

Law (Education) (1926) Department.

6rd. SERIES.

G.O. No. 625

DATED 16-4-1926

14

[Despatch Abstract.]

Books & Publications

Coloured plates on Botanical
Subjects by monsieur A. Descubes
& Mr. Hyson's report forwarded
to the Govt of India

BACK PAPERS.

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

FURTHER PAPERS.

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

D.O. No. 235 - Agri. ②

EDUCATION, HEALTH & LANDS DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Delhi, the 8th February, 1926.

Dear Mr. Campbell

I am to enclose a translated copy of a letter in French from Mr. A. Descubes, an architect at Ootacamend, to Sir Geoffrey deMontmorency offering for sale about 5000 plates in colour dealing with botanical subjects. We would be glad if you could kindly arrange for a suitable officer to inspect the plates and let us have a report on them as early as possible.

Yours Sincerely
Newbank

To
A.Y.G. Campbell, Esq., C.I.E., C.B.E., I.C.S.,
Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras.

I kept this to discuss with Land Sec

Law is I shall be pleased if Law Dept. will kindly have the inspection carried out if possible.

Ord 22.2.26 Secy 8g. H. may be consulted
Phin 5

Ootacamund.

The 29th December 1925.

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

X

X

X

X

Can you imagine my allowing such a favourable opportunity to slip by and allowing Lord Reading who is leaving so soon, to let me remain among the forgotten, seeing that I have placed in him all my hopes of being freed of this botanical burden which has taken me more than half of my life to produce.

The state of the finances of India, thanks to His Excellency, is extremely good, and I hope that he will excuse me if I invoke his aid.

I have approximately five thousand of these original plates designed from nature in colour, with analyses of flowers and fruits, all the known synonyms, the common names, Indian or European, and botanical descriptions, all in English.

I can assure you that I am actually in straitened circumstances and hope that you will help me. What I would therefore wish to suggest is that His Excellency should depute someone to estimate the intrinsic value of my work which I value at the low price of Rs. 8 or even Rs. 7 per copy.

It would give me great pleasure to be relieved of this burden and make me very happy and I would remember him more than ever for it, and would at the same time do something for the good of the rising generation of Indians who aspire to as high an education as possible in subjects concerning agriculture and botany.

I am sorry to address you in my mother language, being always afraid of faults in English.

I trust myself entirely to your protection and help with a view to the matter being brought to the notice of His Excellency, and I feel convinced that he will do all in his power to oblige me.

Sir Harry Watson has written to me proposing the sale of this collection to Maharajas etc., and to use his name. Unfortunately I am not in a position to start negotiations with them, as I know none of them, except Baroda.

Yours etc.,

SD/ + A. Descubes.

C. 25/2
R

pages 1-28

3
D.O. No. 534 C/26.1 d. 23.2.26.

My dear Littlehailes.

Please see the papers

below.

I shall be obliged if you will kindly tell me how best this can be arranged.

Yours sincerely

V.T. Krishnamachari

To

R. Littlehailes Esq., M. A.,

D. P. I.

23.2
D.O. No. 38/26.2/24.2.26.

My dear Krishnamachari,

Mr. Fyson, Principal and Professor of Botany at the Presidency College can be instructed to proceed to Ootacamund on duty and inspect the plates and write a report on them. I shall be glad to know whether you approve of this suggestion and if so, the file might be returned to me.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

For Mr. Littlehailes

Will you kindly note this & return the sheet? you may keep the enclosure.

2 V.T.
25.2
D. P. I.

Enc 50/42/26-3
28.2.26.

M.R. Ry. Rao Bahadur
V.T. Krishnama Achariyar Avl., C.I.E.,
Secretary to Govt., L.E., Deptt.,
Fort St. George.

For approval of D.P.I's suggestion.

V.T.
24.2

SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
25-FEB-1926
LAW DEPT.
CHIEF SECRETARY
25 FEB 1926
GOVT. OF MADRAS

Submitted. Mr. Fyson's report may be awaited.

M2.

Thru C.S.
all 25.2.26

4/3.

5/3

5/3

V.T.K.
28.3

1020 C
1. En 185 B (5)
19/3/26

Office of the Director of Public Instruc-

D.O.No. 219.E/26. tion, Madras, 26th March 1926.

My dear Krishnamachari,

Page 2 supra I enclose herewith the correspondence sent to me regarding the botanical plates drawn by Mr. Descubes now at Ootacamund together with the report of Mr. Fyson dated 23rd March 1926.

