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Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
8th March 1873.

No. 38. Read the following letter from the Acting Collector of the Godavery District, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Yernagudem, 23rd January 1873, No. 1:—

In their Order, No. 1280, dated November 20th, 1872, Public Department, Government directed inquiry to be made on the alleged indifference and apathy displayed by the Tahsildar and Sheristadar of Ellore on the occasion of the late floods; I, therefore, have the honour to inform you that I have been to Ellore, and from the inquiries I have made I can see no reason to alter my opinion that no blame is attaching to them.

2. The Tahsildar and Sheristadar were together almost all the time of the flood, so that the remarks about one will be applicable to both.

3. I enclose a copy of a diary* of Inspector Prendergast sent me by the

* 7th October 1872.

Superintendent of Police, as it enters more in detail into the charges which the

Inspector makes against them. They are accused of not knowing what to do in the emergency, of refusing to join with the Municipal Commissioners in measures to alleviate distress, and of refusing to pay the coolies collected by the Inspector, who were employed in breaching the canals.

4. It will be seen from the Tahsildar's report that he says that Mr. Prendergast did not give himself time to see whether the Tahsildar knew what to do or not. Mr. Prendergast met the Tahsildar, and, on being asked, told him he was going to cut the canal bank. This appears to have been the case that passed at that time. Mr. Prendergast seems to have been excited, and not collected enough to notice accurately all that took place. This also appears from the fact that the Tahsildar, on going to the Head Assistant Collector's Office, found bundles of records still on the ground and not put up on the shelves, although Mr. Prendergast had been there previously with the intention of securing these records. The Tahsildar also wished to have the advice of the Public Works Officers as to where to cut the bank, and for this purpose sent for the Canal Superintendent and went to the Taluq Overseer. His application to the Taluq Overseer seems to have been useless; but I cannot blame him for trying to get his advice. It would have been well had Mr. Prendergast got some advice before he cut the southern bank, because, by acting without advice, and against the remonstrances of the ryots, he endangered their crops unnecessarily. He did not even follow the plan adopted by the Range Officer in the previous flood, but cut this bank in a different place, and another cut had to be made to rectify the mistake. Mr. Prendergast acted with great energy, but the Tahsildar acted with sufficient energy and with more caution.

5. I now come to the question of the Tahsildar's refusal to join with the Municipal Commission in their measures for alleviating distress. These measures consisted in supplying food to those who had none. It may be a question whether such a measure is a "local work of public utility" within the meaning of the Towns' Improvement Act. If it is not, the appropriation of any municipal funds to this purpose is illegal; but, without discussing this question, I think that the Tahsildar might be allowed to hold the view that it was illegal without his motives for forming this opinion being called in question. But the Tahsildar did not think

there was any necessity for this, as this was being looked after by private persons. For my own part I think the Tahsildar was quite right not to attach himself to a Committee. As Tahsildar he would be shirking his responsibility in any emergency if he were to consent to be guided by the opinions of a few others, and, if he were a Member of a Committee, it would not do for him to go away and act contrary to the decisions of this Committee.

6. With reference to the payment of the coolies, you will see that Mr. Prendergast asked the Sheristadar to pay the amount, and that he after some consideration was willing to pay this to Mr. Prendergast, if the latter would give him some paper to serve as a voucher for the payment. I do not think this was an unreasonable request on the part of the Sheristadar. If the money had been improperly paid, or if any objection had been made to it in the Account Department, the Sheristadar would have had to make it good. As soon as I heard of it, I sent word that it was to be paid; but then it would not have mattered to me if I had been called on to pay this myself; it amounted, however, to about half the Sheristadar's monthly salary.

7. The Act I. of 1858 does not bear out Mr. Prendergast's view that the Sheristadar was bound to pay the coolies employed by him. It provides for the Officers of the Department of Public Works doing what is necessary, or, if they are not available, the Revenue or Village Officers. As far as this Act is concerned, Mr. Prendergast was nothing but a private individual, and certainly the Sheristadar would have been wrong in obliging a private person all the expenses he might say he had incurred, without scrutinizing the bill, and without even a receipt. Besides, the Tahsildar thinks that Mr. Prendergast incurred a greater expense than was necessary. I do not suppose that Mr. Prendergast was put to any inconvenience, because when I ordered the payment to be made to him he refused at first to take it.

