

Procedure about disposal of public money in the Presidency College and the management of the library attached thereto

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[No. 17] [File 1-D/1 1]

No. 8024, dated Darjeeling, the 5th October 1892.

From — C.H. Tawney, Esq., Offg. Director of Public Instruction, Bengal,

To — The Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department.

I have the honour to report for the information of Government that extensive defalcations have been committed by the Librarian of the Presidency College, Babu Kisori Mohan Mukerjea. I do not wish to imply that he has withheld Government money, but it appears that he has kept back, and apparently used for his own purposes, certain deposits made by the students of the Presidency College, who from time to time take out books from the Presidency College library.

2. It is the rule in the Presidency College to allow students to take books out of the library on making a deposit of Rs. 10, Rs. 20, or Rs. 30 according to the number of books they require. This money is returned to them when the books are brought back in good condition, or should such not be the case, when the books injured or lost are replaced. Unfortunately it is not stated in the rules to whom the security deposits are to be paid, and for this omission I am probably mainly responsible. But it has been always understood that the security deposits ought to be paid to the Assistant Secretary, who forwards them to the Bank of Bengal the same day. On receiving a deposit the Assistant Secretary gives a receipt to the depositor. This receipt the depositor makes over to the Librarian, who issues to him books. The Librarian enters the name of the depositor and the books taken out by him in the issue book, which he keeps along with the receipts in the desk for the purpose of reference. But it appears that, owing to the fact that the Assistant Secretary is often occupied in receiving fees and other duties, an irregular practice has sprung up, without the knowledge of the Principal and Professors, but according to the statements of the students, with the direct encouragement of the Librarian, of paying security deposits to the Librarian. These security deposits ought properly to pass on to the Assistant Secretary for transmission to the Bank of Bengal, and no doubt he generally does so. But it will appear that in some cases he has retained in his own possession money deposited by the students, and issued library books against such deposits.

3. On the 29th of August last, Mr. Griffiths, Principal of the Presidency College, received an anonymous letter handed to him by one of the Presidency College chaprasis, in which the Librarian, Babu Kisori Mohan Mukerjea, was charged with taking deposit from students without paying it to the College office. This letter gave the names of certain students as having paid deposit money which had not been received in the office. It also appears from a report made by Mr. Rowe that this or some other anonymous letter contained a complaint that students often experienced a difficulty in getting back their deposits. Mr. Griffiths immediately communicated with Mr. Rowe, who has succeeded Mr. Webb as Professor in charge

of the College Library, and sent for one of the students who was named in the anonymous letter. I proceed to narrate what followed in the exact words used by Mr. Griffiths in a letter to my address: —

“Mr. Rowe examined this student in my presence. The student, named Pulin Chandra Das, stated that he had paid Rs. 10 on a certain day to the Librarian, and has consequently been allowed to take out books. Having ascertained from the Assistant Secretary that the sum in question had not been paid to the office, we sent for the Librarian, and Mr. Rowe asked him the following questions: — a) ‘Do you ever give out books to students who have made no deposits?’ He answered emphatically that he did not. b) ‘Do you ever receive deposits from students?’ He answered emphatically that he did not. c) ‘Then for every student who has taken out a book, you have a receipt, given by the Assistant Secretary, for his deposit, filed in your office?’ He answered that he had. On ascertaining from the Assistant Secretary that when he was busy he had occasionally, and, as far as he could remember, only once or twice asked the students to pay their deposits to the Librarian until he has time to receive it; when the receipt for the deposit would be granted, I asked the Librarian if he always paid deposit money to the office on the day he received he. He replied that he did. I next asked him if he knew there was a rule that deposit money should always be paid to the office. He replied that he knew there was such a rule. Was he quite sure that he never retained money beyond the day on which it was paid to him? He was quite sure that he never did. ‘Have you any deposit money with you now?’ ‘No.’ On his being confronted with the student Pulin Chandra Das, who repeated the statement previously made to us, we asked him if the student’s statement was correct. He replied that it might be, but he could not be certain without inspecting the issue-book, and the file receipts. He was then requested to fetch his books and papers to my office for the purpose of examining them in my presence. At this stage of the proceedings the student, Pulin Chandra Das, was sent back to his class. While the Librarian was turning over a handful of loose receipts in our presence trying to find Pulin Chandra Das’s receipt, Mr. Rowe caught sight of a ten-rupee note amongst the receipts, and on inspecting it found Pulin Chandra Das’s name written on the back, but no receipt from the Assistant Secretary could be found. When asked for an explanation the Librarian refused to say anything, except that he could not understand how the note had got there; he did not remember having put it there. We then informed him that similar cases had been brought to our notice, and asked him if he could not tell us how much money he had received without accounting for it in the office. He did not answer our question, but merely observed that he was responsible for the money paid to him. On our further pressing him for an answer he added: ‘This much I can say, the books in the library are intact.’ We then requested him to make out a list of all students who had deposited money to him which had not been paid to the office, and allowed him to search his issue-book and receipts in my office room in the presence of one of my clerks. I locked the library and took the keys home with me that afternoon, telling the Assistant Secretary to take charge of the issue-book and receipts when they were done for that day.”

