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TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

REVENUE DEPARTMENT

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Dated 7-10-1878 197 .

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Archives I—5,806—24-2-78.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

7th October 1878, No. 1,619.

Read the following paper :—

No. 54. Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, dated 16th September 1878, No. 2,549.

Read the following letter from H. SEWELL, Esq., Collector of Trichinopoly, to C. A. GALTON, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 6th September 1878, No. 269 :—

I HAVE the honor to submit copy of a report from the Deputy Collector on General Duties of a flight of locusts through Kolatur in the Perambalur Taluk. They are said to have come from the slopes of the hills in Atur Taluk, Salem District.

2. The Deputy Collector suggests that when a swarm of locusts has settled down in a field it would be a good plan to set fire to the crop, supposing it to be a dry one, such as cholum or cumbu, and burn the lot with a view to saving the other fields of the village. I am not aware that this plan has been tried as yet, but it seems to me that it might prove to be economy in the long run. But the ryot who sacrifice his crops would, of course, expect compensation and remission. I would therefore request the opinion of the Board as to whether they think that in such a case compensation mig't be given, or whether it could be [illegible] the other ryots whose fields escaped by the sacrifice of one man. As regards remission, the loss of crops could not occur without the ryot's consent, and would not therefore be, strictly speaking, from a cause beyond his control, but I presume if the object was attained, the Board would not object to remission being granted in such a case.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From A. KISTNAMAH, Acting Deputy Collector, on General Duties, to H. SEWELL, Esq., Collector of Trichinopoly, dated Perambalur, 20th August 1878, No. 476.

I HAVE the honor to submit the further report promised in paragraph 4 of my No. 458 on the subject of the appearance of locusts at Kolatur, Perambalur Taluk.

2. I send herewith specimens of the insects that I have since procured from the village. They are the remnants and stray ones left behind, and it is not without considerable difficulty and several hours of close search all over the village that I have been able to get them. They differ slightly in color. Some have an yellow tinge about the body, others are of grey or slate color, and a few again are black. The wings of the insects in some instances correspond in color with the rest of the body, while in others they differ in color and are speckled throughout. They are by no means of rare quality, as I have seen grasshoppers of the kind occasionally in gardens, though never in my life in such swarms as they are now seen going about the country.

3. It appears that the locusts in question travelled from north-west, viz., Rajapalayam, &c, villages in the Atur Taluk of the Salem District where they are reported to have done a good deal of mischief to the crops, though originally they are supposed to have been hatched on the slopes of hills and rocks about Atur and the range of hills situated west of it, probably the Kollymalay or Pachamalay hills. They came in party after party in several detachments, and each detachment occupying an area of 60 square feet in the open air; the sound of their locomotion was that of a Railway whistle, while the course of their flight resembled a sky overcast with thick clouds.

4. The ryots of Kolatur first observed the locusts in question on the afternoon of the 7th instant at about 5 at a distance of about two miles from the village whence they took a south-easterly direction and alighted on the plains and dry tank bed which was completely parched up and denuded of vegetation of any kind. Finding nothing apparently to prey upon

here, they started in detachments again and proceeded to the north and settled down on either banks of the Kallar river, where there were some cumbu crops. The Kolatur ryots finding that the locality where they last settled was beyond their limits, returned home thinking that all was safe with them and their crops; but to their utter disappointment and horrors when they went to see the fields the following morning according to their custom, they found them infested with locusts which were just about to begin their ravages, the centre and focus of their abode being chiefly the fields containing young and tender crops, which they most voraciously devoured. The villagers young and old then set to work and organized themselves into small parties with tom-toms and horns and walked through the fields, shouting, beating tom-tom, and blowing horns and kindling bonfires here and there and driving them away with cloths, &c. This led to a general rising of the swarms from the fields, and when they flew in the sky, kites, crows and all ravenous birds which were hovering about in the sky in hundreds caught them by thousands and devoured them, but the number thus destroyed is only a drop in the ocean.

5. On the first day of the experiment, a very large proportion only of the insects disappeared, so that the process had to be repeated and continued for two successive days when the villagers succeeded in getting rid of them altogether, and all that could be seen afterwards is a stray one here and there, which even when once caught sight of by the villagers was not spared. While the ryots of Kolatur were thus trying to get rid of the locust plague, they had the hearty co-operation of the neighbouring villagers, who on their side of the villages did the same to keep out the locusts from their limits.

