M.R.O. 1—38,000—16-10-29.

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 1684 Press
29-30 ~~Mis.~~

Dated 30 — 11 — ~~19 [illegible]~~

Not to be folded or roughly handled

No. 29. Read the following letter from H. D. PHILLIPS, Esq., Magistrate of Tanjore; to T. PYCROFT, Esq., Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George, dated Vullum, 25th November 1858, No. 416.

SIR,

From Session Judge to Joint Magistrate, 18th Novr. 1858.
From Joint Magistrate to Magistrate of Tanjore, 20th Novr. 1858.
From Sub-Judge to Joint Magistrate, no date.
From Session Judge to Joint Magistrate, 21st Novr. 1858.

1. It has become my duty to lay before Government the accompanying papers, which supply in respect of a serious grain riot at Combaconum, certain particulars of information that reached me only yesterday afternoon.

2. This riot has been distinguished from ordinary tumultuous disturbances of its class, by violent resistance to authority, by attacks as well on private houses as on grain-stores, and by the death at the hands of a Judicial Officer, acting under the provisions of Regulation III of 1817, of one of the most forward of the rioters.

3. The price of paddy for some months past has stood at famine rates and on more than one occasion, I have seen reason to suspect a disposition on the part of the poorer classes of Negapatam and other towns, to take by force what they were utterly unable to purchase. Combaconum, which, as the Government are aware, is the principal town in the division of the Joint Magistrate, Mr. W. M. Cadell, has not been free from these suspicions, and on the 17th, disturbances occurred there, conclusively showing that grain bazars were to be made the object of attack.

4. The European Officers of the station were only partially successful in repressing for the time the threatened disturbances, which, after an interval of quiet, broke out again with increased violence on the 18th. The Government will perceive that the riots were extensive and that assemblages of rioters took place at different points of the town, which consists of several pettahs of widely built and straggling houses covering a large area of ground.

5. The Joint Magistrate, it appears, was at this time at Myaveram, whence he was called by a communication from the Civil Judge, Mr. G. T. Beauchamp, which reached him late on the 18th. On the following morning, at XI A. M., when I was at Tanjore arranging for the public reading of Her Majesty's Proclamation, an express arrived from the Joint Magistrate at Combaconum, briefly communicating to me the nature of the violence offered to the dealers and native residents of Combaconum, and urging the necessity of strengthening the Military force available there.

23 miles north of Combaconum.

6. No time was lost in soliciting a reinforcement from General Budd, whom I at once addressed by express and from whom, at 7 A. M. of the 20th, I learnt that sixty men of the 2nd European Light Infantry would leave Trichinopoly for Combaconum on the afternoon of that day.

7. Such, however, since the 18th has been the tempestuous state of the weather, and so unprecedentedly abundant and unceasing has been the fall of rain, that the troops could not by any possibility be marched out. The General then resolved to send them by basket-boats down the Cauvery, but in this respect again, an insurmountable difficulty occurred from the bridge over that river having from the breadth and force of the stream become quite inaccessible. The results of freshes in this and other rivers and the consequences generally of the immense quantity of rain which has fallen, have been most disastrous throughout the southern part of Tanjore, and I hear in Trichinopoly also. In fact, if the most urgent political necessity had existed, the movement of troops to meet it would have been a clear impracticability.

8. It gratifies me, however to be enabled to state that the peace of Combaconum has not been broken since the evening of the 18th Instant, although, in the opinion of the Joint Magistrate, an uneasy feeling has at intervals been apparent. So far the change to quietness is extremely fortunate, as yesterday evening General Budd apprized me that looking to the reported state of the river and other difficulties, he had been obliged to keep the men in Cantonments and would send them off this day morning consequent on a report from the Officer Commanding the Detachment at Combaconum. General Budd added that he should detach only half the number of men originally warned for duty.

