



Ræða í tilefni afhendingar Fálkaorðunar, Mr. Voillery.

Bjarni Benediktsson – Stjórnmal – Ræður - Mr. Voillery – M Voillery - Fálkaorðan

Tekið af vef Borgarskjalasafnsins

bjarnibenediktsson.is

Einkaskjalasafn nr. 360

Ræður

Askja 4-5, Örk 9

©Borgarskjalasafn Reykjavíkur

I must begin these few words with excusing myself because I am not able to speak in the french language. My knowledge of that noble tongue is just sufficient to allow me to understand it if I read it and know beforehand what it all is about. If I had asked someone else to translate my words into French I therefore might have had some idea about the content of the speech myself, but I am sure, on account of my pronunciation, nobody else would have understood a word of what I said or tried to say, so I have chosen the more commonplace but surer method to speak in the English language.

The president of Iceland has today bestowed the grand cross of the Falcon order on our guest of honour. Because he is still considered a foreigner the foreign ministry of Iceland was asked for its advice, and I can assure you, that it is no empty diplomatic phrase, - as you can more easily understand when you bear in mind that I am no diplomat but belong to the truthful politicians of whom so many happen to be in my party - when I tell you, that I have never recommended such an honour with greater pleasure than in this instance.

The reason is not only, that the icelandic authorities wish to honour M. Voillery as the representative of the great and noble French nation, but also our wish to show how much we appreciate him personally and the work he has done here.

M. Voillery has himself related in an interview in the Morgunblaðið, how he felt on the 17th June 1940. At that time I was professor of law at the University and certainly never will forget, how impressed I was by the composure and the dignity of M. Voillery, when he on that

memorable day read his felicitations to our University. Some people may think it was a small affair, but I understood his behaviour on that day of sorrow for the powerful state which had sent him as a sure sign of the unbreakable spirit and high culture both of the man himself and the nation to whom he belonged.

Since that time I have learned to know M. Voillery better than I did then and I must say that the impression I got that day has been strengthened the better I got to know him. I have most fortunately been able to observe him also in the days of joy, both for his country and mine. I remember his moderation and sincere happiness on the day Paris was liberated and I remember too his heartfelt congratulations on our great day of freedom the 17th June 1944.

Those are the great occasions we never will forget, but we have also learned to appreciate the good work M. Voillery has done in every-day life. Never before have there been so many ties that bind together the little icelandic nation and that bearer of the torch of culture, the great french nation. Nobody has been more industrious or more interested in kneeting those ties than M. Voillery, both in the fields of culture, economics and politics.

I am noprophet but just the same I venture to say that this is only the beginning an those two nations will have more and more collaboration in the coming years to our mutual advantage. M. Voillery will no doubt say that one of the reasons for that is the great similarity between the two peoples. This evening I can not go further into that, although I must say it is a long time since I noticed how like icelandic politics in many respects are to french politics.

But one instance of great similarity I want to mention:

The unassuming life of M. Voillery himself and his family. We have heard so much about the lightheartedness and frivolity of certain Frenchmen. But I ask you, who know how M. Voillery lives and works, have you not observed how like he is to the best type of icelandic farmer or official, who knows that everybody has to work and does not consider himself too good to do all the work that is necessary?

The language of course is a difficulty, although certainly Mlle Voillery has surmounted that, but in spite of that we all have felt, when we are with M. Voillery and his family, that we are with people whom we thoroughly like and we are certainly proud if they say after ten years stay here that we are like them.