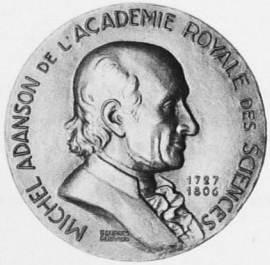
ADANSON

The Bicentennial of Michel Adanson's «Familles des plantes»

Part Two



The Hunt Botanical Library

Carnegie Institute of Technology Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

1964

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The Adanson Medal

The Foreword to Part II of this *Adanson* volume records the details of the Adanson Medal and the addresses and responses given at the celebration's closing evening of festivities (see pp. *x* and *xi*). The response of Professor Seitz, President of the National Academy of Sciences, the presentation address of Mr. Blenko, in behalf of the Trustees of Carnegie Institute of Technology, and the eloquent tribute rendered by Professor Heim, Président of the Académie des Sciences de France, are published here that the record of the occasion may be the more complete. The address of the evening, by Dr. Roger de Vilmorin, concluded the celebration.

Acceptance of Medal

Frederick Seitz

Professor Heim, Chairman Bintzer, Dr. Lawrence, and Mayor Barr—

It is a very rare privilege for me to accept this medal in behalf of the National Academy of Sciences from the Académie de Science—a medal honoring one of the gigantic figures of biological science. I might say that it is an equal pleasure to attend this meeting at an institution for which I feel a very deep kinship, and to participate in this magnificent new library which is a symbol of the growing sophistication of American science and education. This year, the bicentennial year of the publication of Adanson's volume, happens also to be the centennial year of the National Academy of Sciences; so the occasion is doubly significant not only to me but to American science. In 1763, two hundred years ago, in the days of Adanson, French science was already mature. It had nearly three hundred years of creative history behind it. Our land then was still an area of colonies. Those colonies were not quite so grim as the colonies in Guiana which we heard described this afternoon, but nonetheless we had our problems. We had only a few individuals in 1763 who could even remotely be called scientists. Fortunately one of them, Benjamin Frank-

lin, was a man of the first order. We share his memory with the people of France, for as you all know he served as Ambassador of the new nation on this side of the Atlantic in Paris during the critical days of our revolution. Even a century later in 1863 when our National Academy was born in the midst of the great Civil War, with all of the turmoil and the stimulation which that Civil War brought, we had only a few scientists and only a little scientific history. The factors which have made it possible for United States to come in one century into a measure of being a great scientific nation are quite complex. I will not attempt to describe them here, but no small factor has been the contribution of knowledge and men we have received over the century from Europe. I am happy to say that the contribution from France has been by no means the least of these. We will be eternally grateful to France for what it has done for us and science. My own close association with French science began on this campus just twenty years ago when I was here on the faculty in the Physics Department. The French Government had sent a group of young scientists and engineers associated with the French Navy to study here. These men were officers who were being prepared for the mission which lay ahead of them. Some of the scientists are now very distinguished in your country. I might mention for example, Professor Pierre Aigrain, who is now a Professor at the École Normale and is one of the most valued scientific advisors to your country. I have had many opportunities in the intervening twenty years to visit France, and to attend meetings there. In fact, I had the privilege to reside in Paris for a year and a half. It's been a very deep pleasure to see the way in which the science in your country has weathered the storms of recent decades and is emerging again to a position among leaders in the world. This is good for France, it is true, but it is even better for the world since science is one of the main supports of society at present. I would like to take this opportunity if I may to reach for my glass and propose a toast, *Vive la France, Vive l'America, Vive la Science!*

Presentation of Plaque

Walter J. Blenko

Professor Heim, the distinguished Académie des Sciences and the famous Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, which you and your colleagues here represent, have added a unique and happy note to this Symposium by striking off the commemorative medal which you have just presented. Those present who have not yet had the opportunity to see it will find it depicted, obverse and reverse, in actual size, on the front and back of this evening's program.

We, in turn, want to express in some tangible way our appreciation of the marvelous spirit of cooperation which the Académie and the Museum have shown and which has contributed so much to the success of this Symposium.

