Judicial (1895) Department.

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G.O., No. 2467

DATED 28th Nov. 1895

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[Despatch Abstract.]

IDENTIFICATION BY MEANS OF FINGER PRINTS.

Approving the proposal of the Inspector-General of Registration to introduce the system of identification of the executants of documents by means of finger prints and ordering the publication in the Fort St. George Gazette of a notification on the subject.

G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.

FURTHER PAPERS

G.O	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.
G.718	3-5-95				

செப்பனிடுவதற்காக எடுத்துக்
கொள்ளப்பட்ட October
மாதம் வருடம் 1994
November October
செப்பனிட்டு முடித்த 1994
மாதம் வருடம்
30/11/94
ஆராய்ச்சி உதவியாளரின்
கையொப்பம்

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No. 2467, JUDICIAL, 28TH NOVEMBER 1895.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper:—

Office-note from the Secretary to Government, Pension Department, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Judicial Department, dated 12th November, 1895, No. 94.

The undersigned has the honour to forward herewith a copy of the letter from the Inspector-General of Registration, Madras, dated 31st July 1895, No. 2174 G., paragraphs 12 to 14 of which require consideration in the Judicial Department. Orders on the subject of introducing the system of identification of pensioners by finger-tip impressions will issue from this department in due course.

2. Extracts from the demi-official letters relating to the same subject accompany, from which it will be seen that the Inspector-General is anxious that early orders should be passed on his recommendations.

(Signed) E. GIBSON,
Secretary to Government.

ENCLOSURE.

From the Hon'ble S. SRINIVASA RAGHAVAIYANGAR, Dewan Bahadur, C.I.E., Inspector-General of Registration, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 31st July 1895, No. G-2174.

With reference to official memorandum from Government, under date the 21th instant, No. 63, Pension Department, I have the honour to submit copies of the papers marginally noted received from the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal, on the working of Sir William Herschell's system of identification by finger impressions which has been introduced into registration offices in that Presidency.

Circular, No. 26, dated 21st May 1894, of the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal.
Letter from the Additional Sessions Judge of 24 Pergunnahs to Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal, dated 11th June 1894, No. 322.
Letter from the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal, to the Secretary to Government, Bengal, dated 19th June 1894, No. 3227.
Letter from the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal, to the Inspector-General of Registration, Madras, dated 13th July 1895, No. 3361.

2. The explanation of the system given in the papers forwarded is very brief. A full account of it is, however, available in the report of the committee appointed by the Home Secretary of State in 1893 "to inquire into the best means available for identifying habitual criminals." Mr. Francis Galton's method of identification by means of a record of finger-marks, which is the same as that of Sir William Herschell in an elaborated and perfected form, formed the subject of investigation by this committee, and I give below, for convenience of reference, the substance of the conclusions arrived at by the committee in so far as they bear on the requirements of the Registration Department.

3. The general principles on which the system is based are explained by the committee as follows:—

"The materials on which Mr. Galton works are impressions taken from the bulbs below the tips of the fingers and thumbs. The papillary ridges which cover the palms of the hands form at this point patterns of well-marked form and of a curious variety and shape; of these patterns

impressions or 'imprints' can be taken on paper or card-board by means of printer's ink, so as to show the directions, terminations and junctions of the ridges with much greater clearness than can be seen on the hand itself, and these imprints can be examined through a lens or microscope, or can be enlarged to any size by means of photography. The patterns and the ridges of which they are composed possess two qualities which adapt them in a singular way for use in deciding questions of identity. In each individual they retain their peculiarities, as it would appear, absolutely unchangeable throughout life, and in different individuals they show an infinite variety of forms and peculiarities."

4. The committee examined the data on which the *persistence* of the ridges and patterns in the same individual throughout life was considered as established by Mr. Galton and was of opinion that his conclusions should be entirely accepted. Out of a large number of cases of imprints taken from the fingers of various persons after intervals of years and minutely compared in every detail, there was only one instance where a minute detail was found to vary, and this was a case in which a ridge which bifurcated in an impression taken at the age of $2\frac{1}{2}$ was found to have united at the age of 15. In all the cases in which the finger-prints of adults taken at different ages were compared, the correspondence was found to be exact.

