[M. / 20.]
500—92-13-01.

Educational (1902) Department

ORDINARY MS.

G.O., No. 696

DATED 8 · 11 · 02

INDEXED.

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[Despatch Abstract.]

Universities Commission

Informing the Circle Littéraire français, Bombay, that, if their good- are consulted in the matter of their representation to the Govt of India against the proposal of the —— to remove the French language from the Universities Curriculum, the Governor-in-Council will give his best attention to what has been urged by the Circle.

BACK PAPERS.

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

FURTHER PAPERS.

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

[E. / 1]

1,000—23-12-01.

Educational (1902) Department.

CURRENT No. 1655 2

From

[*Name*] _____

[*Designation*] No Honorary Secretary, Cercle Litteraire Francais,

[*Station*] Bombay

No. _____ *Received* 4 . 11 . 1902.

Dated 31 . 10 . 1902.

Enclosures _____ *Registered* 4 . 11 . 1902

SUBJECT.

Forwarding a copy of a letter to the Govt of India ajent the proposal of the Universities Commission to ablish the study of the French language in the Indian universities.

BACK PAPERS.

FURTHER PAPERS.

4-11-02

Cercle Littéraire Français
15, Rope Walk Lane, Fort.
Bombay 31st October 1902.

CURRENT NO. 1655

To

The Secretary to the Government of Madras
Educational Department

Sir,

I have the honour to state that as the Government of India have referred the report of the Indian Universities Commission to the Local Governments for their opinion, I am directed by the Council of Administration of the Bombay Cercle Littéraire Français to forward herewith copy of a representation to the Government of India made by the Cercle against the proposal contained in the said Commission's Report to practically abolish the study of the French Language from the University curriculum, and to request you to be so good as to place the same before His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor in Council for favourable consideration and report.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient Servant,

J. E. Dávar
Honorary Secretary.

SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
4 NOV. 1902
LOCAL & MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT

A LETTER FROM THE

BOMBAY CERCLE LITTÉRAIRE FRANÇAIS,

BIBLIOTHÈQUE DINSHAW PETIT,

On the subject of the exclusion of the French language from the University Course as recommended by the Indian Universities Commission.

BOMBAY GAZETTE PRESS.

CERCLE LITTÉRAIRE FRANÇAIS,
BIBLIOTHÈQUE DINSHAW PETIT,
FORT.

BOMBAY, 20TH OCTOBER 1902.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,

HOME DEPARTMENT,

CALCUTTA.

SIR,

We have the honour, by direction of the Managing Committee of the Bombay Cercle Littéraire Français, to request you to be so good as to submit for the consideration of His Excellency the Right Honourable the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, the following representation on the subject of the Indian Universities Commission's proposal to abolish the French language (except for female students) as an alternative for a classical language from the University Examinations in Arts.

2. In the first place, we beg to be permitted to state for the information of His Excellency that the Bombay Cercle Littéraire was founded in 1886, with the view of encouraging and facilitating the study of the French language and literature. In its early stage it happily found a patron in that farseeing man of business and philanthropist, the late Sir Dinshaw Manockjee Petit Baronet ; and it was owing to his generosity the Cercle now possesses an excellent and still growing library of the works of the best and

most approved French authors, both ancient and modern. One section of this library is devoted to the works of French *savants*, relating to Oriental Literature and the East generally. The work of the Cercle is carried on by means of periodical lectures and debates in the French language, and by social gatherings, at which plays are acted and recitations given in French, and where Parsees, Hindus, Mussulmans, and Europeans mingle on a common platform to their mutual profit and enjoyment. The Cercle endeavours to keep in touch with the student class, by allowing them for a nominal fee the use of its extensive library as well as its reading-room, which is amply furnished with French reviews and illustrated periodicals carefully selected ; and by presenting annual prizes to those who pass in the French language with the highest marks in several of the University Arts Examinations. The Educational Department of France has been so pleased with its object and working, that the French Minister of Public Instruction presents it annually with many valuable books relating to Education and published in France.