4. It appears that the next day the Librarian admitted having detained some other sums of money and paid Rs. 50 to the Assistant Secretary in addition to the ten-rupee note found the day before. On the 6th of September he was suspended by Mr. Griffiths, and Babu Jogendra Chandra Sinha, the Gymnastic Master of the Hindu and Hare Schools, who has had some experience in library work, was appointed to act for him, in addition to his own duties.

5. Subsequent investigations have revealed that the Librarian has detained in his own possession security deposits amounting to Rs. 1,415. A list of the names of the students has been made out, who declare that they have paid deposits to him, and have in consideration of these deposits, been allowed to take out books which they now have in their possession, and the sums set against their names aggregate this total. But this list rests principally upon the word of the students. I am myself afraid that this list may not be complete, as I was in the habit of allowing outsiders to take books on depositing a fair sum as security. This was in accordance with a wish expressed by Sir Richard Temple that the library should be made as generally useful as possible. He even wished at one time, if I remember aright, to throw it open to the general public. The Librarian, Babu Kisori Mohan Mukerjee, in his explanation, practically admits his guilt,

but declares himself willing to refund the money to all the students who have given their names to Professor Rowe as students that have deposited their money with him, provided their names are to be found in the issue-book after examining their names with the receipts granted to him after taking back their money. At the same time he declares himself incapable of making out such a list at present, as this account runs to a very long period. Mr. Griffiths says that he has had every opportunity given to him for making out a list of students who have paid their deposits to him, but he has not made out such a list, and he has not refunded any money except the Rs. 10 and the Rs. 50 mentioned above. So far from it, I am told that on Monday, the 5th of September, an application for casual leave was received from him. I have also heard that he went away from Calcutta without his application having been granted.

6. The students can hardly be blamed for paying their deposits to the Librarian, as they have no doubt supposed that he would make over to the Assistant Secretary for transmission to the Bank of Bengal. It seems to me that they have a right to expect their deposits to be returned to them, bringing back the books they have taken out.

7. The attention of the College authorities has been, I believe, concentrated on keeping the library in good order, and it never occurred to them — at least it never occurred to me — that the Librarian would ever have the audacity to take the security deposits from the students, opposed to such a practice was to the unwritten rule which he himself in his conversation with Messrs. Rowe and Griffiths acknowledged to be known to him. That there is danger of the books in College libraries being alienated or lost is sufficiently obvious, and I regret to say that I shall soon have to address the Government on the subject of a loss of books and manuscripts that has taken place in the Calcutta Madrasa.

8. I have now the honour to solicit the orders of Government as to whether the Librarian of the Presidency College is to be dismissed or retained on condition of paying back the sum of money he has withheld. As I before stated, he has withheld a sum amounting, as far as has been ascertained, to Rs. 1,415, but from this must be deducted Rs. 50 paid by him into the office during the investigation of the case, and his salary for August last, Rs. 68-8-8. There remains a balance of Rs. 1,296-7-4 with him. It appears to me that he has been guilty of so much deceit and prevarication that he cannot be retained in the service of Government. At the same time I must admit that the whole transaction is to a certain extent due to the fact that, when revisiting the Library rules as Principal of the Presidency College, I did not insert a provision that all security deposits were to be paid to the Assistant Secretary, and not to the Librarian. But I have already pointed out that the Librarian himself acknowledged that he was aware he had no right to take deposits from students without immediately paying them into the office.

