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PRESENTATION

OF THE

ROYAL AWARDS

TO ELISHA KENT KANE, M.D.; TO HEINRICH BARTH, PH.D.,
AND TO CORPORAL CHURCH, *of the Royal Engineers.*

HIS EXCELLENCY G. M. DALLAS, Minister of the United States of America, having consented to receive the Gold Medal awarded to Dr. Kane, the President addressed him as follows:—

“ Sir,—The Founder’s Gold Medal, the highest honour this Society has in its power to bestow, has been awarded to Dr. Kane, of the United States of America, for his distinguished services and important discoveries in the Polar regions, while in charge of the expedition fitted out in America to search for Sir John Franklin; and for his valuable Memoir and Charts, communicated through the Admiralty.

“ In the absence of Dr. Kane himself, I could desire no greater privilege than that of confiding the award, Dr. Kane has so justly deserved, to the hands of the distinguished representative of the nation to which he belongs; in order that the feeling of this Society, and I may say of the country at large, may go forth in its fullest extent to the land which enrols the name of Dr. Kane among her citizens. Sir, I cannot discharge this duty without passing a remark on the peculiarity of the circumstances attending this occasion.

“ It seldom happens that nations so distantly situated, spontaneously unite in such acts of humanity as those which have characterized the late search for Sir J. Franklin. More rarely still do we find the sympathies of individuals so enlisted in the fate of foreigners, as to manifest themselves in acts of philanthropy of such a truly liberal and substantial character as have here occurred; and this act of the United States, together with the names of Grinnell and Peabody, will long be remembered in this country, even after the spirit of Arctic enterprise shall have passed away. But, Sir, if the feelings of *nations* have been deeply enlisted in this search, how much more so must have been the feelings of *individuals*, who enjoyed the friendship of the object of it? Sir, there are persons now present who were early associated with our lamented countryman, who shared with him his first perilous encounter with that icy element which was afterwards to become his tomb, and who enjoyed his friendship through life.

“As one of these, you may imagine that it is with no small degree of interest that I find myself now, in my official capacity, conveying this award of the Society, to the officer who so strenuously endeavoured to determine the fate of him, whom we all so deeply deplore.

“These sympathies, however, have had no share in the decision of the Council. Dr. Kane’s merits alone, have won for him this testimony of the Society; and I trust that these reciprocal acts of good feeling between nations and individuals may tend to bind in lasting ties of amity these two great nations, whose sympathies have been shown to be so closely identified.”

His Excellency the American Minister, having received the Medal, replied:—

“Mr. President,—On behalf of my fellow-citizen, Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, I receive, with equal pride and pleasure, this testimonial, awarded by your learned body, to his ability and services in that branch of human knowledge, to which you are specially devoted.

“His country also, even now engaged in expressing her high sense of his deserts, will be gratified to learn that her judgment, which might, possibly, be ascribed to partiality, has been thus sanctioned.

“Young as he yet is, and fairly entitled to count upon many years of zealous intellectual activity, he can never achieve a prouder recognition, considered in all its aspects, than this Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.

“Dr. Kane, as is personally known to me, entered upon his career of Arctic exploration under the influence of sentiments which were strengthened, rather than shaken, by its depicted terrors. In the medical department of the navy of the United States, on a remote station, his Government scarcely intimated a disposition to join in the search for Sir John Franklin, before he hurried forward to volunteer an enlistment for that noble purpose. There was a voice upon the breeze that had caught his ear; an ardent fondness for scientific studies impelled him to a fresh field of research; a daring and irrepressible spirit of enterprise co-operated with much experience and peculiar attainments. He went—he went twice; and, though he vainly offered his own life to rescue another’s, he brought back with him observations, verifications, discoveries, and delineations, worthy to be accepted by the masters of geographical science. If, as I believe was the case, he penetrated to and actually beheld the ice-encircled yet open sea, whose existence had been predicated of the periodical northern flight of aquatic birds, of certain currents, and of other *indicia*, he may justly feel that the practical solution of an interesting problem has earned the honour of your approbation.

“I do not wish, Mr. President, to eulogise my countryman. You are far more competent than myself to appreciate the exact value of what he has effected. Your Council have affixed to his record this their Great Seal; and at your invitation, and with alacrity, I assume the grateful task of transmitting it safely to his hands.”

The President then addressed Dr. Barth, who was present, in the following words :—

“ Sir,—The Patron’s Gold Medal of this Society has been awarded to you ‘for your successful and extensive explorations in Central Africa, your numerous excursions about Lake Chád, your discovery of the great river Binue, and for your hazardous and adventurous journey to and from Timbuctú,’ by which you have afforded to us the first really authentic information respecting that important locality.

“ In conveying to you this testimony of the high sense entertained by this Society of the merit of your performances, I cannot overlook the important fact that it is just thirty-three years since I found assembled upon the shores of Africa, whence you started, the distinguished but lamented travellers Oudney, Clapperton, Denham, and Tyrwhitt, all bent upon the same great enterprise of opening out the interior of that continent; and although Laing, one of our countrymen, did afterwards succeed in reaching the famed Timbuctú, yet of all this party, and of those who attempted that great exploit, you alone stand upon our shores as the successful accomplisher of the enterprise.

