G.O. no: 1702
dt: 29.9.1871

No. 391. Read the following letter from the Conservator of Forests, to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Pulney Hills, 20th September 1871, No. 488:—

HAVING just made a tour in the Tinnevelly range I wish to report specially on several points.

2. The ghaut-forests are becoming annually of more value and the revenue is steadily increasing; it is most important therefore that the question of the boundaries between Government forests and those of Travancore and the boundaries of the different Zemindary tracts should be settled as soon as possible. As Mr. Puckle, the present Collector, is so well informed on the question, and takes a special interest in this matter, it will be a pity if it is not settled whilst he is in the district: year by year the forests will become of more importance, and the question of boundaries will become more complicated.

3. With the exception of a small hamlet of about 30 hill-men in the forests above Paupanassum, there are no inhabitants whatever in any of these ghaut-tracts; they are quite untrodden except by wild beasts, and there are no rights except on the lower slopes, and, excepting the regular passes, there are no foot-paths or tracks through from the eastern to the western side, so that these forests can be treated absolutely as State forests and strict reserves.

4. Of the great importance of these mountain-forests, and their proper conservancy in connection with the water-supply of the Tinnevelly District, there can be no two opinions; but in addition to this I feel certain they will, in future years, become a mine of wealth to the State in their yield of timber, etc. The different Zemindary tracts will, however, always be an obstacle to conservancy, and it will be worthwhile for Government to buy them up, or obtain perpetual leases at sums beyond their present value. When the boundaries have been settled and when Government have decided what claims are to be acknowledged, there will not, I think, be much difficulty, though high rates will be always asked in the first instance. The Collector informs me that he has had an offer of a lease of the Sivagherry forests for Rs. 4,000 annually. This is a large sum, and I think considerably more than the present annual yield of the forests would authorize; but it would be impossible to make an approximate valuation of the forest attached to the Zemindary, until the boundaries between Travancore on the west and Government forests on the south are definitely settled. The Collector has also been offered an annual lease of the small tract in the south, known as the Kutlaymallay, for Rs. 4,000. I believe the proprietors are probably making something like this sum at present; but they are clearing it out indiscriminately, besides poaching on Government forests, and it will be quite exhausted in two or three years. If we are to

have an Act and a proper system of conservancy, we could, of course, stop depredations within our boundary, and I would not recommend the leasing of this small tract, except at an approxim[ate] to its real value (probably not 500 Rs. a-year); but if we are to remain as [pro]tected as we are at present, this tract will always be a thorn in our side, and [be] the cause of incessant smuggling, etc. The large tract of Singampatty adjoin[ing] and unless we get the control of this, it would scarcely be worthwhile to treat [for] the Kutlaymallay. It is very doubtful if the Singampatty Zemindary has any [cl]aim to the large tract in question, and the matter is before Government; but if that right is acknowledged the Zemindar is a minor, and will be so for six years, and could not therefore be treated with at present. I again discussed the question of the Zemindar's rights with the Collector, and he is, I believe, sending in a report to Government on the question. Leases on the stump-fee principle, or on payment of certain sums per cubic foot for the different timbers, would be the fairest arrangement that could be made; neither side would be losers by this arrangement. The Forest Act, however, would enable Government to work these forests on behalf of the owners, and thereby ensure their not being worked beyond their annual yield—a question of very great importance to the district.

5. I visited the dense tract of forest west of Calcad, and encamped for a day and-a-half in the much-talked-of Mukulivayal. Between the highest ridges, situate someway up into the forests and hills west of Calcad, and the high hills immediately over the most northern of the Asambu Coffee estates on the Travancore side is situate a large tract of about 16 to 18 square-miles of comparatively very level country covered with dense forest. It is watered by numerous small streams from the mountains, and is very swampy in parts. The elevation is about 4,500 feet, and the forest is much stunted and completely overgrown with the Irul (*Bheesa Travancorica*), a new species of berry-bearing reed bamboo. It is very impenetrable, and would be quite so if it were not for the numerous tracks of elephants and bison; but as it is, creeping and crawling have to take the place of upright locomotion. The forest is unlike anything to the north, and quite resembles that found in the more elevated parts of the central provinces of Ceylon, and the flora is peculiarly like that of Ceylon. At the extreme west of this forest and just below the Travancore ridges lies the Mutikulivayal, a small narrow tract of grass-land scarcely 200 acres in extent. It is divided into two strips by some grass-hillocks and a little forest-land, the larger strip being about 130 acres in extent, and the smaller one considerably less than 100. A river runs down the former from south to north and the whole of the tract is swampy and covered with deep holes and false boggy ground. It was impossible to get round it even by the edge of the jungle without going deep into mud at the small tributary streams, and I could not find a dry level spot for pitching my small tent, except by cutting out the hill side. The silent, sluggish river meanders away for miles into the impenetrable swampy forest, and it would be no pleasant task to follow it far enough to ascertain if it eventually flowed eastward or westward, and it could only be attempted in the dry weather. From observations made from the mountain ridges, it seems quite doubtful which is the case. The Trigonometrical Maps lay down the whole of this tract as British territory, but if the water-shed is

