

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Revenue DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	934	Press Mis.
292-293.		
Dated	23.6.1870-19.	

Not to be folded or roughly handled

175

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
23rd June 1870.

No. 292.- 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, 13th April 1870, No. 2,050 :—

WITH reference to the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, No. 1,989,* of the 25th March last, I have the honour to inform you that I consider it most important that Government should take the subject of *hill-produce* into consideration.

* Herewith forwarded.

2. *Hill-produce* besides honey, wax, roots, fruits, gall-nuts, ginger, turmeric, cardamoms, dye-powder, and such like products, which, though they might under proper management be made to yield a large profit to Government, might yet be collected without injury to the forest, also includes resins, kino, wood-oils, bark for tanning or distillation, and certain fibres, the collection of which in many cases necessitates the destruction of the trees which yield the products.

3. By the orders of the Board now alluded to, it would appear that our department can interfere in no way in the collection of any of these articles by the hill-men or even by ryots, and that our department cannot collect or utilize any of these articles even where they are the yield of dense uninhabited tracts and are collected by no one. If the collection is in no way under our control, conservancy must suffer to a very great extent; all our officers are aware of this, and the subject is continually brought to my notice. Ryots being allowed to collect is a new feature; hitherto the collection may be said to have been confined to the hill-men, who are in almost all cases in the pay of merchants in the low country. If this order of the Board becomes generally known, there are many rich ryots, I believe, who would be glad to enter upon a large trade in all these articles, cardamoms and bark particularly, the result of which it is impossible to foresee. The fact of our department not being allowed to collect in the large tracts of reserved forest, through the agency of the hill-men, can only result in the greater portion of these products rotting in the forests or being burnt, which can hardly be the intention of Government. Our establishments are too small to do much departmentally in this way, and we can only attempt it on the contract system or through the agency of the hill-men.

4. As Colonel Morgan points out that there are not five hill-men to the square mile in Collegal, and still less in Bhowani and Suttiamungalum, and there are dense tracts, such as the South Canara ghauts and portions of the Tinnevely ghauts, etc., where there are no hill-men or inhabitants at all, it is very clear that, if the collection is to be left entirely to the hill-men, only a small portion of the produce can ever be collected, the large bulk must be burnt or rot in the forest.

5. The Board appear to think that there is no question of the long enjoyment of the right to collect; if I am not mistaken, it was a Government monopoly previous to 1854, and a regular tax was paid even by the hill-men.

6. I would be far from wishing Government to impose any tax upon the collection by hill-men, but I think by judicious management the condition of these men might be greatly ameliorated, and the control of all hill-produce brought entirely under the Forest Department, which there can be little doubt it ought to be. All our officers have more or less made complaints that the hill-tribes are cheated

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*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
23rd June 1870.*

to a very great extent by the Chetties in the plains; and it will be seen by a letter from the Collector of Coimbatore, recorded in the Proceedings of the Board already alluded to, that he makes the same complaint. If the hill-men collected systematically under the Forest Department, they would be regularly paid and at remunerative rates. I would however go further than this; I would get them, as far as possible, into the regular employ of the department; provide them with cumblics, and grant them small tracts of land for cultivation within the limits of the forests.

7. The subject is one that has remained in an undecided state for a very long time, and our officers are never certain how to act, I would strongly urge upon Government the necessity of sanctioning such arrangements as will enable our officers in time to place it on a satisfactory footing. This can only be done with the cordial assistance of Collectors, but with that I see little or no difficulty. No rules could well be laid down which would be applicable throughout the Presidency, as circumstances are very different in almost every district; I would therefore suggest that the arrangements in each district should be made by the Collector in consultation with the Forest Officer of the range, the former being responsible that the interests of the hill-men are cared for, and the latter that the forests are not needlessly injured or encroached upon, and that the hill-produce is utilized as far as possible. In some districts the Chetties will probably make out that the hill-men are greatly in their debt; this I know will be the case in the Annamallays, and cases of this nature will be best handled by the Collector, and may take some time to arrange satisfactorily whether the supposed debts are worked out under some supervision which will be necessary to secure fair treatment for the hill-men or whether they are paid off by our department. When once matters have been brought into fair training I have no hesitation in saying that the advantage to conservancy will be very great, and that the condition of the hill-men will be improved. In time I believe that the sale of these products under judicious management would fully cover the cost of our establishments in many ranges. The Cochin and Travancore Governments and Mysore make exceedingly large profits out of cardamons, but although we have valuable tracts of this article of commerce in the Tinnevely Range, in the Annamallays and in South Canara, we make nothing by them. Certain portions of these tracts in Tinnevely and the Annamallays are poached upon by the Travancore and Cochin Governments, or rather by hill-men in their employ, and in other portions the hill-men collect for outside merchants, and again in other portions there is no collection and the produce is not utilized.