5. As regards the question of the finger-prints of *different* individuals coinciding, the committee refer to Mr. Galton's calculations which go to show that the chance of two finger-prints being identical is less than one in sixty-four thousand millions, that is to say, if the number of the human race is reckoned at sixteen hundred millions, there is a smaller chance than one to four that the print of one finger of any person should be exactly like that of any finger of any other person in any part of the earth. The committee go on to say: "If, therefore, two finger-prints are compared and are found to coincide exactly, it is practically certain that they are prints of the same finger of the same person; if they differ, the inference is equally certain that they are made by different fingers. The prints of one finger, if clearly taken, are therefore enough to decide the question of identity or non-identity, and if the prints of three or more fingers be taken and compared, all possibility of error is absolutely eliminated. We are clearly of opinion that for the purpose of *proving* identity, the finger-prints examined and compared by an expert furnish a method far more certain than any other. They are incomparably more certain than personal recognition or identification by photograph."

6. The committee further state "that they satisfied themselves that finger-prints could not be altered so as to cause any possibility of mis-identification. They can, of course, be altogether destroyed, but this would be a difficult and painful operation and would at once afford a new personal mark of a most distinctive character. Cuts and ulcers destroy a portion of the ridges, but generally leave the pattern perfectly distinguishable; in any case, they could not possibly cause such a change as might lead to mis-identification." In the case of persons engaged in hard manual labour, the ridges may to some extent become obscured, but practically this is not found to affect the validity of the test to any great extent.

7. In concluding their observations on the utility of the system of recording finger-prints, the committee remark: "It seems impossible to insist too strongly on the absolute certainty of the criterion of identity afforded by the finger-prints. Considered merely as a test of identity and not as a detective agency—there being no longer any question of classification—their use becomes at once extremely simple, and in the hands of an expert free from any danger of error. Apart altogether, therefore, from their use in tracing habitual criminals, it would be a very easy matter to use them much more extensively as a check to identifications.

* * * * *

So, if the finger-prints of pensioners were taken and kept with their papers, an absolute test would be available if any question of fraudulent drawing of the pension (*e.g.*, after the death of the pensioner) should ever arise."

8. Two further questions which arise in connection with the system of identification by finger-prints are—1*st*, the procedure to be observed in comparing finger-prints with a view to establish identity or to disprove it; and, 2*ndly*, the methods to be adopted in classifying and recording the finger impressions so as to facilitate

future reference. As regards the first point, I have not been able to procure at Madras a copy of Mr. Galton's work on "Finger-prints" referred to by the committee and in which elaborate rules seem to have been given for noting the points of resemblance or of difference in scrutinising and comparing finger-prints. In an article published by Mr. Galton in the "Nineteenth Century" for August 1891 on "Identification by finger-tips," he points out that, when a finger or finger-print is scrutinised under a lens, even of low power, it is seen to abound in minute peculiarities due to the branching of existing ridges and to the abrupt interpolations of new ones; and it is to these minutiæ, as well as to the general character of the pattern and *not* in the measured diameters of its outline, that the points of reference for establishing identity are to be looked for. The pattern, as a whole, may become altered in length and breadth, as it grows, as the finger grows, or it may become deformed by constant use, gout or age, but the number of ridges, their embranchments and other minutiæ remain unchanged, just as in a piece of old lace, while the pattern may be stretched in one direction or shrunk in another, the number of threads and their relative positions remain unchanged. Further, it must be remembered in scrutinising two impressions that they may not cover *exactly* the same surface of the finger and consequently the comparison should be confined to the portions common to both; and allowance must also be made in noting the points of resemblance at the places where new ridges arise for the depth of the printing in different impressions and minute alterations in the level of the ridges at their starting point. In a book entitled "Decipherment of blurred finger-prints" published by Mr. Galton in 1893, of which I have obtained a copy, Mr. Galton has dealt with the question whether impressions such as ordinary officials are likely to take will afford evidence strong enough to convince a jury that two submitted finger-prints had or had not been made by the same finger. For this purpose, he examined eight cases of finger-prints taken in the Hoogly registration office in Bengal in 1878 under the instructions of Sir William Herschell and compared them with the impressions made by the same fingers in 1892 or after the lapse of 14 years. The impressions compared were greatly blurred owing to the method of printing adopted, which was by using dye or water-colour, whereas, if printing ink had been used, the impressions would have been very much clearer. The impressions were photographed and enlarged sevenfold and the prints were firmly laid against a pane of glass and the axes of the ridges were pencilled on the back. It is necessary to take pains to fix the common starting part with care before beginning to draw any lines at all, and then to proceed from point to point alternately in the two prints to be compared. Proceeding in this manner, Mr. Galton has shown that in the eight cases referred to, the prints taken in 1878 and 1892 present *numerous* points of *agreement* and *none* of *disagreement*. The manner in which the proof of identity or difference sought to be established by means of finger-prints should be put before a jury would be analogous to the manner in which the consistency or inconsistency of facts proved by evidence in the ordinary way with the questions at issue is established; while the reasoning will be more cogent in the former than in the latter case. Ordinarily, in the case of clear impressions, there would be no difficulty in proving identity, and it is only in the case of blurred impressions that special skill in deciphering them will be needed. It may, however, be observed that with this part of the process registering officers will have nothing to do. It is only in a very small number of cases that impressions will have to be compared for establishing the commission of fraud in connection with the registration of documents, and in such cases skilled assistance can be easily procured.

