

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department, /
24th February 1873.

No. 152. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 4th January 1873, No. 2:—

Read the following letter from J. B. PENNINGTON, Esq., Acting Collector of Trichinopoly, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 24th October 1872, No. 228:—

I HAVE the honour to invite the particular attention of the Board to the enclosed copy of a letter on the spread of prickly pear in this district, and to the Resolution on the subject by the Local Fund Board.

2. It will be observed that the Local Fund Board are deeply impressed with the serious importance of the question, and the necessity for the most vigorous measures of repression, I have accordingly allotted Rupees 3,000 in next year's budget to be expended in supplemental grants to villages for the encouragement of the ryots who show a desire to help themselves.

3. As, however, the work of clearing the country of such a bane to agriculture and so bringing more land under cultivation is essentially imperial in its character, and is calculated to bring in a direct return to the imperial exchequer, and prevent further danger of an ever diminishing revenue, the Local Fund Board resolved to apply to Government for a special grant from Imperial Funds in the interests of the land revenue; and I trust the Board will see fit to support their application.

4. It is true that the disastrous spread of prickly pear is due in no small degree to the neglect and apathy of the cultivating classes, and it might be considered a very fitting punishment for bad husbandry; but the damage caused must be shared by Government, however it has been brought about, and it would not be unreasonable to plead on behalf of the ryots that the most luxuriant growth of this pernicious weed is on waste land, the absolute property of Government; and that it has probably spread in many instances from the uncared for waste to the more carefully watched private estates adjoining.

5. Even from the little I have seen of the district, I am sure I may affirm, without hesitation, that the account given by the then Officiating Deputy-Collector is very little exaggerated, and I have little doubt that the Director of Revenue Settlement will corroborate the melancholy story.

6. I trust, therefore, that the Board will impress upon Government the necessity for united action on the part of all concerned by way of encouraging the ryots to help themselves and so clear the district by one combined effort.

7. I have heard lately that the Cochineal insects were found wonderfully successful in some districts, and if the Board would procure some, and furnish me with some account of the way they were applied with success, I should be glad to try them again.

8. Rough estimates of the probable expense involved have been called for, as suggested by the Local Fund Board.

9. With reference to the Officiating Deputy-Collector's proposal to issue notices to parties under Section 62, Civil Code Procedure, I have prepared the

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
24th February 1873.*

following Notification for publication in the District Gazette if the Board approve of it.

(1). "The spread of prickly pear being a public nuisance, the public are hereby directed not to plant it in future on any account whatever under pain of being proceeded against under Section 62 of the Civil Code Procedure."

(2). "Sub-Magistrates will enforce this order rigorously, and the Superintendent of Police will be requested to aid in the extirpation of prickly pear by directing his subordinates to report any one found planting or propagating it in any way."

(3). "This notice will be published by beat of tom-tom in every village in the district."

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From T. PATTABIRAM, Officiating Deputy-Collector, to the Acting Collector of Trichinopoly, dated 3rd June 1872, No. 65.

In my circuits lately in the Kadarambam portion of this district, both for distributing puttas in the Kulitalai and Museri Taluqs and for making over and fixing compensation for lands taken up by the Tuticorin extension line of the Great Southern of India Railway, I had ample opportunities afforded me for forming an idea of the amount of mischief the overgrowth of prickly pear has already done, and is likely to do in those parts of the district, and I felt it my duty to lay before you, for your favourable consideration, the following report on the subject:—

2. The Board's rulings of 16th July 1861, to allow a grant from the Local Funds of a sum equal to what may be subscribed by the ryots for the extirpation of prickly pear not exceeding Rupees 1,000, per annum, remained a dead letter in this district. In 1863 Mr. Walhouse, the then Collector, tried to destroy the noxious plant around the town here by means of insects, as suggested by Rustomjee Viccajee, Taluqdar of Raichore, and an account of which process was sent to the Madras Government by Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Balmain in October 1862. These insects were sent for from Madras, and the solution prepared and sprinkled upon prickly pear trees and the insects imported thereon but with no effect.

