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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 594 Press ~~Mis~~

164-165

Dated 6th March 1869

Not to be folded or roughly handled

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Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 6th March 1869.

No. 164. Read the following letter from the Officiating Conservator of Forests, to the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Madras, 27th February 1869, No. 1,175 :—

1. I regret to have to report serious defalcations and embezzlements on the part of Mr. Turnbull of the Forest Department, who was placed in charge of the Wynaad Range on the 25th of May last.

2. He appears to have received sums, amounting to about 33,000 Rupees, from different Mysore merchants upon his agreements to supply them with timber from our depôts. Contracts of this nature should have been referred to the Central Office for the approval of the Conservator, but Mr. Turnbull not only omitted to do this, but he sent in monthly statements that no timber whatever had been sold, and as he received the money in the Mysore country, it was easy for him to evade detection for a short time. None of this money has been paid to the credit of Government, and Mr. Turnbull appears to have left his district, together with the Sub-Overseer, Veerasawmy Pillay, just when he expected Mr. Cherry would arrive to relieve him. When Mr. Cherry took charge, he reported a deficiency in the Accounts of about 1,457 Rupees, and the Mysore merchants sent in petitions and information of the payments they had been making to Mr. Turnbull. Mr. Turnbull had entered a considerable sum in his estimate for working operations for this quarter (January to March), but as he was about to be relieved, I struck the whole of this amount out of the quarterly estimate; but a sum of 5,000 Rupees was allowed to stand as the contribution of our Department towards the Coorg Road (now under construction); after Mr. Turnbull had quitted his district, he appears to have drawn a cheque on the Manantoddy Tahsildar for 2,000 Rupees out of this amount and handed it over to Veerasawmy Pillay; payment was refused at Manantoddy, and the Sub-Overseer having first mortgaged the cheque and then endorsed it over to a Soucar, eventually got it cashed at a discount by Messrs. Arbuthnot & Co., in Madras, and they recovered the money through the Treasury at Calicut. Veerasawmy Pillay has been apprehended, and most of this money recovered, and this part of the embezzlement is now being enquired into by the Commissioner of Police, Major Tennant. I was returning from a tour in South Tinnevelly when I first heard of Mr. Turnbull's absence and the suspicion of embezzlements; I hastened to Madras, and have seen Major Tennant and given him all the information necessary. The transactions with the Mysore merchants cannot be taken up by the Police here, and I now purpose starting at once for Mysore and Wynaad, and thoroughly investigating this more important part of the embezzlements with Mr. Cherry, who has already taken the matter in hand. I am quite convinced there must be some fraud on the part of the merchants; they would hardly have given such large sums in advance to an East Indian Overseer in Mysore out of his district, unless they were to be made great gainers by the transaction; the price fixed on the timber is higher than usual, but the merchants may have received receipts for larger sums than they actually paid, and if we can prove transactions of this nature we should not be responsible for the advances they have chosen to make to Mr. Turnbull; and one man writes that he has paid more than the amount of his receipts, which is suspicious and points to bribery. Veerasawmy Pillay is witness to some of the contracts, and he could pro-

bably give full information regarding Mr. Turnbull's transactions with the merchants, and perhaps some clue to Mr. Turnbull's whereabouts; he has evidently been led away by Mr. Turnbull, and does not appear to be a gainer to any extent by the frauds, unless he has received a portion of the money paid by the merchants to Mr. Turnbull. I would strongly recommend, therefore, that he should be allowed to turn approver at once.

