M.R.O. 1—29,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue · DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 687. Press ~~Mis.~~

355-6

Dated 13th March 1869.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 355. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 9th March 1869.

Read the following letter from the Collector of South Arcot, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Madras, dated Chingleput, 13th February 1869, No. 43.

1. I have not yet made any report to the Board on the prospects of the present season, but it will be known to them that I only rejoined the District in December last, and I was not then sufficiently acquainted with the character of the season to be able, even approximately, to estimate what it was likely to turn out. Immediately, on rejoining, I found that the anticipated harvest was, on the whole, anything but favorable, and I called for reports from all parts of the District from those Officers who had been on the spot, and had watched the progress of the season. These reports varied, but all told plainly that the present year was likely to prove as unfavorable as its predecessor; still of late years the seasons have been so very variable, and unusual in their character, that I was sanguine we might have late rains in January, which, in a great measure, would make up for deficiency in the early monsoon, and I was unwilling to be premature in my conclusions as to results until I had myself seen a little, and had gathered more certain data than was before me when I rejoined.

2. I was also strengthened in this postponement of my definite report by reason of all I had gleaned and had witnessed both in Coimbatore and Salem, through which Districts I passed on my way down to this. I found in those Districts that the season had been, on the whole, singularly propitious, and in Utengherry, the Talook immediately adjoining Trinamallay in South Arcot, the Tahsildar and others told me there would be no occasion for a single Anna remission, either on Punjah or Nunjah holdings. Thus, I could not for some time realize the belief that all the rumours which had reached me through private sources of the state of my own District could be as represented, and I awaited, therefore, further reports, and also until I had made some personal inspection of the neighbourhood where I was first encamped; and I regret to state that with isolated exceptions, that inspection and the subsequent reports I have received fully bear out my earlier intelligence, and I fear that the present season is likely to prove more unfavorable than the last, and in some respects by reason, of a prolonged absence of rain, it threatens to be even somewhat disastrous in some parts as far as human foresight can predicate.

3

Assessment of the villages

3. In last year, the late heavy rains in the end of January proved a very great relief, and indeed it may be said that this rain really saved the district generally from actual distress, which must have followed the scarcity of water in wells and reservoirs intended for the supply of people and cattle, but while in this season at the same period we have had no such propitious down-pour, the fall of rain throughout the year has been many inches below that of the previous twelve month which, as the Board know, was unusually scant.

4. There are localities in each Talook more favored than others, and, of course, where river irrigation exists, loss of crops and want of water are less felt than elsewhere, but I may observe that river irrigation, properly so called, exists only in the Talooks named in the margin, and there only in certain parts, so that but a comparatively small area enjoys such influence; and thus the Board will readily comprehend the heavy and very general failure of the present harvest in a district so circumstanced, and of which more than three-fourths of the entire area of the cultivable land is dependent on local rains and rain-fed tanks.

Cuddalore, Guddelum river, Chellumbrum, Coleroon, Trikalore, Pooneaur.

5. I enclose, for the Board's information, copy of my instructions* to the Divisional Officers, on the subject of the settlement which has just commenced, and I request their authority, which I have anticipated for the same scale of remissions on Punjah holding, which were granted in the last Revenue year, and even these must, in many cases, be exceeded from inability of the ryots to meet any portion of the Government demand owing to two successive bad seasons.

* Dated 16th January 1869, No. 47.

6. I am of opinion that timely and suitable remissions are a very valuable relief, and to withhold them from agriculturists, the mass of whom live from hand to mouth, is simply aggravating the distress, and embarrassing whole families for years to come. I trust, therefore, the Board will approve of my instructions to the Subordinate Officers which I issued after mature consideration of possible contingencies incidental to the threatened state of things, and as I was of opinion that in the past year, the Sub-Collector had not been sufficiently alive to the sound policy and necessity of exercising the extended power of remissions open to him, I particularly wrote to him expressive of my wishes that one uniform system of operation should be carried out if only to avoid those invidious and painful distinctions which had already attracted notice, and which could but produce grave dissatisfaction and discontent among the ryots affected.

7. I have received numerous petitions from Mr. Hathaway's division, praying that some other Officer be sent to do the Jamabundy, as they are hopeless of his giving the ryots the redress they need, but I trust, after what I have written, and my instructions, they will have no cause for discontent, and, in this belief, I have as yet taken no notice of the various representations made to me, but I cannot help thinking that in the Virdachellum Talook especially, there will be more than ordinary pressure from all I can learn, though I do not of course mean to say that this

is in any way consequent on the want of sufficient indulgence to those who were sufferers in the last year.

