

Edn. Proceedings B. 27-30, Nov. 1864

Correspondence on the subject of specimens required from the Museum for the use of the Geological department of Presidency College

No. 1617 (?)

From — The Director of Public Instruction
To — The Secretary to the Government of Bengal

Dated Darjeeling, the 26th September, 1864.

Sir,

With reference to your office no. 2574 of 6 June 1864 and previous correspondence I have the honor to forward the accompanying papers for the consideration and orders of Government.

2. It appears that the Superintendent of the Geological Survey is unable to present to make over to the Presidency College from available duplicates such a series of geological specimens as are required for immediate use in illustrating the lectures of the Professor of natural science.

3. Under these circumstances it seems to me that this College has distinctly a lien upon the Collection transferred to the Geological Museum in 1856 - and I would recommend that any portion of that collection which Mr. Blanford requires may be at once restored to the College so as to become available for the purpose for which it was originally required.

4. In the event, however, of this arrangement being objected to, I would then recommend that the Government of India should be requested to sanction a special grant for the purchase of Mr. Jones' Collection, as suggested by Mr. Blanford, for the use of the Presidency College and the Educational Department generally.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient servant

W.S. Atkinson

Director of Public Instruction

26th-28th September, 1864

No. 27

With reference to Order No. 2674 of 6th June, 1864 the previous correspondence reports the inability of the Superintendent of the Geological Survey to make over for the present to the Presidency College such a series of Geological specimens as are required for immediate use in illustrating lectures on Natural Science. As the college has a lien upon the collection transferred to the Geological Survey in 1856, requirements

that these be transferred to the college; in case transferment objected to, proposes to ask the Govt. of India for the sanction of a special Grant to purchase Mr. Jones' Collection.

No. 594

From — J. Sutcliffe, Esq., M.A., Principal, Presidency College
To — W.S. Atkinson, Esq., M.A., Director of Public Instruction

Dated Presidency College, the 15th September 1864

Sir,

In forwarding the enclosed correspondence relative to the supply of specimens suitable for illustrating a series of lectures in Geology and Numerology, I beg at the same time to forward a copy of the letter from Mr. Oldham under which the small collection purchased for the use of the Presidency College in 1855 was transferred to the Museum. It seems to me that one of the conditions of the transfer was that the collection should at all times be available for use by the Professor of Natural Sciences. If this condition be carried out, there can be no necessity for purchasing Mr. Jones' collection and indeed if that collection were purchase for the College it would appear that the Superintendent of the Museum might call upon us to deposit it in the Museum.

I have &c.,

/&c./ J. Sutcliffe,

Principal, Presidency College.

No. 84

From — Thomas Oldham, Esq., Superintendent of Geological Survey
To — M. (?) Gordon Young, Esq., Director of Public Instruction,

Dated August 28th 1856

Sir,

Having been entrusted by the Right Honble. the Governor General in Council with the formation of a Geological and Numerological Museum in connection with the Geological Survey under my charge, and which museum it is officially intended to transfer to the contemplated building for the University and Presidency College. I have been ordered to remove at once into the house at present rented for the purpose, the collection belonging to the Government which were in the charge of the Asiatic Society and all other collections of mineral and rocks in Calcutta the property of and purchased by the Government. Should this be the case I shall feel obliged by your authorizing their being handed over to me in charge of the museum.

Should such specimens as are suitable for the purposes of illustrations of lectures in Geology and Numerology be required at present I shall be happy to furnish as complete a set as may be available to whomever you nominate as the person to take charge of them, and among the many duplicates which will constantly be flowing into the museum, it will be in my power to aid your Professor of Geology from time

to time by additions to the services, tending to form a complete lecturing collection, illustrations of Geology of India.

I shall be glad to be favoured with the collection alluded to at your early convenience that they may be laced in their proper order and arrangement.

I have & c.