6. The only damage done is to some young crops in about ten acres in Kolatur and Pimbalur, the next adjoining village. But the damage is said to be by no means serious, and the affected crop is reported to be fast reviving. It appears that very little mischief has been done to crops of more mature age. I have had some young crop destroyed by the insects sent to me, and the fodder looked as if it had been chopped by a chopping instrument into small bits. They are now so dry that I consider it of no use sending it to you.

7. Great credit is due to the ryots for exerting in the manner they have done, and that so promptly; Otherwise the consequence would have been awfully distressing and disastrous in the extreme.

8. From what the ryots say the locusts appear to have taken their flight to the South direction of their route, but the result shows that they have not visited any of them. We may congratulate ourselves that this part of the district has been rid of the locusts for the present at least.

9. I understand that the locusts in question have for some time past been doing serious damage to the crops in the Atur Taluk of the Salem District where village after village tried the same plan of driving them out. The fact it seems that the Kolatur and Pimbalur villagers had got the plan from Atur ryots and appear to have been prepared for the advent of the insects to their villagers for some days past.

10. It appears to me that when locusts migrate from one part of the country to another, as they are now doing, and settle on crops the most effectual mode of destroying them is by setting fire to the whole field at nights, throwing over them a lot of straw and other combustible matter to prevent the insects flying and facilitate and keep up ignition; but the loss to the ryots from this sort of wholesale destruction is so great that they would not agree to this measure; in fact, the Kolatur ryots have told me so.

11. Looking to the importance of a wholesale and widespread destruction of the insects in the manner stated above, and the general benefits arising therefrom to the country at large, I would suggest that the ryots be encouraged to have recourse to this mode of destruction largely by offering them suitable compensation. If any proposal meets with your approval the compensation may, I think, be in the shape of a total remission of assessment on the lands concerned and a money-compensation as well proportionate to the labor and cost of seed, &c., lost to the ryots. If this plan is adopted whole swarms of these destructive insects might be got rid of and their power of locomotion very considerably crippled.

12. I have directed the Tahsildar to strictly enjoin the village servants and the ryots to look for spots where the insects may have deposited their ova and to take immediate steps to destroy them should any be found in the manner prescribed in the annual report of the extract of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the United States published in Board's Proceedings of 17th April last, No. 1,068.

(True Copy)

(Signed) H. SEWELL,
Collector.

1619/2

SUBMITTED for the information of Government.

2. The Board do not approve the proposal in paragraph 2, and moreover doubt the efficacy of the plan suggested; the crops if dry enough to burn would be destroyed without in all probability killing many of the locusts, and the crops which the locusts would be likely to settle on would ordinarily be too green to be set on fire readily.

(True Copies and Extract.)

(Signed) C. A. GALTON,
Acting Secretary.

No. 55. ORDER THEREON, 7th October 1878, No. 1,619.

Miscellaneous.

RECORDED.

2. The Government agree with the Board.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) L. A. CAMPBELL,
Under Secretary to Government.

To the Board of Revenue.

Exd. W. H. French.

1619/3

No. 2,549.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 16th September 1878.

Read the following letter from H. SEWELL, Esq., Collector of Trichinopoly, to C. A. GALTON, Esq., Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 6th September 1878, No. 269:—

I HAVE the honor to submit copy of a report from the Deputy Collector on General Duties of a flight of locusts through Kolatur in the Perambalur Taluk. They are said to have come from the slopes of the hills in Atur Taluk, Salem District.

2. The Deputy Collector suggests that when a swarm of locusts has settled down in a field it would be a good plan to set fire to the crop, supposing it to be a dry one, such as cholum or cumbu, and burn the lot with a view to saving the other fields of the village. I am not aware that this plan has been tried as yet, but it seems to me that it might prove to be economy in the long run. But the ryot who sacrifice his crops would, of course, expect compensation and remission. I would therefore request the opinion of the Board as to whether they think that in such a case compensation might be given, or whether it would be fairer to levy it from the other ryots whose fields escaped by the sacrifice of one man. As regards remission, the loss of crops could not occur without the ryot's consent, and would not therefore be, strictly speaking, from a cause beyond his control, but I presume if the object was attained, the Board would not object to remission being granted in such a case.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From A. KISTNAMAH, Acting Deputy Collector, on General Duties, to H. SEWELL, Esq., Collector of Trichinopoly, dated Perambalur, 20th August 1878, No. 476.

I HAVE the honor to submit the further report called for in my letter, dated 17th instant, No. 453 on the subject of the appearance of locusts at Kolatur, Perambalur Taluk.

