THE FELLOWSHIP OF LEARNING

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BY

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DURING the past year we have passed by unnoticed an anniversary which, if it had not been overshadowed by the greater occasion of the sexcentenary of Dante, we might well have celebrated. October the twelfth, 1920, was the tercentenary of the publication of Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*, or rather of the skeleton of that greatly planned and imagined work and of the one completed section of it which he named the *Novum Organum*. It is a book memorable even in its typographical character, since it bears on its forefront perhaps the finest title-page ever designed, depicting the ship of Learning putting out through the Pillars of Hercules into the uncharted ocean beyond in search of the new world of Knowledge. But for us, and for all time, it is memorable, not for its actual contribution to knowledge, or even to the mechanism for its discovery, but for the great idea which inspired it, the vision which Bacon was not to realize, but which he beheld from his Mount of Pisgah. It is the vision of the Kingdom of Knowledge, the ideal of the Fellowship of Learning, which our Academy exists to foster and promote.

In Bacon's vision, knowledge was one great body, with members duly articulated, each separate limb being a department in which much was to be learnt by means of a new and all-powerful mechanism of research, but all interconnected and correlated, so that the one method would serve for all. It was a great kingdom with many provinces, ready to be exploited and offering great wealth to its conqueror. The new mechanism of which he thought so much has proved to be a delusion, but the ideal remains, and it is for what he imagined, not what he achieved, that we honour the memory of Bacon. Yet it is a mistake to belittle him on this account. The world is not too rich in prophets, in the men who see visions and dream dreams, and have sufficient faith in them to proclaim them to the world. Πολλοὶ μὲν ναρθηκοφόροι, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι: and Bacon himself declared that he was 'content to tune the instruments of the Muses,

that they may play that have better hands'. A great idea does not die, and may inspire men with greater powers of constructive work than the man who proclaimed it; and its force is not exhausted in the generation which gave it birth.

The coincidence which brings the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante into connexion with the three-hundredth of Bacon may remind us that Dante too had a vision of a great unity, or rather of two allied and mutually complementary unities, the one Church under the headship of the Pope and the one State under the headship of the Emperor. The Middle Ages too had their conception of the unity of the sciences, summed up in and dominated by the *summa scientia* of Theology. Bacon's conception was therefore not a new one, but he gave it a new life. He encouraged men to look for a new method, even if his own proved a blind alley, and he held out hopes of an Eldorado, not material like that which travellers sought in the new world, but an Eldorado of the spirit, the rewards of which would be the domination of man over the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of thought.

The prophecy which forms the motto of the great frontispiece of the *Instauratio Magna* has been realized in fullest measure in these latter days. *Multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia.* There has been much running to and fro on the face of the earth, and knowledge has been multiplied in a manner which has far exceeded the utmost dreams of Bacon. But the vision of unity, of the Fellowship of Learning, has been imperilled. The tendency has been centrifugal, separatist, specialist. No one can now, like Bacon, take all knowledge for his province. In each subject knowledge has multiplied to such an extent that the subject must be subdivided again and again, and one man will spend his life in settling Hoti's business or in the doctrine of the enclitic De, and another in investigating the parasite of a parasite. Without specialism knowledge cannot now progress, and specialism has its tendencies which break up the family of learning. Separatism may only too easily turn to rivalry and even hostility: and valuable time and energy are wasted while those who should be allies fight one another.

This danger has been amply illustrated in the past, in the fights between the New Learning and the Old, between Theology and Science, between Science and the Classics, between the modern and the ancient humanities. Nor would it be fair to say that these contests were wholly blameworthy. Different ideals must come into conflict, and those who hold them earnestly will fight for them; and out of the struggle comes progress. Yet it is a happier progress when it

takes the form of generous rivalry and not of hostility. Fighting is at times necessary, to break up the crust of tradition and to remove barriers; but in itself, like war, it is an evil, though it may sometimes be a necessary evil, and the best of the only alternatives. Beyond destruction comes construction; and construction demands the combined exertions of those who before were enemies.

It is to such a period of reconstruction, of alliance, of co-operation, that we seem now to have arrived; or at least to a stage at which the necessity for them is becoming obvious and paramount. On all sides we hear the demand for union, or at least for federation. We have learnt the value of comradeship in war, and the need to sink minor differences in order to defeat the common enemy. The same ideal inspires the conception of a League of Nations and the hopeful movement towards reunion among the Churches. Even Industry is finding out, though with many throes and through much tribulation, the need of union: that neither Capital nor Labour can stand by itself, and that their antagonism is the destruction of both. Whitley Councils, Arbitration Boards, conferences of masters and men, all are symptoms of the same need—the need for co-operation and common effort to overcome the evils that confront us.

