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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

REVENUE DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. ~~B.P. No.~~ 1405 — Press / Mis.

Dated 12-4-1877 ~~197~~.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

1405

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
12th April 1877.

Famine Relief.

No. 282. Read the following Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 3rd April 1877:—

Read the following letter from A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., Collector of Coimbatore, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Coimbatore, 27th March 1877, No. 103.

IN submitting my report on the progress of famine-relief and state of the district, I have the honor to note that the incidence of distress was provided against by the earliest possible measures of proposed relief; that plans were organised in the month of November, and sanctioned before there was immediate need of their being carried into effect: and, therefore, the progress of relief operations has been gradual, with a tendency to increase as the season advanced without improvement, and as agricultural operations by degrees diminished, and then in some places entirely ceased.

2. That there was a great decrease of agricultural operations in the months of December and January, when, in ordinary times, a large breadth of dry cultivation would naturally have been harvested, was evident enough from my inspection of the dry crops, which, for the most part, were not worth harvesting, though, to a considerable extent, they afforded a fodder for the cattle.

3. The worst taluqs as regards failure of produce, so far as I could judge from inspection or information, were Palladam, Oodumalpetta, Erode, Dharapuram, and Caroor.

4. A large part of the Coimbatore Taluq, away from the well cultivation which is characteristical of the drainage line of the Noyal Valley, suffered equally as regards dry crops; even where, from better land and along the western extremity of the taluq, the heads had formed, there was scarcely any grain in them. This was the case where the dry crop had not the supplement of a well, but, even with such assistance, the yield was far below par.

5. As regards relief operations, these commenced in Oodamalpetta on the 25th November 1876. Mr. McWatters was next in the field on the 27th November. The Tahsildar of Erode, an elderly official, but of great energy and resource, at once collected tools and organised gangs in the Erode Taluq. Then, Mr. Gordon Mackenzie got relief operations well started in Palladam on the 7th December; but this being so extensive a taluq and Oodumalpetta requiring an officer for itself, I obtained the services of Mr. J. H. Cook, of the Survey, who has been most energetic; all these officers have turned out most excellent work.

6. Task-labor being insisted on from the first, there was no possibility of making an easy livelihood, while the early institution of relief prevented any distress coming to a head. The consequence has been that the laborers are in fair case.

7. In my own division, I found of the artisans of the Town, almost only one class, the weavers in distress. Suitable task-work was found for them; they were, of course, not such good workers as those inured to agricultural implements. About 1,500 were employed, but on the reduction of the men's wage from about 2 annas to 1-6, and others in proportion, a number including also some coolies from adjacent villages went away, as they said the reduced wage could not support them.

8. The gradual increase is thus, if it needs any explanation, explained.

9. As regards the northern division it soon appeared that Collegal was in no need of relief, the wages attracted no one, higher were demanded, and other means of employment visible. No works were, therefore, prosecuted there.

10. In the Balaghaut or highland division of Sattiamangalam, the Deputy Tahsildar had sounded a note of alarm, and funds were at once provided; but further inquiry showed that in this sparsely-peopled region there was no real demand for work, and the villagers there generally have stores above their own wants. Large fields are cultivated with dry grains at a very easy assessment. The Deputy Tahsildar was found to be an untrustworthy alarmist.

11. As regards Sattiamangalam proper, the wet harvest of the five channels of the Bhowany occupied for some time the laboring class. At its completion, however, there seems a demand for labor, and consequently the repair of the main roads traversing this very important taluq were put in hand for an effective improvement.

12. Bhowany is more than half highland, a grazing country [illegible] inhabitants. In the line of the Cauvery, however, there are villages from Cauveripuram to Bhowany, an important road totally neglected in favor of a ghaut line over the Burghoor range of hills, involving a lift and descent of 2,000 feet constructed at considerable expense; but from the lift and the uninhabited nature of the country, not ever likely to be frequented. The Cauveripuram, an old native track connecting villages, was therefore put in hand, and progress is being made under Mr. C. A. Mackenzie Deputy Collector's supervision.

Near the cusbah Bhowany there are important roads leading in all directions; these are being well repaired.

13. I have now gone a round of the district. Rs. 1,89,490 have been spent up to 24th March, but there is ample to show for the money the people have not as yet suffered. Provision has been made by estimates up to Rupees 4,98,000 for the continuance of work for several months. and whatever irrigation works need repair are being taken in hand. These are chiefly clearance of silted channels, which is an easy work suited for unskilled labor; the rates are the same as in the Public Works Department.

14. Railway feeders, wherever there was an opening for them, have been entered in the list of works. The district in general is very fairly connected already with the railway, but further access is being given to some new trial-line stations.