9. As regards the classification and indexing of the impressions taken for ready reference in future, Mr. Galton has shown that impressions can be classified under three main classes, viz., arches, loops and whorls, with sub-classes, varieties, &c., and he has invented a notation for the purpose. This is a matter of importance where habitual criminals have to be identified; but there is no necessity for a registering officer concerning himself with this. Against each impression the number of the document in connection with which it is taken and the name of the individual will be noted, and this will enable reference being made to the impression at once when required. If the alleged executant of a document denies his appearance before the

registering officer and admission of execution thereof, the impression of his finger may be taken and compared with the impression already taken at the time of the registration of the document, and the truth or falsity of his statement established. In the latter case, if any particular person is suspected to have personated the alleged executant, the suspicion may be strengthened or dissipated by comparing his finger-print with the one recorded in connection with the registration of the document. In the case referred to in the papers forwarded by the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal, it will be seen that the Additional Sessions Judge of the 24 Pergunnahs convicted and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment certain persons for having procured the registration of a document by means of false personation solely on the evidence afforded by the finger-print taken at the time of registration, and that the sentence was confirmed on appeal by the Calcutta High Court.

10. I have in the above paragraphs endeavoured to give some account of the principles and procedure of the system by means of extracts from the report of the committee and the writings of Mr. Galton in order to show how it is possible to put finger impressions, which on a superficial view seem to be an undefined maze, to such important uses. There is also not the least difficulty in taking a finger-print. The apparatus used consists of a thick pane of glass or a plate of copper or tin screwed by its corners and down both ends to a board one inch thick and an ordinary printer's roller. A drop of printers' ink is put on the plate and by means of the roller and with the aid of a drop of kerosine oil it is spread over it evenly. The layer of the ink must be so thin as to allow the colour of the plate to show through it. The bulb of the finger whose impression has to be taken is gently but firmly pressed on the plate, and the inked finger is pressed in the same manner to the paper or book to which the impression has to be transferred. I have taken the impressions in the case of some persons who have registered documents in the Sowcarpet sub-registrars' office, and find that the whole process does not take a minute or indeed more time than is taken by the parties to write their signatures. The impressions of fingers of several persons can be taken on the same plate before it has to be inked again. I understand that Messrs. J. Daws and Co., Calcutta, 21, Lall Bazaar Street, supply rubber rollers at Rs. 1-8-0 and tin slabs at 2 annas 6 pies. The whole cost of the apparatus with printing ink, &c., cannot exceed Rs. 3.

11. Even if the system of identification by finger-prints prove to be not so sure and infallible a test as the committee of 1893 make it out to be—and I see no reason to mistrust the judgment of a scientific man of such great eminence as Mr. Galton, backed by the results of the careful investigations of the committee—there can be no doubt that it would be a most valuable supplement to the methods now employed for ensuring that the persons who appear before registering officers are really the persons they profess themselves to be. I have always considered that the identification of alleged executants of documents is rather a weak point in the registration system. It is true that the fact of inquiries in connection with the registration of documents being conducted in public is a safeguard against fraud and the ratio of the number of documents registered by means of false personation to the total number of documents registered is very small, but at the same time it must be admitted that the nature of the inquiries made is not, and in offices where large numbers of documents are registered daily cannot be, such as to preclude all chance of a false personation being successfully attempted. Registration rule No. 6 requires that the identity of the parties appearing before registering officers should, if possible, be proved by the testimony of persons who are personally known to them, or, when this is not procurable, by the most trustworthy evidence which may be available. There is also a departmental order which requires that some description of the parties should be recorded touching their personal marks or other peculiarities coupled with the injunction that such record should be confined to general defects which can be easily discovered and noted without questioning, and that inquisitorial and offensive inquiries should be avoided. The record of defects, unless very carefully made, is apt to be misleading except in the case of very patent infirmities, and the order referred to with the reservations contained in it is of little efficacy for the purpose intended. About the end of 1893, one or two cases of false personation which came to my notice