No. 293.

ORDER THEREON, 23rd June 1870, No. 934.

Forests, No. 16.

THE consideration of the foregoing paper will be deferred pending the disposal of the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 25th March 1870, No. 1,989, relating to the proposed introduction of the new Forests Act.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department
23rd June 1870.*

2. In the meantime the Board of Revenue will be requested to submit any observations which they desire to make on Major Beddome's proposals.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) R. S. ELLIS,

Chief Secretary.

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

Ed. E. C. Shunker

2875

No. 1,989.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 25th March 1870.

Read the following letters:—

From Major R. H. BEDDOME, Officiating Conservator of Forests, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Ootacamund, 2nd December 1869, No. 1,801.

In reply to the Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, No. 7,934, of the 26th of October 1869, I have the honour to forward the accompanying letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan, the Forest Officer in charge of the Suttiamungalum Range, it appears that the contracts for the collection of Hill produce given by that officer refer to reserved forests under his management.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. MORGAN, Deputy Conservator, to the Officiating Conservator of Forests, Mangalore, dated Ootacamund, 24th November 1869, No. 597.

In reply to your letter, No. 1,793, dated 11th November 1869, I have the honour to report that in the Board's Proceedings, No. 3,632, dated 16th May 1868, paragraph 4, it was laid down that forest products from jungles not reserved were free, but from the context of the paragraph, it appeared to me, that the Board recognized the right of the Forest Department to sell the products of those forests in charge of the department. I consequently gave contracts to certain parties to collect forest products.

2. With the exception of Sholigars on the Ballyrungs, many of whom are in our employ, there are no Hill tribes in Collegal, Bhowany, and Suttiamungalum, and formerly the real collectors of forest produce were villagers in the vicinity of forests, who, were employed by merchants, and these alone reaped the benefit from our forests.

From H. E. SULLIVAN, Esq., Acting Collector of Coimbatore, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Maloopolliem, 29th January 1870, No. 23:—

I HAVE the honour to request the attention of the Board to my letter, dated 5th October last, No. 190, referred in their Proceedings, under date 26th idem, to the Officiating Conservator of Forests for his remarks. I am now engaged on the settlement of the Coimbatore Talook, and yesterday a number of the Mulcers and other hill tribes appeared before me, with a complaint of the Forest Contractor's interference with their ancient privilege of collecting jungle produce. I informed them that the matter had been referred to, and was under the consideration of the Board of Revenue, and that in the meantime, they were at liberty to collect and sell gall-nuts, and other hill produce as heretofore. I should be glad of early and definite instructions on the subject, and avail myself of the opportunity to point out that if the Forest Department is permitted to monopolize these jungle products, the half savage tribes who live in the hill ranges will be deprived of almost their sole means of subsistence. They are cheated enough, as it is, by the Chetties who purchase their honey, wax, nuts, etc., but if handed over to the mercies of a single Contractor, backed by Government authority, I anticipate their being driven to commit robberies and other offences to eke out a livelihood.

2. I should mention that this talook adjoins Suttiamungalum, referred to in my letter quoted above.

From Major R. H. BEDDOME, Officiating Conservator of Forests, to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Ootacamund, 12th March 1870, No. 2,002:—

I HAVE the honour to forward a memorandum on the subject of hill produce from Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan, for the information of the Board.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
TO THE BOARD OF REVENUE

REVENUE.

THE OFFICIATING CONSERVATOR

OF FORESTS.

to
cc,
do,
do

Dated June, 23rd.

Recd.

Encl.

G. O., 23rd June 1870, No. 931.

JUNE.

Nos. 592-593.

Collection of hill-produce in Forests—
Disposal of the letter from the Conservator of
Forests on this subject deferred. Heard of Revenue
to submit observations on Major Beddome's pro-
posals.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. MORGAN, Deputy Conservator, to the Officiating Conservator of Forests, dated Ootacamund, 11th March 1870, No. 781.

With reference to your letter, No. 1,952, dated 25th February 1870, I have the honour to annex a Memorandum on the subject of the forest produce.

Memorandum.

In the Forest Report for 1867-68, Dr. Cleghorn in paragraph 17 of his Report, recommended that gall-nuts and resins, etc., should be made over to Forest Officers. Government in their order on the Forest Report, 5th October 1867, No. 2,340, paragraph 20, remarked—The question of forest produce is a delicate one.