Before Mr. Fyson visited Ootacamund I discussed this matter with him and advised him on the points which it was desirable for him to report upon. He has, I think, covered them all.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

M.R.Ry.Rao Bahadur
V.T.Krishnama Achariyar Avl., C.I.E.,
Secretary to Government, Law (Education) Deptt
Fort St. George.



(Encl) 1020 C-1
30.3.26

C.S. 100
A
29.3.26
19/3/26

R.C.No.135/26

The Presidency College, (b) 9

Madras, 23rd March, '26

From

P.F.Fyson Esq., M.A.,

Ag. Principal.

To

The Director of Public Instruction,

Madras.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit my report of the
Botanical plates of ^{hms.} Mr. A. Descubes examined by me as ordered
in your Proceedings C.No.219 E/26 dated 26th Feb.1926.

2. The plates, over 5000 in number, are on sheets
9 to 10 by 17 to 18 inches, and consist each of a coloured full
sized figure of either a whole plant or a characteristic spray,
and in addition drawings showing the detailed structures of
flowers fruit or seed as may be necessary for full botanical
analysis.

The Indian plants are named as in Hooker's "Flora
of British India" (the standard work) and the sheets are
arranged and numbered serially with a reference in each case
to the volume and page in which the species is described. The
introduced species of a genus are placed after the Indian,
in the usual manner.

In addition to the name, there are given the
synonyms i.e. name by which the plants has been called by
or known to other writers (this information having been
obtained from the "Flora of British India," "Index Kewensis" and
other work), references to other published descriptions and
figures, and the geographical ~~the~~ distribution as copied from
the Flora of British India. A list of vernacular names, both
Indian (several languages) and English has also been inserted
on the majority of the sheets. All this information which
represents much careful research is written in pencil in
clear neat lettering.

3. The general standard of work is very high. I

I don't think I have seen anything to equal it, certainly not in any quantity. While there is of course some variation, there is nothing poor. Throughout the series, at least among all I examined, and I examined a very large number, there is evidence of a closeness of observation, knowledge of the subject and an accuracy and steadiness of hand in the drawing which could not be surpassed. As an instance of his accuracy and faithfulness to detail I may mention that among the plates was one of a plant of which Mr. Descubes had been given the wrong name, and which he had in consequence placed in the wrong family. By reference to his drawings of the flower and fruit, I was able at once to assign it to its proper family, and gave him its correct names.

4 It is difficult to appraise the scientific or commercial value of the collection. I began by examining closely all the plants of every fifth family i.e. of families Numbers 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, but after finishing No. 50 - the very large family of the Leguminosae - found it would take too long to go through the whole lot in this way and therefore confined myself to the more important and difficult families. It would be possible for a critic to point to the absence of a few details of importance, as the inner structure of the seed in some Cruciferae - and the minute details in some of the Orchids - which latter ^{are} difficult to show clearly - but I think the most exacting critic would be satisfied with the faithfulness shown in all of the plates, even to such minute parts as those of the Asclepiodactyl ^{cal} and grasses.

The figures would be of very great help to anyone compiling a local flora as they give the colours and some details which cannot be obtained from preserved specimens. They would have been of greater value perhaps if the place and date of collecting had been marked in every case. This has been done in some sheets but not throughout.

For teaching purposes I would not recommend them,

for if handled by students they would inevitably be dirtied and the sheets perhaps torn. Reproduction in colour would be so expensive that it is virtually out of the question.

The usefulness of the plates would lie rather in enabling people to identify wild and the rarer garden plants. Figures of the latter are of particular value ~~as~~ for it is often very difficult to identify plants introduced from other countries. Mr. Descubes has for instance a very fine collection of Australian wattles (species of Acacia) in this collection. They would also be invaluable to the compiler of a local flora.

5. Their claim to be acquired by a public body rests in my opinion on ^{its} usefulness and on their unique character as a work of art and science which it is safe to say will never be repeated. It would be easy to find a man with the necessary knowledge of Botany: it might be possible, but I think difficult to obtain the services of an artist capable of such sustained and accurate work: but the combination of these qualities, and of the enthusiasm which has driven Mr. Descubes to make these drawings during ^{more than} forty years of official work would be far indeed to seek. Mr. Descubes' earlier figures were done in Mauritius ⁱⁿ from 1879 ⁷⁹ onwards (I noticed one drawing marked Sydney 1876), but most of them after ¹⁸⁸⁶ ~~1880~~, in India, where as an officer first in the Forest Survey and later in the Imperial Survey Department he covered the country from Dehra Dun to Tinnevely and Kashmir, and from Bombay to Moulmein, collecting and drawing the plants which interested him or which were sent by friends: and since his retirement ^{in 1916} at Ootacamund he has added a considerable number.