9. In conclusion, I beg to express my regret that this report is somewhat incomplete, but I have had no time to investigate the matter myself, and the closing of the College for the vacation has apparently rendered it impossible for the College authorities to complete their investigations.

E.J.H. — Reg. No. 5104C—128—17.11.92.

[Nos. 18-19] [File 6-D/1 2]

No. 8052, dated Darjeeling, the 10th October 1892.

From— C.H. Tawney, Esq., Offg. Director of Public Instruction, Bengal,

To— The Secretary of the Government of Bengal, General Department.

In continuation of my letter No. 8024, dated the 5th instant, reporting the case of a defalcation committed by Babu Kisor Mohan Mukerjea, Librarian of the Presidency College, I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the rules of the Presidency College Library.

RULES OF THE PRESIDENCY COLLEGE LIBRARY.

1. The Library will remain open from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. on all days of the week except Saturdays (when it is open from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.), Sundays, and authorised holidays. It will be closed during College vacations.
2. All persons who are permitted to take out books or periodicals shall furnish the Librarian with proper receipts for the books so taken out.
3. Professors of the College and others, not being students, who take out books (other than text-books or books connected with the subjects on which they are lecturing), must return them at the expiration of three months from the date of taking them out. In the case of periodicals, they must be returned within a fortnight.
4. Students of the F.A., B.A., and M.A. Classes, are allowed to take out one or two books on depositing Rs. 10 (ten). Students of the M.A. Class, and those graduates who satisfy the Principal that they are preparing for the Studentship examination may take out as many as six books on depositing Rs. 5 (five) per book. In no case will a less deposit than Rs. 10 (ten) be permitted.
5. Students must return books at the expiration of two months from the date of taking them out, and are on no account to transfer them to any other person. Any student detaining books after that period, will pay a fine of one anna per day, and will not be allowed to take any more books till the fine is paid.
6. Students, Masters of the Hindu and Hare Schools, and gentlemen not connected with the College (see Rule 12) must return books at any time if they are required by Professors of the College, upon notice to that effect being given to them.
7. Any one who loses, defaces, blots, or in any way injures a book shall be liable for the original cost of the book.
8. No books are to be given out to students after 3 P.M.
9. Students will be allowed to take out books and study them in the Library during the time that the Library remains open, but they must deposit any books of their own on a stand reserved for the purpose. Umbrellas or sticks are on no account to be brought into the Library. Students must not carry on any conversation that may create a disturbance, or distract the attention of the Librarians and those engaged in study.
10. The Librarian is strictly ordered not to allow books of the following description to go out of the Library without the written sanction of the Principal, except when they are required by Professors of the College during Lecture hours: —
 - a. Books of reference (except in cases where there are duplicates or more copies of such books, when the latest issues or edition only is not allowed to go out of the Library*)
 - b. Newspapers and Periodicals (except after the lapse of two months from the date of their arrival*)
 - c. Reports and University Calendars
 - d. Books containing plates (These books are not to be issued to students.)
 - e. Law books (with the exception of the Tagore Lectures).

A few more valuable editions of English Prose and Poetical Works will be reserved for the Professors of the College.

11. At the end of each collegiate year, all books taken out of the Library must be returned to the Librarian for examination.
12. Gentlemen not connected with the College may be allowed to take out books with sanction of the Principal.

*These exceptions do not apply to students.

Calcutta,
The 1st August 1888.

A. Pedler,
Offg. Principal, Presidency College

[No. 20] [No. 3043, dated Calcutta, the 4th November 1892] (Response from Undersecretary that Lieutenant-Governor awaits a complete report following which orders will be passed)

[No. 21] [File 6D/1 4]

No. 8531, dated Calcutta, the 10th November 1892.
From—C.H. Tawney, Esq., Offg. Director of Public Instruction,
To—The Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department.

In reply to your No. 3043, dated the 4th November 1892, I have the honour to state that I have nothing to add to my previous report, except that some books are missing from the library of the Presidency College. The issue-book appears to have been kept carelessly.

2. Books have been issued to Professors without any note kept of them. It is clear also that books have been returned and not marked off. This is proved by the fact that the issued volumes, of which there are no duplicates, are now on the shelves of the library. The present officiating Librarian is hardly in a position to determine what books are out without the help of Babu Kissory Mohan Mookherjea, who, when asked to come to the College, makes excuses. It appears that it will be possible to take stock of the library during the Christmas vacation, but until the vacation, Mr. Rowe and the present officiating Librarian will not have sufficient leisure.