3. In 1867 Mr. Agnew set about rigorously to remove it by sheer human labour, and all the Tahsildars and Revenue Inspectors worked right well for about six months, and nearly one-half the extent covered with prickly pear was reclaimed, and I myself as Tahsildar of Trichinopoly got this plant removed in several villages. Since then the plant was suffered to grow without check, and it is really a thousand pities to see this swift growing plant covering beautiful spots of cultivable ground. From what I have seen and learnt of this plant, I think I may safely put down the extent covered with it to be not less than one-eighth of the whole district, and I am humbly of opinion that it is high time to do something towards checking its growth and extirpating it altogether. The ryots look upon the plant with dismay, and feel it hopeless to destroy the plant. They feel discouraged even to remove the prickly pear which disfigures their own valuable garden lands. Some plucky ryots here and there cut it and throw it in heaps in view to get it burnt when it gets dry. A few days labour tires him, and he leaves it alone and sees to his great mortification his whole garden or Punjab field encroached upon by the plant which grows without the aid of either water or rain. The air is enough to give it growth and the plant strikes root wherever it is thrown and grows luxuriantly. The poor ryot thus finds his hand too weak to attack and root out the plant successfully. The Kadarambam part of this district abounds with large bushes on all sides of the country, and they give shelter to all sorts of venomous reptiles, particularly to a kind of snake called Viryan pambu, whose bite brings on loathsome diseases, such as leprosy, swellings, etc., when the poison is not strong enough to kill at once. Deaths by snake-bites are become very common in the country, and our Death Registers

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
24th February 1873.*

from the villages will prove the awful truth that one-hundredth of the loss of life in the up-country is by snakes bites. Thus the plant is not only a great nuisance as it is, but is a source of loss both to the Government and the ryots, and to the general public, because the waste lands covered with this plant never come under cultivation, and the public lose the benefit of the produce of these lands coming to the market.

4. In 1867, I believe when cattle were suffering from want of pasture from the almost universal drought that prevailed over India at the time, it was discovered by a gentleman in the north, that prickly pear when cleaned of the thorns serve as good fodder, and iron scrapers to scrape off the thorn were sent round to all districts, and then it was suggested that scraping the thorn was a wearisome process and that burning the thorns with a fire made of the leaves, etc., about the place, served the double purpose of clearing the thorn and imparting to the bulb of the plant a kind of flavour which made it the more agreeable to cattle to devour it greedily. The ryots who are so credulous in other respects, were either too timid to make a trial upon their cattle or too unwilling to adopt the suggestion of whose results they were not quite sure of. Whatever may be the reason, the suggestion was never tried, and the plant goes on covering the country on all sides, baffling all attempts hitherto made to extirpate it. However discouraging the total destruction of the plant may at first sight seem to be, I am not without hopes of successfully rooting it out quite, if a properly matured system to extirpate it is set on foot and firmly pursued. It is easy enough to make the suggestion and frame rules, but the success depends entirely upon the way in which those that are charged with it go to work. The following plan, I am of opinion, may to a certain extent go to help the removal of the plant if it be strictly enforced for some time. When the harvest season is over, a Revenue Inspector should be detached and deputed to select all such villages in the taluq as may have yielded a plentiful harvest, and to take from the Gurnam of each village on account of the actual area covered with prickly pear bushes in the Nattam or village site on the banks of tanks, channels, river, etc., poramboke, and on the Government waste. The Inspector should go about collecting the Accounts and sending them on to the Tahsildar, and the latter should form an estimate of labour required for the removal of the prickly pear in each village, and submit them to the Local Fund Board, who will sanction the cost of half the labour out of a lump sum of say about 3,000 or 4,000 Rupees, which should be provided in the Budget out of the Road Cess. As regards the prickly pear on putta lands, the owners of the land should be compelled to remove at their own expense, and this can be done easily as the ryots simply require to be told and they, for aught I know, are willing to do it, provided some one would put them up to it. If necessary, a few notices for the removal of the nuisance under Section 62 of C. C. P. may be served upon refractory ryots to enforce this order. The Tahsildar should visit the villages, start the work, and arrange for the whole being done at once, and it will never do to do it by halves. An entry of all those villages where the prickly pear is entirely removed, should be kept to serve reference in the Local Fund Board's Office. The plant must either be well beaten and burnt to ashes, or suffered to rot well under deep water. If this system be regularly pursued for about five or six years, I am almost certain that the extent covered by this unsightly plant will be thoroughly reclaimed and will add as much to the revenue of the State as it will to the comfort of the ryots. The system must be worked regularly and as a matter of course, and if there be no objection, it can well form an item to be dwelt upon in the Revenue Administration or Local Fund report.

