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Nos. 389-390

Political Dispatch from the Government of India to the Political Letters to India,

Letter No 26 dated 11.26 Sept

These facts, however, as well as the general state of fisheries in Southern India in particular, are so fully explained in the paper herewith forwarded and read by me at the rooms of the East India Association, that it is needless here for me to trespass on your Grace's valuable time.

In conclusion I venture to remark that any good to be done this year should be proceeded with at once, or before the season which commences about the month of October, when the fish will be travelling up rivers to spawn.

With many apologies for the liberty I have taken, and for which the interest I continue to take in India, must plead my excuse.

From Sir A. COTTON, K. C. S. I., to Colonel G. T. HALY, dated 26th July 1867.

With reference to our conversation about the effect of the irrigation works in India upon the fisheries, I beg to state that, in my opinion, it is a matter of considerable importance that this matter should be attended to.

2. In 1836 we built a weir in Tanjore called the Coleroon Anicut, about 30 miles from the sea, where the river is about 1,100 yards broad, in two channels. In the following year a prodigious quantity of fish were stopped by it as soon as the freshes came down, and immense quantities were annually taken at it, of course generally full of roe. I have not heard of the weir for nearly thirty years, so that I cannot say whether the fish continued to try to ascend the river; and in 1850, we constructed another weir across the Godavery, about 40 miles from the sea, where it is 4,000 yards broad, in four channels. The weir is now 14 feet to 16 feet high, and the water passes over it to the depth of 14 feet to 16 feet in a full fresh. In the following year the quantity of fish assembled at it as soon as the first water of the monsoon reached the sea was prodigious, and many tons used to be killed in a day, some of them 5 feet or 6 feet long. I have not heard how the case is for many years. I should suppose that the injury to the coast fisheries must be very great, now that seven of the principal rivers on the east coast, *viz.*, the Coleroon, or Cauvery, the Pennair, in South Arcot, the Pullaur, the Pennair in Nellore, the Kistnah, the Godavery, and the Mahanuddy, are thus barred. It seems to me that this matter must be well worthy of the attention of the Government.

P. S.—I should mention that there is a long interval between the arrival of the monsoon water and the time when there is sufficient passing over the weir to allow of the fish going over it.

Order.—Ordered, that a copy of the Despatch, with enclosures, be forwarded to the Governments of Madras and Bengal, and to the Chief Commissioner of British Burmah for information, with intimation that the printed paper referred to by Colonel Haly will follow, if spare copies can be got from the Secretary of State.

(Signed) R. STRACHEY, Colonel, R. E.,
Offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

No. 390. Order thereon, 18th August 1869, No. 2,718.

IRRIGATION, No. 20.

Ordered to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

Colonel, R.E.,
Secretary to Government.

To the Revenue Department.

Exd. S. T Augustin.

Comm^r to the Board of Revenue

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Works Department,
18th August 1869.

No. 389. Read the following Proceedings of the Government of India in the Public Works Department, (Irrigation,) dated Simla, 26th July 1869, Nos. 225—27-I:—

Fish and Fisheries of India.

Read the following Despatch from the Secretary of State for India, to the Government of India, dated London, 17th June 1869, No. 53.

I have considered in Council your Despatch, dated March 18th (No. 41, 1869, on the subject of the inquiries that have been set on foot by your Government into the fisheries of the Indian seas and rivers.

2. The conservancy and control of the fisheries, and the measures suggested for the improvement of pisciculture throughout India, constitute subjects which certainly deserve attention from your Government, and I fully approve of the arrangements that have been made for the employment of Dr. Day on this investigation.

3. In carrying out your views, much will depend on the interest that is taken in the subject by local officers, to whom the advice and special knowledge of Dr. Day will be invaluable. Such officers as the Collector of South Canara, whose report I have perused with much interest, should receive every encouragement; and I am glad to perceive that his suggestions have received the attention they certainly deserve from the Madras Government.

4. Copies of Dr. Day's reports should be forwarded to me as they are received.

5. I enclose herewith a letter* which has been addressed to me by Colonel Haly, together with a copy of a paper read by him before the East India Association, on the subject of the fisheries of India, for the information of your Government.

* Dated 26th May 1869.

From Colonel G. T. HALY, to the Secretary of State for India, dated Shepherd's Bush, 26th May 1869.

More than two years ago I did myself the honour to bring to the notice of one of your predecessors, the then Secretary of State for India, as well as to that of the Governor of Madras, what I considered and still maintain to be a most important subject as essential to the interest of the Indian Empire at large as of vital necessity to the poorer classes in particular.

I allude to the "fisheries of India" and their now rapid destruction,—indeed it may be said the almost entire extinction,—of those of the rivers by the mode in which the works of irrigation have been and are still being carried out.

This fact, however, is so well certified to in the accompanying copy of a letter from Sir Arthur Cotton, marked A, and herewith forwarded, as to need no further comment from me in exemplification, and perhaps if I were here to conclude, enough would have been shown to [illegible] one of your Grace's practical turn of mind of the necessity at least, far more consideration, or rather for immediate action being taken; for consideration is all that the Government of India has as yet apparently given this most important subject.

True a Dr. Day has been appointed to enquire into the nature of the fisheries of India, but this is not what is called for so much as some immediate steps to stop the wholesale destruction as brought to notice by me, and so fully endorsed by Sir Arthur Cotton, and admitted by the Madras Government.

My object, therefore, in now addressing your Grace is to draw attention to the necessity that exists for dealing more practically with this all-important subject, as it is not one that brooks delay, more damage being done by procrastination in one season than can be remedied in a score hereafter.