8. I am willing to give Mr. Prendergast all the praise he deserves. He acted with great energy, and to a considerable extent he acted well, but so did the Tahsildar. The praise should not be bestowed on Mr. Prendergast at the expense of the Tahsildar; and most certainly Mr. Prendergast should not have been the one to throw the first stone at the Tahsildar.

9. With reference to the Order of Government, No. 1398, dated December 20th, 1872, Public Department, I may remark that if Colonel Fischer means to suggest a subscription being raised among any of the inhabitants of this district, or among any private individuals, I am strongly opposed to the measure. Government should not set on foot any public subscription. The people would doubtless subscribe, but they would look upon it as a tax.

10. If the suggestion is that Government should give something themselves, I think that Government is not bound to do so, but at the same time they would be acting with liberality in giving towards the expenses of rebuilding the houses.

11. I send an estimate made by the Tahsildar of the number of houses that had injury done by the water. I have already said in a former letter that the houses fell because the walls were formed of mud, containing a large quantity of salt, so that the moisture soon weakened them. Again, the soil on which the

houses are built is soft, and easily affected by damp; the houses on this account have in many instances their foundations laid on piles. The liability of Ellore to floods seems to have been well-known, such floods having often occurred before, so that those who had the means and who did not build their houses strong enough to prevent this damage, either through an idea that no flood would occur in their time, or through thinking that Government would indemnify them for any loss they might sustain from these floods, can have no claim on Government.

12. The amount of the loss given by the owners of property to the Tahsildar is as follows:—

	Rs.
House property	11,480
Moveable property	23,654

I have made inquiries at some of the houses, and the only conclusion I can come to is that the losses are most grossly exaggerated. One man enters what it would cost him to build a house of the same size now, though the one that has fallen was built many years ago, and was almost falling down with age. Another wants to build a much larger house, and enters as his loss the cost of building the larger one. The Roman Catholic Church enters, amongst other things, the rails before the altar; and a carpet, evidently thoroughly worn out before the flood, is entered as being damaged by the flood. Another man, a butcher, enters the value of a number of sheep, while the amount would buy such a number that, if only half were kept in the premises, many of them would be suffocated. A pensioner on 4 rupees a month says he had 10 rupees worth of rice in his house, and this is the extent of his loss; brass utensils, stone-candlesticks, and other things that would not float are given as carried away, though, as I have before said, there was no rush of water. Cattle are mentioned as having been lost in considerable numbers, but it is surprising how few dead cattle have been found.

13. I could not find a single instance in which, from what the people of the house could tell me, that they had really lost nearly as much as they had said either in house property or moveable property.

14. Mr. Pearce thought that Government should give the pensioners something towards the rebuilding of their houses. I have spoken to Major Marshall on this subject, and he seems to think Government are under no obligation to do this. I agree with him in this; but if Government, putting aside ideas of strict justice, choose to exercise any liberality towards the people of Ellore, I think that it should begin with those who are their own dependants, and who have served them.

15. There is one thing which I think Government might do. A well used for drinking water in the bed of the river has been considerably damaged. It is situated near the Pensioners' Lines. It was built by Subadar Venkatachellum, of the 12th Regiment, purely for charity. I understand that he is willing to repair it, but I think Government might do this. It will cost, I believe, about 100 Rupees.

16. I have come, then, to the conclusion that the Tahsildar does not deserve the blame that has been attached to him, and that Government are not bound to give anything as compensation to the people who have suffered loss. If Government think it right to make a present to these people, I consider that a quarter of the loss in house property would be the limit of liberality; more than that would be prodigality.

17. I did not see much stagnant water. Ellore is a very difficult town to drain. I do not think there is the least fear of what water there is causing any unhealthiness. The Municipal Commission have not adopted any special measures, but no special measures were necessary. In the places where I saw any water there would always be some with the least rain.

MADRAS POLICE—GODAVERY DISTRICT.

Diary of Inspector H. G. PRENDERGAST, K or Ellore Division, 5th October 1872.