9. It will be advisable, I consider, to retain the Europeans at Combaconum until the close of the trial of the numerous prisoners whom the Joint Magistrate has been successful in capturing since the occurrences of the 18th, especially as that officer informs me that he has ground for supposing that the evil disposed of the town are now under the impression that the reported application for Military aid was only a ruse of the Magistracy to repress a further disposition to riot. Such a belief is the natural, but unavoidable consequence of the delay in moving the Europeans towards Combaconum, but will do no harm, I trust, as the real cause of their tardy arrival will surely have ere this been seen in the impassable state of the country.

10. In my own division a similar riot occurred on the 21st Instant, at Cusbah Mannargoody, but the violence of the mob was directed solely against grain-stores and so far was successful. There, too, as at Combaconum, the Police agency available could be used to no good purpose. Probably, as the Joint Magistrate suspects of the Police force at Combaconum, their sympathies were with the rioters and against the grain-merchants, who, adverting to what prior to the very recent rain and floods, were the extremely promising prospects of the harvest of the year, can have had no fair cause for holding back their grain and selling it at the exorbitant rates which have lately prevailed.

11. The events at Combaconum point most markedly to the necessity of the Talook Cutcherry being in a better position and I shall in due course take steps for a change of locality. It is a wretched place, totally unfit for the head office of so important and large a talook as Combaconum and in the absence of restrictive orders as to outlay, would long ago have been made by me the subject of a special representation to the proper authority.

12. It remains for me, with reference to the arduous and most onerous ordinary duties of the Session Judge of Combaconum, to suggest for consideration by Government, whether in relaxation of their last orders, the Magistracy may not be left at liberty to commit to the Commissioner of Combaconum, under Act XIV of 1857, all those rioters against whom the necessary evidence may be forthcoming of their having taken part in attacks on private dwelling houses, leaving the ordinary law for application to those guilty of only stealing grain.

From W. M. CADELL, Esq., Joint Magistrate; to H. D. PHILLIPS, Esq., Magistrate of Tanjore, dated Combaconum, 20th November 1858.

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose for your information, copy of a letter I received from the Civil and Sessions Judge, late on the night of the 18th Instant, and I trust I need hardly state, that immediately on the receipt thereof, I started forthwith for Combaconum, where I arrived at about daybreak on the 19th.

Immediately on my arrival, I consulted with the Civil and Sessions Judge, the Sub Judge and the Commanding Officer, and reports having in the mean time reached me, that outrages of a similar nature were taking place at Muddiarjoonum, Trinagaswarum and in other large villages around Combaconum, and seeing that the Police was perfectly paralysed, I deemed it my duty to send off the requisition which I had the honor to make yesterday morning for the assistance of a body of troops. I may add that on the previous day at Myaveram, and on hearing from the Police Ameen that the people were in an excited state, owing to the great difficulty in procuring grain, and the exorbitant prices which were being demanded, I sent off a reinforcement of 15 Peons, and directed the head of Police (who was then absent on duty on the banks of the Colleroon) to repair immediately to Combaconum and to do all in his power to restore quiet and order.

These efforts though ably supported by the Civil and Sessions Judge, the Sub Judge and the Commanding Officer, were, I regret to say, altogether unsuccessful; the mob collected in such numbers and not only threw stones and brickbats at the European gentlemen, and the few Sepoys who had been called out, but succeeded in plundering nearly all the grain bazars and one or two private houses. During the emeute, the Sub Judge, Mr. Grenfell endeavoured to prevent a body of the rioters from entering and plundering one of the houses of the wealthy inhabitants; he was met, however, by a shower of brickbats and stones, and in self-defence, was obliged to fire his revolver, by which a man of the fishermen caste (and who appears to have

taken a particularly active part in the riot) was killed on the spot. I will, as soon as I possibly can, hold an enquiry into the matter and report the same for your information.

I have only to add that I have been in the town the greater part of yesterday and to-day, and I am glad to say that I hope order is being gradually restored. The respectable part of the inhabitants have come forward in support of law and order and are prepared to act on the offensive, should necessity arise. I am endeavouring by every means in my power to restore confidence amongst the grain-dealers and merchants, with a view to the markets being regularly and constantly supplied. I am, however, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the troops whose presence I consider, will be of the most essential service, not only in restoring confidence among the people generally and in overawing the unruly and turbulent, but the ordinary Police having been so utterly paralysed by the number and frequency of the riots which have taken place both in Combaconum and the neighbouring villages, it seems to me absolutely and indispensably necessary, they should have the support and assistance of the European troops.