8. There has been no rain since late in November, and then only partial and scanty, and this fact is sufficient to demonstrate what the character of the season must be, and with rare exceptions there was not a tank at the end of the year just closed, with water sufficient in it to continue irrigation. The want of rain has been mostly felt as regards wet cultivation in the Villapuram Talook, nearly the whole of the tanks in which are rain-fed, and where river or channel feeders exist, they are for the most part in a sad state of disrepair, so that they are practically useless. I will merely instance two, that of Valavanur and of Pakum. The fixed beriz of each with the Jamabundy of each during the last ten years I give in the margin, and since I have not been backward in pressing the urgency of thorough and early repairs to the irrigation sources of those villages, I must leave to other Departments to account for their neglect. I enclose copy of my last letter* to Colonel Foord on this subject, written in last year, and I have always contended that even if a lac of Rupees were expended in doing what is required to the great feeder of the Valavanur tank, known as the Allungul channel, it would prove very remunerative. When the above channel and that leading to the Pakum tank have the attention and expenditure they stand in need of to render them of any use, and the main and branch channels on the northern bank of the Pooneaur river above the Trevanellore anicut are completed, the condition of the Villapuram Talook will be materially altered, and where the country is now comparatively barren and a waste as regards cultivation, it will become flourishing and prosperous.

VALAVANOOR, PYMAISH BERIZ, RUPEES 26,484.

Faslies.	Jamabbundy Beriz on the cultivation.	Net Beriz at the settlement.
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
1268	17,773 8 11	16,895 2 9
1269	16,998 6 6	16,974 6 8
1270	16,662 4 8	15,854 11 0
1271	17,034 9 11	16,996 1 9
1272	17,838 1 2	17,838 6 8
1273	18,406 9 0	17,659 8 8
1274	17,232 6 3	16,700 14 9
1275	16,610 6 8	9,499 11 3
1276	16,862 7 11	16,737 13 1
1277	17,808 9 10	7,958 15 3

PAKUM, PYMAISH BERIZ, RUPEES 18,600.

Faslies.	Jamabbundy Beriz on the cultivation.	Net Beriz at the settlement.
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
1268	13,325 9 8	13,196 2 9
1269	13,784 4 10	13,757 13 4
1270	13,103 6 1	12,173 1 11
1271	13,988 12 4	12,913 10 8
1272	13,339 8 9	13,816 10 1
1273	13,237 10 9	13,068 1 9
1274	13,283 9 11	12,938 5 2
1275	13,315 9 1	7,902 13 5
1276	13,646 11 11	12,383 13 3
1277	12,506 2 6	6,046 13 6

* Dated 9th June 1869, No. 109.

9. On the whole, save and except where tanks are river-fed, or where there exists channel irrigation, the general out-turn in the District of wet crops will not exceed one-half in my belief, and in many parts not one-third, while the yield of dry crops will be below that proportion, and much land has been left waste, or the crops have entirely died from want of seasonable and sufficiency of rain.

10. I give approximately in the margin the estimated out-turn of wet and dry cultivation in each talook of the district, and when we remember that this is the second year in succession, where these losses have arisen, the effect on the condition of the people needs little comment. I am, however, able to state that

there has been very little rise as yet in prices, and I attribute this to the comparatively small exports of grain of all kinds in this as compared with last year, owing happily to the excellent harvest in the neighbouring districts and in Mysore, all of which drew largely on South Arcot in Fusly 1277, and this absence of demand for grain in the present year for foreign markets will no doubt go far to alleviate the pressure of local scarcity, while it is my conviction that there is abundance of grain in store in all our large towns, and for which, as the export demand is not likely to be large, as above explained, the prices, I am sanguine, will be kept down within reasonable limits, and I am not apprehensive that they will attain what is usually understood by famine rates, so that except in certain localities where other means of subsistence are not available to the people, I do not myself think that any extraordinary measures of relief will be called for.