having shown that the inquiries made by registering officers for satisfying themselves as to the identity of parties were in some cases superficial, I issued circular No. 30 of 1893, a copy of which I enclose. It was found that in some cases where the parties were not known to registering officers, the documents were registered on the evidence as to identity of two witnesses who were equally unknown, and I called the attention of the registering officers to the procedure prescribed in an old circular order, No. 7 of 1868, which had been allowed silently to fall into abeyance, in view to fixing responsibility on the witnesses when they mislead them. Representations, however, having soon after been received from several officers that the revival of the procedure referred to would seriously retard registration work and work hardship to the parties and also encourage resort to a professional class of witnesses, I allowed the order to be in abeyance* until a more satisfactory plan of ensuring correct identification of parties can be devised. It seems to me that the system of recording finger-prints now under consideration will admirably serve this purpose. In the case of persons who are "marksmen", it will furnish a distinctive mark in the place of signature. It will be even more useful in the case of *Gosha* women, whom the registering officer cannot see. The system of recording finger-prints will, of course, operate more efficaciously by way of prevention than of detection, in that persons who wish to have documents registered by means of false personation will hereafter have to look out for persons whose finger-marks resemble those of the persons personated—a most difficult undertaking—even if in spite of the calculations put forward by Mr. Galton, the possibility of finger-prints of different persons being exactly alike be conceded.

* *Vide* Proceedings, T. No. 378, dated 2nd February 1894 (copy enclosed).

12. For the above reasons, I beg to recommend that the system of record of finger-marks be introduced in this Presidency and that the Government may be pleased to accord sanction to the following rule being inserted as Rule 6-A after Rule 6 under section 69 of the Registration Act:—

"In districts where Sir William Herschell's system of identification by means of finger-prints has been introduced under the orders of the Inspector-General, the impressions of the right thumb of the executant or executants of the documents to be registered shall be taken in printers' ink off a flat piece of tin, copper or glass properly prepared for the purpose, and transferred both to the documents and to a blank register kept in the registration office. Against each impression in this register, the name of the party, the number of the deed in Books I, III, IV or V and the date shall be entered. In such districts the registering officer may require every executant who is not personally known to himself to affix such an impression both to the deed and the register in his presence whether he can write his name or not."

13. I request that Government may be pleased to sanction a sum of Rs. 300 for the purchase of the necessary apparatus for use in about 100 offices during the current year. I propose to instruct district registrars to explain the use of the apparatus and to introduce the new system in selected sub-offices during their next tour of inspection.

14. I propose also to issue orders for affixing impressions of finger-prints in the service registers of all officers and servants of the Registration department in the column for personal marks for identification provided therein.

Order—No. 2467, Judicial, dated 28th November 1895.

The Inspector-General's proposals in paragraphs 12–14 of his letter read above are approved and the following notification will be published in the *Fort St. George Gazette*:—

NOTIFICATION.

Under the provisions of section 69 of "The Indian Registration Act, 1877," the following addition to the rules published in the supplement to the *Fort St. George Gazette*, dated the 13th March 1883, has been approved by His Excellency the Governor in Council and is hereby published for general information in accordance with the requirements of the section in question:—

"6-A. In districts where Sir William Herschell's system of identification by means of finger-prints has been introduced under the orders of the Inspector-General, the impressions of the right thumb of the executant or executants of documents to be registered shall be taken in printer's ink off a flat piece of tin, copper or glass properly prepared for the purpose, and transferred both to the documents and to a blank register kept in the Registration office. Against each impression in this register, the name of the party, the number of the deed in Books I, III, IV or V and the date shall be entered. In such districts the registering officer may require every executant who is not personally known to himself to affix such an impression both to the deed and the register in his presence whether he can write his name or not."

(True Extract.)

J. F. PRICE,
Chief Secretary.

To the Inspector-General of Registration.
" Pension Department.
" Accountant-General.
Gazette.
Editors' Table.

Ed. A. Ralph.

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Govt. of {1895} Madras.

JUDICIAL.

Issued

Recd.

Encl.

G.O., No. 2467, 28th Nov. 1895.

NOVEMBER.

Identification by means of Finger-prints.

