M.R.O. 1—38,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 322 Press Mis.

290-291

Dated 21st December 1869

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
21st December 1869.

No. 290. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 29th November 1869, No. 8,778 :—

Read the following letter from the Officiating Collector of the Kistna District, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Narsarowpett, 15th October 1869, Extra No. 184.

In my letter, dated 8th September 1869, No. 277, reporting as Commissioner under Act. XXXVII. of 1850, on certain charges brought against Deputy-Collector V. Venkatachelam Puntulu, I made some remarks with reference to the system that prevails in many of the towns of this and, I believe, the Godavery District of raising funds for the support of temples, the feeding of Brahmins, and other similar purposes by the levy of tolls, fees, or russums, on all the produce or goods brought into or sent out of the towns, or on the daily transaction of buying and selling.

2. These fees are introduced in the first place at the suggestion of some influential man. He persuades a number of the merchants of the town to give a *Danapatta* or deed of gift, binding themselves to allow these fees to be collected in all transactions in which they are concerned, or on all carts laden with produce or goods coming to them or despatched by them. The *Danapatta* is considered binding not only on the parties who sign it, but their descendants to all generations. Once a combination of this kind is established, the voluntary element is very quickly lost sight of. The collection of the tolls or fees is commonly leased out to the highest bidder, and it is not to be wondered at that when the demand of such fees is made on strangers, or on parties who were no parties to the *Danapatta*, the lessee of the fee does not explain that payment is entirely voluntary on their part. In short, the fees are collected like an authorized cess, and every pressure put on the parties who show any reluctance to conform to the custom of the place.

3. I was recently at Muktiyala, high up on the Kistna River, on the borders of the Hyderabad territory, and found there some half dozen boats laden with salt unloading. The salt had been brought from Nizampatam by canal to Bezwada, and from thence the boats were towed up the Kistna—a journey occupying about six weeks. I entered into conversation with the trader who was bringing up the salt to take into the interior. There appears to be a large quantity of salt annually taken up by this means in spite of the difficulties of this mode of transit, but what the man chiefly complained of to me was the exactions made upon him in the way of fees when landing the salt at Muktiyala. He said he had to pay Rupees 1-4-0 for every large boat, and 12 annas for every small one, which fees went to the Jagayapeta Temple. He had also to give 4 seers for the temple at Muktiyala, four seers for Brahmins, and four seers for Dancing girls. He stated that their fees were always collected by the Curnums, and were a great tax on the traders. I asked whether the payment was not voluntary. He stated that if the fees were not properly paid on demand the boats would be at once cut adrift from their moorings, and they would not be allowed to land the salt. I sent for the Curnum, who admitted the collection of the fees, but pleaded that they were perfectly voluntary, except on those who had signed the *Danapatta* or their children, and the fees he urged have been collected for many years. All I could do was to

warn the Curnum, and to inform the traders this that it was perfectly optional with them to pay fees, and that such a demand was in no way authorized by Government as the Komaties evidently seemed to think.

4. It is a question, I think, whether if these tolls and fees cannot be entirely prohibited, they cannot at least be brought under some sort of supervision, and proclamations posted up at every place where they exist, informing the public that the demand has no authority of Government, and that it is perfectly voluntary on all to pay or not, according to their free-will. It is intolerable that trade should be subjected to these illegal duties.

5. The inland salt-trade is capable of great development. All along the southern bank of the Kistna up in the Palnad, I found quantities of salt stored under tents which had been brought from China Ganjam by pack-bullocks, and was waiting for boats to cross to the Hyderabad side. The easier means of transporting salt by water would, I have no doubt, be much more largely availed of if some attempt were made to facilitate the means of communication, as for instance, by providing a towing-path if practicable along the banks of the Kistna. I have addressed the Superintending Engineer on this subject. I have myself been up the Kistna to near Tummerkota in the Palnad, and have found navigation quite feasible. The going up the river is tedious, chiefly on account of the absence of a towing-path, coming down the river is very easy and rapid as might actually be expected.

THE Board resolve to submit this letter for the orders of Government.

2. They concur with the Collector that it is very desirable to facilitate the river-navigation by the formation of a towing-path and landing-places. The upper course of the Kistna is very little known, and a survey is desirable.

3. As regards the system of petty cesses brought to notice, the subject is one which, in the opinion of the Board, calls for decided interference.

4. Every small temple can set up a systematic mode of exaction similar to those which have with such trouble been put down in Zemindary tracts.

5. The Board suggest that a proclamation should be issued, warning all of the illegality of such cesses, and especially cautioning public servants against the consequences which will result to themselves from complicity with and connivance at such practices.

6. In the particular case brought to light, endeavours should be made to bring home the charge to those who threatened to cut the boats adrift, and the Village Officers should be made an example of.

No. 291. ORDER THEREON, 21st December 1869, No. 3,220.

Miscellaneous.

FROM the above Proceedings of the Board the Government learn, not without surprise, that a totally unauthorized custom of exacting tolls and fees from traders for the support of temples, the feeding of Brahmins, and other similar purposes, has for some time prevailed in many towns of the Kistna District.

2. The practice, according to the Acting Collector, has its origin in a "Danapatta" or deed of gift, by which certain merchants bind themselves to allow fees to be collected in all transactions in which they are concerned, or on all carts laden with produce and goods coming to them or despatched by them. The scope of this Danapatta is extended until its real purport is quite lost sight of, and it becomes a cloak for extortion. That the imposition of the cess has been to a certain extent systematized is shown by the fact that its collection is sometimes leased out.

3. The Government regret that this practice, which must have been long known to the Police, should not have been brought to their notice before.

4 The Board's suggestion, regarding the issue of a proclamation setting forth the illegality of the cess, should be at once carried out. The Acting Collector and Magistrate should promulgate the proclamation in question in all places where the dues are enforced, in order that the true nature of the tax may be thoroughly understood by all classes for the future.

5. With the same object the Inspector-General of Police is requested to issue instructions to his officers.

6. The Government concur with the Board as to the propriety of further inquiries in the case mentioned in paragraph 3 of the Collector's letter, with the view of prosecuting the parties implicated for extortion, if there is any prospect of bringing the charge home to them.

7. A copy of these Proceedings should be forwarded to all Collectors, and the Collector and Magistrate of the Godavery District should be requested to state whether a similar abuse exists within his jurisdiction, as is alleged in paragraph 1 of Mr. Boswell's letter.

8. Paragraph 5 of the Collector's letter will receive consideration in the Public Works Department.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Inspector-General of Police.
,, the Public Works Department.

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

Rev: Depart.

№ 3220

Proceedings of the Madras Government

Under date the 31 December 1869.

Read the following

Rec.d of the Board of Revenue.

Subng: Collector's letter suggesting that a proclamation should be issued warning the public against the illegality of fees levied on certain towns on Kistna Dist.t on purchase of goods brought into Masulipatam, free from payment of Octroy, by persons residing in the Mofussil.

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Time to

9-7-70

Govt. of {1869} Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated December, 21st.

Recd. Encl.

G. O., 21st December 1869, No. 3,220.

DECEMBER.

Nos. 290-291.

Unauthorized exaction of tolls and fees in Kistna District.—Passing orders with reference to its suppression and the issue of a proclamation in connection with it.

Rec.d from the Board of Revenue
15 Dec.r/70 C.r 2998.

From the B.d of Rev.
Dated 14th March/70
C. No. 869.
From Do Do
dt/16 March/70. Cir. 928.

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14 Copies to Chief Secretary
4 — Inspector General of Police
21 — Mr Dewar

Ball