3. Many distinguished French visitors have, from time to time, visited the Cercle and have expressed themselves extremely gratified and flattered at finding such an Institution in Bombay. At one of its earlier Annual General Meetings, Sir John Scott (then one of the Judges of the Bombay High Court), who presided and who, from his long connection with the British administration of Egypt, could speak with authority on the subject, expressed himself as follows :—

> "In my opinion the French language is not only the beautiful language of a great nation, rendered illustrious by a magnificent literature, it is much more ; it is the most exact and precise language that the world possesses for the expression of thought,—it is the most elegant of languages, and if I was not an Englishman, I should be tempted to add—it is the richest and most perfect language in the world. A Society founded for promoting the study of such a language needs no argument in its favour, it has already fully deserved and gained the approbation and support of all the intellectual classes in Bombay."

The Cercle is managed by an influential Committee composed of French, English, and Native gentlemen, the latter of whom are well known for their knowledge of French. For the last fifteen years it has been doing its work with considerable success. We have given this *resumé* of the character

and purpose of the Cercle Littéraire to show that we do not venture to make this representation without sufficient knowledge and experience of the subject.

4. Coming now to the subject in hand, we cannot but feel extreme surprise and regret at the proposal made by the Commission to practically abolish the study of one of the most important and splendid of living languages from the University curriculum. We respectfully submit the measure proposed is of an extremely retrograde character, and evidently the result of imperfect inquiry.

5. Prior to 1886 French was not recognized as one of the second languages in the higher Arts Examinations of the Bombay University. It was included only in the course prescribed for the Entrance or Matriculation Examination. This fact, however, in itself, as well as the growing intercourse between India and Europe since the early seventies, the great influx into England of Indian students for prosecuting their studies for the services and the learned professions, and the increasing number of native gentlemen and ladies who have taken to studying French, served effectively to open the eyes both of students and parents and tutors to the immense advantage of studying the French language as a medium of high culture, and professional success.

6. This led to an appeal being made to the Senate of the Bombay University for the admission of French as a second language in the higher exminations in Arts. The Faculty of Arts of the Bombay University passed a resolution in favour of the proposal, the University Syndicate recommended it ; and in April 1886, after the matter had been thoroughly sifted and discussed at two meetings of the Senate, the proposition was adopted by a large majority that "French be added to the list of second languages in the higher exminations in Arts," and it was duly approved and sanctioned by the Government of Bombay by their Resolution No. 1073 (Educational Department), dated 12th July 1886. It may be mentioned the motion before the Senate was proposed by Mr. James Jardine, M.A., Barrister-at-Law, seconded by the Honourable Phirozeshah M. Mehta, M.A., and strongly supported by the College Professors like the late Dr. P. Peterson, Mr. MacMillan, and Mr. E. Forrest and by the late Mr. Justice Kasinath Trimbak Telang, himself a great Sanskrit scholar. It is true the appeal to the Senate was made in the first instance in the interests of female students, but the Bombay University rightly and wisely refrained from making any distinction between the sexes, and this

important reform in favour of higher education has been acclaimed and taken advantage of by students of both sexes ever since to their manifest advantage, to the greater encouragement of liberal education, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

7. It is this much desired reform, achieved after due inquiry and deliberation and which, we submit, has worked most satisfactorily for these sixteen years, that the Universities Commission propose to abrogate by recommending at page 65 of their Report, that "French should not, except for female students, be accepted as an alternative for classical languages."

8. The grounds on which this proposal is based are stated in para. 100 of the Report. They appear to be twofold : 1st., "The comparative easiness of the examination ;" 2ndly., that "French is taken up by a number of students to the detriment of the study of the classical languages of the Province." We most respectfully submit that these grounds or reasons for the practical abandonment from the University course of a language of such acknowledged merit, beauty and educational value as French, are insufficient and unsatisfactory.

9. Confining ourselves to the Presidency of Bombay, it is difficult, owing to the somewhat inexact language used and the perfunctory manner in which the matter is disposed of, quite to understand what is meant by the terms "comparative easiness of the examination," and "The classical languages of the Province." If by the first is to be understood that the examination in French is rendered too easy by the examiners, the defect is surely one of easy cure ; the examiners may be warned to be more strict and more searching, or the standard of qualifying marks may be raised throughout. We do not think there could be any legitimate objection to either of these courses being followed, since we consider that an University Examination, whether in Arts, Philosophy or Science, must be something *worth* passing.