Approving the proposal of the Inspector-General of Registration to introduce a system of identification of executants of documents by means of finger-prints and ordering publication of a notification on the subject in the *Fort St. George Gazette*.

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Revenue Secretariat,
Nov 7 1895.

My dear Mr. Srinivasa Ragava Iyengar,

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I am afraid you can hardly expect to receive orders on your report relating to the introduction of the System of taking finger prints for the purpose of identification in the Registration Dept. in sufficient time to enable you to make arrangements for the immediate

immediate issue of instructions on the Subject. The fact that your reply to the memorandum issued in the Pension Dep^t contained a specific recommendation that the System should be introduced into the Registration Dep^t was overlooked until your letter reached me and though immediate Steps will be taken to remedy the error, it is hardly probable that you will receive

receive final orders as early as you desire them.

Yours Sincerely,

/signed/ Lionel Davidson.

Ag Under Secretary

To

The Hon'ble S. Srinivasa Rajava Iyengar C. I. E, Dewan Bahadur

/True Copy/ Mch 1890

Lionel Davidson

Ag. Under Secretary

Registration Dept.
~~Revenue Secretariat,~~
Madras.
6th Nov. 1895.

My dear Mr. Davidson,

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It will be convenient if I can have early orders on my report on the introduction of the System of taking finger prints for purposes of identification in the Registration dept. In a fortnight all the Registrars will be going on a tour of inspection

tion and I propose to ask them to instruct the Sub- Registrars on the method of taking finger impressions. During my recent tour in the Southern districts I have tried the plan in several offices and I do not anticipate any difficulty in introducing it.

Yours sincerely

signed/ S. Srinivasa Raghavaiangar.

/True copy/

Lionel Davidson
Ag Under Secretary.
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Registration Department
G.O. 2174

From

The Honble S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar,
Dewan Bahadur, C.I.E.,
Insp.r Genl. of Registration
Madras,

To

The Honble J. F. Price, C.S.I.,
Chief Secretary to Government
Ootacamund

Dated Madras, 31st July 1895.

Sir,

With reference to official Memorandum from Government under date the 24th inst. No 63, Pension Department, I have the honour to submit copies of the papers marginally noted* received from the Inspector-General of Registration, Bengal on the working of Sir William Herschel's system of identification by finger impressions, which has been introduced into Registration offices in that Presidency.

* Circular No 26 S/21 May 1894 of the Insp.r Genl. of Registration Bengal.
* Letter from the additional Sessions Judge of 24 Pergannahs to Insp.r Genl. of Registration Bengal S/11 June 1894 No 322.
* Letter from the Insp.r Genl. of Registration Bengal, to the Secy. to Govt. Bengal S/19 June 1894 No 3227.
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5. As regards the question of the finger prints of <u>different</u> individuals coinciding, the Committee refer to Mr. Galton's calculations which go to show that the chance of two finger prints being identical is less than one in sixty-four thousand millions, that is to say, if the number of the human race is reckoned at sixteen hundred millions, there is a smaller chance than one to four that the print of one finger of any person should be

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6. The Committee further state "that they satisfied themselves that finger prints could not be altered so as to cause any possibility of mis-identification. They can, of course, be altogether destroyed, but this would be a difficult and painful operation and would at once afford a new personal mark of a most distinctive character.

Cato

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8. Two further questions, which arise in connection with the system of identification by finger-prints are - 1st the procedure to be observed in comparing finger-prints with a view to establish identity or to disprove it; and 2ndly, the methods to be adopted in classifying and recording the finger impressions so as to facilitate future reference. As regards the first point, I have not been able to procure at Madras a copy of Mr Galton's work on "Finger prints" referred to by the Committee and in which elaborate rules seem to have been given for noting the points of resemblance or of difference in scrutinising and comparing finger-prints. In an article published by Mr Galton in the "Nineteenth Century" for August 1891 on "Identification by finger tips" he points out that, when a finger or finger-print is scrutinised under a lens, even

of low power, it is seen to abound in minute peculiarities due to the branching of existing ridges and to the abrupt interpolations of new ones; and it is to these minutiæ, as well as to the general character of the pattern and not in the measured diameters of its outline, that the points of reference for establishing identity are to be looked for. The pattern as a whole, may become altered in length and breadth, as it grows, as the finger grows, or it may become deformed by constant use, gout or age; but the number of ridges, their embranchments and other minutiæ remain unchanged; just as in a piece of old lace, while the pattern may be stretched in one direction or shrunk in another, the number of threads & their relative positions remain unchanged. Further, it must be remembered in scrutinising two impressions that they may not cover Exactly the same surface of the finger and consequently the comparison should be confined to the portions common to both; and allowance must also be made in noting the points of resemblance at the places where new ridges arise for the depth of the printing in different impressions and minute alterations in the level of the

