M.R.O. 14—1,450—22-10-25.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1726 Press Mis.

Dated 28-2- 1867.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
29th July 1867.

No. 550. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 15th June 1867, No. 3,681.

Read the following letter from the Collector of South Arcot, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 16th April 1867, No. 92 :—

1. I have to apologize for my delay in replying to the Orders of Government, under date the 20th June 1866, No. 1,510, forwarded by the Board with their Proceedings of the 5th July, No. 4,558, on the subject of the supply of fuel and timber to meet the growing demand of the Railway and general community.

2. As far as timber for the Railway is concerned, it is little which this district could provide owing to the limited parts from whence it could be obtained, and to the distance and difficulties of conveying it, and these obstacles, in my belief, would prevent any great drain upon the existing resources of South Arcot, and this is not to be regretted since what forests we have would soon be entirely denuded with little prospect of renewal.

3. I do not think that aid from Government is called for to assist private enterprise, provided remunerative terms could be secured, I make no doubt that contracts would soon be taken up by merchants in this district, who would not be backward in tendering their services to supply fuel and timber so far as local means permitted of it.

4. I enclose copy of a Report* on the subject from Mr. Hathaway, my Sub-Collector, who when Head Assistant in Salem was stationed close on the frontier of South Arcot, and is acquainted with the nature and extent of the jungles in both districts, and his observations are deserving of consideration.

* Dated 7th February 1867, No. 70

5. In regard to the measures practicable for forming and conserving plantations by Government agency, I am of opinion that land for the purpose is available in numerous places, which could be made readily accessible to the high road over which the timber and fuel would have to traverse, and I know of no better or more economical plan to secure the object than by placing their formation and conservancy wholly under the Forest Department, the funds of which might be supplemented if at present insufficient to bear the additional outlay, which of course would be considerable.

6. All existing jungles and Government plantations within certain limits laid down are entirely under the present supervision and control of the Forest agency. They comprise the hilly parts and a certain area immediately below the hills which separate the district of South Arcot on its western frontier from the North Arcot and Salem Districts, and are confined to those parts. There are no other jungles properly so-called elsewhere in this district; but plantations and topes are numerous in almost every talook, and are on the whole carefully tended and conserved either by the villagers interested, and to whom they frequently belong, or by the Government Officers; and no trees are cut down or destroyed except under special permission, and then only decayed ones, and their place is usually at once supplied by other suplings, or young trees.

7. Measures are in progress for the creation of new topes and the planting of avenues very generally throughout the district, and I think all is being done that can be done to spread the growth of trees of all kinds everywhere; but as

explained by Mr. Hathaway, so far as timber is concerned, there is scarcely any of the more valuable kinds, and it would not seem desirable that what exists should be felled indiscriminately for Railway purposes; but such wood and fuel within the limited forests of South Arcot as are available to the public under the Forest Rules would doubtless readily find their way into the Railway market if tenders for its supply were only called for; but the Railway must look to other sources more certain and lasting, and it seems to me that eventually they must fall back on coal as their staple fuel, for the forests of even the Western Ghauts and coast would soon disappear under the devastating axe of the Railway Fuel Contractor, and re-production could not possibly keep pace with the wholesale destruction that would be inevitable to meet Railway wants, and I conceive that no greater evil could happen to the country; and considering what is now being done for the conservancy and rearing of timber trees throughout India, the ruthless destruction of existing forests merely for the supply of the Railway would be a sad spectacle, and I venture to hope may not be permitted.

8. For all local purposes of consumption the supply of fuel throughout the district is and will ever be ample, and no aid from Government towards maintaining that supply is called for.

9. Adverting to the last point for notice, namely, the advisability of putting a higher tax on forest timber in order to check waste, I am not of opinion that this measure is needed in South Arcot, where, comparatively speaking, very little timber, and that mainly for local wants, is cut; and the present seigniorage is, in my belief, quite sufficient to check waste or any reckless felling of trees. How it may be in other districts, such as Canara and Madura, is another question; and very probably the valuable timber which abounds in those parts and elsewhere in the Presidency may need some further protection from a wasteful destruction which was so common in bye-gone days before the duty of conserving forests had attracted the notice of the Government.

