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138. TO ALEXANDER DALLAS BACHE

Washington April 4th
1862

My Dear B.

I am glad to learn by your note of the 2nd inst¹ just received that Fraser² is in favour of the Steven's Battery and I send you for him a copy of my last statement in regard to the Report of the commission. The remarks in the senate did not amount to much and as far as I was concerned was answered by my friend McDougal.³

I have received a letter⁴ from Dr. Woolsey saying that he will accept the appointment.

Barnard has favoured me with a letter⁵ of which I send you a copy. I have not yet given him an answer because I have not fully made up my mind as to what is prudent and just in the case: on the one hand I do not wish to withhold any facts I have on record and shall not do so with reference to th[e]^A Regents; yet I am not clear that I should give him in advance all the records relative to the matter to be used by him in devising an ingenious hypothesis to put me in the wrong and himself in the right. I would prefer that he make a statement of the case to the Regents, to yourself, or Dr Woolsey and I will do the same.

I will send you a copy of what I write to him.⁶ I have no desire to injure^B his character and would be glad if ↑he↓ would prepare the first part of his Report and by its publication relieve me and himself from the difficulty which now exists. If his character has suffered by his nomination, as a Regent of the Institution, the blame must rest with his friends and his own conduct.

A meeting of the Light House Board is called for Monday⁷ at two o'clock.

I think Commodore S.⁸ was some what annoyed by the neglect of Mr. Fessenden⁹ to mention his name among the list of members of the Light-House Board.¹⁰ This was probably a mere slip of memory.

The lecture association have closed their course.¹¹ One of the most rabid of the committee, a fellow by the name of Herbert, who has no office under government as far as I can learn, but who is frequently seen in ↑the↓ Lobby of the House of Repre^s proposed to invite Fred. Douglas¹² as the finishing lecturer of the course, and gave as his reason for the proposition that Mr Sumner was in favour of the invitation. I called on Sumner who said that he never had expressed such a wish although he thought that Douglas ought to be allowed to lecture in every city of the

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Union. I informed him and some of the members of the committee that although I had endeavoured to keep out of a quarrel with them I would not permit the lecture of the coloured man to be given^c in the room of the Institution. I have learned that they have given up the intention. With kind regards to Mrs. B. Mrs. Rogers & the Professor¹³ I remain very truly yours

Jos. Henry

RH 1513, Rhees Collection, Huntington Library.

1. Not found.

2. J. F. Frazer.

3. On March 27 and 28, 1862, there was a fierce debate on the Senate floor over an amendment to the naval appropriations bill to provide \$783,294 to complete construction of the Stevens Battery. During the course of the debate, which resulted in the passage of the amendment with modifications, Henry's expertise for evaluating the ship was questioned. Senator James W. Grimes of Iowa, an opponent of the appropriation, contrasted the opinion of Henry, who belonged in the ranks of "scientific chemists," with "men who have spent their lives upon the sea, and know something of the power and danger of the elements when they are excited." *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2d Session, March 27, 1862, p. 1397.

Senator James Alexander McDougall of California, who identified himself as one of Henry's former students, defended Henry's place on the board evaluating the Stevens Battery. Henry was, according to McDougall, an expert on "the laws of resistance and force," which were the very issues the board had to consider. He was a man who "has pursued that department of science all his life," and had considerably more knowledge of those laws than the typical naval officer. McDougall concluded by praising Henry as "a man who has reflected great honor on our country, more than has been reflected by men holding and occupying and maintaining the most dignified positions even upon this floor." *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2d Session, March 28, 1862, p. 1423.

McDougall (1817-1867) attended the Albany Academy between June 1831 and June 1833 and was apparently Henry's student during the 1831-1832 school year before Henry left for Princeton. Henry Hun, "A Survey of the Activity of the Albany Academy" (unpublished manuscript, 1922-1935), Manuscript Division, New York State Library, vol. 1, p. 39.