Thomas Oldham

Supd. of Geological Survey

Geological Survey Office

— Hastings Street

August 28, 1856

No 2245

Copy forwarded to the Offg Principal of the Presidency College, for information, with a request that he will make over to Mr Oldham the collection of mineral & c. now in the Presidency College

Fort William

The 1st September, 1856

Mr Gordon Young

Director of Public Instruction

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From

Henry Blanford

Professor, Presidency College

To

W S Atkinson Esq, M. A.

Director of Public Instruction

Dated.

Dated Calcutta, 13th September, 1864

Sir,

I have the honor to forward herewith copies of a correspondence on the subject of mineral, fossil and other Geological specimens, for the use of the Presidency College.

The series furnished me by the Superintendent of the Geological Survey, comprises 175 specimens, all useful, and most of them excellent illustrations, but quite inadequate to serve the purpose of an educational collection. I do not doubt that eventually the Geological Survey department will be able to furnish me with further illustrations of fossils when the large stones which it possesses shall have been worked out, and the duplicates thus become available for distribution; but the series actually furnished comprises illustrations of but one zoological order, and of this, with one or two exceptions, only such as characterize the mesozoic rocks. The greater part of the Geological series is almost entirely represented (?) in the Presidency College collection. Fossil specimens are indeed only required for the instruction of

candidates for Honors in the Nat. History tripos, but minerals are required both for these and for the students reading for the B.A. degree. The series furnished by the Geological Survey Department contains no illustrations even of the greater part of the mineral worked as metallic ores, and very imperfectly represents the non-metallic, which are of most frequent occurrence in nature. As crystallographic illustrations, they include but few of importance. It is highly desirable therefore that the College be furnished with a more perfect series of minerals, and I have the honor to submit the following suggestions, for the consideration of His Honor towards providing this requisite.

In 1856 when the Geological Museum was founded by Government, a large collection of minerals, formerly the property of Dr. Dodd and purchased for the use of the Presidency College was on the application of the Superintendent of the Geological Survey deposited in the Geological Museum. Very numerous additions have since been made to the Geological Museum collections, and it is probable that the Presidency College collection is no longer so essential to the Museum as formerly. The series comprises many of the rarer minerals, which are more useful in a general than an Educational collection, but I would suggest that a selection be made by myself from the series, with a view to render the Presidency College collection more fitted for educational purposes than it is at present.

Should this course be thought unadvisable, I would then suggest the purchase of a private collection made by Mr. Jones, formerly a Professor of the Presidency College, which collection is now deposited for sale at the Free School. It includes fossils and minerals; of the latter two collections more of less perfect and comprising good specimens, well fitted for class teaching. I have cursorily inspected this collection, and would strongly recommend its purchase for the use of the Educational Department, whether for the Presidency or any other college. I have obtained the refusal of that collection from the Revd. Mr. Thompson who has charge of it, and I have undertaken to examine it in detail, with a view to estimating its value. So far as I have yet examined it, it seems to me to be well worth about 250 Rs., or I would say 300 Rs. as at maximum, but if you agree with me as to the desirability of its purchase, I will examine it carefully, and make an offer for it, not exceeding the higher sum mentioned. It includes a very fair little series of fossils, such as will be of great use to me for my Honors students, and of minerals there will be enough to furnish two fair, if not perfect, series.

I have &c,
Henry F. Blanford
Professor, Presidency College

From

Thomas Oldham, Esq., L.I.D.
Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India

To

J. N. S. _____
Under Secretary to the Government of India

Dated March 17th 1864

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 1517, dated 3rd Instant, together with its enclosure, relating to furnishing, from the disposable duplicate (if there be any) belonging to the Geological Museum, a series of specimens of minerals, rocks and fossils to elucidate the lectures of the Professor of Natural Science at the Calcutta Presidency College.

In reply I beg to state that it will afford me great pleasure to aid the Presidency College in any way, and that from the few duplicates which the Geological Museum possesses, as perfect a series as we can afford without detriment to the Public Collection, shall be readily given. Mr. Blanford was during the past year supplied with such specimens from the Museum Collections as he applied for, and with a large number of illustrations of my own property, and I shall be happy to continue such aid, so far as I may have the power.

