M.R.O. 1—30,000—16-10-39.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 990 Press Mrs.

268-69
Dated 12-4-1869 N

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Jud

No. 248. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 17th March 1869, No. 1,858 A :—

Read the following letter from the Officiating Collector of Madura, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 9th March 1869, No. 81 :

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Board's Proceedings of the 1st instant. I sent them to the Sub-Collector, for his information, on the same day that they reached me, and Mr. Bliss has now furnished me with a further report, which I have the honor to forward. In it he expresses his regret that the language used in his letter should have conveyed to the Board an impression that the poorer people in the sub-division were generally in a state of destitution, and that immediate and extensive relief was emergently called for.

2. The fact that Mr. Bliss himself did not consider that any exceptional measures were necessary, is apparent from paragraph 4 of his letter, No. 11, dated 18th January 1869, in which he asks to be permitted to give a discretionary remission, not to exceed twenty or fifteen per cent. in the Pulney and Dindigul Talooks, and a special remission of seventy-five per cent. in the case of nine villages in which the crops had almost entirely failed.

3. I forward Mr. Bliss' letter* without a moment's delay, as I feel that it will relieve the Board from what, I am glad to say, are to some extent unnecessary apprehensions, and because I am most anxious that some of the money, which the Board propose to expend in relieving the poor, should be devoted to the execution of various works of general usefulness. This course has the two-fold advantages of permanently benefitting the country, and at the same time affording subsistence and relief to the poorest of the people.

* Dated 6th March 1869, No. 60.

4. I find on inquiry that, the cultivators of dry holdings in the sub-division do not, on an average, hold puttahs for more than 10 Rupees, so that the liberal concession of fifty per cent. ordered by the Board, would only amount to a grant of about Rupees 5 each to the generality of the poorer landholders.

5. I need scarcely say that such a concession, though it would entail a considerable sacrifice of Revenue, would be of very little permanent benefit in cases of real distress and destitution. I myself am of opinion that, as a rule, the extent of a Ryot's holding may be taken as a measure of his means, and if this assumption be correct, the general system of remissions is subject to the defect of affording assistance in an inverse ratio to the necessities and requirements of those for whose relief it is intended.

6. The expenditure of money in the execution of useful works is not open to this objection ; for the money so spent has a general tendency to distribute itself amongst the needy, in a direct proportion to the extent of their necessities.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From the Acting Sub-Collector, to the Acting Collector of Madura, dated Dindigul, 6th March 1869, No. 60.

I HAVE the honor to request permission to offer the following remarks on Proceedings of the Board, No.—, dated 1st instant.

2. I much fear that, in my anxiety to show that I was not causelessly nor without real necessity recommending the sacrifice, this year, of a considerable portion of the Revenue of my division, I have unintentionally conveyed to the Board the idea that *serious* distress may be apprehended as a result of the very general failure of crops which has undoubtedly taken place. If so, I must express my regret that my carelessness in choosing my words should have led to a misapprehension on the part of the Board, and have caused, perhaps, unnecessary anixiety both to them and to Government.

3. In my opinion, and that of the most intelligent natives I have lately been able to consult in the course of my tours, there is no cause for any apprehension of a *famine or anything approaching to it*. There is no doubt that the smaller Ryots will be "hard up," and may experience some difficulty in maintaining themselves and their families until the next crops come in; but for the present, no pressure of *want of food* is felt, nor will it be for several months, if at all. And, with the class I am speaking of, if want should eventually be felt, it will be because nothing will induce them to avail themselves of the frequent opportunities they have of earning a comfortable livelihood by labor on the various works which are now being carried out by the Department Public Works, and by myself. For the wealthier Ryots no anxiety need be felt. They will manage well enough, as they will not be pressed for the realisation of the whole of the revenue demand, and most of them have got enough to live on from their well cultivation alone. Nor will the laboring class suffer, for, as I will show further on, work, at remunerative rates will, if needed, be available for all.

4. It was on considerations of this nature that I recommended the grant of remissions at the rates of fifteen and twenty per cent. on the dry holdings (and in an exceptional case, seventy-five per cent.), which the Board now consider insufficient. I am of course only too glad to have it in my power to grant the far more liberal remissions proposed by the Board, as it is far from my wish to press hardly on a poor people, but I think I should be wrong if I did not place on record my opinion, that a total remission of the dry waste added to a remission on dry cultivation at the rates of fifty and seventy-five per cent, as now ordered, will be more than the people really need, even in the most exceptional cases. I presume, however, that the remark of the Board that, "in granting these remissions Mr. Bliss will of course be guided by the information acquired at the Jummahbundy as to particular holdings and localities," is intended to imply that the rates of fifty and seventy-five per cent. remission on dry cultivation, are to be considered as *maxima*, and that I am entrusted with discretion to give less remissions, when it appears to me that less will be sufficient. I have, therefore, ordered the Tahsildars to enter in the puttahs, which are now under preparation, all dry waste as remitted at once; and unless I receive further orders to the contrary, will use my judgment at the time of Jummahbundy as to the per-centage to be remitted in each village on the dry cultivation.

5. With regard to the necessity of providing work for the people, I am of opinion that, at present no exceptional measures are required, since the following works are now in progress, and afford employment to large numbers of those who need work in different localities :—

Under Department Public Works...	1.	Road from Dindigul to	Ammanaickanûr.
	2.	Ditto	to Pulney.
	3.	Ditto	to Nattam.
Under Revenue Department... ...	4.	Ditto	to Caroor.

Besides these the usual repairs are being carried on to roads and tanks through the sub-division generally. For the future, arrangements have been made, or are in progress, by which, on an emergency, an immense deal of work could be put in hand at once. The works are :—

1.—The four roads above-mentioned, which cannot be finished for months.