The sheets have been beautifully preserved: they have not been attacked by insects and they are not dog-eared. Some have been on exhibit at the Natural History Museum, Kensington for years: but except for a slight discolouration in those done in Mauritius - a discolouration only, for I tested some and

and they had not gone in the least brittle though between 30 and 40 years old. - the paper appears as fresh almost as on the day it was painted on, showing it is of good quality and likely to last.

6. If acquired the collection should in my opinion first be sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Calcutta for verification of the names - for there may be some errors. It should be kept intact and if not required at the gardens be lodged in some central library as at Delhi or Calcutta where it could be preserved carefully and be accessible to those interested.

In his letter Mr. Descubes prices the sheets at 8 rupees each. They certainly could not be produced again at that figure, and in my opinion it is a very reasonable one.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

P. F. Fyfe

Ag. Principal.

Enclosure - original Decretal file 3848.

D.O.No. 576-Agri.

EDUCATION, HEALTH & LANDS DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Delhi, the 24th March, 1926.

Dear Mr. Campbell,

Will you please refer to my
demi-official letter No. 235-Agri.,
dated the 8th February 1926 and let me
know when we may expect a report on the
coloured plates dealing with botanical
subjects offered for sale by Mr.A.
Descubes of Ootacamund.

Yours sincerely,

Rawdon

A.Y.C. Campbell, Esq.,
C.I.E., C.B.E., I.C.S.,
Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras.



Department.

Routine notes [which are not to be (a) sent out of the office or (b) included in the originals or proceedings unless the notes are specially marked for retention or (c) printed].

Subject of file.

-G of I., ET. Health & Hand Dept, do. N° 576 Agn,
24-3-26

Paper ^{please} tomorrow at office
A.Y.G.C.
28-3-26

For US

The previous correspondence is dealt with in Law (ET). The present do. may be transferred to that Dept. after mine of the following do. reply to Mr. Eubank. S.O. no 3634 29-3-26.

Mr. Eubank

Your do. N° 576 Agn, 24-3-26.

The previous correspondence on the subject referred to is dealt with in the Law (ET) Dept. to which Dept. I have transferred your do. reminder.

Yours truly

29/3/26

all
28-3-26

After mine of do. transfer to Mr. Eubank, Law (ET) up

DESPATCHED

CR
30/3/26
✓
R. Eubank Esq

Law (Education) Dept

Mr. Fyson's reports on the plates is at pages 5-8 supra.

A copy of it may be forwarded to Mr. Ewbank.
A draft d.o. is submitted for approval.

1020^c

30/3

CA
30/3

V.T.K.
31.3



C.S. may see after issue

V.T.K.
31.3

Issued as
S.O. No. 1020C-2
31.3.26.

C.S. U.O. 1020C-3
15.4.26

Thanks

all

10.4.26

The papers may be now

'Recorded' for future
reference.

13/4.26
14.4.26

CA
15/4

Law &

order 625
16.4.26

~~Books &~~
Publications

Coloured plates
on Botanical
Subjects by
Monsieur A.
Descubes
Mr. Fyson's
report forwarded
to the L. of S.

1020^c (interior?)

Law (Education) Deptt.

D.O. No. 1020C-2 dated 31.3.26

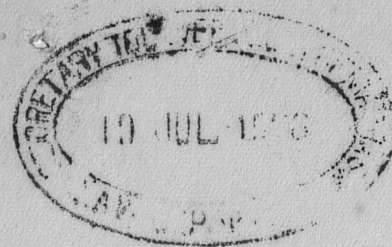
Dear Mr. Ewbank,

In continuation of Mr. Campbell's
D.O. No. 367 dated 29-3-1926, I am desired
to enclose ~~herewith~~ a copy of the report
of Mr. Fyson, Acting Principal, Presi-
dency College, Madras, on the coloured
plates dealing with botanical subjects
offered for sale by
Mons. A. Descubes of Ootacamund.

Yours sincerely,

To
R.B. Ewbank Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S.
Off. Secy. to the Govt. of India
Dept. of Education, Health & Lands.
(with copy of Mr. Fyson's report).

DESPATCHED
12 APR 1926



D.O.No. 1264-A.

EDUCATION, HEALTH & LANDS DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

Simla, the 5th July 1926.

L. Cu 2173C
197/26
16.4.26

Dear Mr. Krishnamachariar,

With reference to your
demi-official letter No.1020C-2 to Ewbank
dated the 31st March 1926, forwarding a
copy of the report by Mr.Fyson on the
coloured plates dealing with botanical
subjects offered for sale by Mons. A.
Descubes of Ootacamund, I am to say that
Mons. Descubes has asked whether he can be
given a copy of the report. I am to
enquire whether there is any objection to
one being given.