It is at the same time right to state that, inasmuch as we have not in our present rooms nearly space enough to put out in regularly arranged order even the Museum series, we are quite unable to keep any duplicates we possess similarly accessible. They are unavoidably kept packed away in cases, or otherwise until required. It would be impossible, even if we had space, to put these out, so that they could be seen together without occupying the staff of the Museum for months, and interfering with the regular duties of the establishment to an extent that would not be justifiable. It will therefore be essential that the Professor of Natural Science should state somewhat in detail, what he requires or wishes for, it will then be possible to say, at one, whether any duplicates are available or not and those which do exist can be placed at his disposal.

I have therefore to request that a list may be furnished of all such specimens of minerals, rocks and fossils as may be required when so far as they exist among our disposable duplicates, they shall be placed at the disposal of the Presidency College.

I have &c.,
Thomas Oldham,
Superintendent of Geological Survey of India

[Copies forwarded to Undersecretary, Home Department, and Blanford]

To

The Secretary of the Govt. of Bengal,

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of Dr. Oldham's letter No. 245, of the 17th March, bearing your endorsement No. 1895, of the 15th April 1864.

I have much satisfaction in being assured that Dr. Oldham will be able to furnish the Presidency College with a series of fossils, rocks &c, for the illustration of the Geological lectures, such being now urgently required for the use of the students preparing for their M.A. degree in the Geological Branch of Natural Science. In reply to Professor Oldham's request that I should furnish a detailed list of what is required by me I would however point out that to draw up such a list would owing to great multiplicity and variety of the subjects requiring illustrations demand an amount of time and considerations which I can but

ill spare and which would be in a great measure uselessly expected inasmuch as I have no reason to infer from Professor Oldham's letter or from my own knowledge of what exists in the Museum, that any thing approaching as a complete illustrative series can be furnished from its duplicates. There are at present no specimens in the Presidency College for the purpose of illustrating the Geological lectures; the fine series of minerals which it formerly possessed having been deposited in the Government Museum, and it is therefore my desire to obtain from the duplicates of the Geological Museum as good an illustrative series as it can furnish. This can be effected most speedily and with great saving of time both to myself and the curator of the Geological Museum if I can be allowed to accompany the Curator in the selection of the specimens. It is quite necessary that the whole available duplicates of the Museum should be displayed for that purpose, as by personal communication with that gentleman, I can both inform him of what is available much more quickly than through the imperfect medium of lists and correspondence.

I would therefore venture to suggest that should Professor Oldham have no objection to urge to my original proposal, that the adoption of that proposal will save me the useless expenditure of a large amount of time and labour and will in no way trench upon the time of the Museum Curator.

I have &ca.,
Henry F. Blanford

No. 254,

Adverting to Mr. H.F. Blanford's letter dated 25th April 1864, to the address of the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, copy of which has been this day received from the Government of India in the Home Department, the Director of the Geological Museum will be happy to see Mr. Blanford at the Museum and to learn from him, as proposed, by personal communication, what he requires in the way of illustrative specimens of minerals, &ca., &ca.

The Director of the Museum will be at the Museum at 2 O.C. each day during the week.

Thomas Oldham
Director of the Geological Museum

From

H.F. Blanford, Esq., Professor, Presidency College,

To

Thomas Oldham, Esq., Superintendent, Geological Survey of India

Sir,

With reference to my interview with you today, and in order to avoid any misconception I have the honor to inform you that the Geological and especially Mineralogical series which have been selected by you for the Presidency College, and which I inspected today, are so far from being sufficient for the use of the Presidency College students, that I fear you must have misunderstood my wishes as expressed at an interview I had with you a short time since. I fully expected from the result of my correspondence with the Secretary to the Government of India that I should be permitted to select specimens from the available