the ridges at their starting point. In a book entitled "Decipherment of blurred finger-prints" published by Mr Galton in 1893, of which I have obtained a copy, Mr Galton has dealt with the question whether impressions such as ordinary officials are likely to take will afford evidence strong enough to convince a jury that two submitted finger-prints had or had not been made by the same finger. For this purpose, he examined 8 cases of finger-prints taken in the Hooghly registration office in Bengal in 1878 under the instructions of Sir William Herschel and compared them with the impressions made by the same fingers in 1892 or after the lapse of 14 years. The impressions compared were greatly blurred owing to the method of printing adopted, which was by using dye or water-colour, whereas, if printing ink had been used, the impressions would have been very much clearer. The impressions were photographed and enlarged Sevenfold and the prints were firmly laid against a pane of glass and the axes of the ridges were pencilled on the back. It is necessary to take pains to fix the common starting part with

with care before beginning to draw any lines at all; and then to proceed from point to point alternately in the two prints to be compared. Proceeding in this manner, Mr Galton has shown that in the 8 cases referred to, the prints taken in 1878 and 1892 present numerous points of agreement and none of disagreement. The manner in which the proof of identity or difference sought to be established by means of finger prints, should be put before a jury would be analogous to the manner in which the consistency or inconsistency of facts proved by Evidence in the ordinary way with the questions at issue is established; while the reasoning will be more cogent in the former than in the latter case. Ordinarily in the case of clear impressions, there would be no difficulty in proving identity, and it is only in the case of blurred impressions that special skill in deciphering them will be needed.

It

It may, however, be observed that with this part of the process, registering officers will have nothing to do. It is only in a very small number of cases that impressions will have to be compared for establishing the commission of fraud in connection with the registration of documents, and in such cases, skilled assistance can be easily procured.

9. As regards the classification and indexing of the impressions taken for ready reference in future, Mr Galton has shown that impressions can be classified under 3 main classes, viz, arches, loops and whorls, with subclasses, varieties, &c, and he has invented a notation for the purpose. This is a matter of importance where habitual criminals have to be identified; but there is no necessity for a registering officer concerning himself with this. Against each impression, the number of the document in connection with which it is taken and the name of the individual will be noted, and this will enable reference being made to the impression at once when required. If

the

the alleged executant of a document denies his appearance before the registering officer and admission of execution thereof, the impression of his finger may be taken and compared with the impression already taken at the time of the registration of the document, and the truth or falsity of his statement established. In the latter case, if any particular person is suspected to have personated the alleged executant, the suspicion may be strengthened or dissipated by comparing his finger-print with the one recorded in connection with the registration of the document. In the case referred to in the papers forwarded by the Inspector General of Registration, Bengal, it will be seen that the additional Sessions Judge of the 24-Pergunnahs convicted and sentenced to 3 years' rigorous imprisonment certain persons for having procured the registration of a document by means of false personation solely on the evidence afforded by the finger-print taken at the time of registration, and that the sentence was confirmed on appeal by the

10. I have, in the above paragraphs, endeavoured to give some account of the principles and procedure of the system by means of extracts from the report of the Committee and the writings of Mr. Galton in order to show how it is possible to put finger impressions, which on a superficial view seem to be an undefined mass, to such important uses. There is also not the least difficulty in taking a finger-print. The apparatus used consists of a thick pane of glass or a plate of copper or tin screwed by its corners and down to the ends to a board 1 inch thick and an ordinary printer's roller. A drop of printer's ink is put on the plate and by means of the roller and with the aid of a drop of kerosine oil it is spread over it evenly. The layer of the ink must be so thin as to allow the colour of the plate to show through it. The ball of the finger whose impression has to be taken is gently but firmly pressed on the plate, and the inked finger is pressed in the same manner to the paper or book to which the impression has to be transferred. I have taken the impressions in the case of some

persons

persons who have registered documents in the Sowcarpet Sub Registrar's office; and find that the whole process does not take a minute or indeed more time than is taken by the parties to write their signatures. The impressions of fingers of several persons can be taken on the same plate before it has to be inked again. I understand that Messrs J. Dawson & Co. Calcutta, 21, Lall Bazaar Street, supply rubber-rollers at Re 1-8, and tin-slabs at 2as 6pies. The whole cost of the apparatus with printing ink &c. cannot exceed Rs 3.

