

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
10th June 1872.*

No. 109. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 26th January 1872, No. 188 :—

Read the following letter from the Acting Collector of Madura, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Peracolum, 8th January 1872, No. 2.

I HAVE the honour to submit, for the favourable consideration and orders of the Board, copy of a letter from the Acting Sub-Collector, dated 27th December 1871, No. 455, requesting permission to grant, at his discretion, remissions not exceeding 50 per cent. of the punjah assessment in those villages of the Palni and Dindigul Taluqs, in which relief seems necessary in consequence of bad seasons in this and the preceding years. As some villages have suffered more than others, and the result of the season is not yet quite certain, it will be necessary to leave the Sub-Collector to decide the percentage of remission to be granted in each locality.

2. Speaking of the sub-division as a whole, without special reference to those localities in which the rainfall has been most deficient, it appears that the harvest of cholam and sâmie is not likely to exceed half of what would be realized in a good year; but there are no complaints as yet of the failure of the cumbu crop, and the gram and pulse crops seem likely to do well.

3. It seems evident that these continually recurring applications for remission in the taluqs of Dindigul and Palni are caused, in a great measure, by the extent of land left waste in all years in consequence of the poorness of the soil. In good years this waste is diminished in extent, and the ryots can afford to pay for it; but in bad years they cannot. As a remedy for this Mr. Bliss proposes a percentage remission on the dry holdings, to continue in force until the district is resettled. I cannot advocate the deduction of a fixed percentage from all punjah assessments alike; and, soils and rates varying much, the fixing of the proper percentage to be deducted in each case would involve much the same labour and investigation as a regular revision of the assessment. I believe that the whole assessment of the Madura District requires revision, and it will, I hope, be the next district to be surveyed and assessed.

ENCLOSURE No. 1

From H. W. BLISS, Esq., Acting Sub-Collector, to the Acting Collector of Madura, dated Dindigul, 27th December 1871, No. 455.

During the last few months I have several times forwarded for your perusal reports on the state of the season from the Tahsildars of the sub-division, from which you will have understood that the outturn of this year's harvest of the dry cultivation of the northern portions of the Dindigul and Palni Taluqs is not likely to be good. I have for some time been hoping that the crops, which were injured by the short rainfall of September—October, might be sufficiently revived by the north-east monsoon to give a fair average harvest and obviate the necessity for remissions; but inquiries I have made and the result of personal inspections have convinced me that this has not altogether been the case, and that it will be only fair to the ryots to forego a

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portion of the State-demand on the dry lands. I have, therefore, the honour to submit the following remarks and recommendations:—

2. The rainfall from the beginning of April to the end of November, as registered at my office, has been as follows:—

Months.	Number of Days on which Rain fell.	Inches of Rain.
April	2	1.76
May	10	2.78
June	4	.85
July	11	1.14
August	9	3.75
September	6	1.37
October	11	5.61
November	9	6.21

The rainfall, as registered at the Dindigul Taluk Cutcherry and at Palni, has not been materially different from the above, except at Palni in June, on the 7th of which month there was there a fall of 4½ inches. This heavy fall being, however, followed by a drought, which continued, with the exception of a few showers too slight to be measured, up to the 18th of August, was of course practically useless for dry cultivation, except as moistening the soil and enabling the people to plough their fields.

3. In May, in which month and in June the people expect to be able to get their ploughing well advanced, a fall of .37 inch of rain was registered at my office on the 9th. This was not enough even for ploughing. The next fall worth speaking of was on the 30th, and amounted to 1.53 inches. Had this been followed by the copious showers we usually get in June, there would have been nothing to complain of as regards the ryots' opportunities for the preparation of their fields for sowing; but, as the rainfall in June (except in Palni as noted above) was only .85 inch altogether, of which the only good shower (.52 inch) was on the last day of the month, it will be

Date.	Inches.	Date.	Inches.
1	.07	16	.04
8	.04	17	.07
12	.01	18	.04
13	.07	23	.03
14	.21	25	.23
15	.65		

seen that the cultivation season was backward, and promised badly from the very first. The July rainfall is given in the margin. It shows that throughout the month (with the exception perhaps of the 12th) there was not one day on which the fall of rain was sufficient to be of any

use for sowing or for bringing on crops already sown and germinated.

4. In August up to the 18th rain fell on four days in the following quantities, namely, .47, .32, .21, and .11 inches, respectively. On the 18th there was a really good fall (1.80 inches) followed by falls of .01, .26, .03, and .54 inches between then and the close of the month. The prospects of the season were, therefore, at this period not unencouraging.

