

# Translation to English of Speeches Given in French to Honour William Macleay at a Picnic of the Linnean Society, 1st May 1875

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A translation of the French speeches given at the Linnean Society's picnic to congratulate William Macleay on his upcoming expedition to New Guinea, in 1875, is presented. The speeches, in French, were made by Professor Badham, the French Consul, Mr. Simon and Lieutenant Villemot. The speeches show the cordial nature present between a young Australia and France at the time.

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## INTRODUCTION

On May 18, 1875, William (later Sir William) Macleay departed Sydney on board the *Chevert* bound for New Guinea. He headed and fully funded a team of biologists and explorers on the first expedition to leave Australia for foreign shores (Fulton 2012). The expedition was enormously successful adding approximately 1,000 birds, 800 fish, and many reptiles, mammals, insects, spiders, marine molluscs and ethnographic objects to Macleay Museum's collections (Macleay 1875; Fletcher 1893; Fulton 2012).

On the lead up to this historic event a picnic was held (on the first of May, 1875) by the fledgling Linnean Society of New South Wales to complement William Macleay on his fast approaching expedition (Anonymous 1875). The picnic was attended by a litany of senior dignitaries and luminaries from politics and the academia of Sydney including: the Premier, Hon. Mr. John Robertson; the Attorney General, Hon. William Dalley; Professor, Charles Badham of The University of Sydney "and other Gentlemen" (Anonymous 1875). Also in attendance were the Consul of France, Mons. Eugène Simon and Lieutenant Henri Villemot, Commandant of the *Cher*

(Anonymous 1875). A toast with speech was given by the Premier and responded to by William Macleay. These were reported verbatim in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. The only other speeches were by Professor Badham who welcomed the French guests in French and subsequently the guests (Mons. Simon and Henri Villemot) responded in their native tongue (Anonymous 1875; Fletcher 1929). These speeches were published, verbatim, in French, in the same newspaper article. To the best of my knowledge they have never been translated into English—until now.

The translation was fraught with difficulty: initially because the surviving scanned, newspaper-article was difficult to read with some words heavily smudged or otherwise distorted; then subsequently, because the French language used by the speakers was rich with metaphors that are not straightforwardly translated across languages. Not all words or phrases are directly translatable across time, cultures and languages: "translating from one language into another is like viewing Flemish tapestries from the wrong side, when, although one can make out the figures, they are covered by threads that obscure them, and one cannot appreciate the smooth finish of the right side" (Cervantes 1615). All speeches at the Linnean picnic were presented in the argots associated with

their time, place and culture. We have tried to retain in our translation the meanings and emotions rather than present it mechanically, in the belief that readers will gain deeper insights if the sense/feelings of the times, as well as the facts, are retained. All diacritical marks are retained where appropriate to facilitate correct pronunciation and meaning (following Fulton 2011). Spelling and grammatical mistakes present in the original newspaper article have been retained to avoid any distortion of what was given to the readers of the day.

#### NEWSPAPER ARTICLE IN FRENCH

Loud calls were made for Dr. Badham, who proposed in French the following toast:—

Dr. BADHAM said: Monsieur le Ministre, — Vous voyez mon hésitation et sans doute vous en devinez la cause, si j'avais seulement voulu donner libre cours à ces sentiments d'amitié personnelle qui me sont communs avec toute la compagnie qui nous entoure, j'aurais fait ce que la discrétion et la modestie exigeaient; je me serais servi de ma langue maternelle pour remplir le devoir qui m'est imposé. Mais la présence de ces deux Messieurs qui ont bien voulu assister à cette fête, et qui portent le plus vif intérêt au grand projet de notre cher Président me force d'entreprendre une tâche bien autrement difficile. Je ne prétends pas représenter la nation Française; mais, si M. le Consul de France et M. le Capitaine du Cher me le permettent, j'oserai devant eux et en parlant leur langue, vous rappeler un fait incontestable: c'est que dans tous nos projets, qui ont été dictés par le sentiment de l'humanité, dans tous ces travaux, dont le but a été la civilisation des peuples, l'Angleterre a toujours pu compter sur la sympathie de la France. Je propose donc que, le verre en main, nous témoignions à nos convives, combien nous apprécions l'honneur qu'ils nous ont fait, en partageant les vœux que nous exprimons aujourd'hui pour la prospérité de notre excellent ami, et pour le triomphe de ses nobles aspirations. Et comment me puis-je armer de ce symbole de la cordialité sans réfléchir que c'est à la France que nous devons cette âme enchantée de nos festins, ce fidèle interprète de nos cœurs, cette fée pétillante qui offre même au plus faible orateur et les trésors de la pensée et le riche vestiaire de la parole. Je porte un toast à l'honneur de tous les français vivants, morts et à venir, en y joignant le nom d'un homme qui a parfaitement compris la mission de son pays, et l'a rendue la sienne. A la santé de M. Eugène Simon, Consul de France!