to the westward, it would, I suppose, be c[on]ed by Travancore. How far the maps in question are any authority I do not k[now]; but the Conservator of Forests in Travancore told me that his Governmen[t] re looking to them as evidence in a forest dispute with Cochin in the north. I [nev]er saw any spot so trodden down by elephants and bison as was this little vayal, elephants had been recently rubbing against almost all the trees on the outs[ide] the forest near my encampment and Ibex swarmed on the rocky hill ridges A very stinging elephant-fly was in great abundance, and caused us much anno[y]ce.

6. From the above it will be seen at the tracts in question are not likely to prove of much value, whether fo[r] orest or plantation purposes, or as a sanitarium. I was luckily up on one of th[e] first five days after long continuous bad weather; but the vayal must be a frightf[ul] ly blown and wretchedly wet locality during almost all the south-west monsoon. [The] ne vayal cannot be approached from the Tinnevelly side; the forest is too dense nd impenetrable on the eastern side, and there is no track whatever. Travelling ight and with half-a-dozen bill-hooks, it would, I think, be possible to cut one's wa[y] rough in two or, perhaps, three days from the native Coffee estates above Calca[d] d if Government wish Mr. Hayne could undertake this in February or March, he could also determine the watershed.

7. My trip yielded some very interes[ting] novelties in the way of trees and plants; but they will shortly be figured in t[he] lora Sylvatica" or in the "Icones."

8. The question of the Travancore C[on]ent working forests to the eastward into British territory, and our workin[g] sts to the westward into Travancore is an important one, and should rece[ive] he attention of Government. In Travancore some timbers are a Government opoly, and if we worked them into that country we should be compelled to sell o the Government; and on all other timbers I believe an import-duty would be c[ha]rged, but we have no restrictions at present. We have forests that can only be worked to the westward, and the Travancore Government have again forests at can only be worked to the eastward. If they have restrictions and an impor[t] luty, and we have none, we must work in future years at a great disadvantage, and would strongly recommend that any tract that can only be worked by one Gov[ern]ment into the territory of the other should be leased to the Government into se territory it is worked, either on the stump-fee principle or on a perpetual leas[e]. The Travancore Sircar are already working forests on the eastern slopes above encota, where they possess a considerable tract, and they intend commencing op[e]rations elsewhere on our side of the chain. The question may not be of great imp[or]tance just at present, but at a future time when conservancy and working are sy[ste]matic, as they must become in the face of railways. Great complications may a[ri]se, and the two departments are sure to clash, and there will be endless disputes about smuggling, etc. Travancore, besides, would not be likely to have any consideration for the water-supply to the eastward, and would only work for a profit, regardless of conservancy and the denudation of tracts. Great loss might consequently acc[ru]e to the cultivation in the plains of Tinnevelly, and our forest-markets could be under-sold, and conservancy thereby much impeded. Questions of this nature sh[ow] how important a Forest Act is, and even the Revenue Board will have to acknowledge it some day.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
29th September 1871.

No. 392. ORDER THEREON, 2 September 1871, No. 1,702.

Forests, No. 12.

REFERRED to the Collector of Tinnevelly for any remarks he may wish to offer, which will be submitted through the Board of Revenue.

(Extract.)

(Signed) W. HUDLESTON,
Secretary to Government.

Forests.
Revenue 1871 Dept
Fr. the Com^r of Forests.
To the Secy to Govt. Rev. Dep.

No. 3099

dated 20 Septr. 71.
rec^d. 26^c —

No. 480

Subjects

Reply on various matters in connection with the Timewally forests.

No. 1702 - 29 September 1871

Will order

No. 1702
Approved to the Coll^r of Timewally for any Enumerate may wish to Dr. Dr. will be submitted
Pres. the Bd. of Rev. [illegible]
29 Sept 71

1 To the Collr of Timewally Despatch
14 - The Board of Rev. S
15 - The Conservator of Forests S

c 28 Sept 71 R. 29 Sept