I may here mention that Mr. Turnbull has been some five years in the Department, and has always borne a high character for honesty, and belongs to a most respectable family in Madras; he was in independent charge of Madura and a portion of Tinnevelly for four years, when it was proposed to remove Lieutenant Fullerton to Madura and Tinnevelly, and place Wynaad for the present under a first Class Overseer. Mr. Turnbull was transferred to this Range, he then received a very good Certificate from the Collector of Madura, and the Collector of Tinnevelly has mentioned him most favorably; shortly after Lieutenant Fullerton assumed charge of the Madura District it came to light that Mr. Turnbull's Timber Depôt Accounts in that Range had been carelessly kept; neither I nor Lieutenant Fullerton entertained any suspicion of dishonesty, as a sum beyond the amount the timber (removed) had been valued at was paid into the Treasury; there was however, no Memorandum to show who had purchased the timber or who had paid in the money. I consequently informed Mr. Turnbull, that I could not keep him in independent charge, and that upon being relieved he would remain under suspension till he had satisfactorily explained his Madura Accounts. I then obtained the sanction of Government for a more responsible Officer for the charge of this Range; there was some delay about this appointment, but as I was expecting the relieving Officer to be appointed in every Gazette, I did not think it necessary to put off a tour that I had made all arrangements for in South Tinnevelly, more particularly so as no operations were supposed to be going on in the Wynaad, and I arranged to visit the district with the relieving Officer on my return from Tinnevelly, this unfortunately enabled Mr. Turnbull to decamp and get a considerable start; I received no answers to letters addressed to him, and I wrote suspending him, and requested the Deputy Collector to take charge until the arrival of Mr. Cherry; it then transpired that he had gone off without leave with his Sub-Overseer, and Mr. Cherry shortly after joining, the embezzlements were detected. I shall report more fully when I have investigated the case at Mysore and in Wynaad, and it is a matter of doubt at present how far our Department can be held responsible for Mr. Turnbull's dealings with the merchants.

No. 165. ORDER THEREON, 6th March 1869, No. 694.

Forests, No. 8.

1. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council regrets to learn that so serious a defalcation has taken place in the Forest Department, and desires to know from Major Beddome what checks there are under the existing system and rules upon the operations of the Officers in charge of Ranges, and in what manner these checks have been successfully evaded in the present instance.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 6th March 1869.

2. Though Major Beddome's report is silent on the subject, the Government are aware that endeavours are being made by the Police for the apprehension of Mr. Turnbull, and it is to be hoped that they may prove successful. It is undoubtedly desirable that if possible, the Sub-Overseer should be induced to disclose all he knows of the several transactions, as in all probability he is quite aware of the circumstances under which Mr. Turnbull obtained such large advances from the Mysore merchants, and if fraudulent conduct on their part could be proved, the liability of Government for Mr. Turnbull's contracts could certainly not be maintained. It is not clear, however, how he could become an approver, unless Mr. Turnbull is apprehended and brought to trial.

3. The Government do not understand why the cheque in favor of Veerasawmy was eventually cashed at the Calicut Treasury, when it had been originally refused at Manantoddy; but on this point the Collector of Malabar will be called upon for a report through the Board of Revenue.

4. The Government approve of the Acting Conservator's proceedings as now reported, but they desire to know why he permitted Mr. Turnbull to remain in charge of the Wynaad after he had ascertained that his Accounts in the Madura and Tinnevelly Range were unsatisfactory. It was clearly Major Beddome's duty to have made known to Government that he was dissatisfied with Mr. Turnbull, personally, when he addressed them on the 12th September 1868, requesting that an Assistant Conservator might be nominated to Wynaad.

(True Extract.)

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

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

Exd· G. A. Turton.

Govt. of (1869) Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE OFFICIATING CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated March 6th.

Recd. 8th.

G. O., 6th March 1869. No. 591.

MARCH.

Nos. 164-165.

Mr. Turnbull's defalcations in the Forest Department.—Passing orders on the Conservator's letter on this subject.