Professor Seitz has told us that we celebrate two centennials this year—the bicentennial of Adanson's work and the first centennial of our own National Academy of Sciences. Professor Seitz has understated the case because there are in fact three. And, most remarkably, Professor Heim, the third is the centennial of a world-famous botanical work in your own special field—fungi. It was to this work that we turned for guidance. Its author was an English mathematician whose *nom-de-plume* was Lewis Carroll. I call it a botanical work because its protagonist was a little girl named Alice who (you will recall) fell down a rabbit hole and there found a rare species of mushroom—if she nibbled on one side, she grew smaller, and if on the other, she grew larger. The plaque which I now present you is the self-same medal which you presented to us but, by the alchemy of the book I have mentioned, it has grown considerably larger.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Carnegie Institute of Technology, it is my privilege and pleasure to present this plaque, to be placed in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle as an enduring memorial of our esteem and gratitude. We hope that it will serve—like Alice's mushroom—to make the memory of this occasion grow ever larger in the hearts of you and your esteemed colleagues, as it ever will be ours.

Greetings and Salutations

Roger Heim

Emotion may hinder the complete expression of my feelings, nevertheless I will try very simply to express thanks on behalf of the Museum of Paris, on my own behalf of course, and also on behalf of my country. Time has come for us to separate, and I believe Ladies and Gentlemen that I have never been sadder than after this occasion of such kind, such generous, and such friendly hospitality.

This symposium was useful in resurrecting the memory of a great man, a great man who belonged not to France only but to the culture and genius of the whole Western World and to a civilization which we must preserve and perhaps better defend than we do.

Three countries stand here closely associated, the United States, the British Kingdom, and France, and for our share I can assure you that I can vouch for those who are present and for those who are overseas that they will pursue the common effort in a spirit of confident friendship.

Following this successful symposium someone else would perhaps have still more reasons to thank you. I see a closed door over there; why not open it for the man behind who wishes to join us? Who is he? The one who awaited this moment since hundred and fifty seven years. Let your imagination open the door and we will invite Michel Adanson to sit amongst us, and he will say: "At last comes the time when, thanks to this Institution, is recognized the genius which was mine (and he will speak with the charming simplicity recalled during those two days)—at last here comes the decisive proof that I, Adanson, was not in the wrong; I knew I would go far, I was convinced my ideas would burgeon and would finally be accepted. In bygone times what I wrote on the Book of Knowledge was not accepted; a century and a half later, thanks to this great Institution, thanks to you, American friends, the hopes of past years become justified at last."

Let us imagine the happiness which would befall Michel Adanson this evening after so many hardships and desperate disputes when would be acknowledged his great talent, his so original fountain of ideas which you and our British friends have celebrated in a community of thoughts which is truly yours. And perhaps Michel Adanson would add: "Do not forget that even before Abbé Grégoire I was of the first who claimed the Abolition of Slavery, this slavery which has not disappeared, or almost

so, and is followed in Africa by Independence." Let us not forget that Adanson belonged to the Académie des Sciences, was a Fellow of the Royal Society and also a friend of that same B. Franklin of whom, Mister President, you talked of a short time ago. So that I am sure that if he came back amongst us he would instantly be able to associate in both past remembrances and future hopes the three countries which have today successfully contributed to a magnificent celebration and lasting organization.

I perceive on the tables, here and there, small baobab trees which our friend Théodore Monod had the brilliant and promising idea of bringing here after germination of the seeds. It is customary to plant a tree at the dedication of a ceremony; I do not believe that here in Pittsburgh these baobabs will attain the 30 to 60 feet which would be their lot in Senegal; but notwithstanding, they stand for us as a symbol: these baobabs live and grow, they will continue after this meeting which is no gravestone but the resurrection of a memory over which shines a light in the future.

But I have been talking for too long; before leaving this privileged stand, I wish to express to you, Mister President and to you all, the gratefulness of those who, coming from other countries, were connected with this symposium. My British colleagues will allow me to speak in their behalf, joining their French friends to assure you, Professor Lawrence, and you also Mister Hunt, of the deep feelings given by your reception, and of how much at home we felt in your home, and of how much we hope this new motive of intimate collaboration will carry us along a sunny road.

Long live the United States, long live France, long live Great Britain sharing our work; long live also this great house with its exceptional treasure of history, the seat of the complete success so well prepared, in an atmosphere of perfect hospitality, and the perpetual source of our common efforts now and in the future.