Yours sincerely,

V. T. Krishnamachariar

Rao Bahadur V.T.Krishnamachariar, C.I.E.,
Secretary to the Govt. of Madras,
Law Department.

Ootacamund.

Mr. Fyson's report referred to in the D.O. at page 1 ante is at pages 5 - 8 of G.O. No. 625 Law (Education), dated 16-4-1926. It was obtained at the instance of the Govt. of India. There does not seem to be any objection to giving Mons. Descubes a copy of the report. If it is not considered necessary to consult the D.P.I. the draft D.O. below is for approval.

18/7. 14.7.26 14.7.26

Will D.P.I. please say whether Mr. Fyson has any objection?

V.T.K. 15/7

D.P.I. no 927.9/26

Mr. Fyson has no objection.

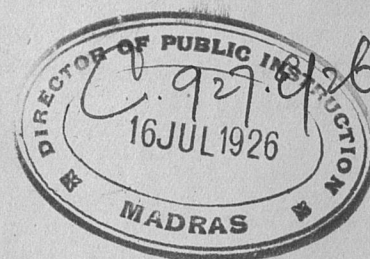
19/7 20/7/26

Education Dept.

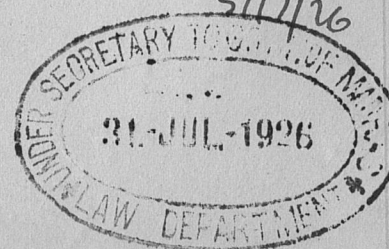
The draft already put up ~~may issue~~ is for approval

18/7. 31.7.26 2/8

V.T.K. 3/8



L. de Vise 31/7/26



Encls 2/73/16 15/7/26

13
Education Department.

D.O. No. 2173 C/26-2 dated 3/8/26

Dear Mr. Hydari,

Your D.O. No. 1264 A., dated 5th July 1926 - Mr. Ryson's report on the coloured plates dealing with botanical subjects offered for sale by Mons. A. Descubes.

I am desired to say that there is no objection to a copy of the above report being furnished to Mons. A. Descubes.

Yours sincerely,

4727
15/7
To **DESPATCHED**
9-3- AUG 1926

M.S.A. Hydari Esq., I. C. S.,

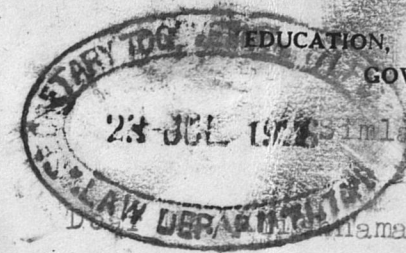
Under Secretary to Government
of India,

Department of Education, Health and
Lands.

Mr
13/7
14.7.26

Mr
14/7
V.TK
3/8

D.O.No. 1393 Agri.



EDUCATION, HEALTH & LANDS DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

23 DEC 1926, the 24th July 1926.

Secretary, Law Department,

L. 9d 2562C
28/7/26

Will you kindly refer to my d.o.
letter no. 1264-A., dated the 5th July
1926, inquiring whether there is any
objection to Mons. Descubes being given
a copy of the report made on his plates
by Mr. Fyson? The Government of India
will be glad to have a very early reply
to that letter.

Yours sincerely,

W. S. S. S. S.

Rao Bahadur V.T. Krishnamachariar,
C.I.E.,
Secretary to the Govt. of Madras,
Law Department.

Education sept

The D.O. referred to
above was sent u.o. to the S.P.O.
on 15/7/1926. The Director was
reminded on 29/7/1926. Sub-
mitted that the return of the
file from the S.P.O. may be
awaited. If necessary,
the S.P.O. may be reminded
again on 2/8/1926.

* Marked urgent.

Please send a
telephonic message
at once stating that
India has received
an answer
29/7/1926

When given for copying _____
 When copied _____
 When examined _____
 When signed _____

192

READ AGAIN G.O. No. _____, DATED
 192

CURRENT No.

ENCLOSURES TO C. No.

ORDER OF GOVERNMENT ... A A A A A A A

LETTER OF GOVERNMENT.

STATEMENT WITH DITTO.

PAPERS NOT FILED OF, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH
 IN ORIGINAL.

N.B.—
 A = Copy in full.
 B = Not to be copied.
 P = Copy abstract only.
 Q = Copy heading only.

14