duplicates in the Museum, a course essential in the case of the Mineralogical specimens at least. I had reason to believe from my own former experience in the Geological Museum would not entail the loss of much time of the Curator. I therefore did not attempt to give you any detailed description of what I required, and indeed it was with the view of avoiding unnecessary correspondence that I strongly urged the desirability of being allowed personally to select the specimens for the College. Moreover I should be permitted to inspect and select from the duplicates when closing of the Presidency College will leave me at leisure to do so. As a member of the University Senate you are undoubtedly aware that the studies for the M.A. degree in the branch of that Science include Mineralogy and Geology together with some other subjects. I have at present under my instruction certain students preparing themselves for this degree and it is with a view of affording them the indispensable materials for that study that I have applied to Government to be furnished with specimens by the Geological Survey Department. I need scarcely point out to you that the series provided by you is quite inadequate to the purpose I have specified but as I am not sure in how far the inadequacy may be due to misconceptions of my requirements on your part, I make the present official communication previous to reviewing my application for the needful specimens to the Government.

I would specially request the favor of a speedy answer as the matter is one which does not admit of delay on my part.

I have &ca.,
H.F. Blanford,
Professor, Presidency College.

No. 260

From — Thomas Oldham Esq.,
Director of Geological Museum, Calcutta

To — H.F. Blanford, Esq.,
Principal of Natural Science, Presidency College

Dated May 23rd 1864

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 20th Instant, but which only reached me late on the 21st Saturday.

I was surprised, after you had personally expressed to me your opinion that the duplicate specimens of minerals &ca. from which you had selected a series to illustrate your lectures would answer your purpose very well so far as they want and after my begging to know if there were any thing else that you especially desired to have which I would at once use my best endeavour to procure for you if it were practicable to which you replied nothing, to find now that you think that series so comparatively useless.

I am fully aware that those specimens are not sufficient for the full illustration of a detailed course of lectures on Mineralogy and Geology; but I am unable at present to supply you with much better. You explained to me in a personal interview that you wished for specimens of the common minerals and rocks, not for rare species or special varieties into the details of which you said you would have no opportunity of entering. Of rocks I told you at once I that very few, if any duplicates indeed, as we never had collected

rock specimens on the survey more than was absolutely necessary to illustrate our Geological reports. Of the common minerals and (so far as possible of rocks also) the available duplicates were at once arranged for your examination. You went over these, and you selected with the exception of two small specimens all that there were. We have at present none others to give.

If I have misunderstood your views, I shall be happy to learn from you whether there be any other kind of specimens which you wish for. If such things can be spared without injury to the public collection, or if they exist in duplicate, they shall at once and most gladly be placed at the disposal of the Presidency College.

It is simply impossible for us here to make all duplicates accessible at once. They must therefore be taken successively in groups. If there be any such that you desire, the available duplicates shall be at one put out before you to go over these, and select those that you want, or take them all, as in the present case.

There has been no delay here in this matter. The duplicates were ready for your inspection within a few hours of your saying what you wished, and lay for nearly a fortnight unvisited, to the interruption of other work.

I have, &ca.,
Thomas Oldham,
Director, Geological Museum

To — Thomas Oldham, Esq.,
Dated 25th May, 1864,

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 23rd Instant, and in reply inform you that having considered the representations made by you, I think it undesirable to trouble the officers of the Geological Museum further at present.

This whole correspondence will be forwarded by me to the Head of the Department for the information of Government.

I have &ca.,
H.F. Blanford,
Professor of Natural Sciences,
Presidency College

No. 4542
To — Thomas Oldham, Superintendent of the Geological Survey of India

Sir,

[Enquires if the collections are transferred etc.]

No. 326

From — Thomas Oldham, Esq.

Superintendent of Geological Survey of India

To — C.S. Bayley, Undersecretary to Government of Bengal

Dated November 16th, 1864

Sir, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 4542, dated 27th, received here on the 2nd Instant. Having only resumed charge of the office on my return from leave of absence on the 14th, my absence will account for the short delay in replying.