Much valuable property has, I regret to say, been plundered and made away with, and immediately the troops arrive, I shall be able to employ the whole of my Police force in making every effort both to recover these properties and to seize and bring to justice as many of the rioters as possible.

From G. T. BEAUCHAMP, Esq., Civil and Session Judge; to the Joint Magistrate of Tanjore, dated Combaconum, 18th November 1858.

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that a grave riot broke out in the town yesterday. It was put down, however, by sun-set, the Sepoys being called out, and the night passed over quietly. The riot commenced anew this morning under the very eyes of the Sub Judge, and an attack being made upon him by a party who were breaking into a house, a man was shot by him dead.

There have been robberies in various parts of the town since. It has been impracticable to cover any part of this widely straggling town, and though the town is quieter just now, a good deal of uneasiness is felt. The shops are closed, and it is only here and there, and that under the protection of an European, that people venture to sell at all. I have in the emergency authorised the Tahsildar to employ 50 additional peons this night, and till further orders. It seems desirable that the Police force should be strengthened as far as possible.

(True Copies.)

(Signed) H. D. PHILLIPS,
Magistrate.

From St. L. M. GRENFELL, Esq., Sub-Judge; to the Joint Magistrate of Tanjore.

Sir,

On receiving information on the 17th Instant, at about 12 o'clock, that plundering had commenced in the bazaar, I took upon myself the powers provided under such circumstances by Section III, Regulation III of 1817, and have the honor to report the following facts that came under my immediate observation for your information.

2. The price of paddy, as you are doubtless aware, has been gradually rising, and on the 17th Instant, reached $2\frac{1}{4}$ Rupees per cullam, having risen without any apparent cause, 8 annas in a day.

3. On receiving the intelligence, I in concert with the Civil Judge, proceeded to the town, the Officer Commanding having been called on for as many Sepoys as he could afford. On reaching the town, I found plundering going on in every direction, which it was, until the arrival of the Sepoys who came up about an hour afterwards, impossible in any way to check except for the moment that I was at the different houses, when the plundering ceased on my appearance.

It commenced as soon as I moved away, I first arrived at the Cadalungoody street, where I found the house of one of the Sub-Court Goomastahs in the act of being plundered. The plunderers fled on my appearance, and I found myself without a single peon in a mob of about 500 persons. I endeavoured to pacify and disperse them, but it was no use. I had no force at my command. The Mettoo peons did not appear and I was obliged to retire. The conduct of the peons of the town has throughout been most disgraceful ; they showed the fullest sympathy with the mob.

4. When the sepoys arrived, they were divided into parties, one under my orders proceeding towards the river from the Talook Cutcherry. When within about ½ a mile of the river, I was informed that a house on the bank was then being plundered. We proceeded to the place as fast as we could, and found the house had been entered and the plunderers there, 10 or 11 were apprehended and a guard posted. The loss from this house was but small if any, as the plunderers were interrupted at once. We had scarcely made the necessary arrangements, when information arrived that another house about 100 yards off, was being plundered. Leaving a guard of 2 men at the house we had saved, and clearing the road in between, we proceeded to the other house and captured 3 or 4 individuals. These with the others were safely lodged in the Jail and await their trial.

This done, I was informed that a house in the principal bazar street was being plundered. We repaired thither at once, and galloping on before the party, I was fortunately in time to prevent any serious loss. A guard of 3 men was established at the spot, and after waiting about ½ an hour, and hearing no further alarms I returned home at about 6 P. M., and revisited the town at about 9 P. M., when all was perfectly quiet. I heard afterwards that after my departure, 3 more houses had been plundered.

6. I did not obtain any reliable information that any thing on that day was plundered but grain. As all classes were alike suffering from the rapacity of the merchants, no co-operation could be expected, and most certainly none whatever was received. No attempt was made to check the plundering or stop the removal of the grain except in the immediate presence of the European Officers, and I can say for myself that I saw peons wearing their belts quietly looking on while large bundles of plundered grain were carried away under their very eyes.