11. Even if the system of identification by finger-prints prove to be not so sure and infallible a test as the Committee of 1893 make it out to be - and I see no reason to mistrust the judgment of a scientific man of such great eminence as Mr. Galton, backed by the results of the careful investigations of the Committee - there can be no doubt that it would be a most valuable supplement to the methods now employed for ensuring that the persons who appear before registering officers are really the persons they profess themselves to be -

I have always considered that the identification of alleged executants of documents is rather a weak point in the registration system. It is true that the fact of enquiries in connection with the registration of documents being conducted in public is a safe guard against fraud & the ratio of the number of documents registered by means of false personation to the total number of documents registered is very small, but at the same time it must be admitted that the nature of the enquiries made is not such, in offices where large numbers of documents are registered daily, as to preclude all chance of a false personation being successfully attempted. Registration rule No. 6 requires that the identity of the parties appearing before registering officers should, if possible, be proved by the testimony of the persons who are personally known to them or when this is not procurable, by the most trustworthy evidence which may be available. There is also a departmental order which requires that some description of the parties should be recorded touching their personal marks or other peculiarities coupled with the

* At page 50 of the Registration manual.

the injunction that such record should be confined to general defects which can be easily discovered & noted without questioning, and that inquisitorial and offensive enquiries should be avoided. The record of defects unless very carefully made is apt to be misleading except in the case of very patent infirmities and the order referred to with the reservations contained in it is of little efficacy for the purpose intended. About the end of 1893, one or two cases of false personation, which came to my notice having shown that the enquiries made by registering officers for satisfying themselves as to the identity of parties were in some cases superficial, I issued circular № 30 of 1893, a copy of which I enclose. It was found that in some cases where the parties were not known to registering officers, the documents were registered on the evidence as to identity of two witnesses who were equally unknown, and I called the attention of the registering officers to the procedure prescribed in an old circular order № 7 of 1886 – which had been allowed silently to fall into abeyance – in view to fixing responsibility on the witnesses

vide Proceedings T. No. 378 D/23 July 1894. (Copy enclosed)

witnesses when they misled them. Represented however, having soon after been received from several officers that the revival of the procedure referred to would seriously retard registration work and work hardship to the parties & also encourage resort to a professional class of witnesses, I allowed the order to be in abeyance until a more satisfactory plan of ensuring correct identification of parties can be devised. It seems to me that the system of recording finger-prints now under consideration will admirably serve this purpose. In the case of persons who are marksmen it will furnish a distinctive mark in the place of signature. It will be even more useful in the case of Purdah women, whom the registering officer cannot see. The system of recording finger-prints will, of course, operate more efficaciously by way of prevention than of detection, in that persons who wish to have documents registered by means of false personation will hesitate to have to look out for persons whose finger marks resemble those of the persons personated – a most difficult undertaking

undertaking — even if in spite of the calculations put forward by Mr Galton, the possibility of finger-prints of different persons being exactly alike be conceded.

12. For the above reasons, I beg to recommend that the system of record of finger marks be introduced in this Presidency & that the Government may be pleased to accord sanction to the following rule being inserted as rule 6-A after rule 6 under section 69 of the Registration Act: —

"In districts where Sir William Herschell's system of identification by means of finger-prints has been introduced under the orders of the Inspector-General, the impressions of the right thumb of the executant or executants of documents to be registered shall be taken in printer's ink off a flat piece of tin, copper or glass properly prepared for the purpose & transferred both to the documents and to a blank register kept in the registration office. Against each impression in this register, the name of the party, the number of the deed in Book No. I, II, III, IV or V and the date shall be entered. In such districts the registering officer may require every executant who

who is not personally known to himself to affix such an impression both to the deed and the register in his presence whether he can write his name or not."

13. I request that Government may be pleased to sanction a sum of Rs 300 for the purchase of the necessary apparatus for use in about 100 offices during the current year. I propose to instruct District Registrars to explain the use of the apparatus and to introduce the new system in selected sub-offices during their next tour of inspection.

14. I propose also to issue orders for affixing impressions of finger-prints in the service registers of all officers & servants of the Registration department in the column for personal marks for identification provided therein.