15. The ordinary wages which were 2, 1½, and 1 anna sufficed at first to maintain the workers and their dependents. *These included the whole of the industrious* and necessitous poor. Professional beggars are a different class. So long as gratuitous relief can be obtained, they wander about and gravitate towards large villages or cusbah towns.

16. Where these have collected, beyond the power of private charity, a Government contribution is being afforded, but this will not be extended to such as can earn their own livelihood.

17. Relief Committees, composed of leading inhabitants as well as officials, are being organised at the probable centres of relief. This was not begun at first, because the institution of Government relief removes the incentive to native charity, and it is as well to keep this resource in hand till the need exceeds the inclination of the gratuitous relievers, whose charity is as may be supposed, somewhat indiscriminate.

18. There has been a very severe visitation of cholera, which shows but little sign of abatement. For the most part it has been of a sporadic nature, but a recent attack in a village near Coimbatore was most remarkable, and so far as the Civil Surgeon's and my inquiries went inexplicable. Our inquiries were directed as to whether there was evidence of contagion, but the first person attacked had not apparently been in an infected locality. The village was on high and open ground, cleaner than ordinary villages, not in a distressed part of the taluq. No damaged grain had apparently been used, but 39 persons were taken ill and died in the short space of twelve days out of a total number of 52 attacked in a population of 90.

19. My Dresser was at once despatched with medicine, a cholera shed was built, houses were fumigated, but all to little effect. The water used was from the usual well, the water of which was taken for analysis and found to be organically free from any pollution. It is the ordinary step well of the country. There was an outbreak of cholera at Mettapolliam in the beginning of last month. I had been there on several occasions to improve the sanitary state of the place, organised a dispensary and sick sheds in case of need. The total number attacked were 70, of whom 42 died. They were some from Coffee estates, others residents. They were attended by the Hospital Assistant formerly stationed by Government at this place, and now entertained by the new Municipality. A large and valuable stock of medicines has been procured at the expense of the Local Fund Board, and the dispensary is likely to be a great boon to the place.

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20. The more valuable cattle of the ryots were taken care of; there is no sensible depreciation of this stock. But of the inferior animals possessed by the poorer cultivators there have been considerable sales owing to inability to maintain them in the absence of fodder and pastures. Even the hill-pasturage were insufficient. Besides the usual grazing stock in the north of the district where a breed of cattle resembling that of Mysore is raised. Herds were driven up to the Sattiamungalum hills, only to find deficient grass and no water. Still further north in the Bhowany Taluq Mr. Mackenzie saw great ravages of murrain which even attacked deer and bison. This was also observed in another part of the hills by the Deputy Conservator of Forests, North Coimbatore.

21. On the hills in the west I learned, from personal inquiry, the cattle on the Nilgiri slopes still have a maintenance. In the south I inspected the lower ranges of the Anamallays early in January. These presented the appearance of March as to season. The grass up to 4,000 feet was all dried up, and the cattle roved about apparently eating leaves. The ryots do not like taking their cattle to the higher ranges, 6,000 feet, as the cold piercing dry winds are very unfavorable to stock.

The year will, therefore, be an unfavorable one for cattle.

22. There has been a gradual depression of water in wells. But these have been, and are still being, deepened.

23. The working staff of the district has been increased by one European officer, Mr. J. H. Cook, of the Survey, and by numerous Native subordinates of the Survey and Settlement Departments. The supervision, though arduous, is not beyond control. Three Tahsildars have distinguished themselves.

24. Tahsildar of Erode, the oldest official, but not the least effective. He was complemented by Sir Richard Temple on the state of his relief gangs.

Of the younger men, Seetharamiah, Tahsildar of Palladam, received also commendation. The Caroor Tahsildar, Natt Streenivas Row, also a recent appointment, has well justified his selection. These officers have worked well and effectually, and I am glad to notice calmness without the tendency to exaggeration and honest work.

Others have come short. Some have apparently, by their habits, incapacitated themselves from active exertion so needed in a time of emergency, thus throwing a much greater weight of anxiety and exertion on their European superiors; such apply for sick certificate when a press of work comes on. Their case, however, will be considered hereafter; meanwhile, all now in employment are reported effective.

25. I have only further to add that the origin of a remarkable fluctuation in the numbers relieved arose from the order prescribing that the numbers on a certain day were to be recorded. This might be pay-day when no work was in hand, or it might be that a day or two intervened, when shifting numbers from one work to another, but the practice now is when there is a day's stoppage on the day of report, to enter the previous day's numbers; otherwise the return as a comparison would be quite fallacious.

