M.R.O. 14—13,000—27-9-24.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue **DEPARTMENT.**

G.O. No. 3251 Press ~~Mis.~~

687-688

Dated 28 - 11 - ~~19~~ 1866

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
28th November 1866.

No. 687. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 15th November 1866, No. 8,267.

Read again letter from the Collector of Coimbatore, dated 26th October 1866, No. 250, in Board's Proceedings 12th October 1866, No. 7,358.

Read also the following letter from the Honorary Secretary to the Agri-Horticultural Society, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Madras, 25th October 1866, No. 558 :—

1. I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of Proceedings of Board of Revenue, No. 7,358, dated the 12th October 1866, containing a letter from Mr. McIvor, Ootacamund, on the Maltese Cactus and the Carob Bean, and requesting further information from the Society regarding these plants.

2. So far as I can learn there are at least two species of Cactus used in Malta as food for cattle, one being armed with spines, and the other spineless. Mr. McIvor remarks that the Opuntia Tuna is "the true Maltese species." It is an erect plant with oval oblong joints, long yellow spines, and orange colored flowers. According to some authorities the insect that yields the fine kind of cochineal is nourished by it. It does not, however, contain so much starch as some other species, and although the amount of starch in a plant is not a certain index of its value as an article of food, still in the absence of a complete analysis, it enables us to form an approximate estimate of its nutritious qualities.

3. I find that of all the kinds of Opuntia found about Madras, the Opuntia Cochinelifera contain largest amount of starch. It is a spineless plant, and goats eat it readily whenever they can get at it. I had a small portion of it boiled like a potato, and found that it has a rather pleasant sub-acid taste, and is far more palatable than the majority of country vegetables. In times of scarcity, indeed, it might be used with much advantage as an article food for the people, and I feel sure it would prove far more wholesome and nutritious than any of those indigenous roots and leaves now resorted to, and which only starvation could compel human beings to eat.

4. There is another species common about Madras with red flowers, brownish spines, and oblong lanceolate joints. It seems to be a variety of the Opuntia Nigricans, and also exhibits a great many starch granules in a thin section under the microscope. Its fruit is much sought after by the natives, and the young shoots, before they have got spines, are in the raw state very tender, and rather pleasant to the taste, and frequently eaten by children.

5. Of all the species of Opuntia or Cactus mentioned above, the O. Cochinelifera seems the best suited for fodder for cattle, being spineless, and therefore easily prepared for consumption, and containing the largest per centage of starch, and therefore likely to prove most nutritious. I may mention that in the month of August, I wrote to a correspondent in Malta to forward to me small quantities of the seeds of the Cacti used as food for cattle in the island.

6. With regard to the Carob tree, or Ceratonia Siliqua, I find that it is put down in all the catalogues of plants in the Society's Gardens, as growing there; but last year, when a search was made, both the Superintendent and myself failed in finding a specimen of it. In September 1865, however, I brought some seed of it from Cairo, and from these several plants were raised which now look very

hardily, but are growing rather slowly. This year, in the month of August, we received a considerable supply of the seed from Malta, part of which has been distributed, and a portion kept for the purpose of raising young plants in the garden. The Society, therefore, is now in a position to give the plant a fair trial, and as it promises to be so useful, no pains will be spared to render the experiment successful. There can be no doubt that the plant is a very hardy one, seeing that it flourishes in some of the most arid and barren countries in the world, and all accounts of it agree in stating, that the pods and seed are nutritious in the highest degree. It appears also to be wonderfully prolific, for although a small one, I find it stated by good authority, that it yields from 800 to 900 lbs. weight of pods in a single crop.

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1. Ordered that the foregoing papers be submitted to Government, with reference to paragraph 5 of Government Order, dated 8th August 1866, No. 1,567, Revenue Department, and that copies be communicated to all Collectors for information. As there appears to be some doubt which is the species of Cactus used for feeding cattle in Malta, the Board think it best to await the result of the cultivation of seed which is expected from Malta, before issuing any instructions to Collectors on the subject.

2. The Board have been offered by Dr. Bidie some packets of seed of the Carob bean and the Hedysarum Coronarium or French Honey-suckle, which produce valuable food for cattle in sultry and arid countries, and have gladly accepted the opportunity of trying the cultivation under the supervision of the Collectors, to whom the seed will be distributed.

No. [illegible] Order thereon, 28th November 1866, No. 3,251.

[illegible] Cactus. Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. CROSE,

Under Secretary to Government.

Rev 8th August 1866 to 188

Rev: 1866. Department.
Pro of Govt 26 November

No 4182.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE,
To all Collectors, &c.

Dated 15th November 1866.
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No. 8,267.

Submitting to Government and communicating to all Collectors letters from Collector of Coimbatore and Agri-Horticultural Society, on use of Maltese Cactus and Carob Bean as fodder for cattle, and considering it advisable to await result of cultivation of Cactus expected from Malta, before issuing instructions to Collectors on the subject. R. 3251.

RECORDED.

28th November 1866.

No. 1,567. Dated 8th August 1866. Revenue Department. Paragraph 5. Copy of Letter from Collector of Coimbatore, dated 14th July 1866, with enclosures.

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