

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Post Office DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	700	Press
		~~Mis.~~
Dated	1 - 8 - 19	1867

Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
1st May 1867.*

No. 11. Read the following letter from the Inspector General of Jails, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Madras, 11th April 1867, No. 8.

I have the honor to forward a letter from the Superintendent of the Central Jail, Coimbatore, dated 8th February, together with the Proceedings held at an inquest on the body of a convict, named Madatil Pudikel Kootan, who was killed by an accidental fall from the platform of a well in the Jail, on the 4th idem. This platform was suspended about half way down, and was constructed, under the orders of Colonel Moberly, for the use of the men employed in widening and deepening the well.

2. In November last, while writing to the Superintending Engineer upon the subject of the water supply generally, I suggested that the well in question should be built up, and be fitted with a proper wheel and appliances; in reply to which, he stated "I have drawn up a specification for a large pump to be fitted up in the 1st well, when it can be given up for completion by this Department. Lieutenant Smith is meanwhile to adopt better measures for emptying it of its present supply daily than have hitherto been availed of—a point which I have frequently before pressed on the attention of his predecessor, as well as himself." Nothing, however, appears to have been done that time.

3. The platform has now been removed, and a wheel for drawing water has been fixed at the top of the well.

From the Superintendent of the Central Jail, Coimbatore, to the Inspector General of Jails, Madras; dated Coimbatore, 8th February 1867.

I have the honor to report that, on the 4th instant, convict No. 201, Madatil Pudikel Kootan, a West Coast man, was accidentally drowned in the large well, in No. 5 yard, of the Central Jail, under the following circumstances.

2. The deceased was one of the Jail well gang, drawing water for bathing, and supplying water for building purposes. He was on the platform, which is situated about half way down the well, which is a very deep one; he was drawing water with a bucket. The rope to which his bucket was attached broke, causing the deceased to lose his balance and fall. In his fall, he turned a somersault, hitting his head against the side of the well, which is of rocks. Upon reaching the water, his body immediately sank, and it was only recovered by a convict lowering himself down by a rope, and diving. There was about eight feet of water in the well at the time. The accident happened between twelve and one (noon). There was no midday rest on this day, as the convicts were not sent out to work until after nine o'clock, owing to the weekly inspection of the Jail by the Medical Officer and myself.

3. I arrived in the Jail just after the accident had occurred, and immediately proceeded to the well; the body was at that moment being drawn out of the water. Upon getting it on the platform, life was extinct. There was a wound on the back of the head, and bruises between the shoulders. Death was probably caused by the prisoner hitting his head against the side of the well in his fall.

4. An inquest was held on the body, about an hour after the accident occurred. I beg to forward the depositions taken by the Head Assistant Magistrate, as also his letter remarking that some precautions ought to be taken to prevent a similar accident occurring.

5. The well, as you may recollect, is the first well dug in the Jail, and is of a great width and depth. About the middle of it there is a platform, on which convicts stand, drawing water with ropes and buckets, which water is again drawn from the top, and passed down to the bathing cisterns. There has never been any railing, or any kind of protection, to prevent a man falling in. The platform is also on a gradual slope towards the centre. A man losing his foot-hold cannot possibly

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
1st May 1867.*

save himself. The dangerous nature of this platform has been repeatedly pointed out to the Engineer Officer by me, also that the drippings off of it contributed in a great measure to the sewage matter which the Chemical Examiner states the water contains. I have requested that this platform might be removed, and the water drawn from the top of the well, by means of a wheel and draw bucket, as is generally adopted by the ryots in this District.

6. I have even requested that I might be allowed to put up a wheel, with the aid of the Jail carpenters, and prevent trouble to the Engineer Department, but my suggestions have not been listened to.

7. The Engineer Department have now seen the necessity of doing something, and have commenced making a wheel. I trust, in the course of a few days, that the platform half way down the well will be taken up, and all the water drawn from the top.

8. I am, however, obliged to draw water, as formerly, until the wheel is prepared, as this well supplies all the water for the cisterns, and no other water is available without sending a gang a long distance into the town.

From the Head Assistant Magistrate of Coimbatore, to the Superintendent of the Jail, Coimbatore; dated Coimbatore, 5th February 1867, No. 10.

I have the honor to forward a report on the death of the convict Kootan, on whom I held an inquest yesterday, according to Jail Rules, paragraph 194.

2. It appears from the depositions given, which are herewith forwarded, that deceased met his death by falling into the well in the Jail compound, from which a party of convicts were drawing water. While in the act of drawing up water the rope attached to the bucket broke, and deceased was precipitated into the water, striking his head against the side of the well during his descent, and thereby becoming insensible, so that he sunk at once.