a deficiency in the accounts of about 1457 Rupees and the Mysore Merchants sent in petitions & representations of the payments they had been making to Mr. Turnbull. Mr. Turnbull had entered a considerable sum in his estimate for working operations for this quarter (January to March) but as he was about to be relieved I struck the whole of this amount out of the quarterly estimate, but a sum of 5000 Rupees was allowed to stand as the contribution of my Department towards the Coorg Road (now under construction) after Mr. Turnbull had quitted his district he appears to have drawn a Cheque on the Nanjunkoddy Tasildar for 2000 Rupees out of this amount and handed it over to Veerasawmy Pillay - payment was refused at Nanjunkoddy and the Sub Collector having first mortgaged the Cheque & Rupees endorsed it over to a Souear eventually got it cashed at a discount by Messrs Arbuthnot & Co. in Madras and they recovered the money thro' the Treasury at Calicut - Veerasawmy Pillay has been apprehended and most of this money recovered & this part of the embezzlement is now being enquired into by the Commissioner of Police, Major Tennant. I was returning from a tour in South Kanara when I first heard of Mr. Turnbull's absence and the suspicion of embezzlements I hastened to Madras & there saw Major Tennant & gave him all the information necessary - The transactions with the Mysore Merchants cannot be taken up by the police here & I now proceed to Mysore

Starting at once for Mysore & Wynaad & thoroughly investigating this more important part of the embezzlements with Mr. Cherry who has already taken the matter in hand. I am quite convinced there must be some fraud on the part of the Merchants they would hardly have given such large sums in advance to an East Indian Overseer in Mysore out of his district unless they were to be made great gainers by the transaction, the price fixed on the timber is higher than usual but the Merchants may have received receipts for larger sums that they actually paid and if we encourage transactions of this nature we should not be responsible for the advances they have chosen to make to Mr. Turnbull and one man writes that he has paid more than the Amount of his receipts, which is suspicious and points to bribery. Veerasawmy Pillay is witness to some of the Contracts & he could probably give full information regarding Mr. Turnbulls transactions with the Merchants & perhaps some clue to Mr. Turnbulls whereabouts, he has evidently been led away by Mr. Turnbull & does not appear to be a gainer to any extent by the frauds unless he has received a portion of the money paid by the Merchants to Mr. Turnbull, I would strongly recommend therefore that he should be allowed to turn approver at once.

I may here mention that Mr. Turnbull has been some 5 years in the Department & has always borne a high character for honesty, & belongs to a most respectable family in Madras - he was in independant charge of Madura & a portion of Tinnevelly for 4 years; when

when it was proposed to remove Lieut.ᵗ Fullerton to Madura & Tinnevelly & place Wynaad for the present under a first class Coursur: Mr Turnbull was transferred to this range, he then received a very good Certificate from the Collector of Madura & the Collector of Tinnevelly has mentioned him most favorably, shortly after Lieut.ᵗ Fullerton assumed charge of the Madura district it came to light that Mr Turnbull's timber Deposit accounts in that range had been carelessly kept, neither I nor Lieut.ᵗ Fullerton entertained any suspicion of dishonesty as a sum beyond the amount the timber (removed) had been valued at was paid into the Treasury, there was however no memo to show who had purchased the timber or who had paid in the money, I consequently informed Mr Turnbull that I could not keep him in independent charge and that upon being relieved he would remain under suspension till he had satisfactorily explained his Madura Accounts I then obtained the sanction of Government for a more responsible Officer for the charge of this Range, there was some delay about this appointment but as I was expecting the relieving Officer to be appointed in every Gazette I did not think it necessary to put off a tour that I had made all arrangements for in South Tinnevelly, more particularly so as no operations were supposed to be going on in the Wynaad & I arranged to visit the district with the relieving Officer.

Cy. Govt Mad. Pub. Cons. No 3 vol. 2 & Dec. 1869 - 134-135

Revenue
~~Secret~~ Dept.ᵗ 1869
No 633
From
The Offg Conservator of Forests
To The Actg Secretary to Govt
Rev. Dept.ᵗ
~~Secret~~ Std Range

Dated 27th February 1869
Received 3rd March
No 1175
Enclosure. None
Subject
Reports various defalcation and Embezzlements on the part of Mr T. H. Turnbull of the Forest Dept.ᵗ at Wynaad.
Refd to 5th & 6th March 69

Recd 6th March 1869

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shortly after joining, the embezzlements were detected.
I shall report more fully when I have investigated
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13 Copies Letter Offg Comy Genl 28/8
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G. R. Hall

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