26. It may be premature to offer an opinion as to the total number which may come on relief, and however may fall when ploughing follows. The ground is ploughed many times before the seed is sown and even when it is never sown. This may relieve works to some extent of the poorer cultivators. Judging from the past and the gradual increase, the numbers having been kept down by somewhat rigid task-work, I should hope not to exceed Rupees 30,000. But for the task-work Mr. McWatters is of opinion, and I agree with him, that our numbers would have been doubled, but allowing that Rupees 30,000 are not exceeded. The projected relief-works, over four lakhs of Rupees, of which up to date 19-10 lakhs have been spent, seem likely to meet the emergency.

SUBMITTED to Government.

2. The Collector seems to have his works well under control, and to have gauged the extent of distress in his district with considerable accuracy.

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Revenue Department,
12th April 1877.

3. The outbreak of cholera reported in paragraph 18 is very remarkable. It is satisfactory to learn that most of the Tahsildars and other officers have been found equal to the emergency.

(A true Copy and Extract.)

(Signed) H. E. STOKES,
Secretary.

No. 283. ORDER THEREON, 12th April 1877, No. 1,405.

Miscellaneous.

RECORDED.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) J. H. GARSTIN,
Additional Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.
,, the Financial Department.
,, the Public Works Department.

Exd. F. R. Bantleman.

1405
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Govt. of 1877 Madras.

REVENUE.

To

The BOARD of REVENUE,

&c., &c., &c.

Dated April, 12th. Encl.

Recd.

G.O., 12th April 1877, No. 1,405

APRIL.

Nos. 282-283.

FAMINE RELIEF, No. 946.

Relief-works in the Coimbatore District.—Recording Board's Proceedings submitting report on the progress of —.

No 282 Read the foll

1405/4 1

Revenue Dept.

Proceedings of the Bd of Rev

dated 3rd April 1877.

Read the following

No 103.

Docket No 3276.

From

A. Wedderburn Esqre

Collector of Coimbatore

To

H. E. Stokes Esqre

Secretary to the

Bd of Rev. Madras

Sir,

In submitting my report on the progress of famine relief & state of the distt, I have the honor to note that the increase of distress was provided against by the earliest possible measures of proposed relief – that plans were organized in the month of Novr & sanctioned before there was immediate need of their being carried into effect, & therefore the progress of relief operations has been gradual, with a tendency to increase as the season advanced without improvement & as agricultural operations by degrees diminished & then in some places entirely ceased.

2. That there was a great decrease of agricultural operations in the months of Decr-Jany which in ordinary times a large breadth of dry cultivation would naturally have been harvested was evident enough from my inspection of the dry crops which for the most part were not worth harvesting, tho' to a considerable extent they afforded a fodder for the cattle.

3. The worst Talooqas as regards failure of produce so far as I could judge from inspection or information were Palladam, Oodamalpeta Erode Dharapuram

& Karoor.

4. A large part of the Coimbatore Taluq, away from the well cultivation, which is characteristical of the drainage line of the Noyel valley suffered equally as regards dry crops, even where from better lands & along the western extremity of the Taluq the heads had formed there was scarcely any grain in them. This was the case where the dry crop had ~~not~~ the supplement of a well but even with such assistance, the yield was far below par.

5. As regards relief operations these commenced in Udamalpeta on the 25th Novr/76. Mr McWatters was next in the field on the 27th Novr. The Tahsildar of Erode, an elderly official but of great energy & resource at once collected tools & organized gangs in the Erode Taluq. Then Mr Gordon Mackenzie got relief operations well started in Palladam on the 7th Decr - but this being so extensive a Taluq & Udamelpetta requiring

an Officer for itself I obtained the services of Mr J. H. Cook of the Survey who has been most energetic. all these Officers have turned out most excellent work.

6. Task labor being insisted on from the first there was no possibility of making an easy livelihood while the early institution of relief prevented any distress coming to a head. The consequence has been that the laborers are in fair case.

7. In my own division I found of the artisans of the Town, almost only one class - the weavers in distress suitable task work was found for them they were of course not such good workers as those inured to agricultural implements, about 1500 were employed but on the reduction of the man's wage from about 2 annas to 1-6 & others in proportion, a number including also some coolies from adjacent villages went away as they said the reduced wage could not support them.

8. The gradual increase is thus, if it needs any explanation, explained.

9. As regards the Northern Division it soon appeared that Kollegal was in no need of relief. The wages attracted no one, higher were demanded & other means of employment visible. No works were therefore prosecuted there.

10. In the Halaghaut or high land division of Sattiamangalam the Dy. Tahsildar had sounded a note of alarm, & funds were at once provided but further enquiry shewed that in this sparsely peopled region, there was no real demand for work & the villagers there generally have stores above their own wants. Large fields are cultivated with dry grains at a very easy assesst. The Dy. Tahsildar was found to be an untrustworthy alarmist.

