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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue

DEPARTMENT

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

FINANCIAL DEPARTMENT.

1st March 1877, No. 767.

Famine Relief.

Read the following paper :—

No. 14. *From Major T. G. CLARKE, Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Bangalore, 15th February 1877, No. 11,606—F. 40.*

I am desired to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 508, of 10th instant, in which you intimate that large numbers of people are flocking from this territory to the famine relief works and feeding houses in the Bellary and Cuddapah Districts, as well as to the Wynaad, "in the hope of securing the means of subsistence," that efforts have been made, but without success, to eliminate these people from the works and relief houses in Bellary and Cuddapah; and that, recognising "the serious risk involved in sending away to Mysore territory large numbers of distressed folk," the Madras Government have given the Collectors of those Districts and Malabar instructions to make arrangements for providing relief and work for these people, with the intention of demanding that the expenditure so incurred be defrayed by the Mysore State.

2. The Chief Commissioner cannot disguise the surprise which he has felt on receiving this communication, and trusts that His Grace in Council will, on a further consideration of the circumstances which have led to the migration of a certain proportion of the people in the border districts of Mysore into Her Majesty's territory, be induced to withdraw from the intention expressed in your letter.

3. It is undoubtedly true that considerable numbers have left their villages in the three districts of Chitaldroog, Tumkur, and Kolar, and that some portion of these have betaken themselves to the relief works and feeding houses in the adjoining districts; but from the inquiries that have been made, the Chief Commissioner is satisfied that, so far as relates to the migration into Her Majesty's Districts, the cause is to be found, not in any omission on the part of this Administration to provide the people with the means of subsistence, but in the fact, which Mr. Saunders understands admits of no denial, that the system on which works and gratuitous relief have been established in the Bellary and Cuddapah Districts has proved a strong temptation to the Mysore people to seek employment and food on the easiest possible terms.

4. In this Province, the Chief Commissioner has, from the first, made it a rule that a light task or piece-work should be exacted from more or less all persons employed on relief works, while it is a matter of notoriety, that, in the works carried on over the frontier, such persons have received a fixed daily wage, for which hitherto no equivalent labor has been exacted. As regards gratuitous relief also, operations have been, it is understood, conducted in the Madras District on certainly a most liberal and philanthropic scale, and it is not surprising that the Mysore people should have been largely attracted by the expectations they had formed of obtaining relief on much more favorable terms than they could have obtained it on this side of the frontier.

5. Another cause which has been assigned by the District Officers as contributing in some measure to the migration eastward has been the desire, on the part of the petty ryots, to evade the land revenue demand, which, after full consideration, the Chief Commissioner decided to enforce to a certain limited extent. Though the number of the kists was increased from four to seven, the payment of the first four kists has been made imperative on all those who were in a condition to pay, and the Chief Commissioner can only regard it as an unfortunate circumstance that a system of relief operations should have prevailed in the Madras Districts which is calculated to defeat the efforts made to collect the revenue, as well as the earnest endeavours made by this Administration to abstain from any measures which would produce a demoralizing effect on the people, and weaken their sense of self-reliance.

6. The Chief Commissioner has been unable to obtain any precise statistics on the subject, but he has ample grounds for believing that the migration from the three districts referred to above has been chiefly in the direction of the western taluqs of this Province and Coorg, to which, from an early period in this season of scarcity, the people were reported to be proceeding in large numbers, accompanied by their cattle, in quest of labor on public works, and on the coffee estates, and also of forage and water for their cattle. As His Grace in Council will be aware the labor required for the coffee estates in the Wynaad and elsewhere, not only during the crop-picking season, but throughout the year's operations, is ordinarily supplied from this Province.

Under present circumstances, it is natural that the influx into Wynaad, as well as into Coorg and Munjerabad, should have increased to some extent, and perhaps beyond the means of the employers of labor in those districts to meet the demand. In any aspect of the case, it would have been inexpedient for this Government to make any attempt to check the movement, the result of which has, it is believed, so far profited the planters, that they have been able to obtain labor on cheaper terms than formerly; and had any attempt been made to interfere with the labor market, Mr. Saunders feels convinced that as strong objections would have been raised to the measure as were, it will be remembered, advanced in reference to the supposed interference with the exportation of grain from the Mysore country. The contingency of having to provide for the numbers returning from the plantations was, however, foreseen, and along the whole extent of the western frontier as well as in Coorg, and in the central parts of Mysore, new road and other works have been opened, and all practicable means taken to afford relief and work, on an extensive scale, for those who need it. From Goondulpet onwards, on the Nilgiri road and on the Manantoddy road, to the northern and eastern frontiers of the Ashtagram Division, as well as from Periapattam on the Coorg road, relief kitchens have been established at convenient distances to meet the requirements of the returning coolies, and separate officers have been already appointed to the special charge of the relief arrangements on these roads. Full information in regard to work provided has been sent to the Secretary to the Planters' Association in Wynaad, and to the Commissioner of the Nilgiris, with printed notices in the vernacular, for the information of the returning coolies, of the localities where works are in progress and can be obtained.

