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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. 1088 Press

~~B.P. No.~~ Mis.

Dated 27-8-1874 ~~196~~

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
27th August 1874.

No. 255. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 10th August 1874, No. 2,185, Forest No. 128.

Read again Board's Proceedings, dated 29th May 1874, No. 1,290.

Read also the following letter from Captain C. WALKER, Offg. Inspector of Forests, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Coimbatore, 22nd June 1874, No. 163:—

With reference to Board's Proceedings, Forest No. 74, dated 29th May 1874, I have the honor to report that I entirely concur with the Collector of Coimbatore with regard to the great importance which attaches to the proper conservancy of the wooded springs and upper sholas on the Nilgiri Hills, and consider that the subject should have increased attention, and that local interests or revenues should not be permitted to weigh injuriously when the matter is one of general interest.

2. Putting aside the question of rain-fall and climate, there is no doubt, from the experience of every country, that denudation of the hill forests, results in disastrous floods, land-slips, and subsequent cessation of the flow of water during the hot months, caused by the drying up of the springs bereft of their wooded shelter.

3. With regard to the particular instance referred to by Mr. Wedderburn in which a wooded ravine at Taymullay was recently sold, I find, on a reference, that this was done with the approval of the Board and Government (*vide* Board's Proceedings, No. 1,840, dated 15th September 1873, and G. O., Revenue Department, No. 1,079, dated 9th October 1873) in accordance with which the land was exposed to public auction and purchased by a Native for a very large sum, upwards of Rupees 25,000.

4. I am not aware whether the amount has been paid, and not having visited the spot can offer no opinion as to whether the block in question should have been disposed of or not; but am informed that the purchaser is rapidly clearing the whole extent, which the owners of surrounding plantations deprecated throughout, and which, I fear, may have a prejudicial effect on the springs and water supply.

5. There are two points in the Proceedings quoted, which call for remark, *viz* :—

(1.) The Commissioner, in his letter submitting the application, states, paragraph 7 (1), that "if it is thought desirable at any time a plantation of Eucalyptus can be run up to compensate for the loss of the trees on the land under consideration".

(2.) The Board, in their Proceedings, paragraph 2, observe "that the Commissioner states that the *Forest Department* do not object to the assignment of the land".

On the first point, I would point out that it is doubtful whether any subsequent planting will revive springs dried up or decreased in consequence of denudation; that plantations of Eucalyptus are not "*run up*" so readily in exposed situations as the Commissioner infers, and invariably cost time and money to establish; and that, when the land has been sold, the Government lose all right to it, and cannot re-plant it at will. On the second point, the Board make the natural mistake, after perusal of the Commissioner's letter, of confounding the *Forest Department* with the local forest officer, then Captain [illegible] officer of but little experience in forest matters, and with no interests [illegible] those of the district in which he was employed. The *Forest Department* was never consulted at all, and the proceedings sanctioning the assignment of the land were not even communicated to the head of the department. Still more, former applications for this very block appear to have been refused on objections raised by the forest officer, then an officer of the Imperial and independent department. It is, therefore, erroneous to suppose that the Forest Department agreed to the transfer of the land; on the contrary, it objected to it successfully on former occasions, and was officially ignorant of it until the date of the present reference.

6. This discloses an evil in the present position of the department since the reorganization which would require to be carefully guarded against; for our officers are, so to speak, *local* under the present arrangements, and their independence of action must necessarily decrease each

year, unless they are encouraged to consider themselves as part of a homogeneous Imperial Department, directly responsible to Government as regards forest administration and conservancy.

7. I am informed that there are other applications at present for blocks of land similar to that at Taynullay, and would respectfully suggest that the greatest care be taken in dealing with them, and that, when any doubt exists as to the advisability of selling the land, the Board should refer the application, with the reports of the local officers, to the Inspector of Forests for his remarks to be submitted, if possible, after personal inspection in company with the Revenue and forest officers of the district.

8. Such alienations may not only be felt with reference to the water supply, but affect injuriously the working and consequent financial success of our plantations. For instance, at present those at Coonoor and Wellington much require thinning, which is delayed mainly on account of an absence of demand, consequent on the large quantities of timber and firewood thrown on the market from wholesale clearings by purchasers of forest lands.

9. With reference to this, I would draw the Board's attention to a point raised several years ago with reference to similar assignments on the Sherveroys, *viz.*, where forest land is granted and is exposed at, and realizes an enhanced price, *because* it is forest land, should not some portion of the amount realized be credited to *Forest* as apart from *Land* Revenue, whether Imperial or Local? This would appear to me only right, in order correctly to exhibit the financial results of the department. I believe that the point was mooted in this very case, in which the large price realized was mainly due to the value of the wooded portion.

Communicated to the Collector of Coimbatore and the Commissioner of the Nilgiris.