2. I send herewith specimens of the insects that I have since procured from the village. They are the remnants and stray ones left behind, and it is not without considerable difficulty and several hours of close search all over the village that I have been able to get them. They differ slightly in color. Some have an yellow tinge about the body, others are of grey or slate color, and a few again are black. The wings of the insects in some instances correspond in color with the rest of the body, while in others they differ in color and are speckled throughout. They are by no means of rare quality, as I have seen grasshoppers of the kind occasionally in gardens, though never in my life in such swarms as they are now seen going about the country.

3. It appears that the locusts in question travelled from north-west, viz., Rajapalayam, &c, villages in the Atur Taluk of the Salem District where they are reported to have done a good deal of mischief to the crops, though originally they are supposed to have been hatched on the slopes of hills and rocks about Atur and the range of hills situated west of it, probably the Kollymalay or Pachamalay hills. They came in party after party in several detachments, and each detachment occupying an area of 60 square feet in the open air; the sound of their locomotion was that of a Railway whistle, while the course of their flight resembled a sky overcast with thick clouds.

4. The ryots of Kolatur first observed the locusts in question on the afternoon of the 7th instant at about 5 at a distance of about two miles from the village whence they took a south-easterly direction and alighted on the plains and dry tank bed which was completely

parched up and denuded of vegetation of any kind. Finding nothing apparently to prey upon here, they started in detachments again and proceeded to the north and settled down on either banks of the Kallar river, where there were some cumbu crops. The Kolatur ryots finding that the locality where they last settled was beyond their limits, returned home thinking that all was safe with them and their crops; but to their utter disappointment and horrors when they went to see the fields the following morning according to their custom, they found them infested with locusts which were just about to begin their ravages, the centre and focus of their abode being chiefly the fields containing young and tender crops, which they most voraciously devoured. The villagers, young and old then set to work and organized themselves into small parties with tom-toms and horns and walked through the fields, shouting, beating tom-tom, and blowing horns and kindling bonfires here and there and driving them away with cloths, &c. This led to a general rising of the swarms from the fields, and when they flew in the sky, kites, crows and all ravenous birds which were hovering about in the sky in hundreds caught them by thousands and devoured them, but the number thus destroyed is only a drop in the ocean.

5. On the first day of the experiment, a very large proportion only of the insects disappeared, so that the process had to be repeated and continued for two successive days when the villagers succeeded in getting rid of them altogether, and all that could be seen afterwards is a stray one here and there, which even when once caught sight of by the villagers was not spared. While the ryots of Kolatur were thus trying to get rid of the locust plague, they had the hearty co-operation of the neighbouring villagers, who on their side of the villages did the same to keep out the locusts from their limits.

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7. Great credit is due to the ryots for exerting in the manner they have done, and that so promptly; Otherwise the consequence would have been awfully distressing and disastrous in the extreme.

8. From what the ryots say the locusts appear to have taken their flight to the South A[illegible] Dist[illegible]trict inquiries were also made in all the villages of this district lying in the direction of their route, but the result shows that they have not visited any of them. Thus we may congratulate ourselves that this part of the district has been rid of the locusts for the present at least.

9. I understand that the locusts in question have for some time past been doing serious damage to the crops in the Atur Taluk of the Salem District where village after village tried the same plan of driving them out. The fact it seems that the Kolatur and Pimbalur villagers had got the plan from Atur ryots and appear to have been prepared for the advent of the insects to their villagers for some days past.

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(True Copy.)

(Signed) H. SEWELL,
Collector.

1619/A

SUBMITTED for the information of Government.

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(True Copies and Extract.)

Acting Secretary.

To the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.

Copy to the Collector of Coimbatore.
" " Superintendent of Government Farms.
" " Superintendent of Government Museum.
" to J. Shortt, Esq., M.D.

Exd. W. J. Lewis.

Revenue Department

No 4230.

1878.

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

To

THE SECRETARY TO GOVT.,
REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

Dated Sept. 16th.

Printed 19th.

Recd. 23

PROCEEDINGS, 16TH SEPT. 1878, No. 2,549.

Pur: 21/9/78

SEPTEMBER.

No. 2,549.

No 1619

Flight of Locusts — through Kolatur in Perambalur Taluq, Trichinopoly District.— Submitting to Government report from Collector on —, and passing remarks with reference to his suggestion to set fire to the crops of a field in view to destroy the locusts settling down on them.

Recorded
The Sec: to Govt: with the Board's Let
7 Oct 1878

14 Sept 1878 Board of Revenue No 1404

No 54

C 25-9-78.
R 7-10-78.

54 55