5. At the beginning of September there was rain on four days, and the fall on each day varied from .03 to .61 inches. From the 8th of that month, however, to the 9th of October inclusive, there was no rain at all beyond three light showers, the fall of rain in which was .10, .15, and .10 inches respectively. These light showers, which occurred at the end of September and the beginning of October, after the drought had already lasted three weeks, were, of course, of no use at all to the crops, which suffered greatly from this entire failure of rain for a whole month at the most critical period for dry cultivation. In many instances they entirely withered, and have had to be resown. This was particularly the case with the cholam which is the staple food of the population.

6. Since the middle of October the rains have been sufficient, though but moderate, and the gram and pulse crops will do fairly well. These latter showers have also brought on the earlier sown crops to such an extent that they present, when casually looked at, a fine healthy appearance

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their stalks being stout and well grown. On closer examination, however, the ears of cholam and samai will be found to be unusually small and badly filled with grain; and in many localities the cholam has suffered severely from blight and the samai from the ravages of insects; and the people say that it has been the weakened state of the crops in September—October, when the ears were forming, that has allowed of both blight and insects doing so much injury. On the whole, I am of opinion that the outturn of the harvest of cholam and samai will not exceed half of what should be realized in a really good year. On the other hand, there are no complaints of the failure of theumbu crop, which is very extensively grown in the sub-division. The gram and pulse crops will do well, as I have said before, if we get another shower or two towards the end of the month; and there will be no serious failure of the garden-crops, although they are somewhat backward in consequence of the scarcity of water in the wells before the latter were replenished by the recent rains.

7. Had last year been a good one for dry cultivation in the localities in which the present failure of crops has been greatest, I should have thought it unnecessary to recommend any relaxation of the general rule, that a single exceptionally bad year is no justification for the remission of the assessment on unirrigated land.

A reference, however, to the Jammabundi reports of the sub-division for Fasli 1279 and 1280 will show you that this year is not such a single instance of partial failure of rain fall and harvest, but that the same complaints have

No. 221, dated 20th August 1870.
„ 303, „ 30th „ 1871.

prevailed in the two preceding years. In Fasli 1280 considerable remissions were given in consequence in some of the northern villages of the Palni Taluk. In Fasli 1279 no special *punjah* remissions were granted; but this was, to some extent, because of the great liberality with which the people had been treated in Fasli 1278. In that year special remissions on dry waste and cultivation together were granted to the large aggregate of Rs. 1,52,440, and the ryots were thereby the better able to meet the Government demand in the next year, even though their crops were again of somewhat less than average productiveness. Under these circumstances, I trust that you will agree with me that it will be good policy to grant such remissions on the dry holdings as will prevent the people feeling seriously the effects of the undoubtedly considerable, though partial, failure of their crops which has taken place.

8. As to the amount of remissions which should be given, I must request your attention to the following table which shows the present state of the dry cultivation in the Dindigul and Palni Taluks:—

	DINDIGUL.		PALNI.	
	Area.	Assessment.	Area.	Assessment.
Holdings at end of Fasli 1280	Acres.	Rs.	Acres.	Rs.
Deduct resigned	207,274	2,42,410	122,272	1,34,220
	14,480	16,527	5,366	5,538
Balance	192,794	2,25,813	116,906	1,28,682
Add taken up about*	7,500	9,000	4,000	4,200
Total present holding	200,294	234,813	120,906	1,32,882
Of which cultivation up to the end of November	154,739	1,81,026	62,208	74,378
Balance, waste	45,555	53,787	58,698	58,504

* The exact figures are not yet available, and it would take some time to ascertain them.

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9. From the above table are obtained the following percentages of the waste (area and assessment) to the total holdings and cultivation respectively :—

Talugs.	PERCENTAGE OF WASTE, AREA AND ASSESSMENT TO			
	Holdings.		Cultivation.	
	Area.	Assessment.	Area.	Assessment.
Dindigul	23	22	29	28
Palni	48	44	94	79

10. Speaking generally this means that in the Dindigul Taluq one-quarter, and in the Palni Taluq half of the dry holdings of the ryots are this year uncultivated.