2.—The road from Dindigul to Batlagunda—Estimate prepared and submitted some time ago, and could be commenced to-morrow if funds were available.

3.—Road from Pulney to Coimbatore.—This road is in great need of repair. There is an old estimate now under revision, but which could be worked on at once without much chance of serious error, as the revision will take time, owing to Mr. O'Ratigan's removal from the district.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
12th April 1869.

4.—The large Vaiyapuri Colum at Pulney.—An estimate has been prepared for the repair of this tank and channel, and is, I believe, nearly ready for submission to the Superintending Engineer.

5.—Road from Pulney towards Dharapûram. An estimate was some time ago prepared by the Local Fund Overseer for the repair, or rather re-construction of this road, but I am not satisfied with it, as the total is needlessly high. But so soon as Mr O'Ratigan's successor arrives and has taken charge from him, I will get it revised and made out on the same scale as that for the road from Dindigul to Caroor.

6. Besides the above, there is a large * grant for irrigation repairs in the Range, in the Department Public Works Budget for 1869-70, and I know that Mr. O'Ratigan has been hard at work lately in preparing estimates for its expenditure.

*Rupees 30,0 0.

7. The above works are fairly distributed over the division, and would do well for Relief-works, if such should be required.

8. I have called on Mr. Burby, Tahsildar of Pulney, to explain why he did not bring to my notice the state of his talook, and particularly of the western villages thereof. His explanation will be forwarded when received.

9. I have issued orders to suspend collections throughout the sub-division until the demand shall have been fixed at the Jummahbundy.

With this letter, the Acting Collector of Madura forwards a communication from his Acting Sub-Collector, Mr. Bliss, regarding the condition of the Ryots in the sub-division, and proposes that "some of the money which the Board propose to expend in relieving the poor should be devoted to the execution of various works of general usefulness.

2. Both Mr. Bliss, and Mr. Arbuthnott are in error in supposing that the Board apprehended a "famine or anything approaching to it." The favorable character of the seasons in the rest of the district, and the falling price of grain, precluded any fear of want of food. It seemed not unlikely, however, that it might be necessary to provide employment for the poorer classes, in order that, by the wages of their labor, they might acquire the means of purchasing food; and in paragraph 11 of their Proceedings, the Board indicated generally the precautionary measures which should be taken to meet the contingency, if it should arise.

3. Mr. Bliss is correct in the inference drawn from the latter part of paragraph 10 of the Board's Proceedings. The Board intended that he should use his discretion in granting remission for loss of crop on cultivated land in individual cases, and not grant the rates specified universally. In many cases a Ryot holds nunjah as well as punjah land; in others he may have had a good crop last year on his punjah, while in others again he may have suffered heavily in the two preceding years as well as the current one. The information which Mr. Bliss will obtain during the Jummahbundy, and his own personal inspections, will enable him to apportion the relief to the actual requirements of each case; but the Board must emphatically repeat, that the Settlement must be conducted in a liberal spirit. Three successive seasons of adversity, two of these almost famine years, must have told most seriously on the resources of the Ryots, and the fact that the cultivators of dry land in the sub-division do not on an average hold puttahs for more than 10 Rupees, shows conclusively that they cannot have the capital wherewith to meet the drain of such successively calamitous seasons.

4. Mr. Arbuthnott's proposals to withhold a portion of the remissions and expend the money on public improvements must be based on a misconception of the nature of a remission of revenue, and the reasons for which it is granted. It is not relief for the poor in the sense of eleemosynary aid or employment. The Government assessment is a commutation of a share in the produce, and although the commutation is sufficiently liberal to enable the Ryot to meet the ordinary contingencies of the seasons, and even an occasional bad year, still when year after year the Ryot does not get half a crop, justice and self-interest require that the State should abate its demand, and practically share the loss with the landholder. Some similar misconception must have been entertained also by Mr. Bliss, or he would never have proposed that in the third bad year, when a half crop was all that the land yielded, the Ryots should pay the full assessment of this land (just as if it had yielded an average crop), and also Rupees 42,000 more for land that was absolutely unproductive.

5. Taking this view of the question, the Board cannot acquiesce in the justice of Mr. Arbuthnott's proposal. Whatever remissions are justly due on account of loss of produce, should be given without reservation, and such works as the Collector and Sub-Collector may consider desirable, either as permanently improving the district, or as "affording subsistence and relief to the poorest of the people," should be proposed on their own merits. Mr. Bliss's letter, however, shows that a large number of works are in progress at present.

No. 249. ORDER THEREON, 12th April 1869, No. 990.

Miscellaneous.

RECORDED, with reference to G. O., dated 3rd April 1869, No. 896.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.

Exd. E. C. Shunker.

Govt. of [1869] Madras.

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE.

Dated April, 12th.

Recd. Read.

G. O., 12th April 1869, No. 990.

APRIL.

Nos. 248-249.

Remission of Assessment in Madura Sub-division.—Proceedings Board of Revenue declining the Collector's proposal to withhold a portion of it for expenditure on public improvements, recorded.

Rev. 16 March 1869 G.O. 294-395
- 5th April - 61-62.

1st Revenue 1869. Part

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

12-1077.

PROCEEDINGS 17TH MARCH 1869, No. 1,858A.

Encl.

Cons 5 April 1869
Recd 1

Finally Cons 3/72

MARCH.

No. 1,858A.

Remissions of Assessment—authorized to be granted by Board in Sub-division of Madura District,—Collector's proposals to withhold a portion of, and expend money on public improvements, declined.

2 Copies 12 April
With order

1