

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

Dr. A. W. WARD

Read October 25, 1911

It seems fitting that the few observations which I propose to offer to the Fellows of the British Academy on taking the chair to which they have done me the honour of calling me, should be prefaced by a single word of sincere thanks. To myself my election is the crowning honour of a long literary life; nor can I prove my sense of its being such in any other way than by placing my services, so far as my powers reach, unreservedly at the Academy's disposal during my tenure of the office which it has conferred upon me. Occasions will be frequent during that tenure, however brief it may prove, of holding counsel with the Fellows, collectively or individually, or through their executive body and special committees, on steps to be taken or to be avoided by the Academy, in order that, while consistently adhering to the principles of its original foundation, it may develop and extend its usefulness as a national organ of learning. To-day, and before I have gained that closer experience both of our organization and of our work to which with your continued indulgence and co-operation I may look forward, I will enter into no speculations as to the future, and content myself with a brief reference to those undertakings in which we are already engaged, and which nothing but the narrowness of our corporate resources, partially supplemented though they recently have been by generous benefactions, can prevent us from expanding and multiplying.

Permit me one other personal word before I proceed. In doing my best to fulfil the duties which your confidence imposed upon me, I know that I may depend upon the advice and the support of our Council, and upon the devoted assistance of our Honorary Secretary. And I trust that I may also have recourse, at least occasionally, to the wise experience of Lord Reay, who not only as the first President of the Academy guided its initial years—years during which it had to acquire the confidence in itself and in its work necessary to the

existence and progress of any national institution—with a statesmanlike prudence and a firm dignity all his own, but who, when the great calamity befel us of the loss of his successor, was, to our general relief, found ready to act as our President during the greater part of the current year. It thus also came to pass that there devolved upon him the duty—a duty which no other member of our body could have performed with the same authority or with more dignity and grace—to dwell upon the losses which we have undergone in the course of the present session, and above all that of our honoured third President, the late Mr. Henry Butcher.

In the address delivered by Lord Reay on assuming the duties of Acting President, he paid to the memory of his immediate predecessor a tribute worthy of Henry Butcher's services and powers, of his personality and ideals. I have since, as no doubt have many other Fellows of the Academy, had the advantage of reading an account of his academical, literary, and political work by a brother member of our body united to him by the closest personal ties as well as by perfect intellectual sympathy; and I cannot but feel that after what Lord Reay has said and Dr. Prothero has written of the man we all mourn, no additional word from me either is needed or would perhaps be seemly. 'The fruitful plot of scholarism' was never 'grac'd' by a more assiduous husbandman; the turbid sphere of political conflict was never clarified by a nobler visitant; at least three great Universities are proud to claim him as their own, because to each of the three he rendered unstinted service.—I can attest this of the one which honoured him earliest and which he served latest, and where he was beloved in his constituency as he was in his Irish home.

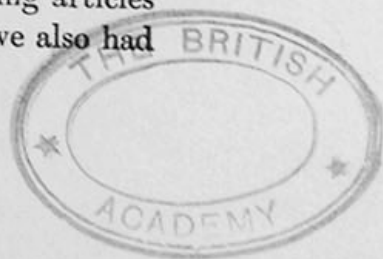
I have touched on the loss of our third President; may I say how sincerely we hope that a learned leisure and the rest which it should bring with it is attending the retirement of our honoured second President, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, under whose chairmanship our Academy first formed itself in his sanctuary at the British Museum.

Of another Fellow of the Academy, too, whom we lost later in the year, Lord Reay also spoke on the occasion to which I have referred with the same complete sympathy and with the special insight of one distinguished Indian administrator into the public career of another. The late Sir Alfred Lyall's indefatigable interest in affairs could remain no secret to any one who has sat with him at our council board; but his name will hold its place on the roll of our past worthies as that of a writer possessed of rare gifts and of a still

rarer combination of them—an historian of wide grasp, a literary critic of fine perception, and a master of fine English, whether in prose or in verse.