2. Your letter states that you are directed to enquire whether the collection of minerals originally purchased from Mr. Dodd and transferred to this Museum in 1856 can be made available for Mr. H Blanford's lectures; and 2nd whether the wants of the lecturers can be otherwise supplied from the Museum.

3. In reply to the first question, I state that inasmuch as all the collections here exhibited to the Public are entirely the property of the Government of India, the whole or any portion of them can of course be transferred by orders of the Government to the Presidency College, or to any other institution. The only stipulation, that I am aware of, that has been consented to with the donors of any such portions of the collections as have not been acquired by purchase, is that they should be properly exhibited, and freely open to the Public without charge. In this way, the collection purchase from Mr. Dodd can be made available. But I am bound to add my hope that no such injury may be inflicted on this Museum, as to abstract a large portion of its arranged Mineralogical collections and more especially I feel that this ought not to be done, inasmuch as the Professor of Natural Science has himself stated that he does not require and does not seek for such a collection.

4. I have also to add, that when Mr. H.F. Blanford delivered a course of lectures for Dr. Liebig (1851-57), he was permitted to use some of the specimens from this collection as illustrations of his lectures, but this was done before those specimens had been arranged as a part of our general Mineralogical series, and this was done at the cost of serious injury to some of the specimens, and at the risk of such to all. It is perfectly impracticable to use safely the same collection of specimens as Museum illustrations of Mineralogy, and as illustrations for lectures in demonstrations, where such specimens must be passed into the hands of unskilled and careless students.

5. In reply to your second query, I have to state for the information of His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, that I am entirely unable to say whether the wants of the Lecturer can be supplied, inasmuch as though I have made every endeavour I have not been able to ascertain, excepting in the most general and undefined way, what those wants are. If the Lecturer will be good enough to state in some detail, verbally or by lists, what he requires, and for what objective, I should then be able to say at once, whether such illustrations can be furnished. If I am able to form an opinion from my own long experience as a lecturer of Mineralogy and Geology, I should say that ample illustrations can be furnished from this Museum, after timely notice of their being required — not at the moment.

6. Adverting to the 2nd paragraph of your letter, I regret that I am compelled to think that His Honor has been entirely misinformed in supposing that any assurance whatever was given that any specimens out of Mr. Dodd's collection would ever be available for lecturing purposes. My letter No. 84 dated 28th Sept. 1856, only states what I have since frequently repeated, that I should be happy to contribute

any thing that might be required, out of the general collection of this Museum then or sine acquired. It is perfectly clear from the letter referred to that those contributions were never intended to come out of the special collection referred to, as these illustrative specimen were to be given in lieu of and as it were in return for the collection made by Mr. Dodd. Most certainly no other meaning has been intended to be conveyed, and that collection was handed over to me for the general objects of this Museum, without the slightest restriction.

7. As I have already stated to the Professor of Natural Science, if the officers of the Geological Survey be made acquainted with what he requires there shall be no want of exertion to supply those wants at the earliest possible date.

8 I must further direct your attention to the fact that at the time of the opening of this Museum, there were in the Medical College two collections of minerals, the property of Government, which were applied for for this Museum, but which were not removed inasmuch as it was represented that these collections might be required for Educational purposes. I presume these still remain, and as no instruction, that I know of, is given at the Medical College in Mineralogy, it is possible that these specimens may be available for the Presidency College.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient

Thomas Oldham

Superintendent of Geological Survey, India

I would ask Dr. Oldham whether the collection originally purchased from Mr. Dodd for the Presidency College, and transferred to the Geological Museum in 1856 may be made available for the purpose of the lectures on Natural Science. From Professor Oldham's letter of August 1856 I gather that a distinct provision was made that such specimens of this collection as might be required for educational objects will be made available.

[If Professors Oldham and Blanford could only behave with each other with ordinary courtesy, all this troublesome correspondence would be spared.]