M.R.O. 1—39,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 3010 Press ~~Mis.~~

3-4 Dated 1-12- ~~19~~ 1868.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 3. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 5th November 1868, No. 7,851 :—

Read the following letters :—

From the Acting Collector of North Arcot, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Chittoor, 15th September 1868, No. 311.

1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Board's Proceedings of the 7th instant, and to submit the report required in paragraph 2 of the Order of Government, Revenue Department, dated 26th ultimo, No. 2,264, therewith communicated.

2. When I took charge of the district on the 27th March, owing to prolonged drought, its prospects could scarcely have been more unpromising generally, while the condition of the country and people in the neighbourhood of Palmanair was specially bad.

3. I cannot better convey a description of the incidents of the season as bearing upon the condition of the people in the north-western section of the district, than by transcribing, in chronological sequence, extracts from the Diaries regularly furnished to me by my Special Assistant, Mr. E. Gibson :—

Palmanair, 3rd April.—" Nearly 300 coolies are now employed on the improvements going on in the town. The Tahsildar says that he could give employment to many more if he had funds, and that he has to refuse many. The supply of water even in the newly dug wells is getting short."

My reply to this was :—" Where the condition of the people demands that employment should be found for them, I am prepared to sanction funds, for the execution of any useful project that may be proposed and approved. No able-bodied really poor people should be refused employment."

4th April.—" I have ordered this work (one for which Rupees 150 had been sanctioned) to be commenced at once. It will afford employment to the people of the neighbouring villages, many of whom now go to Palmanair for work."

Punganur, 15th April.—" Interview with the Rajah, in which he told me that he was going to put some more tank-works in hand in order to afford employment to the people. He also added that he had arranged to put off the collection of half the Road Cess until next year."

Palmanair, 17th April.—" On my way from Punganur, I found two or three people eating aloe-pith which they were cutting from the hedges. I have since observed aloe-hedges in Palmanair Talook mutilated by this means. In 1866 this was a great staple of food among the poor in this part of the district, and I have been on the look-out for their making use of it this year."

18th April.—" The health of the people continues good. Wherever I go I hear of very little disease of any kind. Prices remain much the same. Water is daily getting scarce, and the demand for labor is increasing."

Lakhanapalli, 24th April.—" Revised a portion of the new line previously laid down by me for the extension of the road to Patticondah ; ascertained that it was absolutely necessary to carry on this work, as the coolies, who had been employed on the Teertham and on Lakhanapalli roads, had been thrown out of employment by the completion of those works, and could find no other market for their labor. I accordingly ordered the work to be commenced."

Byreddipalli, 25th April.—" Crimes of violence, robberies, and dacoities are very numerous just now. At this station three robberies were reported last week and almost every day I hear of one in Punganur."

Nellipatla, 1st May.—" Yesterday afternoon and evening we had a good fall of rain at Palmanair. The river came down, and the tanks in the neighbourhood of the Cusbah received a good supply. I rode out to this place this morning, and saw the ryots ploughing in every direction. Here, however, the rain has been far less, and the tanks are still unsupplied. This is about twelve miles south-west of Palmanair."

Lakhanapalli, 4th May.—" Gave instructions for the cessation of relief operations in this part of the country, from the end of the current week."

Ramacuppam, 14th May.—" The sum of Rupees 1,000 was sanctioned by Mr. Robinson for a short road from Ramacuppum to the new Cuppum road. The work would be a very useful one, and should eventually be carried out; but at present it is not necessary that it should be commenced as a famine work. I do not, however, recommend that the allotment be cancelled at present. It may, of course, become necessary to spend it."

Punganur, 19th May.—" Very little rain has fallen in this part of the Zemindary, and there is no water in the tanks."

20th May.—" During the past three weeks, I have been in every part of the Palmanair Talook, and find that the people are in uniformly good health. There is no disease of any importance amongst the cattle, while the markets are well supplied, and during the last week agricultural operations have been generally resumed. Under these circumstances, it will not be necessary to commence the proposed road from Kalamasanapalli to Nellipatla at present. I am now passing through Punganur to Chendragherry, where little or no rain has fallen."