Yet a third of our Academicians has passed away, and he only since we last met to reckon the melancholy tale of our losses. The death, on August 16th last, of Dr. John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury, came with suddenness to his diocese and to the country, in the midst of his continuous activity as a divine. Though, in the many notices of him that have appeared since his death, special attention has been called to his great learning, which was almost without a parallel in matters connected with the literature, dogma, and history of the Church, as well as to his rare excellence as a Latinist, and though it is as a scholar that he should be particularly commemorated in this Academy, no Divine ever more fully illustrated in his person the ancient maxim that 'a learned Church is an active Church'. Familiar as he was with the records and the teaching of the past, he—in the words of a member of one of those Continental Churches to which he always held out a friendly hand—'hopefully and carefully sowed for the future', and the memory of this great scholar will long be cherished in circles which, unlike our own, the inspiring influence of his personality could never reach.

The losses on which I have touched cannot be redeemed except by a recognition of the fact that in the intellectual world what is good and great has alone the prerogative of enduring. And in a body such as ours we can never banish the satisfaction which flows from its continuous self-renewal, or dwell exclusively on our losses, however nearly these may come home to a *sodalitas* which should be ever drawing closer and closer the bonds of intellectual intimacy. To our numbers have recently been added three Fellows to whom we all extend a cordial welcome, and whom, if I may say so, it is a great personal pleasure to myself to see among us, since with two of them I have been closely associated in certain of the literary labours, and again with two in some of the academical experiences, of my life. It is a delight to us all to number among our Fellows Professor Saintsbury, a literary historian and critic of long-established and widespread renown; Professor Tout, to whom students of medieval and of general national history, and the study of history as a whole, are under deep obligations; and Professor A. E. Taylor who at a relatively early age has already done much first-rate work on a great variety of philosophical topics, and has produced important writings on Ethics and on Metaphysics, besides a number of learned and penetrating articles on the history of Philosophy, ancient and modern. We have also had



the honour of electing as Corresponding Fellows his Excellency M. Jusserand, whom all lovers of English scholarship and letters regard as one of the most distinguished members of their body, and who has this very year rendered a conspicuous service to our Academy; M. Henri Bergson, whose book on *Creative Evolution* is recognized by our own philosophical authorities as a work of rare originality and importance; M. Solomon Reinach, late President of the Académie des Inscriptions, to whom homage is due wherever a living interest is felt in the field of philosophical and archaeological studies which he has himself materially widened; and Mr. James Ford Rhodes, the veteran American historian, honoured not less in the old country than in the new whose later annals he has faithfully written.

I turn to some other experiences of the past year that are of interest to the Academy. The genial summer of 1911 has been marked by a series of interesting University jubilees, to all of which the British Academy was invited to send representatives. At Christiania a University—founded by private enterprise in days of depression and dependence—celebrated its centenary with extraordinary enthusiasm in the presence of its own national king. Here Professor Ker found himself in the midst of a distinguished assembly in which few other English scholars could have been so thoroughly at home, and which he addressed in a Latin oration, not lost, as we may trust, to regions whence it is only in later days that many return visits have been paid to the Northmen.

At the celebration of the Centenary of the University of Breslau, where the Academy was represented by Professor Burkitt, on whom the University conferred an honorary doctorate of Divinity, the proceedings and the welcome offered to the delegates of other Universities and learned bodies were equally genial. The occasion was full of interest; for, though the history of the actual University only goes back a hundred years, it is the representative of an Austrian and Roman Catholic Academical foundation, dating from a century earlier, as well as of another University, Frankfort-on-the-Oder, incorporated with Breslau in the great days of Humboldt, Fichte, and the Silesian Schleiermacher. Thus the University of Breslau represents two distinct stages of Silesian history as well as the cultured development of a Germanized land which in a still earlier century—the seventeenth—exercised a notable influence upon the progress of German literature.