The same tendencies are, I think and hope, visible in the field of learning, with which we in our present capacity are more immediately concerned. The fight between Science and Theology has died down; Science is no longer so sure that it knows everything, and Theology realizes that in its own sphere Science must be respected. The fight between Science and the Humanities, or more particularly between Science and the Classics, has also, I think and hope, lost its bitterness. The advocates of each are more willing to recognize the value of the other, and to acknowledge that the free development of both is essential to the intellectual culture of the nation. The war has taught us how greatly we need both, the knowledge of nature which comes from science and the knowledge of man which comes from the humanities. Neither can afford to despise the other. For our defence in war, for our progress in peace, we need to cultivate science, both with the disinterested research which we call pure science, and in its practical applications to industry and commerce. And the problems of government, of economics, of international and internal relations, which bewilder us to-day, impress us with the vital need of the knowledge of man's thought and the history of nations, and of the cultivation of high ideals, which come through the study of the humanities.

It has been my duty and good fortune recently to visit most of the

universities of Great Britain, and to investigate their needs and aspirations; and the experience has convinced me that the spirit of union in progress is very generally spread among them. All are clamouring to be enabled to develop so as to meet the new needs and render to the nation the services for which the nation is asking. And, as a general rule, it is not the material side which is foremost, but the ideal. No doubt there are those who measure knowledge by its utilitarian possibilities, and ask only of a university that it shall enable them to multiply their wealth; but these are outside the universities, not in them. Within the universities the desire is for the advancement of knowledge and the training of the intellect and character. With this great vision before them, there is no place for little jealousies. There is less tendency than there once was to hold that one subject is the best for all students, and more willingness to agree that different minds should specialize in different directions, though all are the better for a wide basis of common thought and common knowledge. It is recognized that for the nation as a whole all branches of intellectual culture are necessary, and that it would be a misfortune if any of them were neglected and allowed to perish.

It is our duty to take advantage of this growth of greater toleration, of this sense of comradeship in the cause of knowledge against materialism, of high ideals against low. It is a duty peculiarly incumbent on an Academy. The very reason of our existence is to promote the Fellowship of Learning. We exist to correlate and to promote the activities of all branches of humanistic study,—at least I trust there are none among us who consider that we exist only to confer honorary distinctions and the right to put certain letters after our names. How far we have been able to realize this ideal may be a matter of doubt. We are a comparatively young body, we are also a scattered body, and we have hitherto had little of the material means which are necessary for the full development of our potentialities. But without such an ideal we have no right to exist.

The Academy will justify its existence if it is recognized, not as a society claiming titular superiority over other societies, but as existing to serve and assist both societies and individuals by the weight of competent and disinterested opinion. It can serve as the centre for combined activity, and can help a good cause by throwing the weight of its authority into the scale. When it possesses the material endowment which every national Academy needs, and which every national Academy except ours possesses, it will be able to give material as well as moral support to such enterprises as it judges to be most deserving. But in order to exercise the fullest influence for

good of which it is capable, it must have the confidence of scholars in general and the respect of the world at large; and to justify this confidence and earn this respect it must be an active body, and not merely a name.

It must be admitted that the difficulties in the way of corporate activity are serious. Foreign Academies, as a rule, consist of members living within easy distance of their headquarters, and therefore able to make a point of attending the meetings without deranging their normal work; and such attendance comes to be recognized as a duty. Here, with our members spread over the United Kingdom, any such regularity is impossible. One cannot expect a Fellow to come up from Manchester or Aberdeen to listen to a paper on a subject outside his own sphere of interest; and it is a serious demand to make even if the subject is one with which he is intimately concerned. Hence the activity of our Academy must necessarily be in the main the activity of its Council; though I hope that, as funds become available, it will be possible to bring the several Sections into play for the administration of grants for the special subjects with which they are concerned. This, I am confident, will come in good time. Meanwhile it is the duty of the Academy, through its Council and through the goodwill of its Fellows scattered throughout the kingdom, to lose no opportunity of putting itself at the service of any good cause that comes within its proper scope, and in particular of promoting to the full extent of its power the Fellowship of Learning.