" Rode to Choudapalli along the line of the new road. There are about 350 coolies at work on this section, and a great deal is being done."

Dhermalcherla, 25th May.—" During this week frequent showers have fallen, but no heavy rain. There is still no water in any of the tanks between Punganur and Saddum. Between the latter place and Kallur some small tanks received a few days' supply. Last evening some heavy rain appeared to be falling over Punganur, and some of it fell at Kallur."

30th May.—" On the whole the general aspect of Chendragherry Talook is " tolerably satisfactory. There is no great demand for labor, and the recent showers " have enabled the ryots to carry on their agricultural pursuits in almost every part " of the Talook. The large numbers of boys of from ten to fourteen years of age, " who are allowed to lounge in idleness about the villages, while relief works are " being carried on in their immediate vicinity, convinces me that neither they nor " their parents are in distress. In many of the villages, which lie to the north of " the river, near the foot of the hills, water is scarce. The Tahsildar will report " specific cases of scarcity. The health of the people appears to be uniformly good, " and it is only here and there one hears of cattle disease. Pasturage is, of course, " very scanty as yet, although the showers which have fallen will produce an " improvement in this respect."

Iral, Chittoor Talook, 5th and 6th June.—" A pouring wet day."

" The recent fall of rain will render it quite unnecessary to put in hand any " other work in this direction. There is a good supply of water in all the tanks, " and the irrigation wells are full."

13th June.—" The rain-fall in the above-mentioned part of the district, that is, " in the neighbourhood of Naraharipett, (between Vellore and Chittoor,) has been " far less than in most other parts. There is no water in any of the tanks, but the " wells now yield sufficient water for domestic and even for agricultural purposes. " Ploughing is going on very generally, and pasture is fast improving."

15th June.—" Drove to Palmanair."

18th June.—" Rode to Punganur to meet Mr. T. Clarke."

19th June.—" Rode in the afternoon to Palmanair in company with Mr. T. Clarke. " A heavy shower of rain, which lasted for about an hour, fell over the whole tract of " country between Punganur and Palmanair. More rain has fallen in Punganur than " in Palmanair, and all the tanks that I saw had a good supply of water in them."

Byreddipalli, 25th June.—" The general aspect of this part of the district has " greatly improved during the last month. Pasture is plentiful, and a great deal " of ploughing is going on. Agricultural operations are limited to clearing the " land, ploughing and sowing, but I have no doubt that these afford employment " to the great bulk of the people. I observe, moreover, that large numbers of " women are now occupied in cutting grass for the ploughing-cattle, which, in the " dry season, got such pasture as they could in the jungles. I cannot, therefore, " suppose that there is just now any lack of employment for those who require it. " *A month or six weeks hence when the seed is in the ground, but before the crops are* " *sufficiently grown to need further care, a good deal of labor may be available* for employ- " ment on public works; but, if active measures are taken just at present, I foresee " a great danger of out-bidding the poorer ryots in the labor-market, whose " poverty will prevent their offering more than a minimum of food for the work " of a daily cooly. I am aware that, in offering this opinion, I am differing " from that of Mr. Clarke, but I think he laid too much stress on the fact of a good " many aloes being recently scooped out in the immediate neighbourhood of Palma- " nair. I cannot help thinking that this was the work of a few beggars only, for " since I came out in this direction,* I " have not seen one hedge mutilated.

* Byreddipalli.

" The number of coolies on the Vencatagherikotah road new trace remains the same " as usual, *viz.*, eighty of all classes. There is no rush for employment. I am, " however, prepared to carry on the road from Lakhanapalli to Pattikondah at any " time that it may be thought necessary. If this is put in hand again now, I do not " think that there will be any unsatisfied demand for labor on this side of the Talook. " At Palmanair the round road or drive might be repaired. Rupees 300 would " do this. The portion of the Talook about Byreddipalli appears to have had very " little of the June rain. The tanks for the most part are still dry, but dry cultiva- " tion is going on. As I found that a good many of the coolies now working on the " Vencatagherikotah road came from Byreddipalli, I am issuing orders for the road " between Lakhanapalli and Pattikondah to be resumed, as it is nearer, than work " on the other side of the Kygul. Both works will go on simultaneously."

