

SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

June 25, 1908

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

ANOTHER year has passed, and the British Academy, although now nearly completing the sixth year of its incorporation, is still a wanderer, without a home. This is not an ideal position for an august body to find itself in; but there are compensations. We have met with the greatest kindness from several of the Societies who have the good fortune to be settled in their own rooms in Burlington House, where, without envy, we may hope that they may ever continue to be. To the Royal Society, to the Society of Antiquaries, to the Royal Astronomical Society, to the Chemical Society, our best thanks are due for frequent hospitality. To all of them we are grateful. We are now the guests of yet another Society. At the close of last year arrangements were made by which the Linnean Society, in a most liberal way, have opened their doors to us and allowed us to find a temporary home with them. I am now addressing you in the Lecture Room of that generous Society, and I do not think that any Fellow of the British Academy will feel that he could be better lodged than in the handsome room in which we meet here to-day.

But while we thus benefit, and gratefully benefit, by the generosity of our friends, we must not rest at ease and be content always to be entertained as we are. Perhaps it may seem a work of supererogation to make application to an unsympathetic Government for the assignment of rooms to the Academy. An opportunity appeared to present itself not long since in this direction. The application was made, and you will not be surprised to hear that it failed. But one must not be discouraged by an occasional rebuff; and, although a refusal, couched, as it always is, in polite official language, might damp the ardour of the uninitiated, those who have had experience of the methods of public departments will not lose courage, but will take example from the importunate widow of the parable, and by much wearying at last attain the object in view.

It would have been a happiness to me if in this my first address as President of the British Academy, I had been able to announce that we had experienced during the past year no loss in our numbers by the fate to which we are all heirs. Last year, you will remember, we had to lament the decease of no less than four of our distinguished Fellows—a loss which dealt the Academy a grievous blow. If during the past twelve months we have been more mercifully spared in respect of numbers, yet the tragic suddenness with which we were deprived of the companionship of our Fellow and friend Sir Spencer Walpole added a sharper pang to our grief for his untimely death. No one took a keener interest in the welfare of the Academy; he was a member of our Council; and his experience in business, his sturdy common sense, and his ready judgement were invaluable assets in our deliberations. Alas, that we have to mourn for him, and to add his name to the roll of those whose work is accomplished!

Owing to the death of Sir Spencer Walpole, and the resignation of his seat on the Council by Sir Frederick Pollock, two vacancies were caused on the Council, and were filled by the election of Professor Henry Jackson and Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte.

The election at the last Annual General Meeting of four new Fellows, Dr. Henry Bradley, Mr. Herbert Fisher, Professor Postgate, and Professor Cook Wilson, has strengthened the Academy in the sections of History, Philology, and Philosophy.

In addition to Fellows, a number of distinguished scholars of other nations were added to our ranks as Corresponding Fellows. The names of Boutroux, Delisle, Harnack, Hoeffding, Judge Holmes, Sachau, Willamovitz-Möllendorff, Gildersleeve, William James, and de Martens are famous throughout Europe and America, and add a lustre to the roll of the British Academy.

In the present year the Council have determined not to propose an election of Corresponding Fellows, having regard to the ample number elected in the past year.

Since the last Annual General Meeting, the report of the Third General Assembly of the International Association of Academies, held at Vienna in May and June, 1907, has been issued. The Academy was represented by Professor Bywater and Professor Gollancz. Among the projects before the Association, those which fall under the section of Letters claim the interest of the British Academy, and in particular the project of a Greek Thesaurus, which was proposed by the Academy at the meeting of the International Association held in London in 1905. A resolution was passed 'That the Greek Thesaurus Committee be continued as an autonomous com-

mittee to promote the project of the Greek Thesaurus and for the consideration of ways and means'. Certain recommendations were made by the committee and communicated to the British Academy, and are now under consideration by the Greek Thesaurus Committee of the Academy, which is empowered to continue to sit, in view of further developments. It will be remembered that the project was originally proposed by our lamented Fellow, Sir Richard Jebb, than whom no one had a higher claim to lay it before the constituent Academies.

With regard to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, to which the British Academy is enabled by the liberality of the Secretary of State for India to contribute the sum of £200 annually for ten years, the first Part has been issued in three languages: English, French, and German. The issue of the English version is the result of this contribution. But for so vast an undertaking as the Encyclopaedia a considerable outlay in the future has to be anticipated, and accordingly, at the meeting of the Association it was resolved to petition for further financial support from the Governments of such countries as number Mohammedans among their populations.

