

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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IT is now four years since the Academy did me the honour of electing me to be its President in succession to Lord Balfour, and now the appointed term has come when, in accordance with our Statutes, I resign my office and bid you farewell. Four years ago I had every hope that Lord Balfour, who had consented to remain a member of the Council, would still be able to help the Academy with his influence and authority; and there was at that time no warning note that our indefatigable Secretary, Sir Israel Gollancz, who had been associated with the Academy since its first inception, and to whose devoted labours the Academy owes so much, was nearing the term of his laborious and distinguished life. But Lord Balfour has gone from us, and so, too, has Sir Israel. The Academy has already acknowledged its deep sense of the loss which it has sustained by reason of the death of two members who did so much to advance its name and usefulness; and to what has already been said I will add nothing now, but confine my observations to the present position of our Society and its potential spheres of helpful activity.

Let me first allude to a slight but serviceable change in our organization which has been carried out during my term of office. It seemed to the Council that the functions of Secretary and Treasurer, which had been combined in the person of Sir Israel Gollancz, should be severed. Sir Frederic Kenyon, whose association with the Academy is almost as long as that of Sir Israel, was good enough to place himself at the disposal of the Council, and to accept the office of Secretary, while the new office of Treasurer was appropriately inaugurated by Lord Chalmers, who has since resigned his post in favour of Professor Scott.

The value of such a body as ours depends partly upon its representative character, and partly upon the quality of the work, which is produced by its individual members, or which is promoted by its initiative, or assisted through its resources. In all these respects the Academy has, I would suggest, established itself in the confidence and esteem of the learned world. It is not for me to appraise the quality of our published proceedings, or to compliment our members upon their publications. I will only observe that the activities of our Fellows, as evidenced by the long row of books and papers which stand in their name, is, as one might expect it to be, considerable, and that our proceedings, if I may judge from the interest which they excite in a reader very imperfectly acquainted with many of the matters with which they deal, deserve to have a larger public.

If I turn to that other most important part of our activities which consists in the organization and encouragement of learned work I am impelled to make three observations. The first is that the Academy has been deprived of the opportunity of initiating any great combined operation calculated to strike the imagination of the ordinary citizen. The *Dictionary of the English Language* had already been undertaken by Oxford University; the *Dictionary of National Biography* was the private enterprise of a distinguished publisher. The great co-operative histories of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Europe, so valuable as furnishing a summary of an active period of historical scholarship, have been launched by the University of Cambridge. It is indeed true that the leading figures in each of these great national enterprises, Sir James Murray, Sir Leslie Stephen, and Lord Acton were all original members of the Academy, but the organization of the work was not a joint enterprise of this body. The tasks upon which we have been engaged, though of great value for the advancement of knowledge, do not strike the popular imagination as the three great enterprises to which I have alluded. The new

*Dictionary of Mediaeval Latin*, which is in course of preparation, will prove to be an invaluable instrument in the hands of our medieval scholars, but it is not spectacular. The series of volumes on English Social and Economic History, which have been edited under our auspices, have been welcomed by those who are best qualified to judge as substantial contributions to the study of the past, but again they command no wide currency.

My second observation is that our resources are very strictly limited. The Academy's opportunity of helping learned enterprises is almost wholly restricted by the compass of the Government grant, and this grant has recently been curtailed in view of the economic stress and strain of the times. It is much to be desired that the capital endowment of the Academy should be increased. I do not suggest for a moment that more should now be expected from the Government; but there are always, even in a country such as ours, a number of private citizens who are both affluent and interested in the promotion of learning, and to such it might be suggested that in the Academy there is an expert body well qualified to examine the claims of learned works, and to advise as to the mode and degree in which they may be assisted.

Let me thirdly ask you to consider some valuable enterprises which such a benefactor, were he to arise, might enable the Academy to support.

There is the new Oxford Critical Edition of the Greek New Testament which is now slowly struggling through its initial stages with only a single worker under the supervision of a committee of which that distinguished Biblical scholar, the Bishop of Gloucester, is Chairman. It urgently needs increased funds so that it may be produced rapidly, and in a style worthy of the country. When I remind you of the conclusion of the Editorial Committee that 'existing editions and collations are far from accurate and in many cases misleading, that a revision of all past work is absolutely necessary, and that all readings that have been quoted in



Tischendorf's and other editions from Uncial and Minuscule MSS., versions, Fathers, &c., must be checked from originals or facsimiles, and further that there is a large number of MSS. of the Greek and other versions which have never been thoroughly examined or collated', the magnitude of the task undertaken by the committee will at once be realized. The Academy have made a few grants ranging from £50 to £100 to this important enterprise. It is all that we have been able to do, but it is not enough. If we could promise an annual contribution of £250 or £300 a year, the contributors who have already generously helped the scheme might expect to reap the fruit of their liberality within a reasonable space of time. The production of the whole work will necessarily occupy many years; but at least those of us who are present here this afternoon might expect to see upon their shelves the Critical Edition of the Gospel of St. Mark.

