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Admiral Ryder's Amended Proposal Respecting Prize Medals to Naval Officers and Others in Encouragement of Surveys, and Suggestion of an International Congress of Hydrographers

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**Position of the City of Mexico.**—The *Boletin* of the Geographical and Statistical Society of Mexico for last year contains an elaborate detailed statement of the observations made by the engineer Senhor Francisco Jimenez and Professor Leandro Fernandez, at the Observatory, to determine the true geographical position of the city of Mexico. The following is the result of these observations:—Latitude  $19^{\circ} 26' 1'' \cdot 3$  north, longitude 6 hours  $36' 26'' \cdot 67$  (or  $99^{\circ} 6' 39'' \cdot 15$ ) west of Greenwich. The height above sea-level was ascertained to be 2283 metres, or 7490 feet.

### **Admiral Ryder's amended Proposal respecting Prize Medals to Naval Officers and others in Encouragement of Surveys, and Suggestion of an International Congress of Hydrographers.**

In June last Admiral A. P. Ryder submitted to the Council the following modified proposal with regard to the institution of medals for the reward of naval officers and others who may make useful surveys:—

ADMIRALTY HOUSE, PORTSMOUTH, *May* 1880.

SIR,—I thank you for your communication (since printed with my letter in the Society's 'Proceedings' for April \*), in which you inform me that my offer of 100*l.* to found "Bird Allen" medals was declined. I have carefully considered the grounds of refusal. My proposal was to confine the medals to officers of the Royal Navy and Marines; and the Council, I can easily understand, thought, as they state in the concluding paragraph, that "the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, or some similar institution connected with the Admiralty, would be better able to carry out such a system of honorary rewards" to be bestowed on naval officers only. I concur in the views of the Council, and have therefore altered my proposal. I wish now to throw the reward open to nautical geographers generally. I am confident that the Council of the Royal Geographical Society will experience no difficulty in finding efficient judges of nautical surveys who, for the love of science, and in the cause of humanity, so much benefited by correct charts, will be willing once a year to award the prizes. I am certain also that the Hydrographer will, with the consent of the Lords of the Admiralty and their approval, be willing to give advice with regard to the details of my proposal, and that he will gladly aid this attempt to encourage those who may endeavour to further the interests of hydrography. I have long been of opinion that inability to make a nautical survey of a harbour, a shoal, or a coast-line, is a great drawback to a sailor's usefulness, whether he belong to the Royal Navy or the merchant service. I therefore have the honour to request that you will submit the following proposal to the consideration of the President and Council of the Royal Geographical Society. The proposal is that the Council of the Royal Geographical Society accept from me the cost of offering one gold, one silver, and one bronze medal every year to nautical geographers, including officers of the Royal Navy, of the Royal Marines, and of the mercantile marine, who shall have submitted to the Council the three † most deserving surveys made and

\* 'Proceedings,' vol. ii. p. 253.

† No one would be entitled to receive more than one medal of each description; but if the person who produces the best survey of the year is already a medallist he might receive from the Royal Geographical Society a certificate notifying the fact, and

