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[Despatch Abstract.]

Mr. J.W. Coombes

Recording the despatch from the
Secy of State forwarding a copy
of a report by — on his visit
to the Paris Exhibition.

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Government {1900} of Madras. EDUCATIONAL.

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Enclosures

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G.O., No. 551, 31st October 1900.

OCTOBER.

Mr. J. W. Coombes.

Recording despatch from the Secretary of State forwarding a copy of a report by — on his visit to the Paris Exhibition.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following paper:—

Despatch from the Right Honourable Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, to His Excellency the Governor in Council, Fort St. George, dated India Office, London, 4th October 1900, No. 9, Public (Educational).

With reference to my despatch, No. 1 of the 1st February last, I forward, for the information of your Excellency's Government, a copy of a report by Mr. J. W. Coombes on his visit to the Paris Exhibition.

The report is instructive and interesting, and is creditable to the writer.

ENCLOSURE.

From J. W. COOMBES, Esq., Madras Educational Service (on deputation), to the Under Secretary of State for India, dated 16, Meadow Street, Moss Side, Manchester, 20th September 1900.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of the Secretary of State for India and the Government of Madras, a short report of my visit to the Paris Exhibition.

The Paris Exhibition is divided into eighteen groups comprising 121 classes and the groups to which I devoted most attention were—

Group I, Education and Instruction.

Group XIII, Thread, Yarn, Textile fibres.

With respect to Group I.—Of the different schools represented, the American and the French were, in my opinion, the best. The former was well arranged and classified. The American representatives were generous enough to supply literature on their entire system of education. Nineteen carefully prepared monographs had been drawn up by specialists and were distributed to the public.

The American School.—A good primary department is the basis of their educational structure. From the age 4 to 6, the child is in the kindergarten school with a special director to superintend kindergarten work. The pupil then enters the elementary school, where he is kept for eight years. In this course, besides the usual subjects taught, nature study and manual training find a place and play an important part. The pupils reproduce their ideas about nature by means of drawing, illustrating form and colour in fruit and flower, change of seasons nature forces and nature processes. They go direct to nature. In colour study, for example, the feather of a bird or a piece of mineral is selected and a colour scheme or chord taken from it. The drawing course embraces free illustrative sketches, freehand drawing from objects, sketches from life, flower drawings and decorative arrangements of floral ornaments. In the latter four years, the pupil has the option of taking up the mechanical side instead of the decorative, and at every turn as much elasticity as possible is given to their system of education.

The pupil now finds himself in the high school where he remains between the ages 14 to 18. At this stage, parallel courses are offered, a classical, commercial or scientific. The high school meets the needs of the middle and especially the commercial classes. The four years following is assigned to the college which offers finally the bachelor's degree. The whole course from the primary school is sixteen years in duration and forms a continuous system of public instruction.

The amount of public money spent on technical education is not as large as that spent on general education. There are just a few trade schools, the passport to which is a primary school certificate, and certain higher institutions, like the Institute of Technology at Massachusetts into which only high school students can gain admission.

The Americans, therefore, believe in a good all round general education to fit their students for the different walks of life.

India wants something more. She requires numerous elementary technical schools, particularly in industrial centres, and a system of practical examinations. Every endeavour should be directed to get the Hindu student out of certain well-beaten tracts and make him resourceful and self-dependant.

A technical side may also be added to existing schools of Art at the Presidency towns.

Another point worthy of attention in the American system of education is that the primary school teachers are well paid. The Americans believe that the teacher ought to have a salary sufficient to enable him to dress decently, to help him to purchase books and attend special evening classes and to mix with people of some culture, knowing that all these influences are carried back into the school room.

Before I leave this particular school, I may state that I saw batch after batch of teachers from Russia making careful notes of this and other schools. The Russian Government has been very earnest of late to push on the education of her people, and within the last ten years, the estimates for public instruction have increased 99 per cent. in that period and the number of scholars has doubled. India would have been amply repaid had a few teachers been sent over, if only to carry back with them some of the freshness that characterises the methods of this young nation.

The only other teacher from India, besides myself, was Mr. Desai, Principal of the Technical School at Baroda.

The French School.—The chief section in this class was the agricultural. Every science connected with the subject is taught in their schools.

The Higher Grade schools of France.—The student after passing through the "Ecole Primaire" enters the "Ecole Primaire superieure" or higher grade school. Here no technical instruction is imparted, but general education on lines that would help the student to take up any particular trade he may choose. Schools of technical character are classed separately under the heading "Ecole Pratique".

Note-books.—Not only in this school but in the American, I was struck with the free use made of illustrations in every subject; photographs being largely used to illustrate machinery or to record experiments. All the exercises in manual training are done to scale and measurement.