10. If, however, the words are intended to convey that the French language is easy to learn or acquire, we would emphatically deny that this is the case. The French language has arrived at its present perfection after a process of formation, and so to say, minting, that has taken nine hundred years. From every point of view, the difficulties it presents to the students are immense and such as could only be overcome by a combination of strenuous mental effort, industry and persistent zeal. The popular idea doubtless is that it is a language easy to master ; but we would assert

without fear of contradiction, that this is a popular fallacy and hallucination, based as most hallucinations are on ignorance or an unverified data. The assumption too, that the French language is easy enough to suit the intellectual calibre of girls and women, is as fallacious as it is gratuitously insulting to them.

11. We next come to the second ground that the study of French is detrimental to the study of "the classical languages of the Province." It is not quite clear what are the provincial classical languages here referred to. We could hardly suppose that the ordinary vernaculars of this Presidency are intended, such as Gujarati, Marathi, Sindhi, and the more or less debased Hindustani. We may take it, however, that the language of the Report refers to the classical languages of India such as Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.

12. We may dismiss the first two of these with the remark, that the study of French has not, so far as we are aware, detrimentally affected or competed with Sanskrit and Arabic. These languages are chiefly taken up by those students who have some ulterior purpose in view, in which a knowledge of them is deemed indispensable, or by those who, having had a proper grounding in their own Vernaculars derived therefrom, think they have thus a better prospect of mastering them. Before French was admitted throughout the University curriculum those who wished to avoid Sanskrit and Arabic took up Persian. The absence or presence thus of French from or in the list of University second languages, could not, we think, much interfere with the study of these ancient languages one way or the other.

13. It is the Persian language then that is evidently intended by the Commission as suffering from competition with French. This is to some extent true ; but we submit in all confidence, that this is not a well-founded or sufficient argument for vetoing from the University curriculum a language so progressive and so unmeasurably superior in every respect as French, in order to favour a language that is pronounced on all hands to be of little or no practical value from an academical view-point. Now-a-days, not only Indian students, but those of other nationalities, Anglo-Indian, Eurasian, Portuguese, flock to our University ; and the important question is whether it is just, right and fair, especially to the non-Indian student, to be deprived of the immense and varied benefits assured to him by the study of French, and to be reduced to take up so barren and unprofitable a language as Persian ? We would unhesitatingly answer this

question in the negative, and we hope we may confidently expect that His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council will favour this view.

14. We have no desire whatever to depreciate the Persian language. It is undoubtedly a fine and elegant language; it possesses too some value as being something of a *lingua Franca* in the remote regions that border the North and North-West frontiers of India; but for all the high intellectual purposes of modern life, it must, we think, be classed as practically valueless; and considering the state of affairs in Persia at present, we may venture to affirm, it does not offer much prospect of future improvement. The range of its literature is remarkably circumscribed. When we have mentioned half a dozen names, chiefly in the domain of Poetry, such as those of Ferdausi, Hafez, Khakani, Saadi, Jami, Nizami, Mowlana Jallal-oo-din Rumi, and may be the over praised Omar Khaiyam, we have exhausted its list of great names. To the student of History, of Philology, of Philosophy, of Jurisprudence, of Political Economy, of Arts and Sciences in all their manifold branches, it offers little or nothing of value.

15. On the other hand, the subject of the extent, excellence and value of the French language and literature and of the advantages a study of the same must procure, is so vast that it would not be possible to do anything like full justice to it within the space at our disposal here; nor need we, we think, attempt to essay it, seeing that we are addressing so eminent a scholar and so gifted a man of culture as His Excellency the Viceroy, and men so distinguished as the members of his Council in all matters of science, taste and learning. It will suffice, if we place before them briefly the many advantages a study of the French language and literature offers to our students, to deprive them of which without valid grounds is, in our apprehension, a matter of serious import to the educational and intellectual advancement of this country.

