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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue. DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	1254	Press
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Dated 2-10-1874 ~~196-~~.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 15. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 14th September 1874, No. 2,599:—

Read the following letter from W. R. ROBERTSON, Esq., M.R.A.C., Superintendent of Government Farms, to J. GROSE, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Sydapet, 15th July 1874:—

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of a Report, on the production of tobacco in India, with a copy of the Board's Proceedings, No. 781, dated the 8th of April 1874, in which I am directed to submit my opinions regarding the suggestions made in the Report.

2. In submitting the remarks I have to offer, I would observe that they refer chiefly to the conclusions and suggestions contained in the latter half of Chapter XIV.

3. To improve the quality of the tobacco now produced in this country up to the standard of European taste, and, to increase the yield, per acre, appear to be the objects to be secured; and, it is suggested that in the efforts to secure these desirable results, the general agricultural practice of the country will be benefited.

4. It is certainly very desirable that, in a few well selected localities, in which the soil and climate are favorable, some attempts should be made to produce and manufacture a tobacco suited for the requirements of Europe; but, I venture to think that, very little permanent good would result from any general, indiscriminate, attempt to raise Indian tobacco generally to the European standard of excellence.

5. The evidence, in the Report itself, is quite conclusive, as to the *great* inferiority of ordinary Indian tobacco. A very large number of samples of Indian tobacco, from various parts of India, have recently been examined chemically, and but an exceedingly small number of these samples were found to possess any merit, sufficient to afford a reasonable hope that, if great care and skill is bestowed on the cultivation and the curing of such tobaccos, the extra value of the produce will be equal to the additional expense that must necessarily be incurred. Indeed, more than one-half of the samples were found to be so radically bad, that it would be an utter waste of time and money to employ the services of trained tobacco-growers in an attempt to grow a superior tobacco on the soils on which such tobaccos are produced. The defects, it must be remembered, are not merely in the curing, but are in the constituents of the leaf itself; no skill in curing, or, in manipulating the leaf, will compensate for this. The fact that we have, in this country, to deal with an arable soil, which has, for centuries, been subjected to an exhausting surface culture, and, is now, in the majority of instances, reduced to a state fitted only to provide the sustenance of low type crops, is generally lost sight of by the non-agricultural writers, who, advocate the claims of India to be considered the tobacco producing country for Europe.

6. It is true that, by the deeper and better cultivation of the soil, with the free use of suitable manures much can be done to remove the defects noticed in the last paragraph; but then, where are the cattle to be found for the deep ploughing? or, where is the manure to be obtained? if, the other departments of a sound agricultural practice do not at the same time receive corresponding attention. If we must plough deeper, we must have better cattle, and, must produce crops suited for feeding such cattle; while, we cannot provide the manure needed, unless our present wretched practice undergoes an entire change for the better.

7. The fact is, no permanent good was ever done to the agriculture of a country, in which, the majority of the cultivators are uneducated, by specially stimulating the production of any special kind of agricultural produce; witness, for example, the results of the exertions of Government in attempting to increase the production of superior flax in Ireland; though, for many years, large grants of money were made to encourage flax culture, and, a large number of instructors were employed to teach Irish Farmers better methods of flax cultivation, the results produced were extremely unsatisfactory; it was only after Government had seen fit to take up the question of *general* agricultural improvement in Ireland, and had established Elementary and advanced Agricultural Schools in various parts of the country that any perceptible improvement took place

in the production of flax in Ireland; and, I might invite attention to the results of efforts made in this country to promote the production of special kinds of agricultural produce; for instance, what has been the result of the vast expenditure that has been incurred in the endeavour to induce Indian ryots to produce a better kind of cotton? If, instead of spending so much time and money in the effort to improve the cotton produced in this country, a corresponding effort had been made to improve Indian agricultural practice generally, there would undoubtedly have been considerable permanent improvements in the quality of the cotton now produced. I fear that no better results would follow any attempt made to improve the quality of Indian tobacco, than were achieved in the endeavour to improve Indian cotton, if, the same means only are to be employed.

8. If, under the effect of an artificial stimulant, a few ryots could be induced to devote more care upon the culture of tobacco, I altogether fail to see how this would react for good on the *general* agricultural practice of the country; the carefully cultivated cotton farms have had no such effect, and, it is not to be supposed that a few isolated plots of fairly tilled soil, planted with tobacco, will be more effective in this direction. It is quite time that the highly pernicious belief that example, even aided by self-interest, will alone be sufficient to induce ryots to adopt better system of cultivation, should be abandoned. The fact is, these means were never sufficient in any country; even in highly civilized England—example and self-interest—have no chance in the balance against—ignorance and prejudice—take, as an instance, the history of Mr. Mechi's efforts on his farm in Essex, though, he has, for upwards of twenty years, produced splendid results by his farming, and, has convinced every educated agriculturist of the soundness of the principles on which he conducts his farming operations, the fact remains that in his own district, some of the worst farming in the United Kingdom is found, and, it is not to be supposed that, the Farmers in the neighbourhood of his farm are less anxious to make money than are their better educated brethren in other parts of the Kingdom, who have adopted the superior practice that is pursued on Mr. Mechi's farm; and, many similar instances, might easily be brought forward.

