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PRESENTATION  
OF THE  
ROYAL AWARDS

TO

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER DALLAS BACHE, OF THE UNITED STATES; AND CAPTAIN COLLINSON, R.N., THE ARCTIC EXPLORER.

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THE President read the following statements explanatory of the grounds on which the Council had awarded the Royal Medals respectively :—

The Victoria or Patron's Medal has been adjudicated to Professor Alexander Dallas Bache for his successful labours in carrying out the Great Coast Survey of the United States of America. This noble work owes its origin, we believe, to the suggestion of those enlightened statesmen Jefferson and Gallatin, as early as 1807, and was supported in 1809 by the American Philosophical Society, when Mr. Hassler, an eminent geometer of Switzerland, then resident in the United States, was entrusted with its execution. But war, and the time required for the manufacture of the instruments, delayed the commencement of the work till 1816. Continuing the Survey, with a brief interruption, to 1844, Mr. Hassler was then succeeded by our Medallist.

Operations of this nature will, of course, have been made available for a correct delineation of all the surface of the interior; for it is manifest that every triangle referable to a known unit furnishes three decided bases with which others may be connected in any direction, as long as there remains a *terra firma* for the instruments to stand on; but these internal operations being more of a domestic nature, do not appear to the Council to establish any distinct claim to the Medal. The case, however, is very different when we come to consider the accurate delineation of such a coast as that of the United States, commencing at the State of Maine, comprising no less than eighteen states on the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico,

besides others on the Pacific, and extending, as we are credibly informed, over not less than 30,000 miles. This number, no doubt, includes all the windings and indentations of the coast, and the interiors of its harbours, the islands, &c. ; for it is to be remarked that, by the especial provision of the Government of America, the duty is not confined to one class of persons, but is shared equally by military and naval men and civilians, all chosen for their fitness, whereby not only is the field for selection vastly expanded, but a greater facility of correctly taking soundings and delineating shoals, harbours, and isolated rocks, is afforded.

It would be impossible to do justice to an extensive work of this sort on an occasion like the present ; but as the previous Reports of this celebrated Coast Survey from 1844 to 1855, inclusive, are in our Library, those of our Associates, and of the public generally, who wish to form an estimate of their value, can do so at their leisure, and they will see how vastly our Medallist has pushed on this great work. They will assuredly then rise from the examination with the thorough conviction that, whether we regard the science, skill, and zeal of the operators, the perfection of their instruments, the able manner in which the superintendent has enlisted all modern improvements into his service, the care taken to have the observations accurately registered, his modest and unpretending demeanour, or the noble liberality of the Government, tempered with prudent economy, all unprejudiced persons must agree that the Trigonometrical Survey of the United States of America stands without a superior.

What then are we to say respecting the accurate delineation of this immense tract of coast, so much frequented by commerce, so important in every point of view to mankind at large, but that it is a great and universal boon conferred on all the inhabitants of this globe ? We all benefit by the security of navigation ; it is not the Government of the United States of America alone which derives an exclusive advantage from this admirable series of operations, but those who have most frequent access to the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific chiefly participate therein ; and as Great Britain stands foremost amongst these, on whom can we so deservedly bestow one of our two Royal Gold Medals this year ?

The President then addressed his Excellency the American Minister in these words :—

“ Mr. Dallas,—Whilst I can truly say that the Council and myself rejoice in this opportunity of recording our sense of the high merits

of Professor Bache, I have a peculiar satisfaction in being permitted to place the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in the hands of your Excellency, with the request that you will convey it to your eminent relative.

“The grounds for making the award of the highest distinction which it is in our power to confer, have been expressed in the terms sanctioned by the Council; but that document does not allude to other great qualities of a man who, besides his admirable Coast Survey, has so largely extended our knowledge on various subjects of scientific importance. I may here cite his delineation of the iso-magnetic curves both in Europe and America, his littoral and deep-sea soundings, which, it is believed, will soon enable us to read off the natural history of the Gulf Stream, and to calculate the periodicity and perturbations of the tides at given spots, and his many ingenious inventions, including a method of registering the pulsations of distant earthquakes.

