


DUNCAN, A., de Eider

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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR JOSEPH BANKS, K. B.

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON,

*Read at the Fortieth Anniversary Festival of the
Harveian Society of Edinburgh,*

ON THE 12TH OF APRIL 1821.

BY ANDREW DUNCAN, SEN. M. D. & PROF.

FIRST PHYSICIAN TO THE KING, FOR SCOTLAND;

FATHER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH,

AND SENIOR SECRETARY OF THE HARVEIAN SOCIETY,

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TO

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, BART.

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON,

THIS TRIBUTE OF GRATEFUL VENERATION

FOR THE MEMORY OF

ONE OF THE MOST MERITORIOUS

OF HIS PREDECESSORS,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

By **ANDREW DUNCAN**, *Sen.*, æt. 77.

*Perish the narrow thought the slanderous tongue,
Where the heart's right, the action can't be wrong,*

BURGOYNE'S Prologue to ZARA.

A

SHORT ACCOUNT, &c.



GENTLEMEN,

THIS Society, which now meets for the fortieth successive year, on the anniversary of the Birthday of Dr WILLIAM HARVEY, the discoverer of the Circulation of the Blood, was instituted for three very laudable purposes. The views of its founders were to commemorate departed worth; to stimulate rising genius; and to promote social intercourse among men employed in the most interesting of all arts, the restoration of health to fellow-creatures, when subjected to disease.

That it has been instrumental in forwarding the accomplishment of all these important objects,

is well known to those who have regularly attended its meetings. And it has been my good fortune, now for the fortieth year in regular succession, to be present at every one of our Harveian Festivals, without a single interruption.

By the exertions of the Muses of a BOSWELL, a BARCLAY and a MACNAIR, even the convivial part of our business will be immortalized in song. The experimental Dissertations to which our Harveian prizes have been adjudged, though the productions of Tyros in medicine, have conveyed useful instruction to the oldest and ablest of the profession; while the annual discourses on departed worthies will at least transmit to posterity the gratitude we feel for the meritorious exertions of HARVEY, PITCAIRN, CULLEN, and several other names justly distinguished for the improvement of the healing art, and the extension of human knowledge.

As the subject of this day's discourse, I have selected a man whose memory ought to be held in the highest veneration, by every one who is

not unacquainted with the benefits which Philosophy confers on the human race. I mean to present you with a short account of the life and labours of the late Sir JOSEPH BANKS, who was for many years the truly patriotic President of the Royal Society of London.

JOSEPH BANKS, was the son of WILLIAM BANKS, Esq. an English gentleman, of considerable landed property. He was born at the country seat of his father, Reresby Hall, in Lincolnshire, on the 13th of December 1743. At the usual period for classical education, he was sent to Eton School, which has long been a celebrated seminary for youth. After finishing his school-education, he went to the University of Oxford, where his classical course of instruction was completed. During these youthful studies, he made such proficiency in the acquisition of every branch of liberal knowledge, as did great credit both to himself and to his teachers. But even at this early period of life, his predilection for Natural History was clearly demonstrated. He soon manifested a particular fondness for Botany, and often expressed an enthusiastic admi-

ration for the illustrious LINNÆUS, the ornament of Sweden, and the oracle of the period in which he lived.

When Mr BANKS had hardly reached the eighteenth year of his age, he had the misfortune to lose his father. But the early possession of an ample fortune did not interrupt his literary pursuits. He was fortunate still in being blessed with a mother of singular merit. Mrs BANKS, on the death of her husband, removed from Lincolnshire to Chelsea. There she resided for many years, in the vicinity of the garden which was bequeathed by the justly celebrated Sir HANS SLOANE to the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries of London. There she was daily employed in exercising all the benevolent virtues. And there her son had an opportunity of cultivating with every advantage his favourite studies. Not only the Chelsea Botanical Garden, but the gardens also of LEE and KENNEDY, and of others in that neighbourhood, afforded him abundant specimens of plants and flowers; while, in quest both of pleasure, of health, and of know-

ledge, he extended his researches to the hill, the dale and the forest.

Such was his singular zeal, that on one occasion when botanizing in a ditch, he was seized by police-officers, and carried before a Magistrate, as a suspicious person. But upon searching his pockets, in place of stolen watches, or other unlawful plunder, nothing was found but wild flowers. On his name, rank and pursuits, being ascertained, he was dismissed by the worthy Magistrate, not only with many apologies, but with testimonies of high approbation.