At 2 A.M. I was awakened by a well near my house filling up with a loud report. I came out and found the parade-ground and the lines of the families of 1st M. N. I. under water. It was raining heavily and was pitch dark. I sent my servants out and advised the people in the lines to come to my house, as the water would have to rise several feet before it came into it. The river was higher than I have ever seen it. As soon as it was light I rode over to the Head Assistant's Office to see whether the records were in danger, and found them all right. I then tried to ride to the iron bridge, where I thought I should meet the Sub-Magistrates. I had to send my pony back from the limits of the parade, as he began to get out of his depth. I then waded and swam the rest of the way. I got to the bridge about 6 o'clock and met the two Sub-Magistrates there. They did not seem to know what to do, and so I advised them to breach the canal. They did not seem to like to take responsibility, and went away to look after the records. Being thus left to act for myself, I collected a lot of coolies and breached the canal on both sides. The water ceased rising at once, and by sunset it had gone down six inches. About 10 o'clock, while I was engaged in this work, the Rev. J. E. Padfield, a Municipal Commissioner, came and asked me what he could do to assist. I told him I should find shelter for the people in chuttrums and some large godowns belonging to the Rajah of Sanivarapettah, and that a subscription had been raised among the Komaties to feed them, but advised him to convene a meeting of the Commissioners to arrange for feeding the people the next day. About 12 o'clock the Tahsildar and Sheristadar came to the breaches and said I had done very right and then went away. After finishing the breaches I went to the chuttrums and lodged all the people who had been driven out of their houses. At the chuttrums erected by the Rajah of Sanivarapettah I had to threaten the man in charge with arrest before he would admit Sudras and Mussulmans. I put the Pariahs and other low castes into the godowns mentioned above. At one of the chuttrums I found Commissioners Mallila, Venkatasawmy Naidoo, and Mothe Venkatasawmy Chetty superintending the distribution of the food. At 3 P.M. I went home to get a little breakfast and to see how the people in my house (400) were getting on. I got back to the branch of the Tummilair that runs past the Church about 4-30 P.M., and found all communication cut off by the bridge having been swept away and the river being too swift to be swam across. After some difficulty I managed to get a rope across and I then succeeded in getting across myself. After distributing the Constables among the chuttrums and arranging beats in their neighbourhood, I went to the Taluq Cutcherry and asked the Sheristadar (the Tahsildar is on leave) to pay the coolies I had employed. He said that, though he apparently had authority to do so under Act I. of 1858 (compulsory labour) there were departmental orders forbidding his paying any money without an order from the Treasury Deputy Collector. After a good deal of time had been wasted, I succeeded in persuading him that no departmental orders could interfere with the authority given him by the Act. He then desired me to present a bill. Before the bill could be made out I received information that the water was rising again. I went off to the breaches at once and had them widened. After the work was over, I borrowed the money and paid the coolies, who were all men who had been swept out of their houses. With the exception of the Mission House, mine, the Overseer's, the barracks and Serjeants' quarters, every building to the north of the canal is flooded. The water rose more than a foot in the travellers' bungalow. The Deputy Inspector-General got away to the fort in a tonjon about noon.

(Signed) H. G. PRENDERGAST,
Inspector of Police.

7th October 1872.

Copy of the Ellore Tahsildar's Report, dated 14th January 1873.

In accordance with your verbal instructions, I beg respectfully to state that from 5th to 15th of October I was in Ellore. On the 5th, about 6 o'clock, I heard that the Tummilair had risen second time and water was coming into the Gunz Bazaar and Lakshmivarapupeta. I told my Sheristadar to go out first. I sent a peon for the Munsif and Curnam of Ellore, who were at the breach of the drainage channel of the Tummilair on the other side of the town. I sent another peon to see whether any Officers of the Department of Public Works were present. I immediately collected some men and was going near the iron bridge. I met Mr. Prendergast about 6-30. He had with him some Constables and about twenty coolies belonging to Chintagudem, which is close to the bridge. He was going on. I asked him "where are you going?" Going down he said he was going to cut the canal. He did not wait a minute. It was necessary for me to know what was the state of the people and of the records of the Head Assistant Collector's Office, and whether the Officers of the Department of Public Works would make cuts as they had done for the first flood. I went a few fathoms further and there I joined my Sheristadar. I was making inquiries as I passed on, and found that before the water came the people had left their houses and took shelter in houses on high ground and charitable choultries, and that no danger was apprehended. It occurred to me that I should see how the servants of Mr. Pearce were in his bungalow, which was on very low ground. I went there and found that they were safe. I bent my way towards the barracks in which the records of the Head Assistant Collector's Office were. While I was going the Deputy Inspector-General, who was then in the travellers' bungalow, wanted to get out. I sent a tonjon and bearers for him.