2. The Board entirely concur with the Inspector of Forests as to the importance of conserving forest on the Hills; but they believe the Commissioner to be equally aware of the importance of great caution in giving up forest land, and see no reason to doubt that Collectors as Conservators will be as careful in this matter as officers of the Forest Department used to be when it was a separate department. Mr. Wedderburn's letter is an instance in point. So long ago as 1868 Government ordered that no land on the Hills containing forest should be sold without their special sanction (G. O., dated 30th January 1868, No. 259.)

Board's Proceedings, 29th May 1874, No. 1,290, Forest No. 74.

3. As regards the particular case referred to by the Inspector of Forests, the wooded ravine sold under the sanction recorded in G. O., dated 9th October 1873, No. 1,079, the Board observe that the Commissioner reported that he had been on the spot himself, and that the land was not thickly wooded, but "of a park like character with clumps of trees and scattered trees upon it. The facts that the land was sold at an unusually high price, and that the purchaser is rapidly clearing the whole extent, seem to indicate that the forest was thicker and more valuable than the Commissioner supposed. He will report whether this was so.

No. 256. Order thereon, 27th August 1874, No. 1,088.

Miscellaneous. Recorded.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) C. G. MASTER,
Acting Secretary to Government.

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

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

1086/2

Govt. of [illegible] Madras

REVENUE.

To

THE BOARD OF REVENUE.

Dated August 27th.

Read.

Encl.

G. O. 27*th August* 1874, *No.* 1,088.

AUGUST.

Nos. 255-256.

Wooded springs and upper sholas on the eastern slopes of the Nilgiri Hills.—Recording the Board's Proceedings regarding the conservancy of the —.

† 1086/3

FOREST No. 74.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 29th May 1874, No. 1,290.

Read the following letter from A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 25th April 1874, No. 96:—

I HAVE the honour to request the attention of Government to the [illegible] conservancy of wooded springs and upper sholas on the eastern slopes of the Neilgiri Hills, in reference to the interests of irrigation under the channels of the Bowany river.

2. There has been a great denudation of upper sholas for coffee planting, but if, in future, the shola lands were spared, there would be secured a more continuous supply of water, even to the estates in dry weather, and less wash than occurs in the ravines, which they cover, during heavy rains, and which give rise to heavy but temporary floods during the north-east monsoon in the Bowany river, which requires a steady and continuous flow.

3. I am aware that the interests of coffee planting are very important, but there is also that of rice cultivation, and it would be well that grass land, and not [illegible] cultivated.

4. It recently struck me on inspection of the eastern slopes, the conservancy of which was last year vested in the Collectorate of Coimbatore, that some part of the ravine jungle recently sold, between the estates of Mrs. McIvor (wood lands) and Tye Mully, might have been advantageously reserved from the axe.

5. The conservancy of springs, swamps, and the consequent evaporation, and prospect of rain on the Hills, from whence the Bowany and its affluents come are most advantageous to the irrigation of the low country.

REFERRED to the Inspector of Forests for his remarks.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

(Signed) J. GROSE,
Secretary.

To the Inspector of Forests.
Copy to the Collector of Coimbatore.

Exd. T. O'Connor.

Rec. 29377/74

1874.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

Proceedings, 29th May 1874, No. 1290.

1088

Received 27 June 1874

Encl.

MAY.

Forest No. 74.

Wooded Springs and Upper sholahs— on eastern slopes of Nilgiri Hills — Letter from Collector of Coimbatore suggesting conservancy of —, referred to Inspector of Forests for his remarks.

FOREST No. 128.

Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 10th August 1874, No. 2,185.

Read again Board's Proceedings, dated 29th May 1874, No. 1,290.

Read also the following letter from Captain C. WALKER, Offg. Inspector of Forests, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Coimbatore, 22nd June 1874, No. 163:—

With reference to Board's Proceedings, Forest No. 74, dated 29th May 1874, I have the honor to report that I entirely concur with the Collector of Coimbatore with regard to the great importance which attaches to the proper conservancy of the wooded springs and upper sholas on the Nilgiri Hills, and consider that the subject should have increased attention, and that local interests or revenue should not be permitted to weigh injuriously when the matter is one of general interest.

2. Putting aside the question of rain-fall and climate, there is no doubt, from [illegible] ence in every country, that denudation of the hill forests results in disastrous floods and land-slips, and subsequent cessation of the flow of water during the hot months, caused by the drying up of the springs bereft of their wooded shelter.

3. With regard to the particular instance referred to by Mr. Wedderburn in which a wooded ravine at Taymullay was recently sold, I find, on a reference, that this was done with the approval of the Board and Government (*vide* Board's Proceedings No. 1,840, dated 15th September 1873, and G. O., Revenue Department, No. 1,079, dated 7th October 1873) in accordance with which the land was exposed to public auction and purchased by a Native for a very large sum, upwards of Rupees 25,000.