7. Early on the morning of the 18th, I repaired with the Civil Judge and the Commanding Officer to the town. We visited all the posted guards and placed some new ones. As we were returning from the river bank, we were informed that a party had opened his shop in the large street and was selling paddy at 8 Annas per cullam, and that there was a very large crowd assembled, and that fears of plunder were entertained. This shop was the one that I had saved the evening before as stated in para. 5. It is much to be regretted that the seller, being at that time the only man selling, should have fixed (doubtless from fear) on so low a rate. It drew an enormous crowd. The shop was small, and the process of supply naturally slow. I took this under my immediate superintendence, the women being served first. On arriving in the street, we caused the front rank of the crowd to sit down, and for about an hour, the sale was peaceably conducted—there being present the Civil Judge, the Commanding Officer, 6 Sepoys and myself, and about 20 peons who were utterly useless ; the number of people in the street, I should put at from 7 to 8,000. At about ½ past 9 o'clock, the Civil Judge having received a message, that another party was willing to sell, repaired to that side of the town; the Commanding Officer remained with me. I was not at first aware of Mr. Beauchamp's departure, but perceived it from a closing in of the crowd which I could not check. At last I was informed that only 10 cullams of paddy remained to be sold, (a statement which proved utterly false, the shop being after my departure as stated below utterly ransacked, and a large quantity of grain removed,) and at the same time that a house was being looted about 100 yards up the street. I therefore left the shop and went forward. I found that we were completely hemmed in while a number of persons were visible on a pial about 80 yards, pulling the tiles of the verandah of a house which they began to pelt at us. At my request the sepoys (6) fell in and loaded. I walked forward, the missiles flying now thickly from behind as well as in front. The crowd gradually fell back as I advanced, but stood firm about 100 yards from the detachment, several of whom were hit with bricks, &c., which flew in numbers from the street and the pials of the houses ; finding then that matters had gone to an extremity, and that it was a matter of life and death to remain where we were, the crowd becoming bolder every

moment, I went forward again pistol in hand and called upon the people to disperse. It is quite possible that in the uproar my words may not have been heard, but I held up my hands and stood still before the crowd for some minutes, gesticulating to them to cease throwing and to disperse, the crowd surged backwards and forwards, and brickbats flew in increased numbers and with greater violence. It was evident that the mob in front must be cleared away at once. Our position was most critical. There was no building to which we could retire, and to remain was impossible. I was averse to calling upon the sepoys to fire, inasmuch as considerable loss of life must have ensued. The persons on the pials on both sides of the road, continued, though I was only about 20 yards off, to pelt at me, I presented my pistol and shouted to them to desist. I was repeatedly struck, once somewhat seriously, missiles also fell from behind, and I could see that the Sepoys were seriously annoyed. I therefore as a last resource fired at a man on a pial not 20 yards from me, whom I saw throw a brick at me which passed close by my head and who had another in his hand. The man was killed at once. The pial of that and the other houses were immediately cleared, and the crowd rushed about 300 yards down the street. I returned to the Detachment, and as our front was clear, requested they might advance, that we might quit the position which was quite untenable. We moved down street, heavily pelted the whole way from behind. The Commanding Officer and the men repeatedly begged me to allow them to fire, but I refused as the road was clear in front. We proceeded (the sepoys threatening the crowd at intervals) to the Talook Cutcherry, where the Officer Commanding sounded the assembly and the sepoys came in from the guards and a reinforcement after a time, came in from the lines. I sent a message to the Civil Judge, who, in about an hour, came in. The street in front of the Cutcherry was kept pretty clear ; the sepoys occasionally charging up the road, but we were not strong enough to maintain any detached post. On the arrival of the Civil Judge he took the management of affairs, and I must beg to refer you to him for further details ; as my appearance seeming to exasperate the crowd, I remained inside the Cutcherry.