The need for this spirit of fellowship is indeed great. It is not merely a question of mitigating the rivalries and jealousies of scholars. Indeed I think it may fairly be claimed that this particular evil, which has at some periods been flagrant, is not now characteristic of humanistic scholars in this country. I am inclined to think it is more visible in other circles. When Hesiod wrote

καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει, καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων,

was not the κεραμεύς the painter of the time, and the τέκτων the sculptor or architect? But wherever it is, the spirit of jealousy and of detraction, of unwillingness to recognize the merits of others, must weaken the vitality of the whole body and lessen the aspiration for progress. A mutual admiration society is at any rate preferable to a mutual detraction society, and in ages of progress men have been encouraged to do great things by the sympathy of their fellows.

There are, however, certain more definite directions in which the spirit of fellowship is needed, and in which our Academy can and should make its influence felt. I should like to be allowed briefly to indicate two or three of them.

In the first place, it is only by co-operation that we can make our influence felt. The progress of knowledge, of education, of culture in the widest sense of the term, is hampered by the dead weight of indifference with which it has to contend. Taking the British public as a whole, there is a solid mass of disbelief in the value of knowledge and of the things of the mind. In spite of the large class of amateurs of culture that the country possesses, people who sympathize with things of beauty and learning without pretending to be professional students of them, the nation has no deep-rooted faith in the necessity for such things. We are predominantly a materially minded people. Consequently literature, art, knowledge, wherever they have not an obvious material value, have to fight everywhere for recognition. Every university has constantly to appeal for local support, and is thankful if it gets even half of what it asked for. Every learned society is in difficulties for want of adequate endowment. Scientific research, archaeological exploration, historical investigation are everywhere held up for want of money. Apart from certain striking and very welcome exceptions, the cause of intellectual progress is mainly financed by the guineas of men who are none too richly endowed with them for themselves. If its value were better understood, there would be less difficulty in persuading politicians to regard it as a worthy object of support from the public purse, and more men of wealth would be willing to choose this as the avenue for the expenditure of their superfluity.

I do not wish to exaggerate the lack of public support. More money has been forthcoming of late for purposes of education and of scientific research, and the atmosphere of the Treasury has been more genial, although on the humanistic side the fruit has not yet ripened. If the national finances were in a more prosperous state, I believe that we might count on a more sympathetic hearing in this quarter than we have had in the past. But it has been uphill work, and one cannot yet say that the average politician, even of those who form the official world, is really cordial and sympathetic in his desire to assist intellectual progress. The same is the case outside. Here and there in the world of commerce and business are men who genuinely and even enthusiastically believe in the things of the mind, and who realize that national efficiency depends in great measure upon national education. I believe that the recognition of this truth is growing, but its victory has not yet come. The nation as a whole has still to be converted.

It is for this purpose that co-operation is especially needed. If all those who believe in the things of the mind would combine and

support one another, they would have a much better chance of making an impression on the nation. Hitherto the individualism which is one of our national characteristics has stood in the way of such combination. The tendency has been for each society to go its own way, without much reference to what other societies were doing; and sometimes in place of indifference there has been jealousy and even hostility. Of late there have been signs of improvement. The existence of a Conjoint Board of Scientific Societies, of a Council for Humanistic Studies, of a Joint Archaeological Committee, are signs of a growing feeling that unity is strength. The Royal Society and our Academy respectively took part in initiating these combinations; and this is one of their most appropriate functions. Containing as they do (or should) the leading representatives of every branch of scientific and humanistic learning, it is their plain duty to support, if they do not initiate, every movement in favour of combined action; to serve as clearing-houses for projects in which more than one branch of learning is concerned; to assist one another, and all societies coming within their respective spheres, to secure that support, whether from the public purse or from private liberality, which is the essential condition of progress. In short, it is their duty to promote the Fellowship of Learning.