Punganur, 29th June.—"Went to Choudapalli inspecting the new road which is now finished for a distance of eight miles. Disbursed pay to the coolies on both sections. The number of people now employed on this line is 550. The present rate of expenditure is about Rupees 1,500 a month. Some coolies, who had been employed, had gone away to work in their fields, so that it would seem that the road-work is not sufficiently attractive to interfere with cultivation."

2nd July.—"Rode to Palmanair from Choudapalli, viâ Royalpetah. In passing through Kallupalli, (five miles north of Palmanair on Punganur road,) I found two pariahs cutting aloes. I called them up and asked them why they were doing so. They uttered the usual wail about "no cooly, no food." I told them that road-work was being carried on by the Department of Public Works at a distance of one-and-a-half miles from their village, and they replied that "they had not been called." These men were strong, and I presume lazy, for I afterwards ascertained that many Kallupalli coolies were working on the road, so they could not have been ignorant of the fact that work was going on. Mr. Urquhart, Inspector of Police, informs me that a few days ago he found four women cutting aloes at the back of my compound at Palmanair. On questioning them, they said they came from Kallupalli. The supply in the immediate neighbourhood of their own village is far more than equal to the demand, and if they found occasion to come to Palmanair, they might have found employment on either the Rattlaguntah or the Benasur tanks, the former of which they passed on the road."

Chittoor Talook, 9th July.—"Inspected Iral. Road-work going on. About 60 coolies employed. The demand for labor is not very great in this part."

Lakhanapalli Talook, Palmanair, 17th July.—"Laid out the remaining portion of the trace of the new road to Pattikondah, and saw the work resumed."

Vencatagherikotah, 18th July.—"A good deal of rain has fallen since the beginning of the month both here and at Byreddipalli, and there is water in most of the small tanks. The crops, Jonna and Anamalu, are growing well, though still very young. The whole country looks fresh and green."

Palmanair, 29th July.—"Rode to Royalpetah. On my way laid out half the line of branch line from the Punganur road to Eden through Calacatur, &c. This work will give employment to the people of Kallupalli, Kaljalpettah, &c., who still persist in coming to Palmanair to cut aloes. In the neighbourhood of Royalpetah, the people are still cutting the aloe-hedges, and allege, as the reason, that, while their crops are growing, they can get no employment."

31st July.—"Rode along the new road from Choudapalli to Punganur and back. The same number of coolies, 300, are still employed."

1st August.—"Rode to Somalli, inspecting the new road, about three miles of which is formed. On this section of the road about 200 coolies are employed. Some are now dropping off for the purpose of working in the fields."

20th August.—"There is a fair supply of water in most of the tanks in Chittoor Talook not generally sufficient for irrigation except on a small scale, or where the tanks are supplemented by wells, but sufficient for cattle, &c. The most advanced crop is cumbu, which will be cut in about two weeks' time, and promises well. There is little cholum nearly ready for cutting in the neighbourhood of Iral, which looks stunted. But most of the dry crops are looking well. The tanks

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throughout Punganur are well supplied with water, and all the small tanks east of Choudapalli are full. In that portion of Chendragherry, which I have just seen, there is considerably more water than in Chittoor. The dry crops are looking very promising every where."

"Rode to Calacatur* to inspect the road-work. About 250 coolies were working, and a good many more were asking to be admitted at the time I was there, that is, 9. A. M; I gave instructions to employ all who came. A proportionate deduction would, of course, be made in the day's pay of those who come late."

* From Palmanair.

21st August.—"Went to Calacatur and finished laying out the trace of the new road as far as Eden. At the present rate of work, (and the demand for labor appears to be on the increase in this neighbourhood,) this will be finished in a fortnight's time. I therefore propose carrying this road through to the Trunk Road No. X. The whole distance will be about seven miles. It will be necessary to provide employment for the next two months at any rate."

