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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.
~~B.P. No.~~

551.

~~Press~~
Mis.

Dated

19. 3. 1878 ~~196~~.

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Civil Servant.

No. 45. Read the following letter from A. WEDDERBURN, Esq., District Magistrate of Coimbatore, to the Hon. W. HUDLESTON, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, dated Coimbatore, 9th March 1875, No. 14.

It is with feelings of the deepest regret I have to communicate to Government the intelligence of the lamentable death of my Assistant, Mr. George Emilius Bird, of which I was informed at about $\frac{1}{4}$ past 3 o'clock of yesterday afternoon.

2. The news reached me in Cutcherry. I heard one of his deloyets say with great emotion "Bird Sahib murgia," and Mr. Bird's servant produced a revolver, one chamber of which was discharged, and pointed to his head; although such intelligence left no hope, I at once sent off conveyance for the Civil-Surgeon and the Apothecary from the Civil Hospital, and, meeting Captain Trotman, Acting Superintendent of Police, who had just heard the news, we at once proceeded on foot to Mr. Bird's house, which is near the railway station on the east. Captain Trotman first entered the room, which was a small dressing-room off the bed-room. He returned saying, it is all over. I went in and saw Mr. Bird in a bent sitting position, with the right side of his head and face turned inwards, resting on the side of a chest-of-drawers and bent down. His right arm was bent under his body, his left arm rested on his side, and his hand touched the ground. I took him by the left-hand, which was pulseless and almost cold. There was a large pool of blood on the floor in the corner below his head, and he had apparently been dead some time. On Dr. Roger's arrival, the body was placed on the bed, and an examination showed that the bullet had entered the centre of the forehead and taken a direction downwards through the brain towards the neck; death must have been instantaneous. The revolver, as I said before, had been picked up and brought to me in the Cutcherry.

3. The last person who saw him alive, which was about 12 o'clock noon, was his servant, a Mahomedan lad of 24 years of age, who deposed that after accompanying his master from Tinnevely to Coimbatore he had obtained leave to return to Tinnevely. On paying him his wages and a present for his marriage, his master asked him, are you really going? and remarked to him in English "it is a bad business," meaning thereby that it was an inconvenience his leaving then. Having taken leave for the time, he saw his master go into a small writing room off the front room, and lean a short time against the wall; the servant then went on his own affairs, first to the well in the compound, then returned and lay down and slept in the north verandah, and then got up, as he thinks, about 2-30 p. m. and went to the kitchen to see if his master's tiffin was ready; on learning which, he returned to the bungalow, and not seeing his master, went into the dressing room to announce the meal being ready, where he saw him lying in the position described. He had not heard the report of a pistol. He took up the revolver which was lying in front of the chest-of-drawers and came with it, and a deloyet, to me. He said Mr. Bird ate a good breakfast that morning, which the maity also corroborated.

4. Mr. Bird, I heard, was in ill-health at Palamcottah or Tuticorin where he had either fever, dysentery or sunstroke, or all of them, and I was told suffered

there from great depression of spirits. On his arrival on Tuesday the 2nd of March, he called on me; he did not look well, but thought himself better. He had previously arranged before his arrival to take Mr. Rice's house off his hands, with whom he lived till Friday morning, or the 5th instant, when Mr. Rice left. On Friday evening he dined with me and appeared in fair spirits, and played a rubber of whist in the evening. On Saturday he played rackets and went with me to the swimming bath. I believe he dined out that evening also. On Sunday I called in the afternoon thinking to take him for a drive, and to ask him to dinner, and found that he was engaged to drive with a lady before church, and to dine at Captain Trotman's afterwards in the evening. He walked home on Sunday night part of the way with Mr. Baber of the Survey. He was not out of spirits then. On Monday morning he met my Huzur Sheristadar near his house at 7-30 and talked with him about his division for about half an hour, and asked where I was (I being then in the town). He told me, on our first meeting, he should like himself to do the Jamabundy of Oodoomalpettah, as I had offered to have it otherwise arranged if he preferred. His head servant and lascar, cart and pony had been sent on beforehand to Pollachy, for which he intended starting at 7 P.M. I had asked him on the previous Sunday to come and dine with me on Monday, and leave after dinner, but he declined. Every thing was apparently prepared for a start that evening. Some of his clothes, writing boxes, and such small articles were, however, not packed. I looked in vain for any writing. There were no letters on the table, but a packet of official papers. In his pocket was a note written by a friend of his from Ootacamund, Mr. G. Thornhill, asking him to receive him on his return to Travancore on Monday afternoon. This letter by the date of 5th, he probably got on Saturday 6th afternoon. (I ascertained that he gave no orders, however, about Mr. Thornhill's reception). Mr. Thornhill had arrived by the 3 P.M. train on Monday, and was at the front door, when I arrived in the house from the back.