11. It should, however, be remembered, on the one hand, that as the cultivation of the year is generally very backward, a considerable extent of land may not improbably have been laid down during this month with gram, which would still have a good chance of succeeding, if, as the people seem to expect, there are a few good showers between now and the middle of January; and, on the other, that these figures relate to the whole of the taluqs concerned, in some portions of which the crops are by no means bad, and not solely to the northern villages of the sub-division, in which alone the want of timely rains has had a distinctly adverse effect on the harvest. I can ascertain the particulars of the cultivation, waste, etc., of these northern villages if it is thought necessary; but the taluq establishments are just at present so heavily worked in the preparation of the Quinquennial Census Returns from those of the General Census, that I am unwilling to call upon them for any non-routine information which is not indispensable. In this instance, I think the preceding statements of the rainfall, of the condition of the crops, and of the prospects of the harvest, are sufficient, when considered in conjunction with the tables of cultivation, waste, etc., above given, to justify my requesting you to move the Board to grant me, as they did in Fasil 1278, discretion to make remissions up to 50 per cent. in those villages in which I am satisfied that relief is required, and to such an extent in each case as the further inquiries as to the actual result of the harvest, which I shall be able to make between now and the Jammabundi, may prove to be necessary.

12. Should this discretion be allowed me, I am not of opinion that the full rate of remission I have mentioned will require to be very generally given. In the four villages of the Dindigul Taluq marginally noted, it most

probably will, since the state of their dry cultivation was last year very bad, and is this year again worse than that of the surrounding tract of country; and it may be necessary to treat a few of the Palni villages with the same liberality. Generally speaking, however, as the northern and western Palni villages received large remissions last Fasil, they will not require, and should not receive, the same consideration now, and it will usually, I think, be sufficient if they and the majority of the Dindigul villages are granted remissions up to the extent of the dry waste in their holdings only.

13. Should these proposals meet with approval, the result will be a loss of revenue of about one lakh of Rupees as nearly as I can tell so long before the Jammabundi, and without going into more minute particulars than I think the Taluq establishments have now time to prepare answers to show. This is a heavy remission, and one which I must regret to have to request sanction for; the more especially as this is the third Fasil out of the four I have been in the district, that I have had no choice but to recommend a considerable sacrifice of revenue. I do not, however, think that it is more than is really required under the circumstances of the present

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season, and on consideration of the generally inferior quality of the soils of the sub-division, and the uncertain and usually partial distribution of its rainfall. Were it not, indeed, that grain continues cheap, and is not likely to rise much in price (the harvests of neighbouring districts being, I believe, good), and that the railway, which will be shortly commenced, and which will, I trust, be pushed on, will afford ample work to the poorer classes, I should not feel certain that I ought not to propose a more considerable measure of relief to the ryots than now appears to me to be required.

14. In connection with the remark above made that this is the third year out of the four I have been in the district that special remissions have been required, and in order to show you that, under present rules, constant applications for the remission of more or less of the punjah assessment must be expected, I beg to point out that, while it is a notorious fact that the dry and gravelly red soils which prevail generally throughout the sub-division are far less fertile than the average of the lands of the rest of the district, there is a much less than proportionate difference in the average rate of revenue assessed on them. In the sub-division the average assessment per Acre on the dry land is Rs. 1-2-2, and in the principal division Rs. 1-6-8—a difference which, I believe, is by no means as much as would fairly represent the average difference in the productive power of the lands. Comparing again the sub-division average above given with the average assessment on dry lands in the neighbouring districts of Coimbatore, Tinnevely, and Trichinopoly (Rs. 0-14-7, Rs. 0-12-0, and Rs. 0-14-11 per Acre, respectively), it would appear that there is no doubt of the rates here charged being extremely high, and that it is not a legitimate ground of surprise or complaint if applications for remission of punjah assessment should be more frequent here than elsewhere. In former years, before the issue of the Board's order that, as a general rule, no punjah remissions at all should be given (and in no case without special sanction), it was the district custom to remit all charges for punjah waste, and in this way to redress as far as possible the evils caused by rates of assessment originally too high, and to enable the ryots to leave their fields fallow every third or fourth year, as it is absolutely necessary to do with these inferior soils so long as they remain in the hands of cultivators who have not the means for the heavy manuring they require, if cropped year by year without intermission. Since the issue of the Board's order adverted to, dated 1st November 1865, Standing Order No. 137, almost identically the same results have obtained, but only after a special representation every year of the state of the season, etc., that appeared to render remissions necessary. In each year much the same account of partial and intermittent rainfall has been given (though the real fact in each year has been the same, namely, that the assessment is unduly high), and in every Fasil, except one, since 1865, remissions have been granted for these so-called special reasons, at the rates shown below:—