The last of these celebrations was that at St. Andrews, and to this I had the honour of accompanying Lord Reay, a former Lord Rector of the University, as well as our own former President. The five-hundredth anniversary (for the University of St. Andrews could not

but refuse its own recognition to the word 'quincentenary') of the Mother University of Scotland was solemnized by a confluence of scholars and men of science from every part of the world, and by a flow of eloquence sufficient to fertilize the hallowed ground for a further long-continued growth. The historic note in these speeches was singularly marked, and rarely on such an occasion has the *admonitus loci*—in this case the silent eloquence of one of the most venerable havens of religion and learning in our island—met with a more inspiring and copious response. St. Andrews, at least, though her stones have grown grey with time and though she has associated with herself a vigorous younger College, will never be transplanted.

These celebrations call to mind a meeting of a rather different kind which is to take place in the year 1913, and to which together with ourselves a large number of other learned Societies at home and abroad, and what (though with the fear of Agathon before my eyes) I may call the world of historical studies, is looking forward with unusual interest. Leibniz's idea of a federation of learned Societies belonging to different lands is approaching realization, not only in that Association of Academies to a meeting of which in Paris our own Academy indirectly owes its being; but in meetings in the great centres of civilization of the members of Societies and others devoted to the pursuit and study of one of the great branches or departments of learning. The experiment of a meeting of historians and historical investigators from all parts of the civilized world was conducted with so much success at Rome in 1903 and at Berlin in 1908 that in 1913 it is to be repeated, we may hope with not inferior success, in London. The British Academy has thought it right to take the initial steps for ensuring the success of this great meeting, and in co-operation with the national Universities, as well as with the Royal Historical Society, the Society of Antiquaries and kindred bodies, is already engaged upon preparations necessarily entailing a good deal of labour. I may be forgiven for remarking that besides much labour they will also entail much expense, and that the Executive Committee which the Academy, in conjunction with other representative bodies, is setting on foot will, it is hoped, not appeal in vain for support which will be urgently needed.

The ordinary work of the Academy divides itself naturally into two halves, each of which is a necessary complement to the other. On the one hand, the flow of special contributions to learning in the form of papers and lectures has shown no sign of decrease or drought; and in our lecture-theatre at least we need not fear the cry against undue

specialization of research which in the last year has been raised so loudly—I will not here examine with what justice—against recent University developments both at home and abroad. Our august Sister on the Seine can take care of her own interests and her own credit, and judge for herself of the measure in which she has developed the conceptions of her illustrious founder and satisfied the ideals which half a century ago were—in a spirit blending enthusiasm with just a little irony—placed before her by one of the most brilliant of her members, the late Ernest Renan. She has certainly had no reason for being depressed by recent attacks; the last of these which has fallen under my notice impugns her time-honoured mode of election; but the censor is fain to confess that, so far as results are concerned, a popular vote would be unlikely to have a very different issue. For ourselves, it is enough—at all events for the present—that we should pursue with unremitting zeal, though also with constant circumspection, the various pathways of research which in continually growing numbers lead us and our fellow-students towards the same sanctuary of knowledge, and offer the fruits of our labours without overlooking the fact that we are a *British Academy*—the organ of studies of which the records claim to form part of the national *literature*. Thanks to the untiring labours of our Honorary Secretary, vols. iii and iv of our Proceedings are now, or will be very soon, in your hands. In the particular field of Biblical Archaeological research the liberality of an anonymous friend of Professor Gollancz has provided us with a trust fund of £10,000—the Schweich Lecture fund—under which three largely attended courses of public lectures have already been given by eminent scholars—Professors Driver and Kennett, and Principal George Adam Smith—under the auspices of the Academy; a course of lectures under this fund will be delivered before Christmas next by Professor S. Macalister on the subject of the *Philistines*. Another benefactor, who also desires to remain anonymous, has through our Honorary Secretary enabled us to found an annual Warton lecture on English Poetry, and an annual Shakespeare Oration. You are aware that the Academy was fortunate in inducing one of its Fellows, Professor W. P. Ker, to be our first Warton lecturer (though it could not induce him to accept any fee); and we are all looking forward this afternoon to the second Warton lecture by another of our Fellows, the author of a history which enters into direct competition with Warton's own classical work. You are also aware that the first Shakespeare Oration on the foundation of the same benefactor was—to our great and general delight—delivered in July last by M. Jusserand, whom on the same day we had elected one of our Corresponding

Fellows, and that on this memorable occasion the Academy had the pleasure of welcoming a large number of its friends at a friendly gathering.