The great critical edition of the Mahabharata is being advanced chiefly by the efforts of the Göttingen Academy.

In the preparation of the Pali Dictionary, to which the British Academy contributes a modest grant, the services of our Fellow, Professor Rhys Davids, are recognized by the Association.

Among other subjects dealt with was one of general importance, namely, the project for the direct international loan of manuscripts and books.

The proposal to publish a corpus of Greek records, put forward by the Royal Bavarian Academy, has been accepted, and, as a preliminary work, the Association has approved of the compilation of a register of all existing documents preserved in the collections of various countries.

The *Corpus Medicorum Antiquorum*, the publication of which has also been undertaken by the Association, is to be directed by an international committee on which our Fellow, Professor Bywater, has been nominated to serve.

A proposal by the British Academy for the compilation of a Bibliography of historical and philosophical papers is in abeyance, in view of a similar scheme undertaken by the Brussels Institute of Bibliography.

The independent work which the British Academy has provisionally undertaken, viz. the publication of social and economic records, will now take shape in the publication of the Cartulary, or rather Rental,

of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, from a MS. in the British Museum of great value for the history of land tenures in Kent. The text has been copied and is being compared and annotated by the editor, Mr. G. J. Turner, whose qualifications for the work are of the best. He is well known as an able editor of publications of a somewhat kindred nature issued by the Selden Society. The copy will be in the printer's hands almost immediately, and, it is hoped, will be issued in the course of some months. In order to insure the best results, the supervision of the edition is placed with a small sub-committee of Fellows of the Academy: a plan which will be followed with all future volumes which may be issued in this series. The undertaking is a most important one. English historical collections have, as we know, been issued in many forms, and notably in the great series of *Chronicles and Memorials*, edited under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. But for the history of the social and economic progress of the country no systematic publication of documents has ever been taken in hand. Here is a great opportunity for the British Academy to do useful work of the highest interest and public value. It is true that the issue of this volume is to be regarded as experimental, but personally I feel no doubt that when the intrinsic value of such a publication is fully realized (and I am sure that we shall not have long to wait before it is fully realized) there will be no lack of means for carrying on a work of such national importance.

In the course of last year the British Academy voted a small grant of £50 to Professor R. S. Conway, in aid of researches on Venetic and Ligurian inscriptions. Professor Conway has now submitted a preliminary report upon the progress made in the work, and he proposes to bring before the Academy a contribution upon the Pre-Italic dialects, the first part of which would deal with the inscriptional and other records of the language of the Veneti. A full report will be read by Professor Conway at our meeting in July.

During the year has been delivered a course of lectures by Professor Driver under the terms of the Schweich Trust Fund. That Fund, as you will remember, consists of a munificent gift of £10,000 made to the Academy by an anonymous donor in memory of the late Leopold Schweich, of Paris, for the furtherance of research in the archaeology, art, history, languages, and literature of ancient civilization with reference to biblical study. The trust deed has been duly executed. The money has been invested; and the British Academy is fully empowered to dispense the interest of the Fund for the objects named. Under the terms of the trust a series of at least three lectures

are to be delivered annually. In the past year the Academy invited Professor Driver to undertake this duty. His inaugural lectures on 'The Results of Archaeological Research as bearing on the Study of the Old Testament' were delivered in the Theatre at Burlington House, and were largely attended both by the Fellows of the Academy and by the general public. They will soon be in printed form in your hands, and you will be able to judge for yourselves the masterly manner in which Professor Driver sketched the progress of biblical archaeological research down to the present day.

The moral value of a benefaction of this nature, when conferred, as this has been, upon a Society in the early years of its foundation, is hardly to be overestimated. Here is a recognition of the high position taken by the British Academy, and of its ability to dispense such benefactions in the best interests of learning. It is for this reason in particular that we, the Fellows of one of the youngest of the Academies of the world, owe a debt of gratitude to the generous donor who has entrusted the Schweich Fund to our care. I can but echo the hope expressed by Lord Reay, in his address last year, that this Fund is only the beginning of similar trusts to be administered in the future by the British Academy.

