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Resurrecting Dr. Moss: The Life and Letters of a Royal Navy Surgeon, Edward Lawton Moss MD, RN, 1843-1880. By Paul C. Appleton, edited by William Barr. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008. 221 p., ill., index. ISBN 978-1-55238-232-5 42.95 \$)

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disabled people's lives, a reality that historians of disability must acknowledge. Furthermore, institutional histories, despite their many problems, can also be well-written and well-researched accounts of events, personalities, representations and attitudes and in this endeavour Geoffrey Reaume has succeeded.

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Resurrecting Dr. Moss: The Life and Letters of a Royal Navy Surgeon, Edward Lawton Moss MD, RN, 1843-1880. By Paul C. Appleton, edited by William Barr. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008. 221 p., ill., index. ISBN 978-1-55238-232-5 42.95 \$).

Edward Lawton Moss was born in Dublin, Ireland, in December 1843, into Anglo-Irish stock. His father was a physician who worked through epidemics of typhus and cholera, and through the great potato famine, only to die in 1859, following a bout of rheumatic fever. Edward studied at Dublin's Royal College of Science, then studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland and at St. Andrew's University in Scotland. Having completed his studies, he became a medical officer in the Royal Navy. His career was to be wholly within the Navy, and he died in the service in 1880 when the *Atalanta* was lost with all hands in the Atlantic Ocean. He began his medical naval career in Portsmouth, joined his first ship in 1864, and served afloat and onshore for the remainder of his life. Some of the lessons of the Crimean War had penetrated medical opinion in civilian and military life, notably the importance of cleanliness, sanitation, and diet; losses in the Crimea had been caused more by avoidable ill health than by enemy action. Moss, who enjoyed several years as his own master on shore at the headquarters of the navy's Pacific Station, ran the hospital at Esquimaux, where he turned a decaying building into an efficient medical centre; the Pacific Station had been re-opened in the light of American anger that the British had allowed the *Alabama* to be fitted out as a warship for the Confederacy, and there was also friction over San Juan Island, near Esquimaux. Later, back in England and coping with an epidemic of cholera, Moss knew and argued that hospitals were a breeding ground for contagious diseases.

Moss was a minor figure in Canadian and British history; but Appleton had good reasons for writing this biography. Two will be familiar to Arctic historians: Moss's role as surgeon and naturalist aboard HMS *Alert* on the Nares expedition of 1875-76, and his skill with brush and

pen, admirably displayed in his portfolio volume, *Shores of the Polar Sea: A Narrative of the Arctic Expedition of 1875*, and represented here by ten of the sixteen plates accompanying the text. It is good to have them handsomely reproduced in medium quarto, and the University of Calgary Press is to be complimented on an admirably produced book. Appleton has made excellent use of Moss family letters, which form an important part of the narrative, and are often quoted in their entirety, and (to my knowledge) for the first time. He tells a good story well, and the book is a pleasure to read. He has done a fine job of consulting key archives and official reports; his bibliography of secondary sources is more erratic; some of them are primary, and others odd, for example one on the Bermuda Triangle, and he has ignored secondary sources that would furnish context and content to Moss's ambitions as a naturalist and natural philosopher. William Barr has been an effective and unobtrusive editor.

Moss was prone to bouts of melancholy, which can not have been helped by his distant postings. He was "never entirely at home in the navy" (p.40). And yet, although as a young married officer he refused to volunteer for the British Arctic Expedition of 1875, he let it be known that he would go if he was ordered to; he was ordered to go, and he went. The appointment to the expedition came as a complete surprise to Moss; it must have come as an even greater surprise to Nares, who was commanding the *Challenger* scientific expedition in the southern oceans, docked at Hong Kong to replenish supplies and collect mail, and found himself ordered to command a new Arctic expedition. The Royal Geographical Society, driven by Clements Markham's advocacy, had long been lobbying for such an expedition, and the Admiralty had long been vetoing it, burnt by the Franklin disaster, the cost of the searches, and the lesson that the North-West Passage was not likely to be of military or economic significance. I suspect that the key to the new Arctic expedition lay in the rivalry between Gladstone and Disraeli; Gladstone had authorized the *Challenger* expedition to the southern oceans and the Antarctic, so Disraeli, on ousting his rival, took pleasure in authorizing a competing Arctic expedition. The Royal Society of London, the Linnean Society, and other scientific bodies had been lobbying for the expedition; and it is worth noting that geography counted as a science – it had its own section in the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and many officers, having returned from expeditions to the Polar regions, were duly elected as Fellows of the Royal Society.

Moss had thought that he was going as the expedition naturalist, but then found that the Royal Society had recommended the appointment of an artillery officer, Henry Wemyss Feilden, as the naturalist on HMS *Alert*. Moss comments on the friendly atmosphere, which was diplomatic

when it came to Feilden; they were not friends, although the tensions never reached the pitch that they had reached on HMS *Beagle*, where the surgeon-naturalist had been thoroughly eclipsed by Darwin. Based, like Moss, on HMS *Alert*, Feilden made the expedition's main contributions to geology, ornithology, botany, and other parts of scientific natural history. And that may be why Appleton has almost nothing to say about Moss's scientific contributions, which did include the collection of specimens from the dredge, their description, and occasionally their dissection; Appleton tells us that Moss did publish short pieces in the journals of several learned societies in England and Ireland, including the Linnean Society and the Royal Society, but he gives the reader neither references nor details. Arctic science receives short shrift. But this is at least partly justified by the fact that while Feilden was busy with the sciences, mapping, collecting, and interpreting, Moss was busy with his gun, supplying fresh meat to the expedition, and leading one of the sledging teams in 1876. Lime juice had been administered carefully on the way north, and with tolerable care in winter quarters. The man-hauled sledge teams, in stark contrast, carried little lime juice (two flasks per sledge), but over 150 lbs of rum; scurvy was unsurprisingly a scourge, killing four men and forcing the expedition to return in 1876 rather than attempt another winter in the ice. That was the responsibility of the Captain, not of the surgeon; Moss knew what the treatment of scurvy should be – rest and appropriate diet (fresh meat and vegetables, and lemon or lime juice) – and he, as far as he could, put his theory into practice. The book gives us a vivid picture of the awfulness of man-hauling sledges over pressure ridges, and also a thorough account of the official enquiry into the scurvy that afflicted most of the crew.

In the late 1870s, the possibility of war with Russia raised tensions in the near East. Moss was sent to Turkey, and met Schliemann excavating Troy, giving him brief assistance. Moss wrote home that Schliemann had “not the slightest idea of what scientific evidence is”; Schliemann, writing soon after Moss had died in the loss of his last posting, on HMS *Atalanta*, called him “my honoured, my learned, my deeply mourned friend.” Moss, like Schliemann, as Appleton perceptively notes, was a man in search of honour and respect in the scientific community. And the loss of *Atalanta* was the result of a tragic error in refitting an old ship for new service.

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