11. It was, while writing this report, that I received a letter* from my Sub-Collector, in regard to the state of parts of the Virdachellum Talook, and of which I annex an extract, but I do not augur anything very serious from what Mr. Hathaway brings to notice, and doubtless a little timely expenditure, when really called for, will fully meet all requirements. I have written to the Sub-Collector authorizing the employment of labor on digging wells and securing water wherever practicable in anticipation of specific sanction, in order to provide any who may be in actual distress with the means of subsistence; but beyond this partial relief I am reluctant to anticipate the necessity of any extraordinary measures, such as were called for in the year before last, and with my knowledge of the resources of this District, and of its fairly diffused wealth in many parts of it, with the fact that grain in store is plentiful, however those interested would wish to make it appear otherwise, I am not of opinion that, as regards food, there will be any difficulty, though, if we are not favored with rain before very long, partial suffering and distress among people and cattle on this account may undoubtedly be looked for, when aid from the Public Treasury may become a necessity.

12. It is no uncommon thing for whole villages to emigrate elsewhere in a season of drought to more highly favored spots in the vicinity of rivers and spring tanks, but this is only temporary, and they return after the cause for their migration ceases, and it is not good policy, in my experience, to show too great a readiness to relieve the people from dependence on their own efforts and resources, however right and necessary it may be to supplement and help those efforts; and therefore, I am not disposed at this early period to recommend any special measures, but all I purpose doing, is to watch events and to meet them as circumstances may suggest, and I solicit from Government this much authority, in order that I may be prepared on representation from my Assistants or other Officers to make timely advances from the Public Treasury, reporting the same in each instance for the information of the Board and Government, and submitting of course, in due course, detailed accounts of all expenditure of the kind. This is all I now seek or think needful; but should any distress of a pressing or extensive character threaten or shew itself, I will immediately report; meanwhile, the Board and Government may rest confident that I shall be fully prepared to act and to do all that is required to avert and alleviate any pressing distress, but I am thankful to say that at the present time I see no substantial cause for anticipating any thing of the kind.

13. I am about to write separately on the state of the Chokkady Jaghire villages generally in the Trinamallay Talook, and I am now engaged on collecting the necessary data in reference to the Board's Proceedings of the 10th November 1868, No. 7,940; meanwhile, I may observe that the present season appears to have been much the same as the last, but the people of these villages, in my belief, are in many respects better off than their neighbours in other parts of the same talook.

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* Dated 1st February 1869, No. 29.

Paragraph 2. "While on the subject I take the opportunity of adding that I expect, in a few weeks, symptoms of distress may begin to manifest themselves, and that it would be advisable for *immediate* expenditure, if that be the case; since the whole value of Famine Relief is destroyed, if it be withheld till months afterwards, when the famine has passed over. I think it, therefore, necessary to give timely warning, in order that sanction may be given beforehand for the funds at once to be made use of immediately they are required. Reports are already beginning to come in of a total absence of water in some parts, and general loss of cattle in consequence, and migration of the Villagers chiefly along the Trikalore Talook side, but though I cannot recommend the digging of wells just yet, until I know where the distress is worst, and where the relief is most needed, it would be advisable for a grant of, say 1,000 Rupees to be ready for immediate expenditure if required.

In this letter the Collector of South Arcot reports that it will be necessary again this year to grant liberal remissions on Punjah, as well as Nunjah, the season having been still more unfavorable than last year.

2. The report, though extending to a great length, is singularly deficient in precise and clear information. As regards a considerable portion of the District, Mr. Reade's opinion, must of necessity, be based on the inspections of his Divisional Officers, but he has not even forwarded the reports of these Officers. The Board understand that the Acting Sub-Collector has already finished the settlement of the Virdachellum Talook, and as this is the Talook of the Sub-Division which has the least certain means of irrigation, the information and statistics acquired during the settlement would have been especially valuable. The Statement of estimated outturn, promised in paragraph 10 of Mr. Reade's letter, has also not been furnished as yet.

3. There can be no doubt that the settlement must be conducted with liberality, for the season has certainly been adverse, and is the second unfavorable year that the ryots have had to contend with, but the manner in which Mr. Reade has dealt with the subject prevents the Board from forming a satisfactory opinion on the question.

4. As regards both Nunjah and Punjah land, the Board think it will be sufficient to grant remission only on lands, where the yield has been below one-half of an ordinary crop. It may very fairly be presumed that, where a ryot has secured one-half of his crop, he is in a position, as a rule, to pay the assessment at current prices. Again, where the loss exceeds 80 per cent., or in other words, where the yield is but one-fifth of the usual outturn, it may similarly be held that re-payment of seed, labor, &c., will leave no fund, whence the land tax can be paid. Where the loss ranges from 50 to 80 per cent. remission should be granted (proportioned according to loss) not exceeding 50 per cent. of the assessment in any case.