Mons. Simon, who was much applauded, responded to this toast: Messieurs, —du moment où Mr. le Dr. Badham s'est levé, je venais de lui dire combien je regrettais de ne pas posséder la langue Anglaise comme on voudrait la posséder quand il s'agit de parler devant une compagnie aussi nombreuse et aussi choisie. Je regrettais de ne pouvoir vous exprimer les sentiments que me suggèrent l'entreprise de Mr. Macleay, lorsque le Dr. Badham, se fit en excellent Français, l'interprète de ma pensée; et il l'a si fidèlement traduite que je ne trouve rien à ajouter à ce qui vient de dire. Je profiterai toutefois l'autorisation qu'il m'a donnée, si délicatement donnée de votre part pour vous dire encore à quel point je trouve remarquable ce voyage qui se prépare. Et en vérité je ne saurais trop le répéter: jamais efforts plus grands n'ont été faits pour le progrès et pour le bien de l'humanité que ceux qui ont été faits par la nation Anglaise, jamais plus grands résultats n'ont été atteints. Et non contente d'agir elle-même, voilà qu'elle agit par ces enfants et que son dernier né se montre déjà jaloux de continuer sa mission. Voilà que, du sein de sa plus récente colonie, du sein d'un pays parfaitement inconnu il y a cent ans, se dispose à partir une expédition qui, s'élevant au-dessus des intérêts matériels immédiats, se propose le but le plus noble et le plus désintéressé: la science et les découvertes scientifiques. Ce n'était, jusqu'né du moins, ce n'était ordinairement qu'une époque aliez avancie de leur existence que les nations pensaient à agrandir le domaine abstrait des connaissances scientifiques. Les Argonautes, en Colchide, ne pensaient qu'à la Toison d'Or; l'Espagne en Amérique ne voulait qu'étendre sa domination sur un monde nouveau et sur les richesses qu'il pouvait renfermer; ce n'est qu'incidemment et comme par surcroit que l'Angleterre elle-même a ajouté à ces plus belles conquêtes territoriales les plus conquêtes intellectuelles. Vous, Monsieur, en consacrant votre fortune et vos loisirs aux recherches et aux explorations que vous méditez, vous avez élevé votre pays au niveau des pays les plus anciens et les plus distingués. Ceux de ses représentants officiels qui vous entourent en ce moment, l'honorent eux-mêmes en montrant la haute importance qu'ils attachent à votre voyage. Vous ajoutez un titre puissant à l'intérêt que l'Australie, et la Nouvelle Galles du Sud en particulier, avaient déjà su s'attirer de la part des autres parties du monde un titre que les amis de la science n'oublieront pas. Je suis heureux, Monsieur, à me trouver associé à la manifestation dont vous êtes l'objet et je vous prie de me permettre d'ajouter mes souhaits et mes félicitations à ceux qui viennent de vous être offerts.

Captain Villemot, Le Lieutenant de Vaisseau, Commandant le *Cher*, who was much cheered, said:—Messieurs, permettez-moi d'ajouter quelques mots, pour la Marine Française, aux sentiments si bien exprimés par le Consul de France. Je regrette bien vivement, messieurs, que mon peu de connaissance de l'Anglais, m'empêche de vous remercier, dans votre langue, de votre cordial accueil, ainsi que du gracieux toast que vient de nous porter le savant et aimable Docteur Badham; mais je me console, en pensant que, lorsqu'on parle avec le cœur, on est toujours compris. Je suis sûr que la France, et la Marine Française en particulier, applaudiront à la nouvelle de l'expédition scientifique que va entreprendre en Nouvelle-Guinée, la brave nation Anglaise, représentée par Monsieur Macleay et ses compagnons. Je suis moi-même, vraiment charmé qu'un heureux hasard fasse que ce soit un ancien bâtiment de guerre de notre marine qui ait l'honneur de porter la commission dans ces parages encore peu connus; j'ai fait, comme officier, sur ce navire, un voyage de quarante jours (de Tahiti à San Francisco), et je puis vous assurer, Messieurs, que le Chevert, remplit toutes les conditions désirables, pour mener à bonne fin l'expédition, et ramener au milieu de vous, sains et saufs, ces nouveaux et hardis pionniers de la science. Je ne puis m'empêcher, en terminant, Messieurs, d'exprimer le regret de ne pouvoir m'associer à vos savants compatriotes, moi qui ai eu le bonheur de combattre plusieurs fois à côté de vos braves marins et soldats.