The vicinity of Mrs BANKS's habitation to the Thames, gave a beginning to her son's acquaintance and intimacy with the late Earl of SANDWICH, who, for several years, presided at the Board of Admiralty. In company with that nobleman, Mr BANKS frequently passed whole days, and sometimes whole nights, on the River Thames, while employed in their favourite amusements as botanists and fishers. For such was the eagerness of their pursuits, that the morning sun was often known to

dawn upon their unwearied exertions. To this intimacy with Lord SANDWICH, there cannot be a doubt, that science, particularly botanical science, has been much indebted for its advancement. For that nobleman patronized and supported Mr BANKS in his future meritorious pursuits, and enabled him to carry into execution those measures which have tended so much to the advancement of botanical knowledge, and to the glory, I may venture to say, of English Philosophers.

The first botanical expedition which Mr BANKS undertook, may seem somewhat singular. On leaving the University of Oxford, and before he had reached the twenty-first year of his age, he made a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, with the sole view of exploring the botanical treasures of Newfoundland and Labrador. The valuable collection of articles in natural history, which he thus acquired, served only to animate his genius, and to incite him to farther enterprize; and for this he soon found another opportunity. Both the French and English had, from repeated voyages, been led to believe, that much more was

to be discovered in the Southern than in the Northern Hemisphere of our globe. Mr BANKS, therefore, excited by ardour for science, and fired by the love of fame, projected a voyage of discovery to the South Seas. This, through the interest of his friend Lord SANDWICH, then at the Head of the Admiralty, he was enabled to carry into execution, in a ship provided by Government.

In the year 1768, Lieutenant COOK, afterwards the justly celebrated and much to be lamented Captain COOK, a bold and enterprizing navigator, was appointed to carry philosophers from Britain to the South Seas, on a voyage of discovery. At the head of these philosophers was Mr BANKS; and for him and his suite every proper accommodation was provided in his Majesty's ship the Endeavour. In this voyage, Mr BANKS was accompanied by a botanist of no mean note, Dr SOLANDER, of the British Museum, who had been a favourite pupil of the great LINNÆUS. He was accompanied also by some able astronomers, philosophers and draughtsmen.

They sailed from Plymouth Sound in the end of August. After various hazards, particularly on the coast of Terra del Fuego, where they lost three of their suite, in a snow-storm, which overtook them when engaged in botanical pursuits on the hills, and where Dr SOLANDER, as well as Mr BANKS himself, had nearly fallen victims to their love of science, they arrived on the 12th of April 1769, at the Island of Otaheite.

This may justly be considered as one of the most conspicuous eras in the annals of British discovery. At that island, for the space of four months, they were assiduously employed in astronomical, geographical and botanical pursuits. By words, it is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the value which ought to be put on the numerous specimens in every branch of natural history which Mr BANKS and his associates collected in the South Sea islands.

On the 15th of August 1769, they took their departure from the now much celebrated Island of Otaheite, and, on the 16th of October, they

descried the coast of New Zealand. In the near vicinity of New Zealand, New Holland next engaged their attention. And Botany Bay, the very name of which was derived from the treasures which its shores contain, afforded fresh subjects of inquiry, of speculation, and of wonder. At length, after escaping many dangers, they anchored safely in the Downs, on the 12th of June 1771, after an absence of nearly three years from Britain. Thus terminated a voyage of discovery, which, on the part of Mr BANKS, a man of an independent and ample fortune, solely actuated by the love of science, may perhaps be considered as the most meritorious of which the annals of the human race afford any record.

But neither the dangers which Mr BANKS had encountered, were able to intimidate his spirit; nor was the success which had attended his exertions sufficient to satisfy his avidity for discovery. For, after a short residence in Britain, he planned, in conjunction with his brother philosopher Dr SOLANDER, a voyage, for the express purpose of visiting Iceland;—a country at

that period but little known to the rest of Europe. This voyage was conducted solely at his own expence, and he not only obtained the company of his former fellow-labourer Dr SOLANDER, but he prevailed also on an amiable philosopher of the city of Edinburgh, the late Dr JAMES LIND, to be one of their party.