3. It is, of course, impossible to avoid loss of books in any library. I myself remember that some books were taken out by a very high official and never returned.

4. The most important point is that no more students have come forward to assert that they have paid deposits as security for taking out library books. In other words, no fresh monetary defalcations have been discovered.

[Nos. 22-23] [File 6-D/1 5]

No. 8733, dated Calcutta, the 21st November 1892.

Endorsement from—The Director of Public Instruction.

Copy forwarded to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General Department, in continuation of this office No. 8531, dated the 10th November 1892.

Dated Calcutta, the 11th November 1892.

From—Babu Priya Sankar Mazumdar,
To—The Principal, Presidency College, Calcutta.

I have the honour to bring to your notice that I deposited Rs. 10 with the Librarian of the College in the year 1886. I passed the F.A. and B.A. examinations from this College and now am an ex-student. I have been taking books until recently and still have one book of the library with me.

No. 992, dated Calcutta, the 11th November 1892.

Memo. by—The Principal, Presidency College, Calcutta.

Copy forwarded to the Director of Public Instruction, for information, in continuation of this office No. 949, dated the 23rd September 1892.

[No. 24] [File 1-D/1 6]

GENERAL DEPARTMENT.
Education — No. 3492

Calcutta, the 7th December 1892.

From C.E. Buckland, Esq.,
Secretary to the Government of Bengal,

To the DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, BENGAL.

Sir,

In acknowledging the receipt of your letters, noted on the margin, regarding the misappropriation of money by the Librarian of the Presidency College, I am directed to say that the Librarian, Babu Kisori Mohan Mukerjea, who detained in his own possession, and apparently used for his own purposes, certain deposits made by the students of the College against book from the College Library, is to be dismissed and gazetted as incapable of being re-employed in the service of the Government. You are requested to submit the usual draft notification for the approval of GOVERNMENT and for publication in the Calcutta Gazette.

2. I am to remark that it is evident from the report that, if any of the officers in charge of the library had done their duty in checking the Librarian's work, his misconduct and neglect of duties would have come to light long ago. The management of a library is a simple matter of routine, if only method and ordinary vigilance are adopted and exercised. His Honour cannot accept as correct the statement that it is impossible to avoid the loss of books in any library. It is surely possible to have locked almirahs or shelves, so that no one but the key-holder shall have access to the books. All that is wanted is to have regular hours of issue of books, and registers with columns showing —

- a) Name of the book taken out.
- b) Date of taking out.
- c) Date on which its return is due.
- d) Date of actual return.

If this procedure is properly followed by the Librarian, and his work is checked by the Assistant Secretary and the officer in charge of the library, no books should be lost.

3. As to the deposits made by the students of the college, it is not stated whether a register of depositors is maintained, and whether books of receipts *with counterfoils* are in use. A register of depositors should be kept by the Librarian as his authority for the names (and addresses) of the individuals to whom books may be lent. Steps should be taken to recover books overdue, and persons delaying to return such should be fined at once, under the orders of the officer in charge of the library. Books of receipts with counterfoils should be used, and the receipt counterfoils should be compared daily with the cash-book, and daily or weekly with the bank-book.

4. The Principal of the Presidency College should now be called upon to revise the rules of the College Library, and a copy of the revised rules should be submitted for the approval of Government. He should also be called upon to prepare as soon as possible a list, to be kept in office of the Assistant Secretary, of those persons who hold receipts for their deposits, if no such list already exists.

5. I am also to observe that the case discloses much carelessness and neglect of the general rules for the treatment of public money. Whenever an officer is allowed to receive money which has afterwards to be paid into the treasury, he should give security sufficient to cover his responsibilities, and he should have a duplicate receipt-book (i.e., receipt book with counterfoils), which should be compared daily or weekly with his bank-book. The Lieutenant-Governor desires that you will now have these principles enforced with respect to all the members of your department. As regards libraries, His Honour also desires that you will have an annual stocktaking of each library regularly carried out by the head of each college or school, and a rule to this effect should be included in the rules to be submitted for the conduct of the Library of the Presidency College.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

C.E. Buckland,

Secretary to the Government of Bengal