Fasil.	Board's orders authorizing Remissions.	REMISSIONS GRANTED IN	
		Dindigul.	Palni.
1275...	No. 698, dated 30th January 1866.	Entire assessment	On waste punjah.
1276...	No. 2,124, dated 3rd April 1867.	Entire assessment on waste punjah and 10 per cent. on the cultivation.	Entire assessment on waste punjah and 5 per cent. on the cultivation.
1277...	No. 915, dated 6th February 1868.	30 per cent. on the punjah holdings.	30 per cent. on the punjah holdings.
1278...	No. 1,341, dated 1st March 1869; No. 1858A, dated 17th March 1869.	Entire assessment on punjah waste in addition to a percentage on punjah cultivation varying from 15 to 50 per cent.	Entire assessment on punjah waste in addition to a percentage on punjah cultivation varying from 20 to 75 per cent.
1279...		No punjah remissions.	
1280...	No. 2,141, dated 25th May 1871.	Do. do.	30 per cent. in 19 and 40 per cent. in 18 villages, in both cases on the punjah holdings.

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15. Under these circumstances I beg to suggest the advisability of making a percentage remission on the dry holdings of the sub-division once for all, to continue every year until the district is resettled, which it is to be hoped will be within a few years. I feel certain that such a permanent remission (say of 20 per cent.) would be cheaper in the long run than the present system of granting special (but no less inevitable) remissions every year according to the state of the season. Even, if otherwise, the advantage, both to the ryots and to Government, of some certainty as to the revenue that the first have to pay and the latter to receive is obvious, and would justify a moderate (and probably apparent) sacrifice of revenue.

16. I am aware that in making this proposal I lay myself open to the answer that the ryots of the Zemindaris in the sub-division are assessed quite as highly as the Government ryots, and yet manage to get on without any remissions at all, much less annual ones. The facts, however, are that the land-holders of the sub-division rarely collect their rents without either a most extensive resort to the summary procedure of Act VIII. of 1865, as the records of my office will show, or the frequent concession to those of their ryots who tenant inferior dry lands of Cowle and other remissions; and that, as a rule, the Zemindari lands of the sub-division are of superior quality to those lands, the very poorness of which led to the break up fifty years ago of the Zemindaris and Poliyaputs to which they were originally attached, and which now form the majority of the Government villages of the Dindigul and Palni Taluqs.

Judging from Mr. Bliss's own premises a general remission, ranging as high as 50 per cent. of the assessment, could not be required or justified. Half the crop of a good year is secured in most villages, and it appears that standing crops may still further improve if showers occur this month. If a remission is given, it should not exceed 25 per cent.; but of the necessity even for this, another fortnight's observation would enable the Board to judge better, and the Collector should in the meantime inform himself as far as he can of the soundness of Mr. Bliss's view of the state of these taluqs.

2. Until the result of the harvest is known, the collections on unirrigated land in the villages principally affected may be suspended.

No. 110.

ORDER THEREON, 10th June 1872, No. 912.

Miscellaneous.

ORDERED to be recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) G. McWATTERS,

Acting Under-Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.

Est. F. R. Bantleman.

12 Feb/72 Rs 244/45
16 March/72 — 396-96
12 April/72 — 248-69

Revenue Department

1872.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

77-583

PROCEEDINGS, 26th JANUARY 1872, No. 188.

Copy 17 Feb/72

Encl.

Received 17

JANUARY.

No. 188.

Assessment on unirrigated land—in villages principally affected by adverse season, in Dindigul and Palni Taluqs, Madras District.—Collector informed that collection of, may be suspended until result of the harvest is known, and requested to inform himself of soundness of Acting Sub-Collector's view of the state of these taluqs.

Est. G. A. Turton.

89/12

10 Dec 1872



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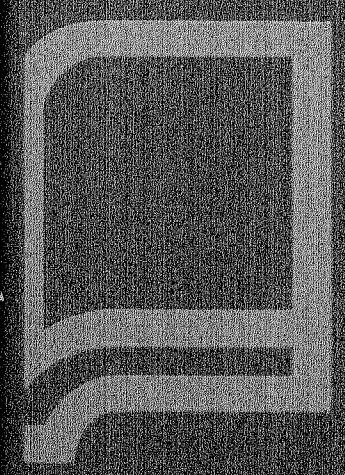
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GOVT OF INDIA

REVENUE

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