5. Waste and shavy, both in Nunjah and Punjah, should also be remitted in full; this being the second year of drought.

6. Remission to the above extent, carefully apportioned after close enquiry, will probably be sufficient. If more be needed, the Collector must furnish fuller details than he has yet done. The remissions last Fusly aggregated Rs. 5,57,158, and while quite concurring with the Collector that liberality is necessary this year also, the Board would impress strongly on him the necessity of careful enquiry during the settlement. It is only by personal enquiry and inspection that the interests of the State can be properly protected. It would, in the opinion of the Board, be well if Government could place the services of a couple of extra Assistants at the Collector's disposal for the next three or four months.

7. The remissions proposed are less liberal than those recently granted in the Madura District, but in the latter, the present is the third season of adversity, and prices are falling, whereas, in South Arcot, Fusly 1276 was a good year. In paragraph 7 of his letter, Mr. Reade expresses his opinion that the Acting Sub-Collector Mr. Hathaway is not sufficiently alive to the importance of granting liberal relief to the ryots in his division, and that the remissions given by him last Fusly in the Virdachellum Talook were insufficient. The remissions allowed last Fusly by Mr. Hathaway were certainly lower than those granted in the principal division, but when they came under the Board's notice, in consequence of Mr. Reade having ordered further reductions long after the settlement, and, indeed, after the close of the Fusly, the Board saw no reason to modify them, as they appeared to have been granted after careful personal enquiries. Mr. Reade seems to attach undue importance to uniformity, and to be disposed to withhold discretionary power from his subordinates. It is his province, as Collector, to regulate the procedure of his Sub-Collector, but reasonable latitude must be allowed to that Officer in the application of his general instructions, and their acts, in the exercise of this necessary and proper discretion, must be judged on their merits.

8. The Board request Mr. Reade to make the most careful enquiries regarding the stock of grain in his district. His remarks on the subject are somewhat contradictory. He writes in paragraph 10 of large exports last year, but as that year was very adverse, the grain exported must have been the crop of the previous year. The stock in the district must, therefore, consist mainly of the deficient surplus yield of last year and the current year. This is somewhat antagonistic to the supposition of any great abundance of stock, and though there is happily no reason to anticipate insufficiency for the wants of the people, the subject is of great importance, and should engage Mr. Reade's constant attention.

9. As regards the former part of paragraph 11 of Mr. Reade's letter, the Board are of opinion that the small sum of 1,000 Rupees, sought by Mr. Hathaway, should at once be placed at his disposal, for use if needed. This will obviate the delay, which will be entailed by seeking sanction when the time for action has arrived.

10. The Board would beg the attention of Government to paragraph 8, relat-

11. Mr. Reade should keep the Board fully acquainted with the condition of the District, and especially with the results of the personal examinations of himself and his Divisional Officers.

No. 356. ORDER THEREON, 13th March 1869, No. 687.

Miscellaneous.

1. The orders of the Board of Revenue are approved. The Government, however, are unable to comply with the Board's recommendation that two additional Assistants should be posted to the South Arcot District; but for the next three months, Mr. Reade need not invariably leave a Covenanted Assistant at Head-quarters. Mr. Reade has already his full complement of Officers of this grade, and should find no difficulty in thoroughly investigating the condition of all parts of his District.

2. The advance of Rs. 1,000, for which Mr. Hathaway has applied, for the purpose of granting assistance to the villagers in sinking wells, should the adoption of this course become necessary, should at once be granted from the District Local Fund.

3. The Collector's remarks, in paragraph 8 of his letter, will be disposed of in the Public Works Department.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Public Works Department.
,, the Accountant General.

Exd. G. A. Turton.

arrangements by the villagers

Govt. of 1869 Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE,

&c, &c, &c

Dated March, 13th.

Read.

G. O., 13th March 1869, No. 6[illegible].

MARCH.

Nos. 355-356.

Salem to South Arcot District.—Orders of the Board of Revenue, with reference to the grant of remission, &c., approved.

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the adoption of this
course become necessary,
should at once be
granted from the
District Local Fund.

The Collector minds
to hear and of his
letter will be disposed
of in the P. W. D.

Approved

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