

SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

July 1, 1909

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, SIR E. MAUNDE
THOMPSON, G.C.B.

THE past year has been an active one in the history of the British Academy. We do not seek popularity, but circumstances have combined to make the Academy better known to the outside English world, and even this must be counted for gain in a country which confessedly 'careth for none of these things', and where the pioneers of such a cause as ours must be prepared to encounter more of the Philistines' incurious indifference than of the sympathetic encouragement of the educated.

That we cannot record such a long-desired triumph as a grant from the public funds, or even the concession of a roof to shelter our heads, will be a matter of surprise to none. We have still to do our best, relying on our own slender resources. It was, indeed, at one time imagined that a renewed appeal to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury might have had a happy conclusion; but the idea was very properly abandoned in the face of the financial position of the country. Let us accept the position as cheerfully as may be. Let us congratulate ourselves that we have no income worth taxing, and that the unearned increment of our brains will not, for the present at least, be scrutinized by a board of assessors.

In the review of what has passed during the year, our first duty is to record, with mournful sympathy, the losses which inexorable fate has wrought in the ranks of the Academy. Two of our Fellows have been taken from us: in Dr. Caird, Master of Balliol, one of the most distinguished philosophers is lost to the learned world; in Dr. Whitley Stokes has passed one whose valuable official work as an Indian Civil Servant is not to be lost sight of in his better known studies in Celtic literature, in which he stood pre-eminent. Among our Corresponding Fellows, we shall no longer count Professor de Goeje, that veteran Arabic scholar, the Editor in Chief of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, one of the enterprises of the International Association of Academies; and, even as we are writing, comes the

painful news that the great Russian jurist, Professor de Martens, another of our Corresponding Fellows, has been snatched away by the hand of sudden death.

At the last Annual General Meeting Lord Curzon of Kedleston was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. That election brought up the total number of Fellows to ninety-four, since reduced, by the losses to which I have referred, to ninety-two. If the names of the six scholars, who are to be presently proposed to you, meet with your approval, the full list of Fellows will be nearly complete. It will be remembered that last year we refrained from proposing the election of additional Corresponding Fellows, the number elected in the previous year having been a full one. But now the names of six distinguished foreign scholars will presently be submitted to you for the honour of admission into the British Academy as Corresponding Fellows.

The Triennial Meeting of the International Association of Academies will be held next year in Rome, where a preliminary Committee Meeting recently took place which Dr. Kenyon, a member of the Council of the British Academy, officially attended. One of the projects before the Association has specially enlisted the sympathies of the British Academy, namely, the proposed critical edition of the Mahābhārata. A Committee of the Academy, appointed to report on the invitation of Professor von Schroeder, the President of the Mahābhārata Committee, addressed to us, to support the undertaking and to appoint one of our Fellows as a member of the Committee, emphasizes the extreme importance of the work in words which may usefully be quoted: 'We are of opinion', runs the Report, 'that the constitution of a critical text of the Mahābhārata is the most important task in the domain of Indian scholarship at the present day. This very extensive national epic has been more intimately connected with the history of Indian civilization for more than 2,000 years than any other literary work. But research can make no real progress with the material it contains till a critical edition has been produced. The work has already been apportioned among a number of most competent Sanskrit scholars, and the Associated Academies have voted a sum of £2,500 towards the cost of the edition. Owing to the position of India in the British Empire the moral support of the British Academy would be of especial value in helping to raise the remainder of the funds necessary for the completion of the scheme. We would therefore without hesitation advise the Council of the British Academy both to support the undertaking and to appoint a delegate as a member

of the International Committee'. Professor Macdonell has accordingly been nominated to serve in this capacity.

Before proceeding to review the literary activities of the Academy, during the year, I should first report that the editing of the Survey of S. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, contained in a MS. in the Cottonian Library, has made fair progress; but it has not advanced so far as might have been wished. It will be remembered that this publication is to form the first volume of the series of social and economic records which the British Academy has undertaken. A large portion of the text is in print and is now passing under revision by the editorial committee, to whose care that duty has been assigned. But it is to be hoped that the volume will be in the hands of the Fellows before long.

