1262 13-11-1873

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, 13th November 1873.

No. 66. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 24th October 1873, No. 2,176 :—

Read the following letter from R. K. PUCKLE, Esq., Collector of Tinnevelly, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 29th July 1873, No. 408 :—

In reply to Board's Proceedings No. 154-4,152, dated 17th July 1873, I have the honour to enclose a copy of a letter from the Inspector of Forests, who has lately visited this district, and to inform you that though the Inspector is unable to value the Singamputti Forest from a general view of it, I should from other data, value it at about 11,000 Rupees per annum.

2. Major Beddome's visit to the forest has enabled him to recognize the fact that lakhs of revenue depend on the conservancy of this protection to the head of our river, and to secure this conservancy at a cost of 11,000 Rupees, per annum, will be a great gain indeed. I do not, however, agree with Major Beddome as to the expediency of contesting the right of the Zemindar to the enormous extent he claims for, as explained before, in paragraph 4 of my letter No. 388, dated 7th September 1868, the right of occupancy has been enjoyed by the Zemindar for more than half a century, and litigation, even if successful, would hardly secure what we want, viz., the immediate and absolute conservancy of the forest-clothed mountains with due consideration for the wants of the people; as regards grazing and firewood cutting, amicable arrangements and liberal treatment seem to me more befitting a Government than litigation in Government Courts, and when all that is needed can be procured at a figure so small, in proportion to the great advantages looked for, I am strongly in favour of the recognition of the Zemindar's right and the lease of the forest from him.

3. The revenue that the forest had yielded upto date to the Singamputti Estate, was given in paragraph 11 of my letter, embodied in Board's Proceedings, No. 4,915, date 4th July 1868. Since then, the revenue has been considerably less than 11,000 Rupees per annum. The highest year's rental was Rupees 13,910 which, as explained in the foregoing letter, was run up by private ill-will, and of this, Rupees 3,000 had to be subsequently remitted.

4. The highest net rental for any year has thus been Rupees 10,910, and a certainty of Rupees 11,000 per annum ought to amply satisfy the Zemindar.

5. The total peshcush of the Estate is 8,000 Rupees, so that the lease of 11,000 Rupees for the forest would give the Zemindar a rent-free Estate and a Maniyam of 3,000 Rupees a year.

6. Major Beddome's estimate of the probable increase in value of these forests is also based on data very different from mine. I look on these forests as yielding water, which trickles down the mountains in a thousand rills, all more or less perennial, as more or less protected from the influence of sun and wind, while Major Beddome regards the forest as yielding solid timber, which is worth a given sum in the market at so much per cubic foot.

7. Practically, however, there is no demand for timber in these or any of the forests under Government management here. We are growing more and more timber in the plains every year, and the wood imported from Travancore and Ceylon is preferred to that grown on our hills.

8. The railway therefore instead of increasing is likely to lessen the drain on our forests by carrying imported timber from the sea coast inland, and in the matter of fuel we can grow and are growing all the fuel required along the line of railway, which will no where approach the hills within about twenty-five miles.

9. The rental and close conservancy of the Singamputti Forest by Government, is a matter of vital importance to many thousands of ryots under the Strivycuntam anicut and elsewhere, towards the mouth of the river, and as the revenue derived from irrigated land in the valley is about 10,00,000 of Rupees, a payment of Rupees 11,000 per annum would be but 1 per cent. of the revenue, and might, and probably would, do much not only towards saving remissions but towards increasing the revenue by the gradual extension of the area irrigated.

Enclosure No. 1.

From Major R. H. BEDDOME, Inspector of Forests, to R. K. PUCKLE, Esq., Collector of Tinnevelly, dated Palamcottah, 22nd July 1873, No. 1,841.

