

NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

July 5, 1911

ADDRESS BY LORD REAY, ACTING PRESIDENT

It is with a deep sense of the transient nature of human life that I find myself addressing you this day from the Presidential Chair, left vacant all these months, since he who filled it with so much dignity, grace, and devotion was suddenly taken from the midst of those to whom he had endeared himself by the many charms and distinctions of his lofty character.

When he addressed you a year ago, he congratulated the Academy on reaching for the first time the prescribed limit of our full Century of Fellows. Since then our ranks have become depleted—Furnivall, Peile, Mayor, one after another, departed; then came our heavy blow, and we could scarcely realize that our President in the very prime of life had passed away! And soon after, that fine stalwart embodiment of the very best combination of culture, exact learning, and active patriotism, ripe in years, honoured, and esteemed, also paid Nature's exacting debt. By the death of Sir Alfred Lyall the Academy lost a sagacious adviser, a distinguished historian who understood the East, and worker for the cause of Humane Learning.

I, in common with so many others, paid, however inadequately, our tribute to the memory of our late President. The Office he dignified will this day be filled again; and I have little doubt that the assembled Body will acclaim the Council's nomination of his successor. To-day, too, we will fill up some of the gaps in our ranks. And so, though our dear comrades fall, with renewed strength and redoubled effort we march onward, in faith, and trust, and hope; believing that successors will never fail us, able to carry to the highest success the cause for which the British Academy has its being.

It is not for me, to-day, to deal with any such problems as those which were treated successively by our late President in his Annual Addresses. At the beginning of next Session the task will fall to our

new President to address you, and to give expression to his views on aspects of the Academy's work and aims. My duty, as Chairman this day, is briefly to recount some points in the past year's history of the Academy. We have had a series of excellent Papers on topics which come within the scope of our activities. In addition to the Ordinary Papers, Dr. Adam Smith's course of Schweich Lectures on 'the Poetry of the Hebrews' was a noteworthy achievement; at least a thousand must have attended the Lectures, which will soon, we hope, be given to the world as the Third Volume of the series on Biblical Archaeology. In November last a beginning was made with the new fund, which we owe to an anonymous donor, for English Literature and Language, and more particularly for the Warton Lecture on English Poetry and the Annual Shakespeare Lecture. Professor W. P. Ker's Inaugural Lecture on 'Thomas Warton' was all that his friends looked for from so erudite a critic. Especially gratifying was the due tribute paid by him to another distinguished fellow-worker in the same field—I allude to Dr. Courthope, whose great work on 'The History of English Poetry' has been brought to its conclusion. The Council has invited Dr. Courthope to deliver the Second Warton Lecture at the beginning of the next Session: he has chosen as his theme 'The Connexion of Ancient and Modern Romance'. To-day we are inaugurating the Annual Shakespeare Lectures; and I rejoice that when we meet M. Jusserand this evening we shall be able to welcome him as one of the small and distinguished band of Corresponding Fellows of the British Academy. It gives me pleasure also to announce to the Academy that the Council has recently decided to undertake the issue of the reproduction of the famous Caedmon MS. of Anglo-Saxon Poetical Paraphrases of the Bible, preserved at the Bodleian Library, and one of its greatest possessions. During the past twenty years, it has been the cherished desire among scholars to possess this priceless treasure of antiquity in facsimile, a MS. of such deep interest for the history of Old English Poetry and also of Early English Art. Perhaps a dozen futile efforts have been made to bring this about, and more recently an effort, promoted by American scholars, has not been more successful, though those concerned will be delighted to hear that, through means privately and personally placed at the disposal of Professor Gollancz, the Academy, having obtained permission from the Curators, has put the work in hand, and at the Oxford Press it is already making progress. The Caedmon Volume may be considered as the Academy's contribution to the more comprehensive scheme, approved by the E. E. Text Society, to promote the issue of a series

of facsimiles of the chief Anglo-Saxon and Middle English MSS., in the first instance as a memorial to the Founder of the Society, our indefatigable late Fellow, Dr. Furnivall. In America, the Modern Language Association is desirous of furthering such a project. The Council of the Academy has expressed its strongest approval of so important a scheme, and it is hoped that the Academy may at some time or other be in a position to assist the combined efforts of English, American, and foreign scholars in this direction. It is gratifying to the Academy that the Secretary has, by Dr. Furnivall's expressed wish, succeeded the veteran Founder as Director of the Early English Text Society. I personally am specially glad to be able to state that the reproduction of the Caedmon MS. is being guaranteed on the express condition that it be issued to commemorate the recent Tercentenary of the Authorized Version of the Bible: in this way, the Academy will be able to evince perhaps in the best manner possible its participation in what was the most important literary commemoration of the year.

As regards the various enterprises which the Academy is helping forward, I have but to remark that the Encyclopaedia of Islam is making steady progress, and that preparations for the Critical Text of the *Mahābhāratha* are proceeding satisfactorily; the British Academy's series of 'Records of British Economic and Social History' will soon be inaugurated, we hope, by the publication of two or three volumes, consisting of 'the Cartulary of the Abbey of St. Augustine', the Record Office Survey of the Knights' Templar, and the Kentish Cartulary. I desire to call attention also to the Academy's new series of Supplemental Papers, of which the first has been recently published, Professor Bury's edition of 'The Kletorologion of Philotheos', with its important study on 'the Administrative System of the Ninth Century'.

As one thinks of the work that the Academy might so well do, if it received but a small subsidy from the State, our late President's words are recalled in which he maintained that the denial of State support to Organized Learning, outside the sphere of the Physical Sciences, tended to lower the intellectual dignity of Great Britain in international relations; and through this cold neglect the British Academy was crippled in the exercise of precisely those functions which were most distinctive of an Academy of Learning.

We desire again to express our sincerest thanks to the Royal Society for its most gracious hospitality.

It is my pleasant duty to express the Academy's hearty congratulations to members of our Body upon whom various honours, so well

merited, have recently been bestowed. And first I would name Sir George Trevelyan, who now joins that most select of all Orders, the Order of Merit, which already numbers Bryce and Dr. Henry Jackson on its illustrious roll, and which in the past included the names of Jebb and Lecky; to Sir William Anson, Sir Frederick Pollock, and Sir John Rhys we offer our congratulations on their promotion to the Privy Council; to Dr. Evans, Dr. Sandys, and Mr. Sidney Lee on their knighthoods, and to Dr. Kenyon on his Companionship of the Bath. Our Fellows have received welcome recognition from foreign Universities and Academies, and I may single out particularly the honorary degree of Doctor of Law conferred upon Professor Vinogradoff by the University of Berlin; he has been elected also a Corresponding Member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences.

It is now my privilege to propose to you the Council's unanimous nomination for the Office of President: when one takes into account Dr. Ward's distinction as a scholar, his services to Learning, his position as Head of the most ancient College in the great University of Cambridge, when one further recalls his devotion to the Academy, there can be little doubt that the choice of the Council and of the general Body could fall upon no one more fitting for the Presidential Chair; and I feel sure you will unanimously invite him to succeed our lamented friend Mr. S. H. Butcher. He is one of the very few remaining of the band who were originally called upon to deal with the whole question of the foundation of the British Academy. Acton, Sidgwick, Jebb, Lecky, Leslie Stephen, Caird, Maitland, all these early pioneers have passed. He, we feel sure, will advance their aims, their aspirations, and their hopes. Without any further comment on my part, I have the honour to submit to you the name of Dr. A. W. Ward for the Office of President, and in doing so, as your first President, would once again express my fervent good wishes for the future of our Academy—

'Floreat Academia Britannica.'