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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Rulalie DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	1184	Press ~~Mis.~~
Dated	23-9-1967	

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No. 191. Read the following Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India, to His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor in Council, Fort Saint George ; dated India Office, London, 9th August 1867, No. 29.

With reference to Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of the 9th of February 1863, No. 6, I forward, herewith, a copy of a letter* from the Principal Librarian of the British Museum, together with a report† by the Keeper of the Department

* Dated 17th July 1867.

† Dated 11th July 1867.

of Mineralogy in that Institution, respecting the presentation to the Museum of Aerolites of importance obtainable in British India.

2. I have to request that your Excellency in Council will take into early consideration the report by Mr. Maskelyne, with a view to meeting, as far as may be practicable, the wishes of the Trustees of the British Museum, as expressed in the enclosures to Sir Charles Wood's above-mentioned despatch, and now communicated in Mr. Winter Jones' present letter and Mr. Maskelyne's Report. You will acquaint me with the result of your consideration of this subject, for the information of the Trustees of the Museum.

From J. WINTER JONES, Esq., Principal Librarian, British Museum, to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for India ; dated British Museum, 17th July 1867.

I am directed by the Trustees of the British Museum to forward to you the accompanying copy of a report which has been submitted to them by Mr. Maskelyne, the Keeper of the Department of Mineralogy in this Institution.

I also beg leave to draw your attention to a letter addressed to the Secretary of State for India, by desire of the Trustees, on the 23rd of January 1863, asking the favor of the intervention of the Secretary of State with His Excellency the Governor General of India, that he would be pleased to take such steps as he should think fit to secure for the British Museum any Aerolites of importance that might be obtainable in Her Majesty's dominions in India. Looking to the scientific interest and importance of the subject in question, I am to express the hope of the Trustees that the views set forth in Mr. Maskelyne's report may be considered deserving your favorable consideration, and that the request which, as appears from Mr. Herman Merivale's letter of the 28th of January 1863, was made by the Secretary of State for India to the several Local Governments in India, in accordance with the suggestions of the Trustees of the British Museum, contained in their letter of the 23rd of January 1863, may not be withdrawn.

MINERAL DEPARTMENT, *July 11th, 1867.*

Mr. Maskelyne has the honor to report the presentation to the Museum by the Trustees of the Indian Museum at Calcutta of specimens taken from two Aerolites, those namely of Gopalpur (that fell in May 1865) and of Sherghalty (that fell in August 1865).

Also by Dr. Oldham, as Director of the Geological Survey in India, of specimens of the Pokhra (that fell in May 1866) and Muddoor (that fell in September 1865) falls.

Letters from Dr. Oldham, announcing these presentations, have been referred by the Principal Librarian to Mr. Maskelyne to be reported on.

In them, Dr. Oldham speaks of these fragmentary specimens as having been sent to the British Museum, "in accordance with a wish expressed by the Government of India, that the British collection should be enriched by specimens of all Meteorites found in India."

Mr. Maskelyne had understood that what Dr. Oldham terms a "wish" was, in fact, an order from the Home Government, not that fragments taken from Meteorites should be selected, and sent by Dr. Oldham, or any one else at Calcutta, but that, after the date of the order, the Meteorites themselves should be sent to London.

Dr. Oldham acknowledged that this was so in a conversation with Mr. Maskelyne on Saturday last, but he added that "the original order had been so far modified as to make the Trustees of the Indian Museum" (at Calcutta) "the medium through which all Meteorites sent in offi-

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
23rd September 1867.*

“cially should pass.” That gentleman further informed Mr. Maskelyne that the Pokhra Meteorite was “stopped in India” while on its way to London, and being sent in obedience to the general order of the Home Government.

Mr. Maskelyne thinks it very important in the interests of this Imperial Museum for the whole empire, no less than in those of European Science generally, that the original order of the Secretary of State for India in Council relative to these Meteorites should not be superseded; still more that it should not be “modified” by a local authority professing to act in the name of the Government, whether it be a Museum or the Geologist at the head of the Indian Survey.

It is true that Dr. Oldham has caused the purchase for the Calcutta Museum of the collection of Mr. Greg of Manchester, a collection remarkable, rather for the numbers of the Meteoric falls it contained, than for their magnitude or capacity for illustrating the different kinds of Meteorite.

That collection, when united with specimens previously at Calcutta, or since acquired in the manner above described, will form a fine series of Meteorites; but it will be comparatively lost in Calcutta, where there are extremely few persons to study it to advantage. In London, on the other hand, the Meteorites of India, as of other places (and Meteorites have no nationality), are constantly being studied by men of science, English, Foreign, and American, and the recent progress of science has given them a redoubled interest. It is in London that the great masses of these bodies would confer the most advantage upon science, while fragments properly cut from them (not as at present destructively broken off with hammers) could be sent as presents to Calcutta, and others again could be made the means of enhancing this collection by exchange with foreign Museums.

Meteorites are unlike fossils in this, that, henceforward, it will be impossible to procure collections of the former representing the falls that have been studied so laboriously during the past fifty years, except by minute and unsatisfactory specimens. It is, therefore, very important to keep up the collection here, which is the finest in the world, in the most perfect and complete condition.

Mr. Maskelyne would, therefore, respectfully suggest to the Trustees that they should exercise their important influence in averting the evil that would befall this collection if the order of the Secretary of State for India were to be superseded here or neglected at Calcutta.

(Signed) N. S. MASKELYNE.

Professor Owen is of opinion that the remarks in the foregoing report are just and to the point, and that it is of great moment in the elucidation of one of the most interesting and obscure problems in Meteorology and Mineralogy that Professor Maskelyne's suggestion should receive the favorable consideration of the Trustees.

(Signed) R. OWEN.

No. 192. ORDER THEREON, 23rd September 1867, No. 1184.

The Governor in Council directs that copies of the foregoing Despatch, and of its enclosures, be sent to the Collectors of the several Districts in this Presidency, who will report, without delay, whether there are any Meteorites procurable in their respective Districts, and will furnish, with reference to any that may be, or may have been, brought to their notice, as much information, of the nature of that indicated in the Memorandum appended to Sir C. Wood's Despatch, recorded in the Proceedings of Government under date the 9th April 1863, as they may be able to procure.

2. It is understood that Meteorites have recently fallen in the Districts of Kurnool and Cuddapah. The Collectors of these Districts will report on this point, and will explain why the instructions conveyed in Sir C. Wood's Despatch, above adverted to, have not been observed.

(True Extract).

A. J. ARBUTHNOT,

Chief Secretary.

To the Collector of

Exd. J. H. Burns.

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