
Review: Life of Sir Joseph Banks

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'Handbook of Polar Discoveries.' By General A. W. Greely. (London: Fisher Unwin. 1910. Pp. 336. *Maps, Frontispiece, and Portrait.* 6s.) In preparing the fourth edition of this work it has been revised and enlarged. The revision, however, appears to have been made too early to allow of a proper appraisement of the recent north polar controversy.

GENERAL.

LIFE OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS.

'Sir Joseph Banks: the "Father of Australia."' By J. H. Maiden. Sydney: 1909. Pp. xxiv., 244. 2 *Maps.* 6s.

One of the most remarkable omissions from our library of national biography is a Life of Sir Joseph Banks. Sir J. D. Hooker has prefaced his edition of Banks' journal of the voyage of the *Endeavour* by an excellent memoir; but there is nothing adequate to Banks' great work and influence, attractive personality, and interesting career. Banks was one of the foremost men of science in the reign of George III.; he may claim to rank as the greatest of the early British scientific administrators, and his life was full of incident and interest. He made a journey of botanical exploration to Newfoundland in 1766; he was the colleague and companion of Cook during the epoch-making voyage of the *Endeavour* in 1768-71; he spent £5000 in preparations for accompanying Cook on his later voyage in the *Resolution*, and was only prevented going by the opposition of the Comptroller of the Navy, while Priestley, the great chemist, would have gone at Banks' expense but for the objection of the Board of Longitude to his religious principles. Subsequently Banks made one of the first important visits to Staffa, and spent a month in Iceland, in a vessel which, according to the account accepted by Mr. Maiden, was especially built for his expedition, and then made the first ascent of Mount Hekla.

The amount that Banks himself wrote and published is surprisingly small. His main influence was as a scientific organizer and generous patron of research. When he joined the *Endeavour*, he took with him a large staff of naturalists and artists, and subsequently he maintained much very important botanical research. The best-known botanists who worked at Banks' expense were Solander and Brown. His most distinguished field naturalist was Allan Cunningham, whose services alone should gain Banks the never-failing gratitude of Australia.

For forty-two years Banks was President of the Royal Society, and he was most indefatigable in support of many branches of scientific activity. Mr. Maiden (p. 168) repeats the oft-quoted statement that Banks, as a physiological experiment, once entered a chamber heated to the temperature of 260° Fahr., and was nearly exhausted by the exposure. This mistake was due to Weld,* who attributed to Banks an experiment by Sir Charles Blagden. Banks took part in some of the earlier experiments, but apparently the highest temperature to which he subjected himself was 211°, and there is nothing in the original record to show that he felt exhausted, or that he suffered any inconvenience beyond perspiration.

Banks' influence was remarkably useful; it was supreme with the Government on all scientific questions, and it had ultimately great political effects. The first colonization of Australia was mainly due to him, and he was the founder (according to Weld), or one of the most important early promoters, of the African Association—the predecessor of the Royal Geographical Society. His personal character is attractive in its generosity, nobility, and essential modesty. At a time

* C. R. Weld, 'History of the Royal Society,' vol. 2, p. 114. London: 1848.

when national prejudices were powerful and bitter, Banks repeatedly secured and sent back unopened to Paris collections made by various French naturalists that had been captured by British cruisers. Labillardière's collection from Tasmania he returned untouched to de Jussieu, with the statement "that he would not steal a single botanic idea from those who had gone in peril of their lives to get them" (p. 222).

Mr. Maiden's volume is not a finished memoir of Banks, but a most valuable collection of materials. The chief facts available about Banks are concisely stated. It contains abundant extracts from the correspondence and previous publications relating to Banks, and a most interesting series of illustrations. There is also a most useful two-sheet chart of the eastern coast of Australia, on which Cook's chart and that of 1890 are placed side by side. Successive parts of the volume record Banks' life as a traveller, a botanist, and President of the Royal Society; one part is devoted to the artists, botanists, and collectors who worked as his assistants; it concludes with a bibliography and a list of various localities and species named after Banks. The Botanical Department of the British Museum at South Kensington is Banks' greatest memorial, though his library, apparently in spite of his own testament, has been separated from the plants, and is retained at the British Museum at Bloomsbury. Mr. J. H. Maiden is especially qualified as a leading Australian botanist to appreciate Banks' work, and he writes with local expert knowledge of the researches which Banks directed and inspired. He complains that much material concerning Banks is still left in this country in manuscript. Banks' journal of the *Endeavour* has only been published in abridged form, and though the parts omitted and the unpublished Banks' manuscripts may appear to British editors of no special value, the doubts introduced by abridgment are often exasperating to an Australian worker. There is still no altogether satisfactory explanation why Banks' work on the botany of the *Endeavour* remained so long unpublished. Seven hundred folio plates were drawn and the descriptions prepared, but they were not published for 120 years. Mr. Maiden quotes several statements regarding the delay, but none of them gives any adequate explanation. One of Mr. Maiden's objects in compiling this volume is to help the movement in favour of a Banks Memorial, and we hope it will not only succeed in that purpose, but will lead the way to a fuller biography, worthy of the man who has been so justly called "the Father of Australia."

J. W. G.

BRITISH EMPIRE.

'The Growth of the Empire.' By A. W. Jose. London: Murray. 1909. 4s. 6d.

This volume is devoted to the development of the Empire, and affords a useful summary of the main historical points. The maps are especially clear and full, and their study will enable a student to follow the growth of each part of the empire in detail. Australia, for example, is shown on maps representing the conditions of land settlement and exploration in 1826, 1842, and 1863; Africa has maps of the years 1843, 1879, and 1909. Other maps of interest are: The Boundary Questions in Maine and Oregon; the Near and Middle East, showing spheres of influence and railways in South-West Asia, and the Grand Trunk Road of Northern India.

Though this second edition is published in 1909, some of the facts are not quite up to date; for instance, the northern boundary of Uganda and British East Africa needs correction. To geographers the book may prove somewhat disappointing. Only two physical maps are given, in which the configuration of Australasia and Africa are represented; but little or no explanation is given of the features shown, and geographical conditions are briefly dismissed in the text. This is unfortunate,