16. The necessity of studying French is, in these days, recognized in the amplest manner in England and in all other countries that can boast of any intelligent system of higher education; and the reason for this is easily conceivable. In the opinion of so eminent a critic and authority as Mr. Geo. Saintsbury, to the French language "belongs in a supreme degree, the charm of precision, of elegance, of expressing what is expressed in the best possible manner." "The special characteristics of the genius of French may be said to be clearness, polish of form and expression, and a certain

quality which perhaps cannot be so well expressed by any other word as by alertness." As to French literature, he considers, "the best work of the 17th Century has no rivals." "For volume and merit taken together the product of the last eight centuries of French literature excels that of any other European nation." These views and opinions, we may confidently say, are the views and opinions of all educated Europe and every civilized country. For depth, richness, beauty, variety and vigour no other language of modern times (excepting perhaps English, which indeed is much indebted for its admirable qualities to French) can we think, compete with French; whilst the same essential qualities enrich the literature of France and render it famous throughout the civilized world.

17. It is not possible here to go into details; but speaking broadly a literature that is rendered great and illustrious in every department of thought, learning and culture, by such immortal names as Montaigne, Corneille, La Fontaine, Fénelon, Molière, Pascal, Racine, Boileau, Bossuet, Montesquieu, Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau, Marmontel, Chateaubriand, Buffon, Balzac, Lamartine, Laplace, Cuvier, Lamarck, Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, Victor Hugo, Burnouf, De Musset, Guizot, Michelet, De Tocqueville, Taine, Thiers, Darmesteter, Sainte-Beuve and a host of others, cannot, we submit, be treated with disregard or indifference in any well-regulated system of higher education. Her great Poets, Historians, Philosophers, Scientists, Scholars, Jurists, Lawyers, Moralists, Orators have indisputably rendered the name of France supremely glorious *ubique et omnibus*; and the magnificent literature they have built up as a vast treasure-house of knowledge, instinct as it were with life and immortality, and unique in the annals of the literary world, is a precious heritage of infinite value open and available to all mankind. The same may be said of the latter-day and contemporary scientific, literary and art work of France. It appears to us then incomprehensible that it should even be contemplated to bar the doors of such a temple of light to our Indian Undergraduates and for no better purpose than the supporting of another language, the chief recommendation of which is, that it is Oriental.

18. The advantages of learning French are so apparent and so manifold that we earnestly trust that those responsible for the spread of Education in this country will never be wanting in their endeavours to encourage and advance it. French has long been admitted among the optional subjects for the Indian and Ceylon as well as English Civil Services; and it is taken up in all the higher examinations of the English Universities. At the Bar,

and in the profession of Medicine a knowledge of French is invaluable. Many of our most promising Undergraduates, whom it is the interest of our Universities to encourage to take their Arts' degrees in India, pursue their studies here with a view to proceed to England for the Civil Services' Examinations, for being called to the Bar and for degrees at the Universities there, to fit them for the various learned professions ; to debar them from studying French thoroughly (and that can only be done by studying it for the higher Arts' Examinations) would be to grievously handicap them. Forestry again is a line, which considering the needs of India, our educated young men should be encouraged to take to. As is well known, some of the best schools of forestry are in France ; a student proceeding to one of these, after graduating here, if not well equipped in French would find himself at a great disadvantage.

19. A sound knowledge of French, moreover, such as we aver, is attainable in our present University curriculum up to the degree, presents the student with numerous opportunities ; so that even if he fails in other directions, he could turn it to good account in after-life in the mercantile or in the educational line, which offer now-a-days many openings, what with the general spread of education and the increasing intercourse with Europe. To the educated gentleman, who without having to depend on his education for his livelihood, works for an University degree to improve his status, a knowledge of French offers means of moral and mental improvement and of social equipment and finish, such as few other studies could so completely bestow ; and such as cannot but make him a good citizen and a useful member of society. To force him to take up anything so useless as Persian or so difficult and recondite as Sanskrit, would subject him to serious hardship, or deter him from taking advantage of a University career in India.

