenance may eventually be afforded to three thousand persons, many of whom will, however, be heads of families, so that the benefit will be felt among a greater number, while the amount of money circulated will be considerable.

11. For the particular benefit of the poorer classes in the towns, not much has been effected, for their necessities were the least pressing. Some wells have been sunk at Berhampore, both for the Native Troops and the citizens; and some tanks have been formed or enlarged. A small order has also been given to the Weavers at the same place for cotton cloth, which it is hoped may be taken by the Commissariat Department.

12. For the benefit of all classes, it was urgently necessary to provide additional Medical Superintendence, a commensurate supply of medicines and some simple Hospital buildings, in which the dying might find a refuge, and the diseased have some chance of recovery. The Collector had already turned his attention to this subject before my arrival. I was accompanied by Acting Deputy Inspector General Porteous, and by Mr. Ross, an intelligent Apothecary. Dr. Porteous gave impulse and direction to the work. Six Hospitals were set on foot. At Ganjam, one of the deserted habitations of the old mercantile body was secured. At Rumbah, the offices attached to a large house belonging to the Aska Sugar Company were converted to the same purpose. At Russelcondah, a temporary shed will shortly be replaced by the repair of an old building, formerly used by a local Militia Force. At Berhampore, Chetterpore and Aska, cheap structures have been erected, with Lamboo supports, wattle walls plastered with mud, thatched roofs and clay floors. Provision has been made for the separation of the sexes, and of contagious disorders. These constructions are far from satisfactory; but time pressed, and means were limited. The patients will each have a bedstead, a mat, and a blanket; they will receive diet in some measure appropriate to their cases; and they will have some share of professional advice. The attendance and the treatment will certainly

be imperfect; but the habits of the people are simple, their wants are few, and their maladies, as I am assured, are more susceptible of cure by rest, shelter and sufficient food, than by physic. The six Hospitals will afford, if necessary, room for between four and five hundred patients. They have been built and furnished from an appropriation made by Government, and they are supported from the Charitable Relief Fund and from Government contributions. At Russelcondah, Berhampore, and Chetterpore, the Medical Officers attached to those stations have afforded their gratuitous assistance. Mr. Ross is stationed at Rumbah. For Ganjam, a Dresser was procured from Waltair; and at Aska, a retired Apothecary, in the service of Mr. Minchin, has, by the kind permission of his representative, been retained with a small addition to his salary and pension.

13. Including every branch of remission, relief and expenditure depending on ascertained private charity, the Court of Wards, the Zemindars, and Government, I think I shall not be far from the mark, when I set down the calculable cost of the famine in Ganjam at about £40,000. The disbursements of native charity in a domestic and desultory form are, of course, unknown; nor can I form any estimate of the loss which the community has sustained by the failure of crops, the death of cattle at an earlier period, and the sacrifice of lives and labor power.

14. The number of persons of all classes receiving relief may be roughly stated at 25,000.

15. Up to the time of my departure from Ganjam, about 1600 persons were officially reported to have died of starvation. Unknown wanderers have probably perished in the woods and bye-ways. The deaths from debility and disease caused by insufficient nourishment, have been numerous, but they will never be traced or recorded.

16. The causes of the scarcity in the Ganjam District have been, for the most part, beyond human control, though the recurrence of such a calamity might, in some degree, be mitigated by the intervention of Government, and prudence on the part of the people. For several years the rain-fall had been small, the crops had been short, and the exportations had been great. In this way, the reserves of food were consumed, and the people were brought to the verge of starvation.

How far the region most affected by the famine could be saved and supplied by irrigation works, it is difficult for me to judge. I believe that the uplands, on which the scarcity fell most heavily, cannot be brought under wet culture from any of the main, natural, intermittent water courses which intersect the country. The local tanks for storing rain water are tolerably numerous already, but the rain-fall is partial and capricious. Many would, under any system, in a dry season, remain unfilled or imperfectly filled. More water might be procured by making more wells; but the people are poor, the construction of wells is costly, and this is not a branch of water supply undertaken by Government, though it is encouraged by considerate and liberal regulations. I presume that I am safe in affirming that in the hilly parts of Ganjam, the Government could afford some help by multiplying the receptacles for the rain-fall, but, do what it may, it never could wholly avert the dangers contingent on a dry season.

The people, on their part, may be reproached with some improvidence. They have been encouraged by the high price of the superior grains to plant wet crops, where dry crops would have been safer, trusting to a rain-fall which never came.

The wet crop failed altogether, where a dry one would have given a scanty yield. By planting the right crop on the right soil, by preferring moderate reliable returns to greater uncertain returns, the hazard of a serious and total failure would be diminished.