I most deeply and sincerely regret the necessity which obliged me to use violence, but I must record my deliberate conviction, that unless such an extreme measure had been taken at that time, we could not have cleared the street in our front without a full volley which must have taken many lives and would probably have exasperated the mob already determined on mischief. Our numbers were so few, and the mob so overwhelming, that I do not hesitate to say that each and all of us were in immediate danger of life or limb.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) H. D. PHILLIPS,
Magistrate.

From G. T. BEAUCHAMP, Esq., Civil and Session Judge ; to the Sub Collector and Joint Magistrate of Tanjore, dated Combaconum, 21st November 1858.

SIR,

With reference to my letter of the 18th Instant, I have the honor to furnish the following additional particulars.

At about 1 o'clock P. M. of the 17th Instant, it was reported to me that the grain-shops in various parts of the town were being plundered. I saw Mr. Grenfell on the subject, wrote to the Commanding Officer, requesting that he would bring down all the Sepoys he could collect, and drove to the Talook Cutcherry and there, learning that the Tahsildar was absent, and the Police Ameen elsewhere, I went to the Cutwal's Choultry. The Cutwal was not present ; many houses were being plundered in the neighbourhood, but 6 or 7 of the plunderers being seized by the peons who came with me, the rest dispersed ; those taken, however, were afterwards rescued from the Cutwal's Choultry to which I had ordered them to be taken. The Police Ameen was the first person to join me and some time afterwards, the Cutwal also appeared.

Mr. Grenfell also came up. On returning to the Talook Cutchery, we found that the Commanding Officer and his Sepoys had arrived. Posts were established at the Cutcherry and Cutwal's Choultry and Mr. Grenfell and myself separated for the purpose of taking different parties to the posts considered most important. Various plundering parties were interrupted,

but from the opportunities offered by the backyards for escape, in one case only were any of the plunderers taken and they were shut up in a godown and secured by Mr. Grenfell's party. Having posted the party taken by me, and all plundering in that quarter having ceased, I went home for my horse and returning immediately, rode about the town till about 9, when finding quiet restored in all quarters, I went home for the night.

On the 18th, Mr. Grenfell, the Commanding Officer and myself visited the posts early on the morning. When near the last post, we heard a rumour that a trader in the Peria street* who had opened his shop was apprehensive of being plundered. We hurried to the spot, cleared the front of his store and the sale went on without disturbance. Hearing that a person in the same street had grain to dispose of with the view of lessening the pressure on the store, I applied to him to know if he were willing to sell. He said he would if I would remain at his door, and what he had to spare was bought at 1 Rupee per cullam. His house was then secured. It was, I subsequently learnt, robbed, and I have too much cause to fear partly in consequence of my interference in the matter. I then proceeded to another person at the other end of the town who had sent word that he would open his store if an European would be present. The sales had just commenced, when I was informed that Mr. Grenfell had been attacked, had shot a man, and been driven into the Police Cutcherry. I returned back immediately, and though quite alone, had little difficulty in passing through the crowd by which the Cutcherry was surrounded on the west. Mr. Grenfell, the Commanding Officer, 6 sepoys and a few peons were present. On the east of the Cutcherry, a more dense and excited crowd had collected; I was told that some show of resistance had been made by them, and I saw them once on the sepoys advancing, run to the end of the street from which on the sepoys retiring, stones were thrown but at too great a distance to reach the sepoys. A fresh party of, I believe, 24 sepoys arrived. On riding alone up the street, the mob obeyed my gestures, and retreated to the end of the street. I warned them to disperse. Their cry was "we are famishing" with here and there an allusion to the fatal shot that had been fired. At this juncture, the corpse was brought out of the Peria Teroovoo street and placed before me and uncovered. I ordered it to be removed to the deceased's house, stating the deceased had thrown stones at the Judge but that enquiry should be made, and then returned towards the Cutcherry. One stone was thrown at me during this time, seeing which, I went some yards beyond the head of the street and into the thickest part of the crowd. I had not gone far on my return, when I heard a movement in the rear and found that the corpse was being brought down the street to the Cutcherry, instead of passing down that which ran direct to the quarter in which the deceased lived. It was stopped by the head of Police who had just come in from duty, and I proceeded to the Cutcherry; the head of Police soon followed, and after some little time, the body was brought and laid down in front of the Cutcherry. This caused much excitement on the crowd to the west of the Cutcherry, but finding that the former demonstrations of the Sepoys seemed only to excite the people whose cries were, "it matters not if you kill us, we are famishing," and as the head of Police had sent for the headmen of the different castes, I did not call them to aid the peons who had failed to get the corpse removed. On the headman arriving, I assented to 40 Rupees being paid to him for the relatives, and the body was removed. The bulk of the crowd, however, still remained. I then in the hope of dispersing them, caused notice to be given that I was about to return to the quarter which I had left, sending word to Mr. Grenfell who was inside the Cutcherry of my intentions, (I had already found that his appearance greatly exasperated the people, and had advised him not to appear unnecessarily) in order that he might retire. A part of the crowd followed me for some little distance but then hesitated, on which I returned to the Cutcherry. After a conference between the headmen and the head of Police, some proposition seemed to be assented to. It was written on an olai which the head of Police signed, and under the impression that it contained nothing more than a notification that an arrangement had been made by the head of Police for an additional supply of grain on the terms that the dealer first referred to had offered it, I put my signature to it without having it read over. I then started from the Cutcherry again for the house from which I had hurried. I was readily followed, and after remaining until the paddy had been all sold, I rode round by the posts to the talook Cutcherry, being called off at 2 or 3 points by alarms that parties were plundering. The head of Police was in the Cutcherry, Mr. Grenfell had left some time before. In conversation with the head of Police, I