11. As regards Sattiamangalam proper the fine wet harvest of the channels of the Bhowany occupied for some time the laboring class. At its completion however

there seemed a demand for labour & consequently the repair of the main roads traversing this very important Taluq were put in hand for an effective improvement.

12. Bhowany is more than half high land, a grazing country with few inhabitants. In the line of the Cauvery however, there are villages from Cauveripuram to Bhowany. An important road totally neglected in favor of a short line over the Burghoor range of hills involving a lift & descent of 2000 ft constructed at considerable expense but from the lift & the uninhabited nature of the country not ever likely to be frequented. The Caveripuram, an old native track connecting villages was therefore put in hand & progress is being made under Mr C A Mackenzie by Coll'rs supervision.

Near the cusbah Bhowany there are important roads leading in all directions these are being well repaired.

13. I have now gone a

roads of the Distt. Rs 189490 have been spent upto 24th March but there is ample to shew for the money. the people have not as yet suffered. Provision has been made by estimates upto Rs 498000 for the continuance of work for several months & whatever irrigation works need repair, are being taken in hand. These are chiefly clearance of silted channels, which is an easy work suited for unskilled labor the rates are the same as in the D.P.W.

Railway

14. Railway feeders, where ever there was an opening ~~of~~ for them have been entered in the list of works. The Distt in general is very fairly connected already with the Railway, but further access is being given to some new trial line stations.

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18. There has been a very severe visitation of Cholera which shews but little sign of abatement. For the most part it has been of a sporadic nature but a recent attack ~~near~~ in a village near Coimbatore was most remarkable & so

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1405/13/10

Local Fund Board & the dispensary is likely to be a great boon to the place.

20. The more valuable cattle of the ryots were taken away & there is no sensible depreciation of this stock. But of the inferior animals possessed by the poorer cultivators there have been considerable sales owing to inability to maintain them in the absence of fodder & pastures. Even the hill pasturage were insufficient. Besides the usual grazing stock in the north

of the hills where a breed of cattle resembling that of Mysore is raised. Herds were driven up to the Sattiamangalam hills, only to find deficient grass & no water. Still further North in the Bhowany Taluq Mr Mackenzie saw great ravages of murrain which even attacked deer & bison. This was also observed in another part of the hills by the Dy Conservator of Forests North Coimbatore.

21 On the hills in the west

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The year will therefore be an unfavorable one for cattle.

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23. The working staff of the Distt. has been increased by one European Officer Mr J. H. Cook of the Survey & by numerous native subordinates of the Survey & Settlement Deptts. The supervision though arduous is not beyond control. Three Tahsildars have distinguished themselves.

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such apply for sick certificate when a press of work comes on. Their case however will be considered hereafter. Meanwhile all now in employment are reported effective.

25 I have only further to add ~~that~~ the origin of a remarkable fluctuation in the numbers relieved arose from the order prescribing that the number on a certain day were to be recorded. This might be pay day when no work was in hand, or it might be

1405/17/14

that a day or two intervened when shifting numbers from one work to another, but the practice now is when there is a days stoppage on the day of report to enter the previous days numbers otherwise the return as a comparison would be quite fallacious.

26. It may be premature to offer an opinion as to the total number which may come on relief & however may fall when ploughing follows. The ground is ploughed many times before the seed is sown & even when it is never sown. The many relieve works to some extent of the poorer cultivators. Judging from the past & the gradual increase, the numbers having been kept down by somewhat rigid task work I should hope not to exceed 30000. But for the task work Mr McNatten is of opinion & I agree with him that our numbers would have been doubled but allowing that 30000 are not exceeded. The projected relief works over

4 lacs of Rs, of which up to
date 19/10 lacs have been
spent, seem likely to
meet the emergency.

Coimbatore
Collr's Office
27th March /77

I have &c
(Sd) A Martindale
for Collr

Submitted to Govt.

The Collr seems to have his works well under control & to have guaged the extent of distress in his Distt with considerable accuracy.

The outbreak of cholera reported in para 18 is very remarkable.

It

1405/18 15

It is satisfactory to learn that most of the Tahsildars & other officers have been found equal to the emergency.

(True Copy & Extract)

J Ensor
Secretary

To The Actg Secretary to Govt
Rev. Deptt

[illegible]

Rev. 1877 Sept
7 P. 2152

Pro. of the Bd of
Rev.

Dated 3d Apl/77
Desp 3 —
Recd 4 —

Submitting
a letter from
the Collr. of Coim
batore reporting
on the progress
of Famine relief
in his Distt.

With order

GO 12 April/77 No. 1405

No 1406 —

Recorded
9/4/77 D.F. 12 April 1877