3. From a personal inspection of the well, it appears to me that some measures ought to be adopted, which would prevent a similar occurrence in future. At present, there is no protection of any kind round the opening, and a like accident might occur at any time.

DEPOSITION on oath of Perumal, son of Vencadachalum, Kurawar caste, convict in Coimbatore Jail.

About 12 o'clock to-day I was at work, drawing water from the well in the Jail. I was alone, and the deceased Kootan was on the platform below. I heard a noise. I did not see Kootan fall in. The Jailer told me to go down by a rope, and get him out. I went down, and found the deceased at the bottom of the well. I put a rope round him, and brought him out. Two other people, Korpan and Vaji Sahib, went down with me. The man was dead when we brought him up.

4th February 1867.

(Signed) E. STORR,
Head Assistant Magistrate.

DEPOSITION on oath of Dasan, son of Vencatayen, Vurden caste, convict in Coimbatore Jail.

I am Maistry in the Jail. This morning, soon after 12 o'clock in the middle of the day, I was in charge of a gang of prisoners drawing water from the well. The deceased Kootan was drawing water when the rope broke and he fell into the well. I went at once and informed the Overseer, and he went and told the Jailer. He came at once, and three convicts were let down by a rope and brought out the body. The man was dead when brought up. I suppose the man was in the water about ten minutes. The man turned over as he fell, and struck his head against the wall.

4th February 1867.

(Signed) E. STORR,
Head Assistant Magistrate.

DEPOSITION on oath of John Kernich, Jailer, Central Jail, Coimbatore.

Between twelve and one o'clock to-day, I was in the office. Rungasawmy, the Convict Work Overseer, came and told me that one of the convicts had fallen into the well. I went down at once to the well and looked in. I could see nothing of any body in the water. I then sent three con-

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
1st May 1867.*

victs down into the well by a rope, and also sent for a rope ladder. One of these, Perumal, dived into the water, and raised the body from the bottom, and we then fastened ropes to it, and brought it to the top. The man was quite dead when brought up. I consider the place from which the convicts draw water to be very insecure, and that measures ought to be taken to prevent similar accidents happening.

(Signed) J. KERNICH,
Jailer.

4th February 1867.

(Signed) E. STORR,
Head Assistant Magistrate.

DEPOSITION on oath of W. H. ROBERTS, Esq., M. D., Zillah Surgeon, Coimbatore.

I inspected the body of convict Kootan, which was taken out of the well in the Central Jail yesterday. There was a wound on the back of the head, which had cut through the skin to the bone, and which must have been caused in falling against the side of the well. The wound was not sufficient to have caused death. Death was caused by concussion of the brain and immersion in deep water, while in a state of insensibility.

5th February 1867.

(Signed) W. H. ROBERTS, M. D.,
Civil Surgeon.

No. 12. ORDER THEREON, 1st May 1867, No. 700.

It is evident, from the report of the Superintendent of Jails at Coimbatore, that the platform erected half-way down the well in question was in a very dangerous state. The Superintendent had repeatedly drawn attention to it, but no action appears to have been taken in the matter by the Officers of the Public Works Department, until after the occurrence of the fatal accident which is now reported. Orders will be issued on the subject in the Department of Public Works.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Inspector General of Jails.
" Public Works Department.

Exd. J. H. Burns.

Considered, when noticed

W. H. R.

To the Secy to the Govt.

Judicial Department.

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Read the following letter from
the Inspector General of Sails.
(Here enter 11th April 1867. no 8.)

Concurred

Order thereon. 1st May 1867. No. 700.

It is evident from the
report of the Superintendent of
Sails at Coimbatore that the
platform ~~erected~~ ^{erected} halfway
down the well in question was
in a very dangerous state. The
Superintendent had repeatedly
drawn attention to it, but no
action appears to have been taken
in the matter by the Officers
of the Public Works Department
until after the occurrence of
the fatal accident which is
now reported. Order will
be issued on the subject in
the Department of Public Works.

WON JP

The Insp. Gen Police takes
his time with telling reaching
his office. Hence we have Mr.
James tell to the I. G. P. of 8th
July, but to get 2 months 2
more after the I. G. P. gets it. !!!
Such inexcusable delay in
answering, considered, when noticed

I agree with the W. Phillips

by [Signature]
to the Secy to the Govt

that the report to
govt. should have been
pursued more
promptly. This might
be noticed and I think
too that the officer of
the Public Works Dep.
should be called
upon to explain why
the simple mechanism
of a wheel and
a rope was not
fitted at an earlier
period. A

Let the order go
cheap - 10/11

11.12

Regarding the accidental
death of a convict in
the Court House building
Jan -

(6)

Judicial 1864. Department.

No. 400.

PROCEEDINGS OF GOVERNMENT.

Feb. 1886.
1504.
Dated 1st May 1864.