22nd August.—"Went down to the town to see the food distributed at the Lungerkhana. I recognised a great many of the people as those who were relieved in 1866. The present number of recipients is about seventy, not an alarming number. I think it will be well to keep this Relief-house open until the raggy harvest is got in. The attendance is composed entirely of poor wretches who can only gain a livelihood by begging, and at present it is probably more hard to do so than in ordinary seasons."

Palmanair, 25th August.—"Yesterday I was at Lakhanapalli. There is more water in that part of the Talook than at Palmanair. The cumbu is being cut, and will give an average yield. The raggy crops look well in most parts, but will want a shower or two within the next fortnight, or will come to nothing. However, the ryots are hopeful, and rain usually falls at Palmanair in the last week in August. I hear that at Vencatagherikotah much more rain has fallen than on this side of the Talook."

Palmanair, 1st September.—"Except in the immediate neighbourhood of Palmanair, I am glad to report that the crops, both dry and wet, are looking well. Vencatagherikotah is by far the most flourishing part of the Talook, and the wet crops, which in that part are extensive, are looking remarkably well. Moreover, the tanks are well supplied. About Byreddipally the area of wet land under cultivation is far less, yet the small tanks still contain water. The dry crops throughout the Talook need rain, and, unless some fall within the next few days, I fear the raggy will come to little good. I should say that the out-turn of the cumbu crop, which is now being cut, is fair in the neighbourhood of Byreddipally and Vencatagherikotah, but that at Palmanair the crop is poor. However, this grain is not cultivated on a large scale at Palmanair, and the loss will not be a matter of much moment, except to the individual sufferers. The numbers at the Lungerkhana are slightly increasing. I recognise the majority of the recipients as those who attended for relief in 1866; but the absence of children is reassuring. Restrictions grounded upon the size of the family, and such domestic considerations, are placed upon their admission. The number of coolies who require labor in the neighbourhood of

Palmanair continues to increase. The chief market is now the cross-road from the Punganur road, where nearly 400 people are working. I am again about to visit this work to arrange for the further supply of employment for those who ask for it."

9th September.—"We have had a good many showers in Palmanair during the week, but the amount of rain gauged at the Cutcherry has been less than an inch. Heavy rain, however, was not necessary. The present showers will be sufficient for the dry crops, which alone were in danger."

4. From the above narrative, which I trust will be deemed of sufficient interest to meet indulgence for the length to which it has run, it will be observed that the pressure of the adverse season upon the people, which was heavy up to the close of April, underwent abatement; varying according to locality, but still a very perceptible general abatement; upon the resumption of agricultural operations, consequent upon the showers that fell in the beginning of May, and the subsequent heavier falls of rain early in June.

5. But, considering the drain which the resources of the people had already been subjected to, and that nothing but fresh local production could suffice to restore to them the equilibrium of their ordinary condition, it was inevitable that, as predicted by Mr. Gibson in the passage I have italicised of his Diary of the 25th June, the pressure should again be felt and should find them, with still slenderer resources, even less able to encounter it than before.

6. Nevertheless, there is a vast difference between the two crises. In the end of April scarcity of water was a grave cause of anxiety, which does not now exist. Then all was uncertainty, and the people had no heart.

7. With plenty of water, and pasture for their cattle, and crops in the ground, although suffering from exhaustion of their resources both in grain and the means to purchase it, the present is felt to be but a temporary pressure, creating comparatively little anxiety and still less, if any, alarm.

8. With reference to the opening of the Relief-house at Palmanair, I had some demi-official correspondence with Mr. Gibson. I would gladly have avoided the inauguration so late in the season of a system of direct relief; but Mr. Gibson adduced instances of poverty that had fallen under his personal observation, such as a husband unable to seek work owing to the illness of wife and children, and resorting to the pith of aloes to subsist the family; instances, to which it was but too probable that similar ones existed, which escaped observation, and which could be met in no other way.

