

L2254

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF HELLENIC STUDIES.

Ans'd
Nov. 28/98

ST. MARTIN'S STREET,
LONDON, W.C.

18th November 1898.

Lieut General Pitt-Rivers.

Rushmore,

Salisbury.

Dear Sir,

At the suggestion of Professor Sayce I am enclosing a copy of a letter, which, in my capacity of Secretary of the Hellenic Society, I received some time ago from Mr W. R. Paton, who you may possibly know by name as an explorer in Asia Minor and the Greek Islands. You will see that it is a proposal for making a collection of the Embroideries and other articles of art peculiar to the Greek Islands. I read the letter to the Council of the Hellenic Society, and at their suggestion I sent it in the first instance to the Director of Art at the South Kensington Museum recommending the scheme to his favourable

consideration. I have just heard from him, however, that, while quite agreeing that examples of this art should be collected, his Department do not see their way to find room for them. Under these circumstances I call your attention to the matter because, as I say, Professor Sayce, who was present at the Hellenic Society's meeting, thought it possible that you might care to take the matter up. Perhaps in that case you would be good enough to let me know, and I could then put Mr Paton into direct communication with you.

I am, Yours faithfully

George A. Macmillan
Hon. Sec.

Copy.

L 2259

Vathy,

Samos.

September 3rd 1898.

Dear Mr Macmillan,

Will you kindly exercise your discretion regarding the following and either submit it formally to the Council of the Hellenic Society or forward it with your blessing as Secretary of the Hellenic Society to the South Kensington Museum or any other place you think wise. Of course I do not expect the Hellenic Society to spend money in the matter, but simply to support an application in any other quarter you may think fit. As you will see my application is necessarily addressed to no existing institution, but to a supposed Museum or Society, which interests itself both in Art and in Ethnology.

It is much to be desired that the fast-vanishing remains of the costumes and embroidery of the Greek islands should be collected at once with a view to publishing a work on the subject. It would be impossible at this date to find in the Cyclades the material for a description of their old costumes and embroideries. As regards the former we have only the plates in Tournefort & other books, as regards the designs of their embroideries nothing.

In the more remote Sporades and in Lesbos it is still possible to secure enough material for an attempt to present a picture of their costume and embroideries, although the costume has, except in the remotest

islands, such as Castellorizo and Astypalaea, been long discarded and the embroideries have been nearly all sold and have passed into the chaos of the European market, except in such cases as they have been rescued by museums.

The variety in the embroideries of different islands, both as regards colour and design is very great, and the variations in the costume are as remarkable. I speak in some measure at hazard but ~~th~~ with conviction when I say that no museum possesses a collection of island embroideries such as would enable it to classify locally with certainty new acquisitions. Such a basis of classification can only be created by collecting on the spot the ^{be} ~~fast~~ specimens that remain and giving them the sanctuary of a museum. The time is at hand when this will be no longer possible. A taste among amateurs has been created for these beautiful embroideries, and those that remain are being fast bought up by dealers. Ten or fifteen years ago a collection of the embroideries of Carpathos, Rhodes, Cos, the minor Sporades, Chios & Lesbos, could have been made with facility and at a very moderate expense. Now it would be perfectly impossible to obtain on the spot a good collection, but a certain number of good pieces would be acquired and with their aid a collection could be formed by purchase in the European market.

I should desire to have placed at my disposal a sum of about four hundred pounds for the purchase of embroideries and articles of costume, among the latter being included jewellery. The last is, of course, far rarer than clothes, but some very beautiful specimens still

exist and might be bought at a cheaper rate than the embroideries, for which, to judge from the Smyrna Bazar prices, there is now a furore.

I would give my time and attention to the matter and defray the cost of travel myself.

I should wish, when the material has been collected, that the task of editing it might be in part at least entrusted to myself; but I do not at all insist on this. I have myself a small collection of island embroideries, which would help, and I expect Mrs Bent has a good many. Otherwise I know of no one who has made them a subject of his special interest. Of course in a general work Crete would be included and the fine collection at South Kensington of Cretan embroideries and lace, combined with Mr Sandnith's possessions and probably unrivalled knowledge would be of enormous value.

I enclose two photographs of the front part of a bed-curtain, which I bought lately in Cos. It will be observed that the central part, the portiere, has been detached and sewn on to this hanging; but it, of course, belonged to a similar one and is the best specimen I have seen of this, the most decorative part of these hangings. The hanging is more than eleven feet high and hence was difficult to photograph well. I had to pay for it the very large price of £30. I propose sending it to the South Kensington Museum in order that they may purchase the central part at least, but I will not do so before hearing from you or them.

Yours very truly

(signed) W. R. Paton.