The other division of the Academy's work is one still attended by great difficulties, inasmuch as it is only step by step, and by co-operation with other authorities and institutions, that we can at present hope to perform our natural function of promoting important collective undertakings whereby those branches of learning with the cultivation of which we are directly concerned will be materially advanced. In the early days of the Academy it was fortunate enough to be able to obtain a substantial grant from the Secretary of State for India (£200 for ten years) in aid of the *Dictionary of Islam*, which is progressing towards completion under the distinguished editorship of Dr. Snouck Hurgronje; and from the same source we are now in the position of aiding the critical condition of the *Mahabharata*, by means of a lesser grant for the same period. From our own slender resources, as yet unreplenished by any Government grant, we are, so far as we can, supporting the preparation of the *Dictionary of Pali*, and that of a *Bibliography of British History*, from the Tudor reigns onwards, which has been undertaken by a joint Committee of British and American Scholars presided over by one of our Fellows, Dr. Prothero. We have further made ourselves responsible for the publication of *Social and Economic Records*, under the editorship of yet another of our Fellows, Professor Vinogradoff, of which the volumes now at press are the Cartulary of the Abbey of St. Augustine, the Record Office Survey of the Knights Templar, and the Kentish Cartulary. Finally—through means privately and personally generously placed at the disposal of our Honorary Secretary—the Academy has undertaken to issue the reproduction of the Cædmon MS.—perhaps the most important of Anglo-Saxon MSS.—in commemoration of the recent Tercentenary of the Authorized Version of the Bible; and it is hoped that other Anglo-Saxon MSS. will also be issued in fac-simile. I have much pleasure in stating that M. Jusserand has gracefully signified his wish that the fee due to him for his recent Shakespeare Oration should be handed over as his contribution towards this project which is meeting with as hearty a welcome from American and continental scholars as from those at home. In the same connexion I am desirous of mentioning that the Academy has expressed its goodwill, and will, many of us hope, at some not distant date, be able substantially to contribute to the scheme of the Early English Text Society for the reproduction of some of the chief MSS. of Early English Literature in memory of the Society's first Director, the late Dr. Furnivall, one of

the original Fellows of our body, which had to regret the loss of him in the summer of last year as that of one of the most strenuous and large-hearted English scholars of any age. The first volume of the Series (*Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, and Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*), edited by Dr. Furnivall's successor in the Directorship, Professor Gollancz, our Honorary Secretary, will, it is hoped, be issued on February 4th, the anniversary of Dr. Furnivall's birthday; and the reproduction of other Early English MSS. will follow as soon as possible. I am particularly anxious to impress upon Fellows of the Academy who take a leading part in the affairs of other learned Societies, the expediency of associating with their activities that of our own institution; there is not one of these Societies, in so far as their work has any homogeneity with our own, with which it is not expedient and desirable that the Academy should be in the closest touch. In this connexion I may perhaps mention that the Council of the Academy has to-day resolved to memorialize the Secretary of State for India against the proposed abolition of the office of Director-General of Indian Archaeology, which, as administered by its present distinguished occupant, has signally contributed to the advance of a study of the deepest interest to our body.

I must not detain you a moment longer, and I therefore beg you to draw your own inferences from the facts which it seems only right on this annual occasion to bring before you. If our resources grow with our years, and above all if the State recognizes the significance of the services which we desire to render, and which we believe we can render, to the promotion of a wide range of learned studies in this country and Empire; the purposes for which the Academy was founded and chartered, and which all its Fellows have at heart, may find ample fulfilment. If we of the present generation are destined to see those purposes only partially and imperfectly accomplished, let us take refuge in the reflexion of the great Optimist, who never had a better excuse for despondency than the scanty immediate outcome of his efforts for the foundation of Academies, but to whom the majority of modern Academies owe perhaps more than to any other man—in the reflexion of Leibniz:—‘I confess that we must work for posterity. One often builds houses which one will never inhabit, and plants trees whose fruits one is not to enjoy.’