Nevertheless, all the assistance which Government could grant, and all the precautions which the cultivator could practice, will never suffice to preserve the dry soils of an Indian province from occasional barrenness, caused by the failure of the rain-fall. This is a contingency beyond the reach of human foresight or control. Such a calamity is always impending in one locality or another, and there is reason to be grateful when it occurs on a limited area, and in an accessible situation. It is then the duty of Government to order timely and sufficient remedies for an evil which it cannot prevent.

17. I wish I could assert that the remedies ordered by Government were altogether timely and sufficient in the present instance. If they had been so, 1600 persons would not have perished by hunger. I am bound to acknowledge that some portion of this death and suffering might have been hindered, if action had been taken on the earliest intimation of approaching scarcity. It may, however, be affirmed that the measures sanctioned by Government, whether we regard promptitude or efficiency, will bear comparison with the proceedings of authority in similar cases, in other times and at other places. Governments are slow believers in public calamity, and they entertain a justifiable reluctance to sanction the commencement of gratuitous relief—a measure of which no one can foretell the economical and moral consequences. If help was not afforded at an earlier period by the Madras Government, it was certainly not due to a want of benevolence, but from a want of conviction that the necessity was inevitable, and, in some degree, from a want of accurate detailed information. When the necessity did become indisputably apparent, the Government was not idle, and it was supported by the charity of Madras. There is no doubt something to regret, but there is more that may be regarded with satisfaction. We may profit by experience, and do better next time.

18. Before closing these remarks, it becomes my duty to record my gratitude to those who have co-operated, by their authority or their services, in meeting the present emergency.

To His Excellency the Viceroy our first thanks are due. The Supreme Government has acceded to all the requests and to all the measures of this Government, and, by its prompt and liberal sanction of the Chilka Lake Canal, has conferred, not only a temporary, but a permanent benefit on the Presidency.

Mr. Gordon Forbes, the Collector of Ganjam, has been active and judicious in the suggestion and application of relief measures. He was offered the assistance of a Special Commissioner, but refused it, preferring to labor in person. When I renewed this proposal to him, observing that he was suffering from fever, and that he was burdened with other affairs, he again declined any extraneous aid, saying that he took too deep an interest in the work to delegate it to any other hands.

Of the Gentlemen attached to the Collectorate, I am able to speak in favorable terms. Mr. Leman, Mr. Goodrich, and Mr. Grigg, with whom I was brought into personal contact, appeared to be impressed with a sense of their duty to the people, and performed it with kindness and intelligence.

In Captain Darrah, the Executive Engineer at Berhampore, Government possess an Officer who has done everything to familiarize himself with a new field of duty, and who manifests the closest application to business.

Lieutenant Lys, the Officer in command of the Police, has placed his force at the disposal of the local authorities, for the protection and discipline of the relief establishments. Without this interposition, it would have been impossible to exercise the discrimination and control so necessary in those places. The men seemed to perform their duty with sufficient attention and forbearance. I have also to thank Mr. Lys for the arrangements he made for my personal convenience.

I was not much struck by any spontaneous zeal on the part of the English or East Indian Medical Officers in the District, but I think that their activity was eventually roused by the interest taken by others in the work. The example and advice of Dr. Porteous were beneficial. Mr. Ross, the Apothecary, installed at Rumbah, commenced his duties with commendable activity.

At Ganjam, Mr. Waters, the Superintendent of Customs, and Mr. Broom, the Superintendent of the Salt Pans, voluntarily assumed the direction of the Relief-house and of the Hospital, and dedicated their time and their best exertions to a task which was neither agreeable nor safe; for the worst extremities of hunger were there aggravated by the prevalence of small-pox and other maladies. They were zealously assisted by a native merchant or shop-keeper.

The Baptist Missionaries at Russelcondah and Berhampore have redeemed a considerable number of deserted children from death by want. The Roman Catholic Clergy at Berhampore and Suradah have exerted themselves in the same manner, and with the same success. Both these religious agencies have but very slender means at their disposal; they have received assistance from the Collector.

With the conduct of the Native Officials in the pay of Government, Mr. Forbes is generally satisfied. The Sheristadar at Chetterpore is very sensible and very willing in the prosecution of relief measures; and the Treasurer is distinguished for his personal devotion to the poor. At all the Stations which I visited, the Tahsildars and other local functionaries appeared to superintend the arrangements for relief with assiduity. At Rumbah alone, there had been a serious abuse of duty. The Native Officer entrusted with the management of the relief-house had diverted a portion of the grain to his own use. He is now under trial for this offence, with his son.

