M.R.O. 1—38,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 2998 Press ~~Mis.~~

212-213

Dated 20th November 1869

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 212. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 6th October 1869, No. 7,406 :—

Read the following letter from Major R. H. BEDDOME, Officiating Conservator of Forests, to the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Camp at Ootacamund, 16th August 1869, No. 1,610.

I HAVE the honour to forward, for the information of Government, copy of the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, No. 957, of the 13th of February last, and a letter* to my address from Mr. Sheffield, the Forest Officer of the Kurnool District.

* No. 132, dated 13th August 1869.

2. Some time ago Mr. Sheffield had reason to believe that many ryots brought out much more firewood than they could possibly require for their own use, and that they sold it to parties who were not entitled to wood free. He therefore addressed the Collector on the subject, and asked permission to regulate the amount of wood given free to each ryot. The Collector approved of this suggestion, and addressed the Board on the subject; hence, the Proceedings above alluded to.

3. As the Government rules on the subject have hitherto been understood in our department, all the poorer classes, who cut and bring out firewood themselves for their own use, are allowed to take it free; but rich ryots, who generally employ wood-cutters, pay for their firewood as well as other parties. In the Kurnool District, the poorer classes have hitherto brought out free as much firewood as they liked, taking it from fallen or dead-timber; but the rich ryots, who employ bandies, have only been allowed to bring out timber, free of any seigniorage, when it has been for *bona fide* agricultural purposes. When they send their bandymen or others to the jungles to fell wood, they pay four annas per bandy-load if for firewood, and 1 rupee per bandy if for building-purposes (unreserved trees).

4. The rules have hitherto worked well in this district, and Mr. Sheffield has his forests, etc., in very good order; and I never had a complaint made to me during my tours in the district.

5. The immediate effects of the present orders of the Board will be to knock off several thousands of rupees from our revenue; to enable ryots to bring out wood to any extent from the jungles, so that they can give it away, or sell it to parties not entitled to it; and to enable them to bring out building-timber, calling it firewood. There is to be no restriction as to quantity; so that every ryot may have a large timber-yard of his own. How far the privileges will be abused I cannot at present state; but, if attempts were made to bring out the whole of the building-timber of the district on free firewood Passes, I hardly see how we could prevent it; unless it is to be understood that the firewood is to be dead-wood or wood of small size. The demand in this Range is at present only a local one, and if attempts of this kind were successful, the whole of our revenue would be lost.

6. The entire deforestment of all village-jungles and unreserved tracts can only be a question of time under privileges of this nature, and that time would not be far distant if a railway should come through the district; and as it is, the demand

for wood is daily increasing. The inhabitants will then claim the same rights in the reserved tracts, and the privilege having been of long standing, it will have to be recognized as a right.

ENCLOSURE No. 1

From T. SHEFFIELD, Esq., Assistant Conservator of Forests, to the Officiating Conservator of Forests, dated Madras, 12th August 1869, No. 132.

I HAVE the honour to report, for your information, that some months ago I wrote to the Collector asking permission, in giving free Passes to ryots for firewood, to be allowed to regulate the number of bandies by the amount of revenue each ryot paid; say, for a man paying Rupees 50, so many bandy-loads free, and a man paying Rupees 100, so many. This I requested, because I had reason to believe that many ryots brought more wood than they required for their own use, and sold it to people not entitled to free wood.

2. The Collector approved of my suggestion, and wrote to the Board of Revenue for sanction; but the Board disapproved of the plan, and, in their Proceedings, No. 957, of 13th February 1869, they have ordered that for one year firewood shall be given free "without any restriction as to quantity," and means taken to register the number of loads so taken; so that it may be seen at the expiration of a year how far the privilege has been abused.

3. On receipt of this order, I wrote to the Collector, suggesting a few minor rules in the interest of the department, copy of which I submitted to you with my letter, No. 110, dated 2nd July 1869, and the Collector has been good enough to approve of them. I see also in the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, No. 5,521, of 28th July 1869, that you have proposed the rules for Coimbatore; so that nothing further is necessary. But now the question arises, are rich ryots, who are well able to pay the small seigniorage levied on firewood, to get it free? Hitherto we have received from 2,000 to 3,000 rupees yearly from this source, and a great deal of this was received from ryots. They always paid the money into the Cutcherry, and came to my office for licenses, and appeared well satisfied to get agricultural wood free.

4. The Forest Rule No. 11 provides that villagers shall be allowed to cut firewood for their own use, free of taxation, "from low scrub jungles." *We have no low scrub jungle*, and the rules, which were sanctioned for my district in 1865, put a tax of 4 annas per bandy-load on "firewood cut for sale," but free when cut for a person's own use. If this still means from low scrub jungle, we have none, and every person should pay.