9. I am thoroughly convinced that, the cotton, tobacco, and other agricultural productions of India are capable of being greatly improved; but, I believe that such improvement can be effected, permanently, only by improving the general agricultural practice of the country. Instead of trusting the improvement of the agricultural practice of India to the results of a well directed effort to improve the cultivation of tobacco, I would venture to suggest, that good results in the improvement of, not only tobacco, but, all agricultural productions, would be more likely to result, from a well directed attempt to improve the general practice of our cultivators.

10. It will be seen, from the foregoing observations, that I do not think it likely that much good would result in an attempt to improve Indian tobacco generally, by engaging the services of skilled tobacco growers to teach Indian ryots better methods of tobacco cultivation. But, I am decidedly of the opinion that, it would be possible, with such aid, to produce in certain well selected parts of India, a tobacco that would meet with a ready demand in Europe; but to effect this, it would be necessary to begin at the very beginning, indeed, to create a new industry, and to carry on the manufacture by Government Agency. The curing and preparation of tobacco for use, is a manufacturing process; in Europe, it is seldom the duty of the Farmer to do more than bring the tobacco he produces into a condition fit for being sent in safety to the factory, where it undergoes the curing operations. These factories are provided with every aid and appliance that science and skill can suggest, and, are directed by thoroughly trained managers. In the tobacco growing States of America, no tobacco plantation is complete without a curing-house provided with stoves, hot air flues, etc., or, with boilers, hot water pipes, etc., for drying the leaf, and so constructed that the inside temperature can be raised or reduced at pleasure. Compare these elaborate arrangements with the primitive and rude means at the disposal of the ryot, and, it will not be difficult to decide why, even when he grows good tobacco, he altogether fails in preparing it fit for the fastidious taste of markets that are regularly supplied with tobacco, in the preparation of which so much skill has been devoted.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
2nd October 1874.

11. Tobacco curing is not the mysterious process it is generally supposed to be; the difficulties to be encountered in an attempt to cure some of our best tobaccos, in a way that will suit them for the European markets, are chiefly those connected with—ways and means. If, until private enterprise will undertake the work, Government will provide, in a few well selected localities, Central Depôts, in which the tobacco grown in the surrounding districts can be deposited, and there cured and prepared for the market by trained men under a competent Director; I see no reason why the tobacco produced should not be fully equal to that which now supplies the European markets.

12. Possibly one or two of the District Farms, to be established, might be connected with some such Curing Depôts as I have suggested. Three districts; Coimbatore, Trichinopoly, and the Nilgiris, seem suited, but of the three, I should much prefer the last mentioned, both as regards climate and soil. I believe that no where in the Presidency have we such favorable conditions both for growing and curing tobacco as are met with on the Neilgherry Hills. If a Farm is established in that district, the raising of tobacco on a large scale, might well be undertaken; a trained tobacco-curer might be attached to it, and the factory might have the valuable aid of Mr. Broughton, if his services could occasionally be spared.

13. We must seek our tobacco-soils in thinly populated localities, in which, the exhausting culture universal in this country, has not yet seriously injured the soil. Tobacco requires a very fertile soil, and, it is an exceedingly exhausting crop; it needed but a few years of constant cropping with tobacco and maize, to exhaust the rich virgin soils in the south eastern States of America. The Americans are now fully alive to the disastrous effects produced by the culture of tobacco under improper conditions, one of the most difficult problems they have yet to solve is, how to bring back into cultivation the thousands of acres of abandoned land that has been ruined by tobacco cultivation. The Agricultural newspapers published in Virginia, and in the adjoining States, are now giving great attention to the manuring of tobacco; in fact [illegible] manures, farmers are thus advised to use, cost less than 5£ per acre. Until our cultivators, generally, are as enterprising, I fear that they can never compete with any chance of success, with the Americans, and other producers of tobacco.

Submitted to Government, in continuation of Board's Proceedings, dated 13th August 1874, No. 2,228.

No. 16. Order thereon, 2nd October 1874, No. 1,254.

Miscellaneous.

Recorded with reference to G. O., 7th September 1874, No. 1,144.

(True Extract.)

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

To the Board of Revenue.

Exd. G. A. Turton.

3/1254

No. 2,599.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 14th September 1874.

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SUBMITTED to Government, in continuation of Board's Proceedings, dated 13th August 1874, No. 2,228.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

Acting Sub-Secretary.

To the Acting Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.
Copy to the Superintendent, Government Farms.

Exd. G. A. Turton.

No. 3433

[illegible]

Rev. 1874. Depl

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

PROCEEDINGS, 14TH SEPTEMBER 1874, No. 2,599

Dept 29 Sept 1874. Encl.

Received — 30 —

No 1251 — 2 October 1874

SEPTEMBER.

No. 2,599.

Tobacco Cultivation—Report of Superintendent Government Farms on subject of importing a skilled tobacco grower and curer from Manill or elsewhere to instruct native agriculturists etc., in —, submitted to Government.

G.O. 7 Sept/74 No 82-83

No 1257

Recorded with Reference to P.O. 7 Sept/74 No. 1144 ...

15-16