2. About 7½ I reached the barracks. There the water was then entering upon the floor of the verandahs. I opened the record-room. Several dufters, the receive and sent paste-books, &c., were lying on the ground. I had them all put on the frames so that even if the river should rise more no damage might be occasioned to the records. I afterwards went to the house of the Overseer of the Engineer Department. I asked him to help me to make some cuts in proper places. He said he was not in charge of the Kistna Canal, and the Channel Superintendent was in the town. I was informed that the Channel Superintendent was going to the Kistna Canal. I then went to the Kistna Canal. It was about 9 o'clock. There several ryots of Ellore complained to me that Mr. Prendergast made a cut in a wrong place, and that the water flowing through it would cause damage, not only to their crops, but also to the southern part of the town. When I went to the breach the ryots were loudly suggesting that the cut made by Captain Dorward for the first flood should be opened instead of the one cut by Mr. Prendergast. Some men then began to open that cut; as it had been only recently filled up, and as the earth was loose, in a few minutes it gave way, and considerable quantity of water began to run through it into the natural stream called Jalipudi Channel, a branch of the Tummilair. There a few coolies were making cross channel to divert the water of the first cut into the Jalipudi Channel. Then I suggested that one cut in each of the embankments of the canal should be made between the Travellers' and Mr. Pearce's bungalows, so that the water could freely pass into Komadavole Tank, which is on low ground, and from which it could easily fall in the Colair Lake, but Mr. Prendergast said that they were not necessary. Mr. Prendergast, however, afterwards made two cuts in the northern embankment, but none in the southern one. The cut made (in the southern embankment for the first flood) by Captain Dorward being in the place of an irrigation sluice given for Jalipudi, Katlampudi, and Madipalli villages and also in low ground, much water was running through it. If this cut had not been opened the first cut made by Mr. Prendergast in the southern embankment would have done considerable mischief as the ryots had anticipated. When the ryots entreated Mr. Prendergast not to make that cut, he (they say) said that the Tahsildar would give remission to them. As the necessary cuts made by Lieutenant Dorward were opened and the water was subsiding, I went to see where people took shelter; it was about 11 o'clock. They were in choultries, &c. About 12 o'clock I was going home. I knew that on such occasions Banians would gladly feed people. I happened to see some Banians. They said that for the poor, Banians were preparing to give food,

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so they began to give food from the very day (5th October), as they have got funds on account of the contributions made by them to charitable purposes

3. All the time the Sheristadar was with me.

4. About 5-30 on the evening of the 5th October, Mr. Prendergast went to the Sheristadar and asked him to pay some rupees for the coolies who made cuts. Sheristadar consulted me, although contrary to the provisions of Act I. of 1858. Mr. Prendergast acted himself independently; yet all that was to be done either by the Department of Public Works or by me was to have opened the cuts made by Lieutenant Dorward, and I considered there would be no objection to payment being made to the coolies, and advised Sheristadar to make payment, taking a voucher for the amount. Sheristadar asked him (Mr. Prendergast) to give a bill, which he never did. This was quite apparent from Mr. Prendergast's diary. As no money could be disbursed without a voucher, payment could not be made upon Mr. Prendergast's verbal application.

5. On the evening of the 6th October I was called to attend municipal meeting. I observed that it was for feeding people, and thought that it was not advisable to spend municipal funds while Banians were giving food. I know Mr. Prendergast, who wanted to make the Municipal Commissioners to undertake the feeding of the people, would not listen to me, because I understood his feelings and he began to do every thing independently without considering the necessity and importance. Native Municipal Commissioners were not disposed to spend municipal funds on the ground that Banians' charity was at hand. Although I packed up every thing to go away on leave, I stayed in the town. I was then completing the explanation called for regarding the castes. I had no mind to join the Committee for the reasons stated above. On the 9th I was again called to attend the meeting. I went. Mr. Padfield, Mr. Prendergast, and Native Commissioners were there. Mr. Padfield, as usual, presided at the meeting. He voted to feed people for two days more. Native Commissioners did not agree. Upon his persuasion Commissioners agreed. I too agreed with the majority.