With reference to paragraph 4 of the Board's Proceedings, recorded in G. O., No. 685, of the 4th instant, I have the honour to inform you, that I have just been inspecting the Singamputti Forests. They form a large and valuable tract, the area of which I was unable to ascertain, but it is probably more than 100 square miles, but almost all the finer portions are very inaccessible, and the timber could not be removed without a considerable expense for road making. These forests will, of course, annually increase in value, and many years hence, railroads and better communications may cause them to become of very great value. It would be wise, therefore, for Government to try and procure possession of them either by purchase or perpetual lease; just at present there is no demand for timber, and a short lease from the Court of Wards which might terminate on the proprietor attaining his majority, is scarcely worth more than the annual revenue derived from the Hill produce, etc.

2. These forests protect the water-supply of Tambrapurni, many lakhs of land revenue therefore depend upon their proper conservancy, and if the proprietors attempted reckless felling, it would be incumbent upon Government to pass an Act to sanction their taking them over. The proprietors hitherto have never exercised any rights except in quite the oustkirts of these forests, and I would strongly recommend you to advise Government to dispute the right of the estate to the immense tract claimed.

3. With reference to Kattalai Malai I cannot estimate the value of the annual lease at more than 500 Rupees. This tract should, I think, be bought outright if it is decided that it really belongs to the temple, but as far as I can learn, the temple has no claim whatever beyond that of a certain usufruct, and by a late decision in the Bombay Courts, this would appear to have no force against Government, and I think that the right should be disputed.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) R. K. PUCKLE,
Collector.

In the letter from the Inspector of Forests now submitted by the Collector of Tinnevelly, Major Beddome states his opinion that the Singamputti Forest is a tract of great and probably increasing value both on account of the timber contained in it and of its utility as protecting the water supply of the Tambrapurni, on which many lakhs of land revenue are dependent. Mr. Puckle on the other hand does not consider that the value of the forests in yielding timber and fuel is or is likely ever to be of much moment; but lays great stress on the protection to the sources of the Tambrapurni which is afforded by these forests. He states that the highest net revenue which they have yet yielded is Rupees 10,910 and he proposes an annual rent of Rupees 11,000.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
13th November 1873.

2. As already stated by the Board, the question of a lease must be deferred until the Minor Zemindar attains his majority which will be in 1878. It seems extravagant to assert that the timber of these forests will never come into the market to any great extent, and the opinion of the Inspector of Forests on this point is doubtless correct. It is unquestionable, that forests have a very important function to perform in protecting river sources, by checking evaporation and retaining moisture, though the value of such influences cannot be exactly estimated. The Board are of opinion that 11,000 Rupees per annum will be a moderate sum for Government to pay for possession of these forests, and the offer is likely to be accepted by the Zemindar when he comes of age. Meanwhile under the charge of the Court of Wards the forests will be saved from denudation.

3. Major Beddome's letter does not explain nor does the Collector state why so small a value as 500 Rupees per annum was put by Major Beddome upon the Kattalai Malai Forest; nor is it stated what steps have been taken to acquire the lease of it for Government as sanctioned in the Order, 4th July 1873, No. 685. The Collector should report on this point.

4. These proceedings are submitted for the information of Government.

No. 67. Order thereon, 13th November 1873, No. 1,262.

Forests, No. 6.

The Board's Proceedings are approved and their further report in regard to the Kattalai Malai awaited.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. STURROCK,
Acting Under-Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Inspector of Forests.

Exd. G. A. Turton.

4th Jan/73 No 29–30

Rev: 1873 : Dept No 3521

1873.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 24TH OCTOBER 1873, No. 2,176.

Dept 30 Oct 73

Encl.

Received 3d Nov

OCTOBER.

Forest No. 68.

Forests of Singamputli Estate—in Tinnevelly District.—Collectors proposal that Rupees 11,000 per annum should be offered for lease of — to Government by Zemindar approved; but question to be deferred till minor attains his majority.—Collector to report as to small value put upon Kattalai Malai Forest by Inspector of Forests, and steps taken for acquiring lease of it for Government.

No 1262 - 13 Nov

Rev Proc 6 dec 1873 No 2

No 1262

The Board's Proceedings are approved and their further attention is invited to the Kattalai Malai case noted

13th Nov 1873

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