A second province in which the Academy has obligations and opportunities is that of International Scholarship. As we know only too well, the Fellowship of Learning which existed in this province up to 1914 has been violently torn asunder. It would serve no good purpose here to recapitulate the unhappy events which have made full co-operation between the scholars of Europe impossible. The question which the Academy had to answer was whether, since full co-operation was impossible, partial co-operation should be fostered in its place. I have no doubt that the Academy was right in deciding that those nations which could work together should do so, and that to defer all combination until everybody could come into it would have been a treason to learning. But I think we have gone into this combination in an inclusive and not an exclusive spirit. We do not regard our new international organization as a fortress of defence against the nations that are at present outside, although we recognize that for a period to which we cannot as yet fix a limit they must remain outside. The union is incomplete because it must be so, not because we wish it so. Meanwhile the combination is valuable, and we trust it will do good work. Nothing could be better than the spirit of cordiality and goodwill that has animated the meetings of the new Union Académique Internationale

that have been held up to the present time; and the Union has embarked on a programme of work which we trust will be a real contribution towards the progress of learning.

During the session which was held at Brussels at the end of May last, several projects were before us, and two in particular were materially advanced. The first of these is for a Corpus of Ancient Vases, the object of which is to place at the disposal of students descriptions and photographs of practically all the vases at present known in public (and, if possible, also in private) collections, omitting only duplicates and quite worthless specimens. Such a Corpus will provide for ancient ceramic art what the compilations of Clarac and Reinach have done for Greek and Roman sculpture. It cannot claim to publish and reproduce every vase exhaustively; nor is this desirable. But it will show the student of any particular branch of ceramics what his material is: what are the shapes of vases, what their technique, what their method of decoration, what the subjects depicted on them. The publication will consist of fascicules issued by the several museums and collections in a common format, with a common classification, and with a common scheme of description and illustration, but with sufficient elasticity to meet local requirements, and with liberty for the employment of any of the chief European languages. In this country I hope it may be possible to make a beginning with the collections in the British Museum, and perhaps some day the Academy will be able to assist with other collections that need financial help.

The other great project is a new Thesaurus of Mediaeval Latin, to supplement, or in fact replace, Ducange. No one who is concerned with mediaeval studies will question the desirability of such a Thesaurus, or will be under any illusion as to the enormous magnitude of the enterprise. It is eminently a task to be undertaken by international co-operation. It will be the work of a generation or more, and it needs for editor some one who will devote his life to it. Meanwhile preparations can be made. At the recent meeting at Brussels it was resolved to limit it in the first place to the period between A.D. 600 and 1050, and each country is asked to prepare schemes for dealing with its own material for that period. A committee has been formed by our Academy, under the chairmanship of Professor Tout; and if we are able to offer any material contribution to the work, it will be due to the enterprise and enthusiasm of one of our Fellows, Professor Lindsay, who has set on foot and already begun the publication of a series of editions of the earliest Latin glossaries. It is hoped that his scheme will be carried through, and also that

volunteers will be forthcoming to collect materials for the Thesaurus itself. A very small expenditure would enable us to establish a central bureau, with a secretary, to which such collections might be sent.

Other projects have been before the Union,—some which do not need universal co-operation, but which will be carried out by the Academies specially interested under the patronage of the Union, such as an edition of the works of Grotius, collections bearing on the customary law of Indonesia, and a catalogue of Greek and Latin alchemical manuscripts. The latter we have been able to assist by putting the editors into relations with Professor and Mrs. Singer, of Oxford, who have made vast collections bearing on the history of mediaeval science. Others have been discussed, but not yet adopted: such are the proposals for supplementary or re-edited volumes of the Corpus of Greek and of Roman Inscriptions, and for a map on a uniform scale of the Roman Empire. But, over and above the work actually done or proposed, the great achievement of the Union is the promotion of intellectual comradeship between the civilized peoples of the world. The Academy may, I think, justly congratulate itself that it has taken part in this manifestation of the reality of the Fellowship of Learning.

A third development of the spirit of fellowship would be the discouragement of exclusiveness and provincialism in matters of learning. No country lives, or has a right to live, to itself. If it has any contribution to make towards the advancement of knowledge, it owes that contribution to the widest circle that it can reach; and the greater the contribution, the wider should be the circle reached, and the greater is the interest that other countries should take in it. The products of ancient Greece, of the Roman Empire, of renaissance Italy, to the progress of humanity do not concern the inhabitants of modern Greece and modern Italy alone: they are part of the heritage of humanity, and all the civilizations which have descended from them have a claim upon them. Any exclusiveness which reduces the number of those who benefit by this inheritance is a sin against civilization, and a renunciation of that which should be a nation's glory—the power of doing a service to humanity.

Unfortunately there is a school of thought which maintains the opposite thesis. It is argued that everything which was ever produced in Greece should remain in Greece, that everything produced in Mesopotamia should remain in Mesopotamia, that everything produced in Little Peddlington should remain in Little Peddlington.