“British philosophers, Sir, have indeed long admired the progress of your accomplished relative, as I can personally testify; for when he visited our country, in 1847, I had the gratification, on resigning the chair of the British Association to my esteemed friend Sir Robert Inglis, to welcome Mr. Bache to our meeting at Oxford, where he presented to us some results of his great Survey, and we did honour to ourselves by enrolling him among our honorary members.

“Lastly, Sir, when I know how successfully he has recently been labouring to aid the accomplishment of the submarine electric telegraph which is to unite our countries—that this same individual is the great-grandson of the illustrious Benjamin Franklin, as well as the near relative of one of your leading statesmen, and that, bearing his honoured name, he is your own nephew, I feel, in common with my Associates, that there never was an occasion on which the sympathies and just pride of our kindred nations were more thoroughly united, than they are by the adjudication of the Victoria Gold Medal to Alexander Dallas Bache.”

The American Minister thus replied:—

“Mr. President,—I receive with much gratification, on behalf of my eminent fellow-citizen, Professor Alexander D. Bache, this mark of the approbation of your learned Society.

“The fame of her sons in the noble brotherhood of science is a most cherished part of my country’s wealth and strength; and, as her national representative, I thank you, Gentlemen, for thus adding to her store.

“Professor Bache has for many years discharged elevated, interesting, and arduous duties under the Government of the United States. He was specially fitted for these by academical training and successes, by educational labours, by an intellect at once lucid, profound, and persevering, and by an aptitude, not too common with reserved students and philosophers, for practical method and administration. Without adverting to a rich series of prior and of

accessory performances, I speak with entire certainty in saying that his chief work (though yet uncompleted), the Survey of the American Coasts, Sounds, and Estuaries, in all their expansion, intricacies, and characteristics, admirably delineated, as if daguerreotyped, in charts of extraordinary perfection, has earned for him a solid and enduring reputation in this, as in our own, hemisphere.

“I believe him, Sir, in every respect entitled to the high honour you confer by awarding this Medal, and am happy in being made by your distinguished Association the medium of its safe transmission.”

The Founder's or King William Medal has been decerned to Captain Richard Collinson, R.N., C.B., &c., &c., for having in Her Majesty's ship *Enterprise*, though baffled by provoking calms and adverse winds, ultimately passed through Behring Straits in search of Sir John Franklin and his companions. Hampered by those glacial obstructions which every change of wind wafted against him, and greatly perplexed by the proofs occasionally found of his former companion, M'Clure, being in advance, but without the slightest intimation of the course he had pursued, Captain Collinson deemed it advisable to follow the open water in shore, and thus penetrated farther to the eastward than any vessel had ever reached, approaching nearly to the point attained by the *Hekla* from the Atlantic in 1819.

Though employed on a mission of pure humanity, Captain Collinson was quite alive to the benefit commerce might derive from taking advantage of the now discovered resort of shoals of huge whales, seen from time to time disporting themselves in unvisited security; and, therefore, this voyage has also the merit of extending the field of that profitable fishery in the Arctic Seas.

Captain Collinson's previous services as a surveyor (and he was with our late lamented President Admiral Beechey) in different latitudes, but more particularly on the coast of China—at Canton, Golongsoo, and especially when he surveyed the channel before Woosung, and surmounted all the difficulties in the navigation of the Yang-tse-kiang, during the advance of the British on the city of Chin-kiang-foo, are to be found in the Gazette of 1841 and 1842. His accurate description of his track left nothing to be desired.

Captain Collinson's astronomical observations, together with his contributions to the geography of Arctic America, have already appeared in the Society's Journal, vol. xxv., and are highly appreciated for having corroborated and given a more fixed character to our knowledge of those regions.

While carried forward by his great zeal and courage, and far

beyond any of his predecessors—no ship having been there before—it must also be remembered that this officer exhibited peculiar skill and prudence in the selection of his route, in overcoming great impediments and the opposing current, and, lastly, in re-conducting his ship from that dreary solitude and monotonous waste of waters in safety to his own country.

A detailed list of his geographical positions has been printed in the Journal, and a synopsis of his meteorological, tidal, and other scientific observations has been deposited with the Society.