projected by themselves, with the necessary sailing-directions, meridian distances, and meteorological observations, &c. There will be no possibility of this medal being mistaken for that highly honourable distinction the Royal Geographical Society's Gold Medal, although a few of the recipients of the former may hope some day to aspire to deserving the latter also. It will be distinctly understood that if the charts be engraved and published by the Royal Geographical Society, no responsibility whatever, as to the accuracy of the information, is taken by the Society, and that this be stated *distinctly* and *conspicuously on each chart*, which chart should be withdrawn from circulation immediately after the issue of an Admiralty survey. It may fairly be anticipated that the Royal Geographical Society, if it adopts this suggestion, will, by so doing, give a considerable impulse to the acquirement by nautical geographers (civilians and naval officers) of a knowledge of nautical surveying, and that after a little time the true geographic spirit will be much more widely awakened generally, and especially in the Royal Navy, than at present. The race of naval men who have done so much for geography, independently of their service in the Royal Navy—Clapperton and Tuckey, Lyon and Cameron, Cochrane and Smyth, Franklin and Parry, Julian Baker and Musters, and a host of others—will henceforth be more easily continued and replenished by volunteers. At the same time officers of the mercantile marine will more generally emulate the examples of Horsburgh, Allen Young, Toynbee, and other master mariners, who have combined surveying or scientific research with their regular work. Valuable surveys and re-surveys will reach England every year from all quarters of the world, executed by amateurs, but of course merely supplementary to the invaluable work of the regular marine surveyors. Those officers of the Royal Navy who are winners of the Greenwich prizes and Beaufort prizes, and those who obtain "First Classes" in navigation, will not be content unless they carry off also the "Bird Allen" gold medals for nautical surveys. With regard to expense, the intrinsic value of a gold medal, the size of a doubloon, is 3*l.* 15*s.*; of a silver medal, the size of a dollar, 4*s.*; of a bronze medal, the size of a dollar, 1*s.*; together, 4*l.* There would also be a small expense for engraving the name of the recipient on the rim of the medal. 100*l.* invested at 4 per cent. would meet the demand. Mr. Wyon showed me, some years since, the *die* of one of your medals, which he thought would be suitable. I shall be glad, if the Society should welcome my proposal, and adopt it (subject, of course, to such changes as to details as may be agreed on), to pay 100*l.* to the Society for the above purpose. The best *practical* marine surveyor I ever met in our service, and who instilled a love of the science into all of his young subordinate officers, was the late Commander Bird Allen, R.N., who was first lieutenant with Commander Richard Owen, in H.M.S. *Thunder*, in the West Indies, 1833-6, and died as commander of H.M.S. *Soudan*, in the Niger expedition, 1840. I should like the medals to be called the "Bird Allen Medals for Nautical Surveys." I have lately returned from being commander-in-chief in China and Japan for three years. Had a knowledge of practical marine surveying been as common as it was rare among the commanders, lieutenants, and sub-lieutenants, considerable additions might have been made to our geographical knowledge on that station, much of which requires re-surveying; much of which is unexplored, or as regards large extents of coast-line, is in that dangerous half-explored, non-surveyed state so fatal to numerous ships.

ALFRED PHILLIPPS RYDER, F.R.G.S., Admiral.

on the medal he has already received would be engraved the years in which he wins this extra distinction. The bronze medal would most frequently be won by the junior geographers.

The following letter on the subject of Hydrographical Surveys was sent at the same time as the above by Admiral Ryder.

ADMIRALTY HOUSE, PORTSMOUTH, May 1880.

I have visited nearly every portion of the globe, and have, by early and much prized association with the surveying service, been driven, by the fascination that surveying exerts over its votaries, to take a deep interest in the work. I have often asked myself these questions: (a) When will the surveys of marine dangers be completed, on such a scale and with such accuracy that nothing will be left to be desired on the part of navigators? (b) By what law is the rate of progression of this world-wide survey proceeding now? The result of my inquiries is that although various countries exchange their surveys, there is *no* concerted action between the Hydrographical Departments of the different countries interested in the matter, as to the *prompt distribution of the work remaining to be done*. To bring about this concerted action there should, in my opinion, be a Congress to sit in London, with access to its treasures of geography, and with, as its Presidents, the Hydrographer and the President of the Royal Geographical Society. I submit to the Council that this proposed course of action would well become the high position of the Royal Geographical Society in the scientific world, and that the result could not do otherwise than redound to its credit, and to the advantage of navigation. I do not venture to go into details, which could be best settled by a Special Committee appointed for the purpose.

ALFRED PHILLIPPS RYDER, F.R.G.S., Admiral.

The foregoing proposals having been referred to the Scientific Purposes Committee and duly considered by them, the Council, after the vacation, directed the following answer, founded on the Report of the Committee, to be sent to Admiral Ryder:—

1, SAVILE ROW, W., November 27th, 1880.

SIR,—I am directed by the Council to inform you, with regard to the renewed and amended proposal which you made to them in May last, of awarding medals to officers of the mercantile marine and the navy for nautical surveys, that, while recognising the importance of the object you desire to attain and the liberality of your offer, they have, after careful consideration, come to the conclusion, that the plan of granting medals to officers and seamen for independent nautical surveys is impracticable.—I am requested further to say, with respect to your other proposal of the same date, of a Conference having for its object the promotion of surveys by concerted action between Hydrographical Departments of different countries, that, in their opinion, the proposal hardly comes within the sphere of the Society's operations, and that they are unable therefore to take the action you desire in the matter.

H. W. BATES,  
*Assistant Secretary.*

## Obituary.

**Mr. J. T. Towson.**—We regret to have to record the death at Liverpool, on January 3rd, at the age of seventy-seven, of Mr. John Thomas Towson, who had been a Fellow of our Society since 1858. Our associate was born at Devonport, and first became known for the improvements he suggested in the art of photography. In 1846, however, he turned his attention to navigation, and especially to discovering the quickest routes to distant countries. His chief services were in con-