#### FRENCH TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Dr BADHAM said: Sir Minister — You see my hesitation and with no doubt you may guess the cause, if I only wanted to give vent to the feelings of personal friendship, that are commonly shared with the whole company, I would have done what discretion and modesty require; I would have used my mother tongue to fulfil my duty. But the presence of these two Gentlemen who have agreed to attend this party, and who share the greatest interest to the great project of our dear President, obliged me to undertake a much more difficult task. I do not claim to represent the French nation; but if, Mr The Consul of France and Mr The Commandant of the *Cher* allow me, I would venture before them and speaking their tongue, remind you of an indisputable fact: It is that in all our projects, which were driven by the sense of humanity, in all of these works whose goal was the civilisation of nations, England could always rely on the sympathy of France. I offer therefore, that glasses in hands, we reflect to our guests, how

much we appreciate the honour done, by sharing our wishes that we express today for the prosperity of our excellent friend, and for the triumph of his noble aspirations. And how can I arm myself of this symbol of warmth without thinking that it is due to France that we have this enchanting soul at our feast, this faithful interpreter of our heart, this sparkling fairy offering even the weakest orator the riches of our language. I propose a toast to the honour of all French, living, dead and to come, inviting the name of a man who perfectly understood the mission of his country, and made it his own. To the health of M. Eugène Simon, Consul of France!

Mons. Simon, who was much applauded, responded to this toast: Gentlemen, from the moment when the Dr Badham stood up, I was just telling him how sorry I felt not to have the knowledge of the English language as we would like too, when we have to speak in front of such a numerous and chosen group. I regret not to be able to express my feelings of the enterprise led by Mr. Macleay, when Dr. Badham made himself such an excellent Frenchman, such a good interpreter of my thoughts. And he has been so faithful to my thoughts that I do not find anything to add to what he has just said. I will however take advantage of the authorization he gave me so gently, to tell you how remarkable I find this journey that prepares. And in truth, I cannot repeat too often: never, such efforts have been put into progress and in the interest of humanity, than such made by the English nation, and never such great results achieved. And as if it was not enough, she is acting through her children and the latest, is already eager to carrying on his mission. And now, coming from the heart of its most recent colony, from a country completely unknown hundred years ago, an expedition is getting ready, which considering its immediate material interests, proposes the most noble and selfless purpose: science and scientific discoveries There wasn't a time, in history, when progress wasn't typically allied with advancing the existence of a nation's thought by enlarging the domain of abstract scientific knowledge. The Argonauts, in Colchis were only thinking of the Golden Fleece; Spain in the Americas only wanted to expand their domination on the new world and its treasures: and incidentally, it is only England itself that has added intellectual conquests to its beautiful territorial conquests. You, Sir, by devoting your fortune and your hobbies, to the research and explorations that you meditate, you raise your country to the level of the most ancient and distinguished countries. The official representatives that are around you at this moment, honour it themselves by showing you the high importance that they attach to your

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voyage. You add a powerful significance to the title of Australia, and to New South Wales in particular, whose title had already noticed by other parts of the world, as the friends of science will not forget. I am delighted, Sir, to be associated to this event, which honour you, and if I may, I would add my best wishes and congratulations to the others made to you today.

Captain Villemot, Navy Lieutenant Commander *le Cher*, who was much cheered, said:— Gentlemen, if I may, I would add a couple of words, in the name of the French Navy, to the feelings here so well expressed by the Consul of France. Gentlemen, I deeply regret that my little knowledge of English prevents me from thanking you, in your language, for your cordial welcome and the gracious toast just cheered by the savant and amiable Doctor Badham; but I console myself, thinking that when speaking from the heart we will always be understood. I am sure that France and the French Navy, in particular, will applaud the news of the scientific expedition that the brave English nation, here, represented by Mr. Macleay and his companions, will be undertaking to New Guinea. I am myself, really charmed that serendipity has given this veteran warship of our Navy the honour of taking this commission into these parts still unknown; I did, as an officer of this vessel, a forty day trip (from Tahiti to San Francisco), and I can assure you, gentlemen, that the *Chevert*, fulfils all the desirable conditions, to carry out a successful expedition, and bring back, safe and sound, these new and bold pioneers of science. In conclusion, gentlemen, I cannot help but to express my regret at not being able to join your learned compatriots, I who have had the pleasure to fight several times alongside your brave sailors and soldiers.

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