Since this, nothing has been done to settle the matter.

In Collegal, there are not five Sholigars to the square mile, in Bowany and Suttiamungalum, still less, the greater part of whom are in our employ, consequently, they are quite unable to collect gall-nuts, etc., all they can manage is to collect a little honey and wax. If the gall-nuts are not collected by merchants, they are burnt in the annual fires; this I know from personal observation to be the case.

It appears to me that to protect the interests of the hill tribes and those of Government, the Forest Officers might give contracts for gall-nuts, tamarind and seaco, thus leaving roots, honey and wax to the Hill tribes. A settlement of this question is important, because under the present system, Government loses the produce, and the only gainers are outside merchants who reap all the profit, while we conserve the trees for them.

In the first of these letters, the Conservator replies to a reference from the Board, on the subject of renting the Hill products of the Collegal, Bhowany and Suttiamungalum Talooks, and explains that the measure has been adopted in consequence of the forest, and these talooks being reserved Forests, and there being no jungle tribes, except the Sholigars in the Ballyrungams. Major Morgan states that formerly the real Collectors of Forest produce, were the villagers in the vicinity of the forests, who were employed by merchants, and that these alone reaped the benefit from the forests.

2. In his second letter, Major Morgan states, that the Hill tribes in Collegal and Bhowany are so few in number, and so much employed in the Forest Department, that they cannot collect the gall-nuts or in fact anything but roots, honey and wax, and he accordingly suggests that these three articles should be left to them and contracts be given out for the other products by the Forest Department.

3. The Collector on the other hand strongly objects to these contracts, and is of opinion that if the contractors are allowed to monopolise these jungle products, the tribes will be deprived of almost their sole means of subsistence. From his second letter it would appear that the system has been extended to the Coimbatore Talook, in which the jungle tribes are by no means few in number.

4. Jungle farms were ordered to be abandoned in seven districts, of which Coimbatore is one, in 1854, as being a source of oppression, and this policy is referred to in Government Order, 7th July 1864, No. 1,181, and has never since been abandoned.

5. In their Proceedings of 5th June 1865, No. 2,977, the subject was discussed on a complaint of the Collector of Coimbatore, that Major Morgan had again re-imposed these Hill rents, and the Conservator was referred to the recent orders of Government, and requested to cancel his orders.

6. The only question for consideration is, as to how far these orders are affected by the fact of certain Forests being now considered as reserved.

7. In their Proceedings of the 1st February 1869, No. 653, the Board with reference to the Salem jungles, deprecated the renewal of the renting system, but stated that they saw no objection to the Forest Department collecting and selling spontaneous products in their reserve, through the agency of the Hill tribes at liberal rates of remuneration.

8. This proposal, however, the Government refused to sanction, observing that there was no more reason to suppose that their semi-savage tribes would be better treated by the agents of the Forest Department, than they were by the merchants and agents.

9. The Board consider that this ruling of Government must be taken as decisive, and that all interference with the collection of jungle products by the Hill tribes and ryots, must be at once put a stop to. There is no question as to the long enjoyment of the right to collect, and there are no forests in the district, which can be considered as coming within the definition of reserves from which Government have the power to exclude trespassers. Even under the proposed Forests Act it is only after compensating existing rights, that the power can be acquired. As pointed out by the Collector, there is no power of dealing with complaints made by the contractors, and the contracts should at once cease.

(True Copies and Extract.)

(Signed)

J. GROSE,

for Acting Secretary.

To the Conservator of Forests, with copy of letters from

Collector of Coimbatore.

Copy to the Collector of Coimbatore.

Ed. G. A. Turton.

No. 934.

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Under date the 23rd June 1870.

Read the following. Letter from the

Offy. Conservator of Forests.

Reporting upon the collection
of Hill produce in forests

N.E. 13 April 1870 No 2050.

The consideration of
the foregoing paper will be
deferred pending the dis-
posal of the Proceedings of
the Board of Revenue dated
25 March 1870, No 1989, relating
to the proposed introduction
of the new Forest Act.

2. In the meantime

the Board of Revenue will

be

J. D. S.

1870.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 25TH MARCH 1870, No. 1,989.

Received

Encl

MARCH.
No. 1,989.

Jungle products.—Interference with collection
of hill tribes and ryots in Coimbatore District,
directed to be put a stop to at once.

be requested to submit
any observations which they
desire to make on Major
Heddon's proposals.

1700

1700
1700

1700
1700

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Charles F. McDougall
Ed. H. Hall