4. I am not aware whether the amount has been paid, and not having visited the spot can only express no opinion as to whether the block in question should have been disposed of or not; but am informed that the purchaser is rapidly clearing the whole extent, which the owners of surrounding plantations deprecated throughout, and which, I fear, may have a prejudicial effect on the springs and water supply.

5. There are two points in the Proceedings quoted, which call for remark, *viz*:—

(1.) The Commissioner, in his letter submitting the application, states, paragraph 7 (b), that "if it is thought desirable at any time a plantation of Eucalyptus can be run up to compensate for the loss of the trees on the land under consideration".

(2.) The Board, in their Proceedings, paragraph 2, "observe that the Commissioner states that the *Forest Department* do not object to the assignment of the land".

On the first point, I would point out that it is doubtful whether any subsequent planting will revive springs dried up or decreased in consequence of denudation; that plantations of Eucalyptus are not "*run up*" so readily in exposed situations as the Commissioner infers, and invariably cost time and money to establish; and that, when the land has been sold, Government lose all right to it, and cannot re-plant it at will. On the second point, the Board make the natural mistake, after perusal of the Commissioner's letter, of confounding the *Forest Department* with the local forest officer, then Captain Murray, an officer of but little experience in forest matters, and with no interests beyond those of the district in which he was employed. The Forest *Department* was never consulted at all, and the proceedings sanctioning the assignment of the land were not even communicated to the head of the department. Still more, former applications for this very block appear to have been refused on objections raised by the forest officer, then an officer of the Imperial and independent department. It is, therefore, erroneous to suppose that the Forest Department agreed to the transfer of the land; on the contrary, if objected to it successfully on former occasions, and was officially ignorant of it until the date of the present reference.

6. This discloses an evil in the present position of the Department since the re-organization which would require to be carefully guarded against; for all our officers are, so to speak, *local* under the present arrangements, and their independence of action must necessarily decrease each year, unless they are encouraged to consider themselves as part of a homogeneous Imperial Department, directly responsible to Government as regards forest administration and conservancy.

7. I am informed that there are other applications at present for blocks of land similar to that at Taymullay, and would respectfully suggest that the greatest care be taken in dealing with them, and that, when any doubt exists as to the advisability of selling the land, the Board

should refer the application, with the reports of the local officers, to the Inspector of Forests for his remarks to be submitted, if possible, after personal inspection in company with the Revenue and forest officers of the district.

8. Such alienations may not only be felt with reference to the water supply, but affect injuriously the working and consequent financial success of our plantations. For instance, at present those at Coonoor and Wellington much require thinning, which is delayed mainly on account of an absence of demand, consequent on the large quantities of timber and firewood thrown on the market from wholesale clearings by purchasers of forest lands.

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COMMUNICATED to the Collector of Coimbatore and the Commissioner of the Nilgiris.

2. The Board entirely concur with the Inspector of Forests as to the importance of conserving forest on the Hills; but they believe the Commissioner to be equally aware of the importance of great caution in giving up forest land, and see no reason to doubt that Collectors as Conservators will be as careful in this matter as officers of the Forest Department used to be when it was a separate department. Mr. Wedderburn's letter is an instance in point. So long ago as 1868 Government ordered that no land on the Hills containing forest should be sold without their special sanction (G. O., dated 20th January 1868, No. 259.)

Board's Proceedings, 29th May 1874, No. 1,290, Forest No. 74.

3. As regards the particular case referred to by the Inspector of Forests, the wooded ravine sold under the sanction accorded in G. O., dated 9th October 1873, the Board observe that the Commissioner reported that he had been on the spot himself, and that the land was not thickly wooded, but "of a park like character with clumps of trees and scattered trees upon it." The facts that the land was sold at an unusually high price, and that the purchaser is rapidly clearing the whole extent, seem to indicate that the forest was thicker and more valuable than the Commissioner supposed. He will report whether this was so.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

Secretary.

To the Collector of Coimbatore.
" the Commissioner of the Nilgiris,
with Board's Proceedings, dated 29th May 1874, No. 1,290, Forest No. 74.
Copy to the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, with do.
" the Inspector of Forests.

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

Received 10 August 1874.

Board of Revenue
MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 10TH AUGUST 1874, No. 2385.

AUGUST.
Forest No. 123.

Wooded Springs and upper Sholahs—on eastern slopes of Nilgiri Hills. Report of Inspector of Forests on subject of proper conservancy of communicated to Collector of Coimbatore and Commissioner of Nilgiris with remarks. Latter officer requested to report whether the wooded ravine referred to by Inspector of Forests and which has been sold, was thicker and more valuable than he supposed it to be when he reported on it on a former occasion.