Dr LIND, after visiting Bengal, and other parts of Asia, in quality of surgeon to an East India ship, had taken the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the year 1768, and had published, on that occasion, an inaugural dissertation, *De Febre Remittente Paludum*, which did him great credit. Soon after his graduation, he settled as a physician in Edinburgh. He was admitted a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1770. The year following, I obtained the same honour, and became his immediate junior in the College. While he resided in Edinburgh, we lived on terms of the most intimate and cordial friendship. But, notwithstanding a fair prospect of success in this city, Dr LIND was induced by Mr BANKS to accompany him in a scientific voyage to Iceland.

Although Iceland was their ultimate object, they could not resist the temptation of surveying those numerous isles which are scattered along the west coast of Scotland. There they discovered the columnar stratifications of Staffa, which, till then, had been unobserved and unknown to naturalists. They detected also many other natural phenomena which had escaped the eyes of ordinary observers. But, having reached the chief object of their voyage, they found a most abundant store for satisfying their thirst after natural knowledge. Were I to detail all the interesting particulars which were communicated to me by my amiable friend Dr LIND, after his return, it would occupy much time and many pages. Suffice it, then, to say, that the arctic plants and animals; the wonderful volcanic mountain Hecla; and the still more astonishing boiling fountains or Geyzers, with their siliceous incrustations, afforded them a rich harvest of knowledge.

With this Iceland voyage, the philosophical travels of Mr BANKS may be considered as having terminated. On his return, he became a stationary inhabitant of Britain, residing chiefly

either at his country seat in Lincolnshire, or at his town house in Soho Square. There he cultivated, I may say, the friendship of the whole philosophical world : For philosophers of every nation were proud to be ranked among the number of his correspondents ; and, when they visited London, never failed to meet with a welcome reception at his house.

He was particularly a sedulous attendant on the meetings of the Royal Society of London ; and he communicated to them some valuable papers, which at once excited the curiosity and approbation of all who heard them. It is not, therefore, wonderful, that he soon obtained the highest honours which had ever been conferred on any British Philosopher. Our late most excellent and ever to be revered Sovereign George III. fully sensible of his singular and superior merit, created him a Knight of the Bath,—an honour which had not before been bestowed on any civilian : He was also enrolled a Member of the Privy Council. And, in the year 1777, he was elected, on the resignation of Sir JOHN PRINGLE, President of the Royal Society of London. Thus he be-

came the primate of philosophers in the British Empire; nay, I may venture to say in Europe.

At the head of the Royal Society of London, the conduct of Sir JOSEPH BANKS, during a period of more than thirty years, was highly meritorious. It met with the warm approbation of almost every wise and good man. Universal approbation, however, is not in this world to be expected, and perhaps is never to be desired: For opposition affords the best opportunity of refuting groundless calumnies. The opposition which at one period was made to Sir JOSEPH BANKS, in the Royal Society, by a set of disappointed and discontented mathematicians, headed by an arrogant ecclesiastic, served only to elevate his real worth. But to take any farther notice of the unmerited abuse, and groundless calumnies with which he has, on different occasions, been loaded, might be considered as some acknowledgment that they were not below contempt.

Although the natural bent of Sir JOSEPH'S genius led him to cultivate a different line of philosophy from the immortal NEWTON, his

most eminent predecessor in the chair of the Royal Society, yet his ample fortune, his hospitable disposition, and his friendship for learned men, rendered him, even in the chair of NEWTON, a President of the Royal Society of London, who has never, perhaps, been excelled in an institution where philosophy has long reigned, and where NEWTON once presided as her minister.

Of Sir JOSEPH'S successful efforts in improving every branch of philosophy, and inspiring a taste for useful knowledge, the regular weekly meetings at his house in Soho Square, for philosophical conversation, afforded incontestible evidence. There the most accurate knowledge of every important discovery in science was diffused in the most ready and most agreeable manner. An evidence of this I had personally an opportunity of witnessing not many years ago. When I happened to be accidentally in London in summer 1815, and when present at one of the Sunday evening meetings in Sir JOSEPH'S library, I heard an interesting discourse delivered by a Frenchman born deaf and dumb. This occurrence, which may seem almost incredible, will ap-

pear less wonderful, when I add, that the dumb lecturer was assisted by his preceptor **ABBE' SICARD** of Paris, a man whose name has long been favourably known over all Europe as a teacher of the dumb. And when I mention the name of **SICARD**, I need hardly add, that the information communicated by the dumb orator was truly surprising, and excited the admiration of an enlightened audience of philosophers.