Local patriotism is good, devotion to the parish pump is good, protection of the interests of a country entrusted to our charge is very good; but there are other goods to be taken into account also. Excessive exclusiveness is not even an advantage to the country or locality on whose behalf it is exercised. If all the pictures produced in mediaeval Italy had remained there, not only would the art of the rest of the world be poorer, but Italy would have stood less high in the estimation of the world. How much have not modern Greece and modern Italy owed to the admiration and sympathy aroused in the whole of Europe and America by the services rendered to civilization by those countries in the past, even in a remote past? It has been a loss to England that English art and literature have not been widely known (with a few exceptions) on the continent of Europe. To every country it should be a source of pride that the products of its culture are appreciated and desired beyond its own borders.

This belief in the rights of humanity as a whole is compatible with the fullest respect for the interests of the several localities. It is eminently right and desirable that an ample representation of the past art and history of a country should remain in the country itself. This applies alike to countries in which a national self-consciousness is fully developed and the glories of the national past fully appreciated, and to those in which this consciousness and this knowledge have still to be built up. In Egypt, in Palestine, in Mesopotamia, in India,—to name only these countries as pre-eminent examples—the relics of the past should be amply represented, and the inhabitants enabled to learn to the fullest extent what their ancestors have done, and what is the past of which they have got to be worthy. But when full provision has been made for this first call, the claims of civilization as a whole and of the advancement of knowledge remain to be met; and there are ample resources from which to meet them. It is blind obscurantism or parochialism to lock up in Mesopotamia or in Egypt all the remains of the ancient history of these countries; it would do no service to those countries themselves, and it would retard the progress of knowledge in the world at large.

This is the spirit which we have to combat in the countries for which we and other nations have become responsible as the result of recent territorial changes,—and perhaps nearer home also. We have to plead for a more generous appreciation of the Fellowship of Learning, for the realization of the truth that knowledge knows no boundaries. Let each country try, not only to

cultivate its own particular soil for its own particular profit, but to contribute all that it can to the common stock. The quality of such generosity is not strained; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes. Let societies support one another in their endeavours to impress the general public and to secure the resources which they need for their efficiency and progress. Let it be the mark of the liberally-minded scholar that he appreciates the importance of subjects other than his own, and does what he can to secure their prosperity. Let there be no dissipation of the forces of culture in vain controversies among themselves, but let all go forward as one army to overcome the hosts of indifference and materialism. So may we play our part as members of the Fellowship of Learning, and contribute to the realization of the universal victory of knowledge which Bacon saw in his vision.

In order to leave in your ears the sound of a nobler language than my own, let me recall to you one of the great passages in which he sets out the grounds of his confidence in the new birth of time to which he so wistfully looked forward:

'Surely when I set before me the condition of those times, in which learning hath made her third visitation or circuit, in all the qualities thereof; as the excellency and vivacity of the wits of this age; the noble helps and lights which we have by the travails of ancient writers; the art of printing, which communicateth books to men of all fortunes; the openness of the world by navigation, which hath disclosed multitudes of experiments, and a mass of natural history; the leisure wherewith these times abound, not employing men so generally in civil business, as the states of Graecia did in respect of their popularity, and the state of Rome in respect of the greatness of their monarchy; the present disposition of these times at this instant to peace; the consumption of all that ever can be said in controversies of religion, which have so much diverted men from other sciences; the perfection of your Majesty's learning, which as a phoenix may call whole vollies of wits to follow you; and the inseparable propriety of time, which is ever more and more to disclose truth; I cannot but be raised to this persuasion, that this third period of time will far surpass that of the Graecian and Roman learning; only if men will know their own strength and their own weakness both; *and take one from the other light of invention and not fire of contradiction*; and esteem of the inquisition of truth as of an enterprise, and not as a quality or ornament; and employ wit and magnificence to things of worth and excellency, and not to things vulgar and of popular estimation.'

We have not all the favourable symptoms which Bacon enumerates. Our times do not abound with leisure, nor do they at this instant manifest so effective a disposition to peace as we should desire, nor are we blest with the phoenix-like perfection of James I; but at least we can try to take one from another light of invention and not fire of contradiction. Men and societies are what their ideals make them, and the ideal of such a body as our Academy is that 'fraternity in learning and illumination', the hope of which inspired the prophecy of Bacon.