No. 1,225.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 8th July 1873.

Read the following letter from W. R. CORNISH, Esq., F.R.C.S., Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 27th May 1873, No. 973: —

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipt of Proceedings of Board of Revenue as per margin.

No. 792 of 14th May 1873.

2. In these Proceedings my opinion is desired as to the effect on the public health of the use of insufficiently salted fish, and on the use of salt fish as a part of the diet of the people of the Presidency generally.

3. In regard to the first question I am strongly of opinion that the use of semi-putrid fish is a frequent cause of sickness in the population of this Presidency; and I may state that I have formed this opinion, from personal observation, as a Medical Officer, and also from learning the views of other Medical Officers whose duties bring them into contact with the poorer classes of the population.

4. The forms of disease which such food is apt to induce, are derangements of the digestive organs, and especially diarrhœa and dysentery. In seasons when epidemic cholera is prevalent, any cause deranging the process of digestion is very apt to induce an attack of the prevailing epidemic, and the use of bad fish has been frequently noticed as a powerful determining cause of an attack.

5. It is a great mistake to suppose that the labouring population of this Presidency are indifferent to the use of animal food. Brahmins and some other castes whose daily occupations do not necessitate much expenditure of force are content with milk and ghee, as the equivalents of their animal diet, but nine-tenths of the people of South India, are flesh or fish consumers, and it is therefore a vital point in reference to public health, that the animal food, the people consume, should be brought before them in a wholesome condition.

6. That this is not the case in regard to fish, I have had abundant experience in my inspections of Municipal towns and markets. The order of the quarter in which fish is sold is generally enough to convince any one that much of the food exposed for sale is but partially cured. According to my observation, the *fresh water fishes* have always been more strikingly unwholesome as regards defective curing than the sea fish, and of course the explanation is to be found in the fact, that salt is more costly, and therefore more inadequately used in the curing of fresh fish, than when the salting is done on the sea coast.

7. I have observed the process of fish curing both on the eastern and western coasts, and I am quite satisfied that, as a rule, the amount of salt employed is insufficient to preserve the animal matter from undergoing decay. With many species of fish the process of curing consists simply of washing the fish in salt-water or brine, and drying the fish subsequently on the sea sand. The fish so cured, are affected subsequently by atmospheric changes and undergo a form of decomposition which practically makes them injurious as food. The fish curers in this country do not appear to be aware of the antiseptic properties of the smoke of wood fires in drying the fish, and the heat of the sun and air alone is trusted to.

8. With regard to the question as to the effects of good salt fish as an article of diet, I can only say that experience has proved that such food may be used with advantage, in moderation, by all classes of the people. As a matter of fact, salt fish is now used as food throughout the inland districts, and the consumption is only limited by the supply.

9. In the districts where coolies are employed on coffee plantations and elsewhere, when they receive their wages *in coin*, salt fish is very largely consumed, and probably the demand would be greater in the low country districts generally, if the servants of the ryots were more generally paid in money instead of a grain allowance and presents of cloths once or twice a year. The great fact to be borne in mind in dealing with this question is that the working population of the country, the population upon which the material wealth of the country depends, are in part animal feeders, and I think the experience of our jails has sufficiently demonstrated that such people cannot be kept in health for any length of time, while undergoing hard labour without a due allowance of animal food. Salted fish is a wholesome form of animal food, and that it forms an agreeable variety in the diet of the natives may be inferred from the avidity with which the people of the inland districts purchase it, even when in a more than doubtful condition as to wholesomeness.

10. Any measures which the Board and Government can devise for the increase of the supply of fish in a wholesome form as a portion of the food supply of the country, must, in my opinion, have only a good effect upon the public health.

SUBMITTED to Government in continuation of Board's Proceedings No. 792 dated 14th May 1873.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

H Goordiwy
Acting Sub-Secretary.

To the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.
Copy to the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras.

Exd. G. A. Turton.

24th June 1873 to 21-25.

21-25

1873.
BOARD of REVENUE,
MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 8TH JULY 1873, No. 1,225.

Encl.

Received 11 July 1873.

JULY.
No. 1,225.

Salt fish.—Letter from Sanitary Commissioner giving his opinion as to effect on public health of use of insufficiently salted fish, and on use of salt fish as a part of the diet of people of the Presidency generally, submitted to Government.

Govt Aug 1/73 No 810

Revenue Dept. 32

No. 810

Pros. of the Madras Govt
Under date the 5th August 1873.

Read the following
Pros. of the Board of Revenue

Submitting to Govt letter from Sanitary Commr. giving his opinion as to effect on public health of use of insufficiently salted fish, & on use of salt fish as a part of the diet of the people of the Residency generally.

H. E. 8 July 1873, No. 1225.

1. 22 April 1873, No. 424.

The Governor in Council awaits the report called for in the Proceedings noted in the margin.

To Bd Revenue
Govt 4-8-73

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Opinion of Surg. Commissioners
upon Surgeon's Certificate, in
favor of Dr. Fish on public Record