Schools of Design.—The French do not follow nature too closely. To fill a space, flowers are thrown in loose but with a decorative effect, and the masses are often connected, not by stems but by free ornamental lines. A common form of exercise given was to draw a piece of foliage in the centre of a sheet and then adapt it for designs to fill the irregular available spaces around. The sketches are made in pen and ink, pencil or charcoal and the designs are executed in colour. A plaster cast or a vase is sometimes taken as a motif for decoration; a shaded or freehand drawing is made from it and certain elements extracted to be used in a design. I noticed that the students kept a collection of sprigs and flowers stamped in books, as a source of inspiration. The sprigs were arranged decoratively and supplied a ready means for purposes of design and what is more, the colour scheme which stamped flowers furnish is valuable.

M. Grasset's School.—This is the leading school of design. The students execute very original work and are so clever at conventionalising. In one design, black birds were arranged flying among clouds of gold on a green ground. In another, horses are used, their manes and tails being treated very decoratively. M. Grasset has a system of teaching quite his own and I believe it is the natural method, because it follows the historic. He teaches the student how to conventionalise at the very commencement of his course. A few simple motifs are given and these are arranged in different ways. At the same time sketches are made from the human figure. Having the power to conventionalise, the student is taken to plant form, then animal and last of all, the human, all of which he uses in his designs. In the South Kensington system, the first stage is to make sketches or studies in brush work from plants, then to conventionalise, and last of all to adapt these. The weak point in the system is that the student does not know really how to conventionalise.

Sculpture.—Much is said about the life there is in the sculptured or modelled figures of the French. There is a certain amount of "abandon" about them which is characteristic. In short, the realistic school prevails and extensive studies are made from the nude. The realistic tendency may be even traced down to the kindergarten. If a child is made to draw a cat, the animal is represented playing with a ball. It is certainly more difficult to get the repose of the Antique.

The English School.—This school was badly represented, Manchester not taking any part in it.

Technical Schools.—The Northampton boot and shoe case attracted the greatest attention. The teacher is a practical man who is conversant with his trade. He invented a piece of apparatus to measure the pressure on the different parts of the foot and the whole thing is worked out so scientifically that a bid was made for the case by the Russian Government.

What strikes the foreigner most is the youthfulness of the students that attend technical schools.

School Board for London: Art Schools.—The scheme of brushwork and design based on plant form is good. A plant is taken, say the wild rose. Flower and leaf forms at different stages of development are drawn in a direct manner with the brush. From these forms, a conventionalised spray is arranged and the last stage is to make a design containing the foregoing elements according to definite instructions.

Note-books.—Among the exercise books I noticed illustrated diaries and a collection of wild flowers by a boy of 11.

The Japanese School.—The boys use the brush even in the lowest class.

The Swedish School.—The sloyd system was exhibited and was worthy of notice.

Algeria.—I went into the Algerian section to see what the French were doing for the people of that colony in the matter of education. Their methods in art instruction are more or less on European lines, even teaching drawing from the life in India, schools of design at present require attention. Indian art needs to be restrained and a little freshness thrown into it.

Group XIII—Textile Machinery.—Among the different exhibits, there was just one solitary handloom weaving silk ties from Spitalfields. The handloom is evidently doomed for commercial purposes. India must sooner or later take to the power loom and to educate the people, a light running handloom on the power loom principle to be worked by hand may well be introduced.

Jacquard machines should be introduced also. A number of these looms were exhibited by the French, the needle holes being cut upon thin paper, which carries very little wires. Such looms could only be used in places possessing dry even atmospheric conditions.

Some looms had an automatic weft supply motion. In Crossby's Terry loom, there was an arrangement for reversing over from the centre to the cross border and back again, without loss of time.

Conclusion.—My visit to the Paris Exhibition has proved educative. Paris is a city of perspective and the exhibition has been arranged with due regard to it as well as to balance and proportion and not among the least of the valuable lessons learned was that from the study of the architecture. Through the kindness of Mr. Rose, the Honorary Secretary of the British Indian Section, who helped me in many ways and gave me a free pass for the exhibition, I was able to visit the porcelain factory at Sévres and the Tapestry works of the Gobelins. At the former place, I could not help being struck with the fitness of the decoration to the form of the pottery.

In the dye works of the Gobelins, no aniline colours are used, but only vegetable or rather natural colouring matters—chiefly cochineal, indigo, garance and gaudé.

I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Fabian Ware, Representative of the Education Committee of the British Royal Commission, for his kindness to me.

I have only to add that my remarks have been brief and I have noted down just those points which struck me as peculiar. I am bringing away with me a number of syllabuses and catalogues, explaining the different systems, and the Superintendent of the Educational Department at New York has given me his card and promised to supply me with any information I may require in the future.

ORDER—No. 551, Educational, dated 31st October 1900.

Recorded.

(True Extract.)

M. HAMMICK,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Director of Public Instruction.

Ed. W. D. Moss.

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Educational (189⁵⁰⁰) Department.

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