

GIFT FROM THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The President has suggested that the Fellows will be interested to read the correspondence that passed between the American Philosophical Society and the Royal Society concerning the recent gift to the Society of the sum of \$10,000.

The American Philosophical Society has set aside from its annual budget the sum of \$10,000 to be made available for the aid of science and learning in Britain.

The President of the Society consulted the office of the British Consulate General in Philadelphia and has just received a letter from the Acting Consul-General, a copy of which is enclosed herewith. This indicates that the Royal Society under its Charter would use this gift for the promotion of natural knowledge. Inasmuch as it was the desire of the American Philosophical Society not only to aid the Royal Society but also to have it distribute part of this sum to those institutions and agencies where it would be most needed, a question has arisen whether the Royal Society would undertake this service. In the hope that you may be willing to do this, we are this day cabling to the Royal Society a credit for \$10,000, and we request you to distribute this money where it may be of greatest service to science and learning in Britain.

We make this gift in filial regard for the Royal Society which was the model upon which Benjamin Franklin in 1743 founded 'The American Philosophical Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge in the British Plantations in America' and as evidence of the spirit of friendship and common purpose among men of science in both countries.

With assurances of high esteem we are with great respect,

(signed) EDWIN G. CONKLIN,

21 March 1941.

Executive Vice-President.

The desire of the American Philosophical Society, to help the men of science in this country through the Royal Society, has been so urgent in its friendliness, that our correspondence concerning it has hitherto been conducted entirely by cable. You will already have learned that the cheque for the sum of £2,475 was duly received by the Royal Society on 26 March, only a fortnight after we first learned, through the Foreign Office, of your Society's most generous intention.

In accordance with your cable indication that the news of this fraternal gift would be made public in America on Sunday 30 March, I sent a statement in the form of a letter to *The Times* newspaper, with a request for its publication on Monday 31 March. A copy has also been supplied as a basis for wider publication through official channels.

In my letter to *The Times* I have mentioned the circumstances under which the offer was made and accepted, and have given for the information of the readers a

brief, but I hope not inaccurate account of the origin of the American Philosophical Society, with special mention of the fact that its founder, Benjamin Franklin, early created for it a close association with the Royal Society, through his election to our Fellowship. I have further made what acknowledgment the space permitted of the peculiarly gracious character of your Society's action. You may be sure that it will be warmly welcomed by all men of science in Britain, and that they will gladly recognize the fine spirit of comradeship which inspired it.

There has yet been no opportunity for a formal report of the matter to the Council of the Royal Society, but I am confident that your Members may be assured in advance, that there will be no difficulty in finding use for their gift, in the promotion of such scientific activity in Britain as they had in mind. At the present time the scientific and technical activities of our country are, of necessity, predominantly employed in connexion with the nation's needs for the conduct of the war; and it is heartening beyond measure to know that those of the United States of America will now be likewise engaged on behalf of the same cause. We do not lose sight of the fact, however, that victory will be barren unless it preserves for the world, restoring to the countries which have been brutally robbed of it, the freedom of thought and of action required for the unhampered pursuit of knowledge by research, for the benefit of all mankind. This is, in effect, the purpose proudly declared by both our Societies. We are aware that one of the cares of the Royal Society should be to keep alive, even under the stress of our nation's tremendous need and responsibility, a sufficient measure of these normal and beneficent activities, to prepare for their full and rapid resumption when peace returns. Your Society's generosity will therefore be welcomed by Britain's men of science, not only for the direct and intrinsic value of the gift, but also, and even more, for the evidence which it brings of the desire of their American friends to help and to encourage them, even amid the proper and insistent claims of a nation at war, to preserve the spirit and the aim of all true science. It cannot, I think, be doubted that this friendly and gracious action will stimulate, in the men of science in both our countries, that spirit of co-operation in the furtherance of common ideals, which means now so much for the future of the world.

I beg that you will kindly transmit to the members of the American Philosophical Society my heartfelt acknowledgment on behalf of the Royal Society.

(signed) H. H. DALE,

President R.S.

31 March 1941.

This generous gift was also the subject of a speech delivered by Dr Frank Aydelotte, Rector of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, on the occasion of the Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Society on 26 April 1941. (See p. 107).