I have the honour to be
Sir,
Your most obedt servant,
(Sd) S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyangar
Inspr General of Regns

/True copy/

Lionel Bourdon
Ag. Under Secretary to Govt

[0/0]
2,000—12-8-95.

Current No. 5355

Judl DEPARTMENT.

From

The Revenue Dept

Office Note

No. 94

Dated 12 — 11 — 95

Received 12 — 11 — 95

Enclosures 13 - 11 - 95

SUBJECT.

Forwg Copy of a letter from the I. Gen Regn re: the System of identification of pensioners by finger tip impressions & requesting that certain paras therein require Consideration in the Judl Dept.

Cover

G.O. 837: 23, 10-9-95 Judl

For orders Submitted that the I.G's proposals in paras 12—14 of his letter may be approved. Rs 200 has been provided for this expenditure in the budget for 1896-97. The receipt of this is under disposal in Pension D.

14-11-95

25/11/95

The letter is interesting. The I.G. seems not to have noticed another point in the system which is not found to introduce and which is the moral effect which it must have on would-be impersonators, of the lower classes especially. There is a "bogie" element about it which is sure to impress the native mind.

The system itself is a very ancient one and owes its origin to China

20/11/95

The proposals may be sanctioned. The letter should be printed & sent for E.7.

I observe that the malcontents referred to herein have put up. However, I don't want to bother.

We have no copy of Letter No. which the R.G. refers, nor the G.O. referred to — also the report of the Committee —

22/11/95

C. No. 1080

E.

Pension Department.

No. 94.

OFFICE NOTE.

Station Madras. date 12th November 1895.

From

THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
PENSION DEPARTMENT.

CHIEF SECRETARY GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS 12 NOV. 1895

To

The Honble the Chief Secretary to Govt
Judicial Department.

The Undersigned has the honor to forward herewith a copy of the letter from the Inspector General of Registration, Madras, dated 31st July 1895 No. 2174 G., paras 12 to 14 of which require consideration in the Judicial Department. Orders on the subject of introducing the system of identification of pensioners by finger tip impressions will issue from this department in due course.

Extracts from the demi official letters relating to the same subject accompany from which it will be seen that the Inspector General is anxious that early orders should be passed on his recommendations.

R. Gibson.
Secretary to Government.

12/11

Judicial DEPARTMENT. D

orders of the Inspector General

[G. 34.]
500—23-7-95.

Judicial DEPARTMENT. O

Papers to be read in proceedings :—

Again G.O., dated 189 , No.

Again G.O., dated 189 , No.

Current No. 3355 of 1895, dated 12 Nov, from the Rev. dept.

" " " 189 , " , "

" " " 189 , " , "

ORDER. No. 2467 d/28 Nov 95

P.S.

The Rg's proposals in paras. 12-14 of his letter read above are approved & the following notification will be published in the Fort St George Gazette :-

Notification.

Under the provisions of sec. 69 of the Indian Registration Act, 1877, the following addition to the rules published in the supplement to the Fort St George Gazette, dated the 13th March 1883, has been approved by H.E. the Gov. in Council and is hereby published for general information in accordance with the requirements of the section in question :-

"6-A. In districts where Sir William Herschell's system of identification by means of finger-prints has been introduced under the orders of the Inspector General

the impressions of the right thumb of the ex-
"ecutant or executants of documents to
"be registered shall be taken in printer's
"ink off a flat piece of tin, copper or
"glass properly prepared for the purpose &
"transferred both to the documents and to
"a blank register kept in the registration
"office. Against each impression in
"this register the name of the party, the
"number of the deed in Books I, III, IV
"or V and the date shall be entered.
"In such districts the registering officer
"may require every executant who
"is not personally known to himself
"to affix such an impression both to
"the deed and the register in his pre-
-sence whether he can write his name
"or not."

(From orders)

DW
25/11/95 Drawings 29
26/ " /95

Ld

The Rg. of Registration
Petition Dept.
" Acct. Genl.
Gazette (Notice)
Editor's Table.

draft 12/12/95

Librarian with an extract from this note marked for guidance.

Specification as means of finger print.

(From orders)

C.S
PS.

22

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2140/96 C 23 Mcgin

335 a.

2467/21

ORDINARY PRINTED

Judicial
28-11-95
2467

INDEXED.

28/11

11/12

13/12/95

7 Copies

Identification by means of finger prints.

Approving and ordering the publication in the Fort St. George Gazette of the proposal of the Inspector General of Registration to introduce a system of identification of executants of documents by means of finger prints.

2467/21