5. I request you will kindly give the subject the consideration it deserves at your hands, and do something towards the extirpation of the noxious plant.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) J. B. PENNINGTON,
Acting Collector.

ENCLOSURE No. 2.—Extract from Proceedings of Local Fund Board.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
24th February 1873.*

This letter will be submitted for the orders of Government.

2. The Board distrust the Collector's picture of a revenue ever diminishing before the rapid encroachments of prickly pear, which is already so widely spread as to cover one-eighth of the district. So far as regards cultivation prickly pear is not a dangerous pest, for as soon as the people want more land the prickly pear which now covers it will be speedily extirpated. It is in a sanitary point of view that prickly pear is most to be dreaded and then only when it is near villages and towns. The Local Board is the proper authority to deal with this evil and they cannot reasonably ask for assistance from Government.

3. As regards Mr. VansAgnew's great effort, the Board are informed that the labour expended in carrying it out was worth no less than Rupees 80,000, and it is obvious that this is too great a tax to be repeated.

4. The attempts made in 1863-64 to extirpate prickly pear by means of certain insects were not successful.

5. It was found that the insects although feeding readily on the red flowering species would not feed on the ordinary or yellow flowering cactus of this coast.

No. 153. ORDER THEREON, 24th February 1873, No. 210.

Miscellaneous.

The Government recognize the evil noticed in the Board's Proceedings above recorded, and appreciate the efforts of the Local Fund Board to eradicate the prickly-pear; but they regret that many demands on Provincial Funds render a grant of funds impossible.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) D. F. CARMICHAEL,
Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
„ the Financial Department.
„ the Accountant-General.

Erd. F. R. Bantleman.

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Under date the 24th February 1873.

Read the following Proceedings of

the Board of Revenue

Submitting letter from
Coll. of Trichinopoly recommend-
ing for favorable consideration
application of Trichy Local Fund
Board for a special grant from
Imperial Funds for extirpation
of Prickly Pear.

N.E. 4 Jan. 1873, No. 2.

The Govt. recognize

the evil noticed in the
Board's Proceedings above

recorded and appreciate

the efforts of the Local

Fund to eradicate the

Prickly pear, but they regret

that the many demands

on Provincial Funds, render

a grant of more than

No. 73.

Revenue 1873. Dept

Board of Revenue,
MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 4TH JANUARY 1873, No. 2.

Dep. 10 Jan 1873.

Encl.

Received 11

10.21. February 1873

JANUARY.

No. 2.

Prickly pear.—Letter from Collector of
Trichinopoly recommending for favourable consid-
eration, application of Trichinopoly Local Fund
Board for a special grant from Imperial Funds
for extirpation of—submitted for orders of Go-
vernment, with remarks.

The Govt. concur in the
opinion expressed by the
Board that the application
is inadvisable. J.E. 11/

I fear that with
his energy and
the efforts of the
L. F. Board
it is by no means
likely that the many
demands on Provincial
Funds will be
sufficient to
afford aid. Can't
be but Imperial Fund

No. 152-153

C. 10.21. Feb. 2. 21. Feb.

Q. 15. Jan 73 R. 17. Feb 73

1000 Impossible Function
is granted for this contribu-
tion and ~~will~~ will
be provided by the Financial
Dept.

I refer to the Ministry of
Dept. that request can be made
from the Imperial Treasury
that request can be made from
~~the Imperial Treasury~~

14 Board of Revenue, Dec 25 1861
5 Financial Dept.
6 Account General

See 1000



10

B

B

B

B

B

L

L

L

B5