Almost every learned society in Europe, from the French Institute at Paris, downwards, was proud to be permitted to enrol the name of **Sir JOSEPH BANKS** in the list of its honorary members. And there was hardly one of them, whose efforts he did not assist by valuable communications, or pecuniary aid. Of this assistance, his conduct to our Caledonian Horticultural Society, afforded, to me at least, a striking example. He was one of the very first who did honour to our institution, by cheerfully permitting his name to be enrolled in our honorary list; and one of the earliest numbers of our Memoirs was enriched by a valuable communication from his pen.

But to detail every particular instance of his patronage to science, would be an endless task. I shall, therefore, conclude with observing, that, after having long presided over philosophy in Europe,—after having collected one of the most valuable libraries of modern times,—after having aided almost every scheme for the advancement of useful arts, and the progress of our species,—and after arriving at the seventy-eighth year of his age, the common lot of mankind put an end to his life and his labours. He died on the 9th of May 1820, at his house in Soho Square. But, in the annals of philosophy, he will live for ever.

HARVEIAN HYMN.

*Written by A. BOSWELL, Esq. Poëta Laureatus
to the Harveian Society of Edinburgh, and
set to Music by J. TEMPLETON, Esq. their
Cantor Primarius.*

STRIKE, strike the Harp! strike loud and long!

Thine, God of Pindus, thine the theme;

So may thy warm life-giving beam,

Fire our rapt spirits, while we swell the song.

In classic lore, thy mystic powers

Rule light, and harmony, and healing skill;

And all thy three-fold influence be ours,

Streaming propitious from thy sacred hill.

For thrice we honour thee,

While bosoms glow

And goblets flow

In honour of thy votary.

Hail! to immortal HARVEY hail!

Thine inspiration breathed upon his soul,

And to his ken the hidden truth unfurled;

That, as the seasons change, the planets roll,

As from the eastern wave to western flood,
Thy course revolving animates the world,
So circling moves the current of the blood:

Hail ! to thy favoured Son ! let pæans ring.
Hail ! to his deathless name, whose fervid mind
Flashed light to teach, to lead, to bless mankind.
Hail ! to immortal HARVEY !

And, while our bosoms throb, our pulses beat ;
While the red current charged with vital heat,
Plays in meandering stream,
Still higher shall we raise the strain,
Till heaven's high vault returns again
The soul-expanding theme.

Hail ! to immortal HARVEY raise the song.
Hail ! to immortal HARVEY.

Hail !

DUNCAN'S GRAND PANACEA,

AN

INFALLIBLE CURE FOR ALL DISEASES,

*Translated into Pindaric Rhyme by Dr BARCLAY,
and Published at the Fortieth Anniversary of the
Edinburgh Harveian Festival, 14th April 1821.*

IF aught be found wrong in our frolics to-night,
A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE will set it all right :
'Tis folly to sacrifice comforts to fame ;
A hundred years hence it will be all the same.
And what tho' the cynic approves not our glee,
A hundred years hence he's not wiser than we.
Live long, or live short, let us live while we can,
As the hundred years hence will make it all one.
The present is ours, we know nought of to-morrow ;
A hundred years hence there's an end to all sorrow.
Dismissed by the doctor, or by the disease,
A hundred years hence we'll be all at our ease.

And spend we now freely, or hoard up our pence,
 We're not poorer nor richer—a hundred years hence.
 Come, then, fill a bumper, a bumper o'erflowing,
 For where is the heart not with gratitude glowing,
 To honour the man who, by deep meditation,
 Has published to mankind this grand consolation,
 This fact of all facts,—this astonishing truth,
 Which ought to be known from the north to the south,
 From the east to the west, especially whereas,
 Compar'd to the trash in our Pharmacopœias,
 'Tis diamond to dross: So let nations and tongues
 Proclaim it aloud, in the strength of their lungs,
 That a Cure is found out for the worst of all evils,
 For heart-aches, for sulks, and all kinds of blue-devils,
 Of course for all ailments, whate'er they may be ;
 And, wonder of wonders, nought's said of a Fee !
 For that, which in giving contentment and ease,
 'Midst the troubles of life and the plagues of disease,
 Exceeds every thought that man has been able
 To gather from facts, or to read of in fable.
 Let DUNCAN be honour'd, whose wonderful skill
 Cures every complaint without potion or pill.
With all kinds of drugs henceforward dispense,
*The cure of all cures is—*THE HUNDRED YEARS HENCE.