A second great enterprise is that of a *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Roman Britain*. This has been undertaken by the Haverfield Fund and is in the hands of Mr. R. G. Collingwood; but the preparation creeps along at a snail's pace for lack of funds. Here, as in other departments of English archaeology, we might, were funds available, do much to redeem the charge of remissness and neglect which may be levelled against us, not wholly without justice. We might, for instance, give substantial assistance to such excavations as those at Richborough, Verulamium, Colchester, Caerleon, and the Roman Wall. As it is, these nationally important researches are dependent on the scanty contributions of individual benefactors instead of being supported (and to some extent directed) by a national institution of the status of the Academy. That the Academy should be the channel of national support (partly with government money and partly from its own resources) of the British Schools of Archaeology abroad—Rome, Athens, Jerusalem, Iraq, is self evident. Of these schools the two last impose a special responsibility upon British Scholarship.

It was one of the most startling consequences of the Great War that at the close of it, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the grassland routes of East Africa, through which from time immemorial roving tribes from the Nile Valley found their way to the Cape, passed under the political control of the British Empire. At one blow we found ourselves possessed of a tract of the earth's surface which in its wealth of archaeological and anthropological interest can hardly be surpassed. I will not labour the extraordinary value of the finds at Ur, which the world owes to the co-operation of British and American generosity and to the discovering abilities of Mr. Woolley, nor will I descant upon the new avenues of anthropological inquiry, which Mr. Leaky is opening out in Kenya. The point is that we are only at the beginning of a new era of anthropological and archaeological discovery. What we have retrieved from the distant past in these regions is already remarkable. What the future has in store for us may be more remarkable still. Quite apart from the Archaeology of Palestine and Mesopotamia, our new African possessions present problems for the student of languages and anthropology which, fully as we may realize the importance of international co-operation in science and learning, we should not be content to leave in the exclusive domain of foreign scholars.

We should, however, be prepared to take our full share in international intellectual enterprises. So far we have sustained our part in the Union Academique Internationale (where, indeed, our contribution compares well with that of any other nation) by taking credit for work for which we have not paid. Thus we have contributed ten parts of the *Corpus Vasorum*, but seven of them (dealing with the vases of the British Museum) have been paid for by the Trustees of the British Museum. We paid for printing the *Catalogue of Alchemical Manuscripts*, but all the work of preparing it was done by Mrs. Singer at her own cost. We contributed to Lindsay's edition of the *Glossaria Latina*; but Professor Lindsay and Sir Frederic Kenyon collected

subventions from five universities. As a country with large Mohammedan interests we should be able to contribute to the proposed *Concordance of Muslim Tradition* which has just been undertaken by the Union Academique Internationale on the initiative of the Dutch; also, in virtue of our interest in Malaya, to the collections of the Customary law of Indonesia. Another international enterprise, lately undertaken, is a *Corpus of the Mediaeval Latin Translations of Aristotle* which is intended as a first instalment of a *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi*. In view of the Aristotelian interest which is traditional in our older universities on either side of the Cheviots, it is impossible to imagine that we shall fail to take a substantial part in this particular work of co-operative scholarship. We are already, I am glad to say, pulling our weight in the matter of the *Mediaeval Latin Dictionary*.

So much for international enterprises already launched or projected. There remains one other question to which the Academy may in future years direct its attention. I have already alluded to the proposed *Concordance of Muslim Tradition* as an international scheme to which we should endeavour to lend our support. But over and above this, have we not a national or imperial duty to perform towards Indian scholarship and literature? I ask myself whether we in Great Britain pay sufficient heed to the good work which is now, as I am given to understand from those who know, going forward among the historians, and philosophers, the poets, dramatists, and novelists of India in one or other of the greater vernacular languages. It is, of course, impossible that more than a very small number of experts in this country should familiarize themselves with Urdu, Bengali, or Tamil. But it should not be impossible to throw out signals of sympathy and encouragement from this country to Indian writers of learning or imaginative genius whose work reaches a high level of accomplishment either by the offer of prizes or by the invitation to lecture here, or by the publication in our language at stated intervals



of a survey of Indian intellectual movements. If the political relations between Great Britain and India are likely never to be entirely comfortable, there is no reason why, on the side of culture, the relations of sympathy and mutual understanding between the two peoples should not be progressively strengthened. The Academy, with its strong oriental section, is in a position to assist in such a process.

In offering this wide panorama of learned work to which the British Academy might in happier circumstances lend a substantial and effective measure of support, I may appear to those whose minds are obsessed by the present economic dislocation of the world to be talking idly of dreams impossible to realize. My belief, however, is that our present economic discontents are susceptible of cure, that the maladjustment of our exchanges will be remedied, and that in course of time, the world will discover the secret of enjoying the plenty which Science has placed within its reach, without experiencing the paralysis which proceeds from constantly changing price levels. That mankind is now in a position to supply itself with the necessaries of life more cheaply than ever before is certain. That the process of cheapening the staple articles of food and clothing has not stopped is certain also. And from these premises it would appear to be a necessary conclusion that, when or if the present political ferment abates and trade and industry recover their tone, a greater surplus of the world's wealth will be available for the higher needs of man. How much in a country such as ours will then in fact be employed upon the advancement of learning will depend upon the play of moral and intellectual forces. This we cannot estimate in advance: but is it altogether fantastic to assume that the measure of our future achievements will bear some direct relation to the largeness and generosity of our designs?