5. Dr. Rogers arrived at 5 minutes to 4 P.M., and was of opinion that life had been extinct for more than an hour. Besides the young servant about to leave him, there was only a young deloyet or peon who remained in the north verandah from 12 noon till 3 P.M., when the discovery was made. It is possible the fatal shot was fired when the servant went to the kitchen at 2-30 to order tiffin. No one, not even the young deloyet, had heard it.

6. On the top of the chest-of-drawers were some clean articles of dress and the leather case of the revolver unbuttoned, and his pocket-handkerchief. His diary in his desk contained some ordinary entries made on his journey and after arrival—none later than 3rd instant. There is nothing to show how he was employed after 12 noon, after he was last seen alive by his servant. The only paper in his pocket was the letter to him from Mr. Thornhill. In the blotting book on the writing table I found a letter to him from Dr. Ratton asking about his health, and the following verbatim and facsimile unfinished reply, dated the 6th:—

Coimbatore, 6th March 1875.

“MY DEAR RATTON,—Thanks for your kind letter. Yes, I am all right again now but on the way to it. I don't know exactly what has been the matter with me

or rather I” (this is on the first page, and the letter remained unfinished). The only other papers were rough drafts of his letter, reporting his arrival to me. He seemed to have had a fancy for writing people's names in print, and copying printed characters, but how he was employed in the last two hours of his life I have not been able to discover by any clue, and what passed through his mind is only known to his Maker. The revolver was kept in the left-hand upper drawer of the chest against which he was found, the unbuttoned case lying on the top and not replaced. It may have been a sudden impulse.

7. I had some conversation with him when I called at his house on Friday morning. He had played Badmington on Thursday evening. I asked him to come on Friday, but not appearing, I called for him and drove him to my house to dinner, an invitation to which he had accepted that morning. He said he had not been well that afternoon, but he showed no symptoms of this at dinner, and played a good game of whist afterwards. I asked him about his malady, and he said he suffered much from want of sleep. I told him I had likewise to a very great degree, but that he would get better.

8. His servant, whom I questioned afterwards on this subject, said that he had noticed his master walking about all night instead of resting, and when he suggested that he should consult the Doctor, he said that it had been so with him for three months, and that he did not want medicine. That he had suffered in health was apparent to some degree, but in writing to Mr. Puckle, who was greatly interested in him, I mentioned, so soon as I saw him on Tuesday, that he hoped to be soon well, and would be able to play rackets, which, in fact, he did. Nothing in his manner or remarks has afforded the slightest indication of so dreadful an end.

His arrangements for his journey were made with forethought.

His affairs were apparently in good order, and his spirits apparently improving, and the new work in which he was about to be engaged apparently attracting his interest. He showed no pre-occupation of mind, only a little anxiousness to have his papers about his arrival and other official details duly attended to, which was at once done. I considered myself as most fortunate in having the services of so intelligent and willing an Assistant.

9. The circumstances of the case seem to preclude any long predetermination. That the death-blow was self-inflicted is left in no doubt, and such was the verdict, but whether by accident, or otherwise, is left, in charity, an open question, as not affecting the interests of others.

10. The pistol, I learn, was loaded at Tinnevely before his journey, and as dacoities were not unknown upon roads, it was not an extraordinary precaution.

