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Question of opening lectures on special subjects in the Presidency College

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Open Lectureships at the Presidency College

No. 1256, dated Calcutta, the 24th March 1873. [File 35.---1]

From—C. Bernard, Esq., Offg. Secretary to the Government of Bengal in the General Department,

To—The Director of Public Instruction

It has lately been suggested in several quarters that while general education may well be given in the various colleges in Calcutta, there is a want of some central place of education, where professors of special sciences might lecture to all students who desire to attend from colleges which cannot or do not afford to give such courses themselves, and that by this means a general training might be combined with special knowledge. The University has been suggested as a body, under which professorships might be endowed; but this proposal raises wide questions, and at present at the University, with the exception of one law professor, has no teachers, and has no means of obtaining them. It has occurred to the Lieutenant-Governor that the needs of the present time might be met if the function suggested were to a certain extent exercised by the Presidency College—a Government institution common to all races, creeds, and sects.

2. It seems to him that there may be difficulty and expense in providing for the said colleges in Calcutta teachers of special sciences and of other special subjects. The gentlemen charged with the management of these colleges will no doubt desire to give the students an opportunity of studying the alternative science course prescribed by the University, and yet may be unable to provide the means of teaching two different courses. Possibly, then, the difficulty in regard to special subjects might be met if the Government were to open the lectures in these subjects at the Presidency College to the students from aided or other colleges in Calcutta, or other students who had passed the Entrance Examination. They might attend any course of such lectures on payment of a small fee, say Rs. 1 or 1-8 a month. The plan might be extended to lectures in comparative philology, agricultural chemistry, and other subjects which ordinary private colleges could not afford to teach. It would perhaps be desirable that the lecturers should themselves enjoy the fees of all outside students not belonging to the Presidency College, who might be attracted to these classes.

3. The Lieutenant-Governor would ask you to favour him with your opinion on the plan sketched in the foregoing paragraph after obtaining the views of those who are interested on education, as well as of professors and representatives of the teaching bodies. Are there any practical obstacles in the way of such a scheme? Is there anything in the distance of the Presidency College from other colleges? Or are there any other practical difficulties which would make impossible for students of aided colleges to avail themselves (say three or four times a week) of lectures such as are proposed? If you think the scheme might work, what would you suggest in regard to the details of arrangement?