In the annual literary output of the British Academy the lectures instituted under the Schweich Fund must always hold a prominent place. The inaugural lectures which were delivered last year by Professor Driver upon 'The results of archaeological research as bearing on the study of the Old Testament' have now been published, and you will be glad to know that the first edition is already exhausted. This result was only to be expected, having regard to the extreme interest of such a general survey of the field of archaeological research as the lectures covered.

The lectures for the present year have been delivered by the Rev. R. H. Kennett, Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge, his subject being the 'Composition of the book of Isaiah in the light of Archaeology and History'. These lectures, like those of Professor Driver, have been largely attended.

Professor George Adam Smith has accepted the Council's invitation to deliver the Schweich Lectures in the year 1910.

Of general papers which have been contributed at the ordinary meetings of the Academy, one by Professor R. S. Conway entitled 'The Records of the Venetic Language' embodied his report on the investigations which he undertook by the aid of a grant voted by the Academy, and is of considerable philological value. Dr. Postgate, Fellow of the Academy, gave a paper of interest for classical students entitled 'Flaws in modern Classical Research'. In the sphere of archaeology Professor W. Ridgeway, Fellow of the Academy, read a paper with the very suggestive title of 'Minos the Destroyer rather than the Creator of the so-called Minoan culture of Cnossus'. Two papers connected with architecture will also appear in the next volume of the Proceedings of the Academy: the one being on the 'Evolution of Ancient Indian Architecture', by Professor A. A.

Macdonell, Fellow of the Academy; the other on the 'Nave of Westminster', by the Rev. R. B. Rackham, which was communicated by the Dean of Westminster, Fellow of the Academy.

These contributions to the ordinary proceedings of the Academy have during the past year been largely augmented by the papers which were written in connexion with the Milton Tercentenary. I may first enumerate these papers before going on to say a few words on the Celebration itself.

The essays were:—

'Milton as an Historian,' by Professor C. H. Firth, Fellow of the Academy.

'A consideration of Macaulay's Comparison of Dante and Milton,' by Dr. Courthope, Fellow of the Academy.

'Milton in the Eighteenth Century,' by Professor Dowden.

'Milton as Schoolboy and Schoolmaster,' by Mr. A. F. Leach.

'Milton's Fame on the Continent,' by Professor J. G. Robinson.

Also—by the kindness of Lady Jebb—a paper on 'Samson Agonistes and the Hellenic Drama', by the late Sir Richard Jebb, Fellow of the Academy.

As to the celebration of the Tercentenary itself, which took place early in December, the British Academy may be congratulated upon the success which attended it.

I venture to think that nothing could have been carried out in better taste. There was a general feeling that the ceremony should not be allowed to lapse into anything that might be considered an extravagant demonstration; and all who were engaged in the celebration were influenced by the consciousness of discharging a pious duty in memory of one of the greatest and most revered names in English literature.

At the inaugural meeting in the theatre of Burlington House on the 8th of December, the eve of the Tercentenary, which was attended by a large representative gathering, a fitting oration was delivered by Dr. A. W. Ward, Master of Peterhouse and Fellow of the Academy; and a paper was read on 'Milton and Music' by Sir Frederick Bridge, with vocal illustrations by the choristers of Westminster Abbey. At this meeting, too, were read the fine lines on Milton composed for the occasion by the late Mr. George Meredith. A certain pathos attaches to these lines when we remember that they were almost the last contribution to literature from the pen of that great writer. Performances of 'Samson Agonistes' brought the programme of the Tercentenary to a close.

The celebration of the Tercentenary also owed much, as it is a

pleasure to record, to the kind offices of the Lord Mayor, who most graciously gave a banquet in honour of the occasion for the Fellows of the British Academy and others; and also to the Rev. A. W. Hutton, who was a member of the British Academy Milton Committee, and who arranged a remarkable musical service at Bow Church, Milton's parish church, at which the Bishop of Ripon preached the sermon.