Under these arrangements, the coolies are now returning with their earnings at the rate of from three to four hundred per diem to the Province.

7. The Chief Commissioner feels assured that the Madras Government, in arriving somewhat suddenly at the conclusion stated in your letter, have acted, on an

erroneous assumption of facts, and there is further evidence of this in the assertion contained in your last paragraph where you say that "the rates of wages in Mysore are understood to be the same as in this (the Madras) Presidency." On this point, I am to remark that, though the wages earned on relief works in this Province might amount to 2 Annas 6 Pies per diem, the rates adopted vary from 1 Anna to 1 Anna 4 Pies per cubic yard of excavation, and it is only on works of a character that do not admit of exact test, that a daily wage of 2 Annas and in some cases 2 Annas 6 Pies per diem is paid.

8. Under this explanation of the procedure that has been adopted in this Province, the Chief Commissioner trusts that His Grace in Council will see that it is impossible for him to assent to the suggestions made in paragraph 5 of your letter; and I am desirous to add the expression of his opinion that such portion of the Mysore population as continues to find employment and relief in the Madras District, the number of which must, however, be considerably reduced by the measures already taken to turn these people off the works and feeding houses, will speedily return, if the inducements heretofore existing are withdrawn. The arrangements made by this Administration are calculated to provide adequately both work and gratuitous relief for those of its own population who are in need of these several forms of relief, and Mr. Saunders must respectfully protest against the proposal to throw upon this Government the charge of maintaining those of its population who find it convenient and profitable to remain in Foreign territory.

No. 15. To the Chief Commissioner of Mysore, dated Fort St. George, 1st March 1877, No. 767.

I am directed by His Grace the Governor in Council to acknowledge receipt of your reply, dated 15th, to my letter of 10th February, No. 508, and to observe that it seems more essential to consider how the large numbers of Mysore folk now in this Presidency shall be kept from starvation than to discuss conjectural causes which may have led to their increase by some few thousands. Whether laxity on the part of any particular officer on some portion of an extended frontier, or the desire of the people themselves to evade the pressure of the Mysore revenue officials or to escape the pangs of hunger in the prevailing scarcity, the fact remains that there are at the present time in this Presidency a very large number of Mysore laborers dependent on others for means of livelihood.

2. Of those in the Wynaad a large proportion are doubtless the ordinary plantation labor supply of the year, but the demand for these was less and ceased earlier than usual owing to the season, while a large and extraordinary number of men, women, and children have flocked into the district in the hopes of finding a demand for labor which does not exist, and a similar influx has taken place at various other points on the frontier.

3. That many of those in the Wynaad are in distress is testified from personal observation by Colonel Kennedy, the experienced District Engineer, writing on 30th January.

4. That some at least of those who found their way to relief houses in the Bellary District were in sore need is shown by the annexed extracts from reports by the Acting Head Assistant Collector.

5. This Government are determined that, so far as in them lies, loss of life from starvation shall be prevented in the territory under their administration, and have therefore directed that all in destitution shall be relieved alike. But though this will provide for immediate need, the continued maintenance of people from other territory is a different matter. This Government ought not to bear the charge, and the Governor in Council considers that there should be no difficulty in the Mysore Government administered by British Officers directly under the Supreme Government consenting to contribute towards the maintenance of its famine-stricken subjects although in British territory. The measure would be advantageous both to the people and to the States, and would be no more than equitable, for though Madras in ordinary times benefits by the supply of labor to the Wynaad, Mysore benefits also by the employment of large numbers of her population and by their savings which they annually take back with them.

6. His Grace the Governor in Council still hopes that this system of contribution may be arranged, for the constant and unregulated movement hither and thither of large masses of people already weakened by insufficient or inferior food in times of scarcity and of great sickness, is highly undesirable and cannot but entail much additional suffering as well as increased risk of spreading disease.