9. I am satisfied that the step was a right one, and I believe that it was taken at the right time, neither too soon nor too late; and I think I may venture to assure the Government that this form of relief shall be continued just so long as the necessity for it exists, and no longer. The expense will probably never exceed hundreds, and is insignificant in comparison with the many thousands of Rupees that have been, and are being spent upon relief works.

10. Upon this head I think it may be satisfactory to the Board and Government if I here state generally my conviction that the Relief Funds have been carefully expended upon works of substantial and permanent utility. I do not mean

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to assert that no mistakes have been made, that the trace of no road, on which some labor had been expended, has not had to be altered; that no money has been lost in sinking unprofitable wells in ill-selected localities, but I can say that such losses have been comparatively trifling, and that the great bulk of the money has been well spent, and will go some way to make up for the losses consequent on the adversity of the season.

11. Liberal as have been the contributions of the Government to the Relief Fund, and the expenditure may be put in round numbers at two lacs, I may mention that the extent of that liberality will be far exceeded in loss of revenue consequent on remissions for failure of cultivation. The accounts are not yet made up, but the loss will amount to little, if anything, short of five lacs and a half.

12. But on this subject I take the liberty of cordially endorsing the opinion recorded not long since by Mr. P. Grant, the late experienced Collector of Coimbatore, that, in bad seasons, in poor, dry districts, liberality is the only sound policy, and that the State has never yet been a loser in the long run by liberality exercised under such circumstances.

13. In conclusion, I trust it may be permitted to me to take this opportunity of mentioning how materially my anxieties have been relieved, and my responsibilities lightened, by the cordial support and able cooperation I have received from, and by the full confidence I have been justified in reposing in, not only Mr. E. Gibson, but Messrs. Comyn and McCarthy, my Acting Sub-Collector and Acting Head Assistant; for in the earlier part of the season the pressure of distress extended to every division of the district.

14. The brunt of the execution of active relief measures has, however, fallen to Mr. Gibson, and I cannot speak too highly of his performance of that duty.

From the same Officer, dated Chittoor, 4th November 1868, No. 377.

Adverting to the Proceedings of the Board, dated 23rd ultimo, No. 7,586, I have the honor to report that the out-turn of the Raggy harvest in Palmanair being particularly good, and the tanks being well supplied, I have closed the Relief-house, and have called Mr. E. Gibson into head-quarters for ordinary duties, thus permitting the Head Assistant Collector to return to his division.

SUBMITTED for the information of Government, with reference to their Proceedings, dated 26th August 1868, No. 2,264.

2. The Board observe that the experience of their first Member, derived from personal observation in the district fully bears out Mr. Agnew's report; and they see no reason to doubt that the Collector exercised a wise discretion in establishing Relief-houses.

3. They are glad to learn from Mr. Agnew's subsequent report that the out-turn of the Raggy harvest in Palmanair having been particularly good, and the tanks well supplied he has ascertained that there is no longer necessity for affording relief, and that the houses have been closed, and the Assistant withdrawn.

4. The information called for in paragraph 3 of the Government Order will form the subject of a separate communication.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
1st December 1868.

No. 4. ORDER THEREON, 1st December 1868, No. 3,010.

Miscellaneous.

Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) F. BRANDT,
Under Secretary to Government

To the Board of Revenue.

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

Revenue Dept.
No. 3564

BOARD OF REVENUE, MADRAS.
1868.

PROCEEDINGS, 5TH NOVEMBER 1868, No. 7,851.

Dated 5 Nov/68. Encl.
Dup. 11
Received 12

NOVEMBER.
No. 7,851.

Relief Houses opened in Palmanair Talook, North Arcot District,—Collector's letters stating necessity for, and reporting closing of, submitted to Government.

Recorded

Ext. J. Wright.

2034.

Govt. of {1868} Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE.

Dated December, 1st.

Recd.

Encl.

G. O. 1st *December* 1868, *No.* 3,010.

DECEMBER.
Nos. 3-4.

Relief Houses in North Arcot.—Collector's report with reference to the circumstances which led to its establishment, recorded.