11. This clearly points to an absence of premeditation, and nothing which has been observed, or has transpired, tends to another conclusion. From the position of the body which had, as it were, collapsed from a standing or leaning position, death being instantaneous, and the pistol having apparently fallen from the hand in front of the drawers, and the direction of the bullet, and the closeness of the shot, it is difficult to realize the result of accident; but as it might have been within the limits of possibility, such was the verdict concurred in by five gentlemen

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
13th March 1875.*

then present, including Dr. Rogers, Captain Trotman, Mr. Winscom, Mr. G. Thornhill, and myself.

12. The State has lost a most promising young officer with whom my acquaintance has been but short, but not so short as to preclude a recognition of his most excellent qualities and the deepest regret for his lamented end.

C. J. Rogers, Civil Surgeon of Coimbatore, duly sworn:—I was sent for yesterday, and arrived at Mr. Bird's house at five minutes to four o'clock by my watch, and examined, at the District Magistrate's request, the body of Mr. George Emilius Bird, of the Civil Service. The body was in a bent, sitting or half-reclining position in the corner between the wall under the window of the dressing-room and a chest-of-drawers, against which the head was supported in a bent position, face inwards, a large pool of clotted blood was on the floor, under the head, whence it had flowed; the wrist was pulseless, and somewhat cold, and rigor mortis had commenced to set in. I had the body raised and put on the bed and found in the centre of the forehead a pistol-shot wound as described in my certificate, which was the cause of death.

From the appearance of the orifice of the wound, I am of opinion that the pistol must have been held, when fired, close to the forehead, and when receiving the shot, the head must have been bent down. I come to this conclusion from the direction of the ball and laceration of the brain, as ascertained by the probe; the pistol I consider was held in the right-hand, the right arm bent and leaned on the chest-of-drawers; that death was instantaneous, when the body at once collapsed into the position I found it in, and the pistol dropping from the hand would naturally be found in front of the chest-of-drawers. I am of opinion that death took place from one to two hours before my examination.

COIMBATORE,
9th March 1875.

(Signed) C. J. ROGERS,
Surgeon-Major.

Certified that we examined the body of George Emilius Bird, of the Madras Civil Service, Assistant Collector of Coimbatore, and that we find that he came by his death by a pistol ball through his forehead into the brain by his own hand, whether accidentally or otherwise, there is nothing to show.

(Signed) A. WEDDERBURN,
President.

(Signed) C. J. ROGERS, Surgeon-Major,	} Members.
(„) C. H. TROTMAN, Captain, Superintendent of Police	
(„) G. T. THORNHILL,	
(„) J. C. WINSKOM, Deputy Collector,	

Coimbatore, 8th March 1875.

No. 46. ORDER THEREON, 13th March 1875, No. 327.

The Governor in Council has received this melancholy intelligence with the greatest regret and deeply deplores the loss to the public service of so very promising an officer.

2. The Secretary of State will be requested by telegram to cause the news to be broken to his family in England.

3. The Magistrate will do what is necessary for securing Mr. Bird's property.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
13th March 1875.*

Telegram to Secretary of State.

George Emilius Bird, Madras Civil Service, died eighth instant at Coimbatore, by pistol shot self-inflicted, whether accidental or otherwise not known. Please cause news to be broken to his father, Charles Bird, at Cheltenham.

Telegram to Magistrate of Coimbatore.

Government received intelligence of poor Bird's death with greatest regret.
(True Extract.)

Chief Secretary.

To the Magistrate of Coimbatore.
„ Revenue Department.
„ Accountant-General.

Exd. T. O'Connor.

1875
Hudson Dept -
Dtbl. of 1875; Madras.

PUBLIC.

To
THE MAGISTRATE OF COIMBATORE,

de,

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Dated March 18th.

Recd.

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Encl.

G.O., 13th March 1875, No. 327.

MARCH

Nos. 45-46.

2 To the Board of Revenue - 27th Mar

Mr. G. F. Bird, Assistant Collector, Coimbatore,
has been expressed at intelligence of his death,
and the Secretary of State requested by telegram to
cause the same to be broken to his family in
England. Magistrate of Coimbatore directed to do
what is necessary for securing Mr. Bird's property.

Commissioner to the
Board of Revenue

19th March 1875