20. Whether then it be the student, the scholar, the gentleman merely, the man of the world, the professional gentleman, or the official, the knowledge of so beautiful a language as the French, with its magnificent literature, which daily grows in volume and worth, cannot but be of infinite advantage to him. Experience has taught us that the French language possesses powers and influences for mental discipline, culture, and enrichment, such as the Indian student should not be required to neglect or forego. It helps him not only to material benefits, but to moral improvement and intellectual pleasures of the highest order. We may, we think, confidently claim for it, that it expands his vision, quickens his faculties, humanizes his character, liberalizes his ideas, exercises his mind, awakens his senses, and

enables him continually to extend his knowledge and thus his usefulness, by affording him a ready and effective means of keeping himself in touch with European thought and European sciences as they develop towards perfection day-by-day. In short, the advantages are such, that a knowledge of French must always be reckoned on as a valuable asset and a most desirable acquisition, such as we submit, it should be one of the functions of an University to place within the Indian student's reach, rather than to snatch it away from his grasp.

21. The more we consider the matter, the more we are taken aback at this proposal to do away with French from the University curriculum, and we feel it to be our duty, in the true interests of the students of this country, though with the utmost deference to the Commissioners, to protest against it and to deprecate its acceptance by the Government of India. To enforce this proposal, would, we are confident, entail great hardship and serious loss on a large number of our students, without ensuring to them any compensating benefit, would greatly hamper the full, free and due course of liberal education and culture in India, and would expose our educational authorities to the reproach and even ridicule of Western nations.

22. We would here crave leave to state that whilst we view with the utmost satisfaction the desire and anxiety which the Government of India has evinced from time to time, to maintain and encourage the great Oriental languages as well as the provincial vernaculars, we respectfully submit this admirable object is capable of being achieved effectively enough, in many different ways, without sacrificing the study of a language so important, so serviceable and so universally popular as the French.

23. In conclusion we most respectfully and earnestly pray that His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, fully appreciating the great and undoubted merits of the French language and its immense capabilities, both present and future, as one of the most active forces of civilization and progress, and as an unerring and effective medium of scientific teaching, taste, culture, and higher Education generally, and taking into consideration the needs, aims and aspiration of the Indian students

and of those interested in their welfare, will be pleased favourably to entertain this humble representation by withholding his sanction from the proposal in question or by leaving it open to each University to retain the French language in its curriculum of studies as is done at present by the Bombay University, or in such modified form as the needs and circumstances of each Province may demand.

We have the honour to remain,
Sir,
Your most obedient Servants,

S. NOTI, S. J.,
(Professor of French, St. Xavier's College,)
PRESIDENT.

JEHANGIR EDALJI DAVAR,
(J. P.
Fellow of the Bombay University.
Officier d'Académie Univ. Gallic.)
HONORARY SECRETARY.

[E. / 12]

1,000—7-5-02.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

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READ AGAIN G.O., No. ..... dated ..... 190 .

" " " " ....., " ..... 190 .

READ ALSO :—

C. No. 1655, From the Hon. Secy. Cercle Littéraire ~~Fr~~ français, dated 31 - 10 - 1902.

" " ....., " ....., " ....., " ..... 190 .

" " ....., " ....., " ....., " ..... 190 .

Letter

~~ORDER~~ / This No. 696, dated 8 . 11 . 1902.

Dept 8/11/02

Dept 11/11

To the Hon. Secretary,

Cercle Littéraire français,

Bombay. ,

Sir,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st ultimo, forwarding a copy of a representation (to the Govt. of India) which the Cercle littéraire français has made to the Govt. of India against the proposal of the Indian Universities Commission to remove the French language from the university curriculum, and to state that, if the Madras Govt. are consulted in the matter, the Governor-in-Council will give his best attention to what has been urged by the Cercle.

P.T.T. 5-11-02.

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A.T.P. 5-11-02.

*When given for copying*_____
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When signed _____

READ AGAIN G.O., No. , DATED
190 .

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 UP, BEING MEANT FOR DESPATCH IN ORIGINAL.								

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