5. Again, I would beg to inquire whether people may fell living trees for firewood, or whether the order refers only to dead and fallen wood. When any trees are felled, there are always to be found some parts fit for rafters, posts, etc.; and this is taxed at one rupee per load. But if people are allowed to fell green wood for fuel, they will constantly be bringing out rafters, etc., on firewood licenses, and who is to decide any such questions raised? The Forest Department are best able to decide them; but people would say we were interested in the matter, and decided unfairly. It would, therefore, I think, be best to confine them to fallen wood, as I have always hitherto done, and with satisfaction to the people, as will be found on inquiry with the different Tahsildars of the district.

ENCLOSURE No. 2.—Copy of Board's Proceedings, No. 957 of 1869.

REFERRED to the Board of Revenue for their remarks.

FORT SAINT GEORGE,
26th August 1869.

(Signed) R. A. DALYELL,
Acting Secretary to Government.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
20th November 1869.

IN the foregoing letter, referred to the Board for their remarks, the Officiating Conservator of Forests takes exception to instructions laid down by the Board in their Proceedings, dated 13th February 1869, No. 957, a copy of which is herewith submitted for the information of Government.

2. The Board perceive from Major Beddome's letter that they were correct in their conjecture that, while poor working-men were allowed small quantities of wood free for their own use, the rights of the more respectable and higher class of ryots were restricted; and that they were obliged to pay for what they are, under the rules, entitled to have free equally with others.

3. The Assistant Conservator adds that they are well able to pay the small seigniorage, and that the Forest Department has hitherto received from 2,000 to 3,000 rupees yearly from this source; a large portion of the amount being received from ryots.

4. The Conservator anticipates that the effect of the Board's Order will be "to knock off several thousands of rupees from" the revenue of the department.

5. There is no doubt that a respectable man will prefer to submit to an unauthorized exaction, rather than wrangle about his rights with the subordinates of the Forest Department; but the Board consider that the distinction made between the working man and the richer ryot, simply because the latter has money, cannot be upheld.

6. The Board cannot but think that the fears expressed by the Conservator regarding probable loss of revenue are somewhat exaggerated, and neither Major Beddome nor Mr. Sheffield gives any proof that the privileges hitherto conceded have been abused.

7. In any case, however, the Board consider that the rights of the people must be respected, and that the Conservator should find means, with the establishment at his disposal, for preventing abuse, without having resort to unauthorized restrictions. The Board are satisfied that it is both the policy of Government, and also their intention, that their rules shall be observed in a liberal spirit, and not be construed so as to interfere with long prescriptive communal rights for the sake of showing a small sum to the credit of the Forest Department.

8. With reference to the question raised by Mr. Sheffield in paragraph 5 of his letter, regarding the felling of living timber (too large to be described as "scrub") for firewood, and his proposal to limit the supply of untaxed firewood to dead-trees and fallen trees, there being no "scrub jungle," the Board observe that no attempt is made to show that the wants of the community could be fully met from this source, nor could such be the case.

9. It is obvious therefore that living trees must be cut; and the Board consider that, when the experimental period fixed by them furnishes the means of judging whether untaxed felling is abused, it will be necessary to fix a limit to the number of bandy-loads of untaxed wood to be allowed for each village, regard being had (in fixing such limit) to the quantity available, and provision being made for working the felling tracts in rotation.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 20th November 1869.

No. 213. ORDER THEREON, 20th November 1869, No. 2,908.

Forests, No. 11.

THE Government concur in the views expressed by the Board of Revenue in the foregoing Proceedings, and approve and sanction the Orders issued in the Board's Proceedings, under date 13th February 1869, No. 957.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) R. A. DALYELL,

Acting Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Officiating Conservator of Forests.

Ed. F. R. Bantleman.

4-298-8. Rev. Dept.

Proceedings of the Madras Govt
Under date the 25 Nov 1869

Read the following
Report of the Board of Revenue

Extract Fifty of 1869 Para
of the Proceedings of Govt
Confirming the Rules proposed by the Board
for the Conservancy of Forests
and the Management of Forest Lots
and the Levy of Duties thereon
contained in Three Parts

Read the Letter from the Board of Revenue
dated 20th October 1869 No 2998

The Government
are therefore pleased
to direct that the
Rules proposed by
the Board of Revenue
in the foregoing Proceed-
ings, and afterwards amended
in the course of correspon-
dence with the Collectors
of Kurnool and Cuddapah
be passed into Law

By Order &c
W. A.
Secretary to Govt

Fort St George 13th December 1869

Rules, pp 57.

To the Board of Revenue
Also to the Collectors of Kurnool & Cuddapah
Also to the Conservator of Forests

Copy sent

Ord.

1 Ord 23 Jan 1870

Cont. of 1869 Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated November, 20th.

Read. Sect.

G. O., 20th November 1869, No. 2,998.

NOVEMBER.

Nos. 212-213.

Cutting of firewood by ryots in Kurnool District.—Orders issued by the Board of Revenue on this subject, approved.