Leaving other matters which have engaged the attention of the Academy, I would briefly refer to the extremely interesting paper read by Professor Gollancz on 'Spenseriana'; to the contribution of Professor Percy Gardner on 'The Gold Coinage of Asia before Alexander the Great'; and to Mr. Andrew Lang's suggestive paper on 'The Origin of Terms of Human Relationship'.

The present year brings with it the usual accompaniment of congresses. The International Congress of Orientalists is to be held at Copenhagen in August, when the British Academy will be worthily represented by Professor Rhys Davids. The value of this Congress has been more and more recognized every succeeding year, and it is a satisfaction to think that Great Britain, the greatest oriental Power in the world, is beginning to show an interest in oriental matters. It is noteworthy that a paper on oriental studies in England, by Professor Rhys Davids, at one of the early meetings of the Academy, has had a most important effect. The attention thus drawn to the subject has led to the appointment of a Treasury Committee, under the presidency of Lord Reay. This committee is now sitting, and it is to be hoped that when its report is issued, oriental studies in this country will receive an impetus, and obtain the support and encouragement, so long wanting, of a British Government slowly awakening to the fact that British scholars are

capable of adapting themselves to the study of Eastern languages, which until recently have been left with somewhat contemptuous good nature to the enterprising foreigner and the zealous professor of other lands.

In a few days will be celebrated in these rooms by the Linnean Society the fiftieth Anniversary of the reading of the joint Essay by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace which led the way to the issue of the famous *Origin of Species*. I shall have the honour of representing the Academy on that occasion.

The Congress of Historical Science, to be held in Berlin in August, will be attended by our Fellows, Mr. Bryce, now on his way home for a brief respite from his ambassadorial duties at Washington, Professor Bury, and Professor Haverfield.

A happy suggestion has been made, and has been welcomed by the Council, and, I believe, will also be welcomed by the Fellows, that occasionally meetings of the British Academy should be held, when fitting opportunities present themselves, in Oxford and Cambridge. So many of our Fellows are members of the sister Universities, that it seems only a natural and proper thing that the Academy should put in an appearance from time to time at those seats of learning. Such occasions as the reading of papers by members of one or other University may be very properly utilized for such migrations of our meetings from London.

At the close of this year, on December 9, there is to be a Tercentenary celebration of the birth of Milton, and the arrangements for carrying it out have been entrusted to the British Academy. An invitation to initiate a movement for the commemoration of the Tercentenary, in the form of a letter addressed to the Academy and signed by the Lord Mayor of London, the Chairman of the London County Council, the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, the Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, the High Master of St. Paul's School, and Mr. H. A. Harben on behalf of the Trustees of Milton's Cottage at Chalfont St. Giles, was received in January last. The Academy have accepted the invitation and have appointed a committee of their Fellows, with power to add other members, to make all arrangements. We have undertaken the office with a due sense of the responsibilities of the occasion. It is a very necessary and seemly thing that a celebration of the birth of the great English poet, who above all represented the religious sentiment of his time in the great poems which are a monument of our English language in its most stately form, should be conducted with all dignity and reverence, and with simple ceremony. The

committee have not yet entirely formulated the programme, which will be submitted on a future date; but, as you are aware, with the authority of the Council, I have already addressed a letter to the public press inviting all educational authorities of English-speaking countries not to forget to mark the event in a suitable manner. It is not for the British Academy to suggest the ways in which those authorities should do honour to Milton.

I have now reported to you on the affairs of the Academy for the past twelve months. You, the Fellows, knowing the conditions, will recognize in this brief summary the points in which we may claim to have made progress, and those in which, perhaps, more might have been achieved. As an Academy, we have a right to the position taken by the Academies of foreign countries who are recognized by their respective Governments as bodies whose advice and assistance can be sought in all matters appertaining to literary and scientific knowledge. In our own country it is our function to do for humane learning what the Royal Society (our sister Academy in the International Association of Academies) does for the physical sciences. But the growth and development of such a body as ours must necessarily be a slow process, and too much must not be attempted at once. Slowly and surely, since its foundation scarcely six years ago, the British Academy has become firmly established, and has worthily taken its place among the Academies of the world—a position which has been honourably recognized by our colleagues in other countries. Original investigations; relations with other Academies and Societies; publication of such series as our social and economic series; administration of trusts, as in the case of the Schweich Trust; conduct of national commemorations, as, for example, the Milton celebration—in these, and such as these, the British Academy is to find its field of action.