6. The following passages in Mr. Prendergast's diary are wrong:—

(1.) "They (Sub-Magistrates) did not seem to know what to do, and so I advised them to breach the canal. They did not seem to like to take the responsibility." This never happened at all.

(2.) "Being left to act for myself, I collected a lot of coolies." When I first saw Mr. Prendergast he had with him about twenty coolies. Therefore this is not right.

(3.) "About 12 o'clock the Tahsildar and Sheristadar came to the breaches and said I had done very right." We never approved his proceedings. The first cut being dangerous, and a cross channel for the diversion of the water of that cut being dug, I said that the cross channel was good to prevent danger to the other part of the town.

(4.) Mr. Prendergast says he provided shelter. The choultries in the town were occupied long before he went there. The only opposition was as to the admission of Pariahs into that portion of the choultry of the Zemindars of Nidadavole and Baharzhally, which is occupied by higher castes. Many lower-caste people occupied the godowns belonging to the Zemindars.

(5.) "After good deal of time had been wasted I succeeded in persuading him that no departmental orders could interfere with the authority given by the Act." This is not the case. There was not much delay in taking my advice. Mr. Prendergast admits having been asked to give a Bill. This was upon my advice that the Sheristadar told Mr. Prendergast. He was unwilling to do so, and went away.

(6.) Mr. Prendergast says that he received information that the water was rising again, and that he went and widened the breaches. When water was rapidly passing through the breaches, it would be extremely impossible to widen them. It is possible that a small cut on such occasion would itself widen much better than coolies could do.

7. When I went to the second breach in southern embankment I saw the Channel Superintendent there. It does not appear that he did anything. He was with Mr. Prendergast there.

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8th March 1873.*

8. When I asked Taluq Overseer to help me to make cuts in proper places, he said that he was not in charge of the Kistna Canal, and that he (Channel Superintendent) was in the town. He did nothing.

9. On the 5th October, before 12 o'clock, four breaches were made. The next day another breach was made in the northern embankment near Mr. Pearse's bungalow. This would not take more than an hour. I do not see any real necessity of employing three days so many coolies as forty, forty-nine, and forty-nine, respectively. It is said that Mr. Prendergast continually kept coolies at the breaches, and that several times the breaches had to be widened. The two cuts made by Lieutenant Dorward cost only about 3 Rupees.

STATEMENT sent by the Tahsildar of Ellore showing the number of Houses that had injury done by Water.

Description of Houses.	Number of Houses into which water entered.	Number of Houses fallen.	Number of Houses injured.
<i>1, Tiled Houses.</i>			
Single houses	104	9	38
Large huts	4	...	1
Bungalows	32	4	8
Huts	...	...	...
Total	150	13	47
<i>2, Straw-thatched Houses.</i>			
Single houses	64	5	27
Round huts	15	1	12
Total	79	6	39
<i>3, Palmira-leaf-thatched Houses.</i>			
Single houses	319	29	162
Round huts	370	71	180
Cow-sheds	37	6	18
Total	726	106	360
Grand Total	955	125	446

VEGESWARAPURAM,
23rd January 1873.

(Signed) W. S. FOSTER,
Acting Collector.

No. 39. ORDER THEREON, 8th March 1873, No. 239.

The Governor in Council accepts the Acting Collector's explanation as exonerating the Tahsildar and Sheristadar from any imputation of wilful inactivity or indifference. The repair of the well mentioned in paragraph 15 will be carried out at the cost of Government.

2. Major Marshall, the Paymaster of Pensioners at Ellore, will be requested, through the Military Department, to report on the actual condition of the pensioners residing at Ellore, and whether they were severe sufferers from the flood.

(True Extract.)

J. H. D. M. S.

To the Collector of the Godavery District.

„ Revenue Department.

„ Military „

Inspector-General of Police.

Exd. J. Wright.

W. H. D. M. S.

Revenue Clerk

Acct. of 1873-74
Madras.

PUBLIC.

To

THE COLLECTOR OF THE
GODAVERY DISTRICT,
Secr.,
Secr.,
Secr.,

Dated March, 8th.

Recd. a

17

And

G. O., 8th March 1873, No. 239.

MARCH.
Nos. 38-39.

Passing orders on the report submitted by the
Collector of the Godavery District on the conduct of
the Tahsildar and Sheristadar of Ellore during the
late floods.

#-156.

Comm. to the
Board of Revenue

5th March 1873

24th March 1873