4. Not found.

5. Henry Barnard wrote, "I was astonished to learn that you had represented to individual

Regents and to others, that this unfinished business, which I have twice expressed my willingness to submit to the decision of a mutual friend, Prof. Bache—after a mutual explanation as to the matter, form and time of my report, was a sufficient objection to my appointment as a Regent." He asked that Henry send him all the pertinent documentation regarding the agreement of the Smithsonian to provide financial support for his history of education in the United States, so that he could present the documentation and his defense to "some mutual friend" for judgment. Copy, March 31, 1862, RH 2693, Rhees Collection, Huntington Library.

6. Letter not found.

7. April 7.

8. William B. Shubrick, chairman of the Light-House Board.

9. William Pitt Fessenden (1806-1869), a senator from Maine. *BDAC*.

10. During a Senate debate over revising the process of naming lighthouse inspectors, Fessenden defended the process already in place and the members of the board. He mentioned all of them by name, except for Shubrick. *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2d Session, March 31, 1862, p. 1444.

11. The Washington Lecture Association was established by local abolitionists in December 1861 to trick Henry into allowing use of the Smithsonian lecture room. Henry required that they agree to the usual stipulation "that subjects of sectarianism in religion and special politics should not be discussed" (*Smithsonian Report for 1862*, p. 43). He also demanded that the organization make clear that the lectures were not sponsored by the Smithsonian. Each of the lectures opened with the following statement by the chair:

Ladies and gentlemen, I am requested by Professor Henry to announce that the Smithsonian Institution is not in any way responsible for this course of lectures. I do so with pleasure and desire to add that the Washington

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Lecture Association is in no way responsible for the Smithsonian Institution. [Quoted in Conlin, p. 311.]

The Washington Lecture Association has been identified as part of the campaign by Radical Republicans "to pressure Lincoln into conducting the Civil War on abolitionist principles" (Conlin, p. 310) by using a highly public and non-political forum in the nation's capital to advance radical antislavery views.

Henry's response to the controversy was thereafter "to restrict the use of the lecture-room exclusively to the lectures given under the

immediate auspices of the Institution" (*Smithsonian Report for 1862*, pp. 43-44).

Michael F. Conlin, "The Smithsonian Abolition Lecture Controversy: The Clash of Antislavery Politics with American Science in Wartime Washington," *Civil War History*, 2000, 46:301-323.

12. A former slave, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was a journalist, lecturer, and abolitionist. Prior to the war, he had advocated violence to achieve abolition, and, once the war began, had called for the enlistment of blacks. *ANB*.

13. Fairman Rogers.

139. HENRY LOCKED BOOK

April 12, 1862

Meeting of the club at the Saxtons'. Small attendance. Mr. Bache in New York, Gen. Meigs¹ and Col. McComb² engaged.

Night pleasant with a beautiful and unusually well-defined circle around the moon. Mr. Taylor with the assistance of Mr. Hilgard measured the interior diameter of the ring with a sextant, and found it almost exactly 44 deg. It was at first difficult to distinguish the bright circle when the brighter moon was brought into the field by the reflection from the index mirror, but this difficulty was obviated by putting down before the telescope of the instrument a screen of glass of a slightly blue tint, which obscured or tempered the light of the moon just enough to render the circle distinctly visible. The wind at this time was from the northeast, but gentle, and the haze was that produced, most probably, by the vapor coming in from the ocean, and suffering partial condensation by the colder air with which it was brought into contact, or by its upward motion.

The explanation of the halo as given by the best authority, is that of the reflection from the specula³ of ice in the air. They appear of two dimensions, one of 44 and the other of 22 degs.⁴

In the explanation it is not necessary to suppose that all the specula of ice are falling perpendicularly or horizontally, but that the effect is due only to those whose axes are in the proper direction.

On two occasions I have seen during a snow storm at night and a distant fire from a burning house a single beam of light extending from the source of the light perpendicularly upwards. The effect is probably due to the simple reflection of the rays of light from the flakes of snow, so as to produce the same appearance as that of a triated looking glass on the