“ If, Sir, the service performed be measured by the difficulty of accomplishment, evidenced by the lapse of time and by the loss of life that has occurred in this adventurous attempt, the award of our Medal must be acknowledged to be justly merited. But you have other performances to strengthen your claim; for we are informed that your labours have been so extensive, that the account of them will reach over five volumes of matter, which, collected in such a country, must prove of the highest import.

“ Sir, I congratulate you on the successful accomplishment of your undertaking, and trust that this high tribute will stimulate you to future enterprises.”

Dr. Barth replied :—

“ Mr. President,—It is with great pride and satisfaction that I am here to receive, at your hands, the Medal which the Council of the Royal Geographical Society has awarded to me; for nothing can be more gratifying to a man who, from love of science, has thrown himself into a dangerous and adventurous career, like that of a traveller in the inhospitable and turbulent regions of Central Africa, than the acknowledgment of such a distinguished body of learned and eminent men as the Council of the Royal Geographical Society. But it is not alone on my own behalf that I thank you; as a member to a foreign nation, who will be honoured by the distinction which this day you have conferred upon me, I offer you also their acknowledgments as well as my own grateful thanks.

I shall say nothing on the extent and purport of my discoveries, which have been fully appreciated by competent men, and will shortly be laid before the public in a full account of my Travels. May I only be allowed to express the hope that, after a great and

practicable high road into the heart of Africa has been found at length, with the sacrifice of the lives of so many noble, eminent, and daring men, and after it has been proved to be such by the successful voyage of Mr. Laird's steamer 'Pleiad,' and after a considerable advance has been made in the knowledge of the interior of the continent, which shows it to be of a far richer character than has ever been supposed, Her Majesty's Government will not allow the opportunity to pass by, to establish, in a vigorous manner, legitimate commerce with those unfortunate regions, and thus hold out to the natives a humane and lawful way in which they may be able to supply their wants of foreign produce, without bringing, by slave-hunts and slave-trade, misery and desolation over wide and fertile districts.

"The present moment is the more important for such exertions, as, by the abolition of the slave-trade in the regency of Tripoli and in Fezzan, the trade of the interior has just been brought to a great crisis, and the people are obliged to look most anxiously about for a new channel by which they may supply their wants. The last news received from Dr. Vogel gives a new proof how extremely anxious the chiefs along the river Chadda or Binue are to enter into friendly relations with the English, but how continually they are disappointed. Certainly the commercial relations of the great western branch of that immense river, the so-called Niger, principally between Timbuctú and Sansandi, are far more developed; but the difficulties which attend the navigation of the lower part of that river, as well between the towns of Bousa and Yauri, as higher up the river between Tosaye and Kendaji, are considerable, although with the means which human genius has made available, they appear by no means insurmountable.

"I conclude, Mr. President, by repeating to you my grateful thanks for the distinguished honour conferred upon me this day."

Corporal Church having requested that Lieutenant-General Sir John Burgoyne would kindly do him the honour to receive the award of the Society on his behalf, the President addressed him as follows :—

"Sir John Burgoyne,—The Royal Geographical Society have awarded to Corporal Church this watch and chain, in acknowledgment of his meritorious and intelligent services while employed upon the African expedition under Dr. Vogel. It is the wish of the Society, especially to mark with approbation, his diligence in conducting a long series of meteorological observations at Kuka, and his ability in assisting Dr. Vogel in those observations, by which he has determined astronomically so many positions on his route.

"It will be satisfactory to you, Sir John, to learn that Corporal Church has amply sustained the high reputation of that excellent corps of Sappers and Miners, whose unassuming labours have so materially contributed to render the detail of the topographical survey of this country so perfect, and have so largely contributed towards the suc-

cess of other geographical undertakings. If anything can enhance the pleasure which I feel in the discharge of this duty, it is that of delivering this acknowledgment of the merits of a zealous and faithful soldier into the hands of so distinguished an ornament of the army, one whose high scientific knowledge and military experience have contributed so largely to the glory of this nation.”

Lieutenant-General Sir John Burgoyne, accompanied by Corporal Church, after the delivery of the honorary award, said :—

“ Mr. President,—I have not been prepared to take any part in this proceeding; but although unexpectedly called upon, I cannot refrain from expressing the gratification I feel, that any member of the corps to which I have the honour to belong, should be thought worthy of so flattering a mark of distinction as that now conferred. I can assure the Meeting, that the corps of Royal Engineers and Sappers are as ready to devote themselves to scientific enterprise, as they are for military service in the field.

“ With regard to Corporal Church, I believe him to be a zealous, good soldier, a man of intelligence, and one who would be always anxious to carry out the orders or wishes of his superiors; and that he would never bring discredit on the marks of favour thus shown to him, by so distinguished a body as the Royal Geographical Society.”