The International Historical Congress was held at Berlin in August last, and the British Academy was represented at it by some of its Fellows. An invitation which by direction of the Academy was offered at the Congress by Sir John Rhys, and was ably supported by Professor Percy Gardner, that the next meeting of the Congress should be held in London in 1913, was most cordially accepted. The British Academy is therefore responsible for the organization and successful management of the Congress in that year. Let us not rest quiet under the comfortable assurance that there are four years in front of us for preparation. May I express a hope that a handsome series of papers for the occasion may be taken in hand forthwith by Fellows interested in historical studies.

At the International Congress of Orientalists at Copenhagen the Academy was represented by Professor Rhys Davids.

Professor Macdonell will serve as delegate at the Five-hundredth Anniversary of the foundation of the University of Leipzig. Lord Reay will attend the University celebration at Geneva.

One of the most interesting meetings in which the Academy took part was that held on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Professor Wilamowitz-Moellendorff at the end of last December in Berlin. In the name of the Academy Sir William Ramsay, Fellow of the Academy, expressed our congratulations to the Professor, and this action evidently afforded great satisfaction not only to our distinguished Corresponding Fellow, but also to the assembled scholars who were present at the ceremony. It is above all things the friendly and fraternal feeling with which the British Academy is recognized by the Academies and scholars of other nations, that is one of our chief consolations and encouragements in our efforts to represent our country worthily in the International Association.

Here we may notice the literary appointments which have been obtained by Fellows of the Academy:—

Mr. Fitzmaurice Kelly has become Professor of Spanish in the University of Liverpool, a position which recognizes his eminence as a scholar in that language.

Mr. Reginald Lane Poole, in addition to his other University

duties, has been appointed Keeper of the Archives of the University of Oxford.

Mr. D. G. Hogarth, so well known in the archaeological world, has succeeded Dr. A. J. Evans as Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, to the development of which he will bring the advantage of his great knowledge and archaeological experience.

It is not necessary to notice honours other than literary, which have fallen to the lot of Fellows. There is, however, one which carries with it so much distinction, and which is bestowed for eminence in learning, as well as for eminence in the arts of peace and war, that I cannot forbear mentioning it. It gave universal satisfaction to the Fellows of the Academy when it was announced that His Majesty had conferred the Order of Merit upon Dr. Henry Jackson, our distinguished Fellow, the Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge.

It is with some embarrassment and with a sense of humility that I ask the Fellows to allow me to say a few words affecting myself personally. I have had the honour of holding the Presidency of the British Academy for two years; but I am only too conscious that the second year of my tenure of that great office has passed under circumstances of trouble to myself, and, I fear, of great inconvenience to the Academy. A severe illness with which I was stricken towards the close of last year totally incapacitated me from taking that active share in the work of the Academy to which I was eager to devote myself. The kindness with which the Fellows have refrained from pressing me in any way, and in tolerating my inactivity, has touched me most profoundly, and they must permit me to offer them my grateful, heartfelt thanks.

I felt that it was impossible for me to offer myself for re-election; indeed, it would have been altogether improper in me to do so. I hope that the election which will presently be brought before you of a new President will place in this chair one of our most distinguished Fellows, a man still comparatively young in years, of high distinction as a scholar, of great ability in public affairs, one who will, I am convinced, carry on the fortunes of the Academy to honour and glory, and whose term of office, I venture to prophesy, will mark a great and auspicious development in our career. We are at this moment, it may be said, in the first crisis of our history. We have entered our seventh year. In mortal life, we are told, each recurring seventh year marks a crisis of the constitution of the human frame. Our seventh year may be considered to have brought us out of infancy at least, and to have placed us in that period of

existence when we may be more critically judged by our works. We must not fail to meet that judgement and to justify our existence. There is much for us to do ; and that can only be done by unremitting labour on our part, both as a corporate body and as individuals. We have to plead our own cause. We have to compel recognition ; to convince unbelief ; to enforce sympathy. But we must face our difficulties with a good heart and with a cheerful spirit. If there is one word that I would choose for the motto of our Academy, that word is 'Courage'.