The Zemindar of Calycota supported for some time about 2,000 persons at his own charges at his country residence. The poor carried the contagion of small-pox into the house, and eight members of the Zemindar's family died of that disorder. He himself, and his brother were dangerously ill. During the funeral ceremonies and the period of mourning, the distribution of food was arrested, in conformity with certain usages or superstitions of the country. On my personal request, however, the Zemindar renewed the issue of cooked food to all comers, and thus diminished the pressure on the neighbouring Government establishments. He declined an offer of direct contribution on the part of Government, but accepted my proposal to furnish him, should his supply run short, with rice at the wholesale price paid by

Government on the coast, the Government assuming the cost of transport. I thought it right to make this overture to the Zemindar, who pays a large rent to Government, whose charities have been most liberal, and who has contributed to the support and welfare of his dependents by digging a great tank at Calycota.

Finally I must not forget the charitable conduct of the soldiers of the 11th Regiment of Native Infantry, stationed at Berhampore, who, from their limited resources, found means to institute a distribution of food to their more unfortunate fellow-countrymen.

19. The Government will, no doubt, think it right to mark their sense of the services rendered by various persons in a becoming manner when the famine has run its course. In the mean time, I beg to suggest to the Council the following proceedings:—

1. To express to the Viceroy the grateful sense which this Government entertains of the generous co-operation which the Supreme Government has afforded us on this occasion.
2. To instruct the Collector of Ganjam to take the necessary measures to supply the Zemindar of Calycota with a sufficient quantity of rice, should he need it, at the wholesale price of Cocanada or Madras, in conformity with the engagements taken by me.
3. To direct Mr. Forbes to forward an estimate of the number of orphan children who will probably be left upon the hands of the local authorities in consequence of this famine, and to authorize him to enter into a negotiation with the Catholic and Baptist Missionaries for the future education and support of such destitute children, reporting to Government how many children those Missions are willing to take in charge, and what amount of compensation they will expect from Government, per head, for the lodging and maintenance of the orphans.

(Signed) NAPIER.

No. 64. ORDER THEREON, 5th October 1866, No. 1015.

Ordered that copies of the Minute of the Right Honorable the President be forwarded to the Secretary of State and the Government of India.

2. With reference to paragraph 16, instructions will be issued, in the Public Works Department, to the Superintending Engineer, to report what can be done towards increasing the supply of water in Ganjam, by improving the existing, and constructing fresh, sources of irrigation. The Board of Revenue will also report whether, in the peculiar circumstances of the District, it would be advisable to make advances to the ryots for private wells, and the sums probably required for the purpose.

3. The Collector of Ganjam will supply the Zemindar of Calycota with rice, in accordance with the arrangement effected by the Right Honorable the President. He will also carry out the instructions contained in clause 3, paragraph 19 of the Minute without delay.

G. Forbes, Esq., Collector and Agent.
Dr. Porteous, Deputy Inspector General.
G. D. Leman, Esq., Acting Principal Assistant.
H St.A. Goodrich, Esq., Assistant Collector.
H. B. Grigg, Esq., do
Captain Darrah, R. E., Executive Engineer.
Lieutenant Lys, 31st N. I., Superintendent of Police.
Mr. Waters, Superintendent of Sea Customs.
Mr. M. Broom, Salt Superintendent.
Mr. Ross, Apothecary.
T. Sivaramiya, Sheristadar.
K. Murahari, Treasurer.

4. The thanks of Government will be conveyed to the Gentlemen whose names are entered in the margin, and to the Baptist Missionaries at Russelcondah and Berhampore, and the Roman Catholic Clergy at Berhampore and Suradah, for the valuable and praiseworthy service rendered by them during the famine.

5. The Collector will, also, specially communicate the approbation of the Government to the Zemindar of Calycota, and the other Proprietors who have aided in relieving the distressed during the famine.

(True Extract).

Secretary to Government.

To the Collector of Ganjam.
" Military Department.
" Public Works Department.
" Revenue Department.
" Board of Revenue.
" Principal Inspector General, Medical Department.
To Deputy Inspector General H. W. Porteous.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

Revenue 1866 Sept
Pro: of Govt for October
No 3524

Pro of the Madras
Govt in the Public
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£75
Rec'd } October 1866
No 1075

(150)

Passing Orders on
Minute by the Rt. Hon. the
Govr. on the subject of his
recent tour in the famine
stricken portions of the
Ganjam District. —
No 2769.

A. 315 & 316

RECORDED.

12 Oct 66 L