The President then addressed the recipient of the Founder's Medal in these terms:—

“ Captain Collinson,—As a friend of Franklin of thirty-five years' standing, and as one who has had his heart set upon never ceasing to search the Arctic regions until we obtained true tidings of the fate of that great explorer and his gallant companions, I enjoyed the sincerest gratification when our Founder's Medal was unanimously voted to you at a full Council where you only (at my own request) were absent.

“ Gratified as I have invariably been in seeing all our Arctic explorers rewarded, it truly gladdens me to have your name added to the list of those noble British seamen who have received our highest distinction for their meritorious services, whether in the cause of Arctic geographical discovery or in the subsequent searches after Franklin.

“ When we know how perseveringly you endeavoured to realise a north-eastern passage from Behring Straits, by carrying your sailing ship, the *Enterprise*, to a more northern latitude in that meridian than any British seaman had attained, and that, trending a large part of the north coast of America, you pushed your vessel up the eastern side of Banks Land to nearly the same point as your eminent brother medallist M'Clure, and that when foiled by the great packs of ice you retraced your steps, and, nothing disheartened, still threaded your way eastward along the mainland until you reached the open sea between Victoria Land and King William Island, whence you brought back your ship to England, I have strong grounds for saying, that we mete out but simple justice in granting to you this distinction.

“ There is yet, Sir, another reason which operates strongly in satisfying me that you are well worthy of this or any honour which may be conferred on you. You warmly advocated the last search after Franklin; and if your judicious suggestion had been complied with, of sending once more a vessel by Behring Straits to the spot whither you went and whence you returned, and on the successful repetition of which you staked your well-earned reputation, we should now feel no anxiety respecting the isolated efforts of M'Clintock; whilst, to the eternal credit of our country, the problem of the fate of Franklin would in all probability have been for ever solved.

“For all these reasons, and also because, though not chosen to perform any part of the noble mission on which your mind was bent, you have earnestly laboured in carrying out the last Franklin Fund Subscription in aid of the survey undertaken by your younger brother officer M’Clintock, I have the sincerest pleasure in putting this Medal into your hand.”

Captain Collinson then replied :—

“Mr. President,—I must ever retain a lively recollection of the kind and impressive manner with which you have conveyed this honour—an honour which is greatly enhanced in my estimation by its having come through the hands of one who not only holds so eminent a position in the scientific world, but who has taken so deep and unswerving an interest in that great cause which has led to its bestowal. I receive it, Sir, as the tribute which Knowledge pays to Enterprise. Hand in hand the two sisters have worked together, the one, by laborious study and close reasoning, pointing out the path which the other, firmly relying on the matured judgment of her elder sister, has unhesitatingly followed, until, in this our day, we have seen the Himalayas mapped, a great portion of the interior of Australia explored, an Antarctic continent discovered, the water boundary to America established, and last, but not least, Africa permeated.

“These results have to a great extent exhausted the field of exploration, but a higher and a nobler task awaits their efforts; we have to turn them to good account; and whether we go forth as settlers to occupy, or as merchants to exchange our manufactures for the natural productions of these distant regions, we have to diffuse among their inhabitants the comforts of civilization, the advantages of free institutions, with the blessing of that true and holy religion under the special providence of which we have spread from an insular kingdom to a mighty empire.

“Though these things are rapidly coming to pass, we cannot expect to see them fully realised; after ages will, however, acknowledge with gratitude the furtherance which they have received from the influence of this Society—a Society through whose annals the public is made acquainted with the progress of discovery, where the field of ambition is opened to the young geographer, who is shown the best means of accomplishing his object, and where (but with diffidence I now say it) a generous stimulus is given to scientific research and to perseverance under difficulty, by the distribution of honourable distinctions, such as it is my good fortune to have been deemed worthy of deserving.

“I have to thank you, Gentlemen, for the kind reception you have given to the award of the President and Council. Your cordiality has afforded me a life-long gratification; it sends me to my seat with the assurance that on this occasion I may assume the motto of that illustrious seaman who made the signal ‘England expects every man to do his duty’—‘*Palmam qui meruit ferat.*’”