7. I am directed to ask your early consideration of this important matter, as well as a reply to the request of this Government in my former letter that an officer may be deputed from Mysore to supervise the return of the people to their own country.

8. I am in conclusion to point out that it is very desirable that important notices, such as those alluded to in the letter under reply, should be communicated to this Government direct. The notice of relief works established in Mysore seems to have been sent to a private Association in the Wynaad and to the Commissioner of the Nilgiris, but it was not sent to this Government nor to the Collectors of Malabar (which includes the Wynaad), of Bellary, Cuddapah or other districts bordering on Mysore.

(Signed) W. HUDLESTON,
Chief Secretary.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

EXTRACT from a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel R. B. KENNEDY, District Engineer, Malabar, to H. E. STOKES, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated Calicut, 30th January 1877, No. 372.

I presume it is known that there is a season in the year when work on coffee plantations is almost entirely suspended, extending from the close of picking crop to about the end of May; picking is generally brought to an end about the middle, or close of February; this year, however, owing to short crops, it was finished throughout almost all Wynaad by the end of December, the result of which has already been explained by Mr. Logan in his letter to the Board. As a rule the planters are not men of large means; and of late years, owing to bad seasons, they have been by no means doing well, so that to expect them to maintain large gangs of coolies when there is no necessary work is asking what is absolutely beyond their ability. At this moment, I can vouch from personal knowledge that coolies who, in other seasons, would immediately after crop picking have gone back to Mysore and the other localities from whence they came, are hanging on at the estates and asking to be kept on without wages but for the mere food necessary to keep body and soul together. They all know that scarcity exists in Mysore, and that the price of food in Wynaad is slightly lower than there, and it is not therefore difficult to account for their clinging to the former. A fortnight ago I was in Wynaad and again observed what I saw on a previous tour.

that men, women, and children are still flocking in bringing cattle and all they have with them; by no means arguing the likelihood of those already in Wynaad or on estates being about to return to their villages. *** It is said that in some parts of the Presidency, where relief works are going on, the appearance of the people is not always such as to give the idea of want, but the same could not be said of the troops of men, women, and children seen by me lately, nor are deaths even already wanting.

ENCLOSURE No. 2.

EXTRACTS from letters from H. T. ROSS, Esq., Acting Head Assistant Collector, to J. H. MASTER, Esq., Collector of Bellary, dated 10th December 1876, and 11th and 23rd January 1877.

Ever since I opened relief works in my three taluqs they have been resorted to by Mysore subjects in distress. For some time the number of these was inconsiderable, and I directed my Tahsildars personally not to exclude any persons who came for relief to our works, no matter what their villages were. Now, however, the number of Mysore coolies on our works is considerable and believed to be on the increase, and it becomes a matter for serious consideration whether large sums of our Government money should be expended in supporting Mysore subjects who have their own Government to look after them. I have not liked to turn them off my works because they have represented to me earnestly that they have no means of living as no work has been provided for them in their own taluqs, and there could be no mistake about their distress and their gratitude for the relief given them. I have the honor to request early instructions whether I am to continue admitting an unlimited number of Mysore subjects to my relief works or not.

Moreover, the influx of a large number of Mysore subjects migrating into our territory in families has swelled, and threatens to swell still more the numbers both on our relief works, and in our relief houses. From the Tahsildar's return for the week ending 6th instant, it will be seen that the number has increased to 10,867.

With reference to your letter, No. 1978, dated 16th December last, I have the honor to enclose a statement exhibiting the number and distribution of Mysore coolies who have been resorting to my relief works. This shows a total of 17,618 in my three taluqs, but from what I have personally seen of them, I am inclined to think their number is understated.

There are considerable numbers of Mysore paupers now being fed at my relief houses. These I have not liked to turn away in common humanity; and I am getting a return of the numbers fed at each of my relief houses, which I will submit shortly for your information and orders. I think I informed you demi-officially that I had, on the 10th instant, counted 1,321 of them at the Hindupur relief house alone. I regret to report that three cases of death from starvation, two in Hindupur and one in Madaksera, have, within the last few days, come under my notice. These three persons were Mysore paupers who had dragged themselves to these relief houses in the last stage, and though they were cared for immediately, I am satisfied they were beyond saving.

To the Revenue (Famine) Department. *for information*
,, Board of Revenue.

Exd. J. Wright.

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FINANCIAL

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