* Principal Bazaar street.

found that I had misunderstood the contents of the olai which I had signed, which was to the effect that an order had been given for the sale of paddy at 8 and 10 Annas. I then wrote the letter sent to you by express.

I cannot state the time at which any of the different facts stated occurred, having left home between 5 and 6 o'clock A. M. and returned at 6 P. M.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) H. D. PHILLIPS,
Magistrate.

No. 30. To the Magistrate of Tanjore, dated Fort St. George, 30th November 1858, No. 1684.

SIR,

The Government have perused with much regret, your report of 25th November (only received this day on account of the weather) on the outrages at Combaconum, and the death of one of the rioters at the hands of the Sub-Judge. This catastrophe appears to have been unavoidable.

The Government are not prepared to extend Act XIV of 1857, to these disturbances, but trust that you will be able as Magistrate, to dispose speedily of some of the minor cases, and that the Sessions Judge will be able to dispose of the remainder, without extra aid.

It is most desirable that those of the Police force who behaved in so reprehensible a manner, should be severely dealt with.

The Government await the further particulars promised by you.

(Signed) W. H. BAYLEY,
Acting Secretary to Govt.

Exd. F. Cartiedge.

Dispt 30 Inst. Jud Dept

No 1684 of

To The

Magistrate of Tanjore

Sir

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Report (only received this day on account of the weather) on the Combracoon outrages at Tanjore, & the death of one of the rioters at the hands of the Sub-judge. This entirely appears to have been an unavoidable

The Govt are not prepared to extend Act XIV of 1857 to these disturbances, but trust that

you will be able as Magistrate to dispose speedily of some of the minor cases, & that the Assistant judge will be able to dispose of the remainder, without extra aid.

It is most desirable that those of the Police force who behaved in so reprehensible a manner should be severely dealt with.

We got aware the further particulars required by you.

Fort St George.
30 November 1858.

WHS

Judl. Ltr. to Engd. 15th Febry
No. 7 of 1859 Para 3.

10-2-59 ✓

20-4-11 BI ✓

In Cons: 20 Novr. 1858.

Judicial 1858 Departt.

No. 1684.

To, The Magistrate of Mangore.

Dated 20 Novr. 1858.

H.C. 8/61/59

Regret to learn of the outrages at Combaconum Govt. are not prepared to extend Act XIV of 1857 to these disturbances but trust he will be able with the cooperation of the Sessions Judge to dispose of the cases with extra aid.

29 & 30