From the Acting Sub-Collector of South Arcot, to the Collector of South Arcot, dated Virdachellum, 7th February 1867, No. 70.

1. I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your Memorandum, No. 97, of the 2nd instant.

2. As to timber for the Railway Company I need say nothing, as they use little else but teak, and the sleepers now are almost exclusively of the iron-pot description.

Timber for the Railway.

3. The chief source of supply from this district of fuel for the Railway is the line of hills that forms the western boundary of the district. I know the hills well, having travelled over them repeatedly in various directions when in the Salem District; and from what I observed on those hills as to the enormous destruction that is indispensable in order to furnish the necessary supply for the Railway as compared with the difficulty of restoring it, I am convinced that on the whole there is very little chance of private enterprise, in whatever way assisted, doing anything to meet the large requirements for fuel. It is an undeniable fact that in the ordinary soil of the low country there is no tree producing large wood, such as is required, that can be grown except at a large cost and after a great number of years. This is the rule stated broadly. I can say nothing about the exceptional case of Casuarina plantations on sandy flats by the coast, as about that I have no experience; but as a general rule large wood cannot be grown easily except as on hills where the climate is moist and cool. The source of supply then being limited to hills of this sort, the difficulties of executing labour there and the unhealthiness of the climate are alone quite sufficient,

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in my opinion, to prevent much private enterprise, leaving out of consideration the question as to whether it would be a profitable speculation in a pecuniary point of view.

4. A great deal may be done in these forests by real conservancy, *i. e.*, a careful system of preserving and closing tracts in regular order so as to prevent an undue pressure upon any part; but time is required to shew whether even this will be sufficient for keeping up the supply. I scarcely think so myself, and believe that the Railway Company will have in time to trust almost entirely to the forests on the Western Coast, where timber grows luxuriantly and rapidly, and to coal for their whole supply: and that these hill jungles, with poor rocky soil and little water cannot produce more trees than will be required for use as timber for the general population. It would, I think, be far more advantageous to the country at large to reserve them for this alone, either by imposing a higher rate of seigniorage, say 8 or 10 Rupees a cart-load, or by other means. At present the provincial population at large have great difficulty in obtaining timber. It is gradually disappearing from these hills, and there is no fresh source of supply. They endeavour, as I pointed out in a former letter, to obtain it from scattered trees and topes belonging to Government, but this ought to be repressed, and they should be enabled to draw a good supply for all their purposes from the Government hill forests. I think that a far greater difference ought to be made between really valuable timber and mere small jungle-wood, and that though the seigniorage on the latter may stand at 2 or 3 Rupees a cart-load, that on the former ought to be raised to 8 or 10 Rupees.

Timber for general use.

5. My previous remarks of course only apply to fuel for the Railway which has to be of a certain size, mere firewood being useless. But for fuel for the general community I do not apprehend that there will ever be any difficulty, as this grows easily on all suitable waste land, and would require very little care.

Fuel for general use.

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1. Submitted to Government, with reference to their Order dated 20th June 1866, No. 1,510, Revenue Department.

2. The Board have already expressed their opinion that a careful conservancy of existing jungles is the only system which holds out a fair prospect of success. The remarks made in the Sub-Collector's letter, regarding the conservancy of the jungles on the hills between South Arcot and Salem and North Arcot, will be communicated to the Conservator of Forests for his opinion.

No. 551. ORDER THEREON, 29th July 1867, No. 1,720.

Forests, No. 11.

Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) W. HUDLESTON,
Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.

Exd. S. T. Augustin.

1867. Department.

No. 1587.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

Dated 15th June 1867.

No. 3,681.

Submitting to Government letter from Collector of South Arcot regarding supply of fuel and timber to meet growing want of Railway and general community and communicating to Conservator of Forests for opinion remarks of Sub-Collector regarding conservancy of Jungles on Hills between South Arcot and Salem and North Arcot.