

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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IN a footnote to the Presidential address for 1941, which like much other printed matter these days appeared rather late, was recorded what, I would argue, was the most important event in the history of the Academy during the year now closed—the death of Sir Arthur Evans. Whether the uncovering of the Minoan civilization was the greatest achievement of our time in the wide fields of those studies for which we stand might be disputed—by papyrologists perhaps, or Sumerian archaeologists; maybe by mathematical philosophers, or the psychologists of the newer schools. To me, no expert in any of these fields, it remains the greatest. Few things, I may add, have hurt me more of late than the thought that the Minotaur, the man-beast, is again in Crete, and once more is levying a tribute of young lives there and in Greece. Whatever our estimate of Evans's work, we must agree that with his death the last page in the first volume of the history of the Academy has been turned. In our Charter of Incorporation of 8 August 1902 'Arthur John Evans, keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford' stands between Robinson Ellis and Andrew Martin Fairbairn. No name of any man now living is in the Charter, although within a year of its sealing, the founders, most wisely, elected one who is here to-day, to whom the Academy and its Presidents—like many other societies and organizations—are in perpetual debt.

If the turning of that last page is the chief event in our domestic history for the year, the year's *weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung*—there are notions for whose expression German is still the most convenient, even the most concise, medium—lies in the completed association for the defence of many values for which an Academy stands of four great and most diverse civilizations: that of the realms which acknowledge our King; that of the United States of America; that of China; and that of what I will call, for convenience if inexactly, the Russian Republics. And linked with us in spirit, and by their representatives in exile, are the oppressed and threatened civilizations of Europe. Not long ago I had the good fortune to preside at a little gathering of historians from seven allied nations. It was at one of the many dark moments in the history of these swaying campaigns. No one present was

more confident, or more inspiring to the rest than a Norseman and a Dutchman. Since that meeting I have had inspiration from behind the veil. A postcard came through from France—in six weeks. From where in France and from whom I must not say. But the writer was an old friend. 'Nous allons aussi bien que possible,' he wrote, 'et le moral est solide . . . je vois . . . que vous continuez à travailler. Je vous en félicite de tout cœur. Nous reparlerons un jour de tout cela et nous confronterons nos expériences d'historien.'

That we are at last side by side with the people of China, who always gave to art its due place in civilization and to pure learning at one time perhaps a little more than its due place, must be satisfactory to every Fellow of an Academy. A British scholar's mission of friendship and collaboration will start shortly for Chung-king. As our Council does not meet in summer the Secretary and I are taking upon ourselves to send a message of goodwill to the Academia Sinica. I cannot think that anyone will criticize us for so doing: if anyone does we are prepared to face a vote of censure.

An economic historian, whatever his political opinions or prejudices may be, or may have been, stands gladly beside Russian scholars, red or less red, domiciled or exiled. They have always shown a special gift for the economic interpretation of history, their own or ours, contemporary or ancient. I think of Vinogradoff, Kovalevsky, and Klyuchevsky, Rostovtzeff, and my recent correspondent Ostrogorsky, who was working at Byzantine economic history in Belgrade until the storm burst. Whether he has survived it I do not know.

It is heartening to learn from Russia that the treasures of the Hermitage 'have been evacuated to a safe place' and that members of the Hermitage staff are working at Greek coins found on Russian soil, studying the primitive culture and archaeology of the Urals, and following up on the ground the Bactrian inquiries which have interested our colleague, Dr. Tarn.

As to the United States, those in their seats of learning—and especially Harvard of which I have the honour to be an *alumnus*—have almost invariably been so close to us from the beginning, so whole-heartedly in accord with our ideals, and so eager to see their country standing armed at our side, that her position there seems obvious and natural. One odd little result of her combatant zeal and how it affects university life I learnt recently from another of our Fellows, Dr. Coulton. He is a temporary resident in Toronto. Since war began for the United States he

has been asked to give only a single lecture there. He had given about twenty, in all sorts of places, during the previous year. A man of war from his youth, he is delighted with the decline in what economists call the demand schedule for his academic services.

I return to our domestic affairs and the second volume of our history. There is no need to summarize the record of activity now before you in the Annual Report; but I should like to call attention to the sustained vigour of what is to me—I speak as student, not as President—the most interesting of the learned series which we help to support, one that Fellows of ours edit—the volumes of the English Place-name Society. Nottingham and Middlesex have both appeared in war-time, and I am looking forward to Cambridgeshire, which I know to be almost complete. Our Annual Report was rather late but that was no fault of the secretariat. The Report does, however, contain a small blemish, for alluding to which I hope the secretariat will pardon me. On p. 3 a new Corresponding Fellow, and my friend, Professor Charles McIlwain of Harvard is disguised as Professor McIlwraith. No doubt this is due to hurry at the finish, though I doubt if the readers of the Press in another place—who know their McIlwain—would have passed it. Permitting myself that inter-academic jibe, I now make apology to Professor McIlwain in the name of this Academy.

Our losses by death during the year have been numerically light—three Corresponding Fellows, four Ordinary Fellows, and one retired Fellow. Of the inner five, Sir Arthur Evans was turned 90 and two others were nearer 90 than 80. Here is no place for tears: they had done their work; but the death of Raymond Wilson Chambers at what to our long-lived caste seems the early age of 67 is lamentable. We had hoped for much more scholarly output from a man whose range was as wide as his mastery of whatever he touched was complete—from *Widsith* and *Beowulf* to Sir Thomas More and Shakespeare.

A year ago I called the Academy's attention to the fact that the average age of the ten Ordinary Fellows whom it had just elected was 53·6. I may complete those statistics by noting that the average of the seven elected to-day is 54·3. One Section even sent forward, and you and the Council have approved, two candidates whose mean age is not quite 41; and it was this that kept the total average so low. Last year I begged Sections, if they approved a policy of keeping the average age of election down with a view to the future activity of the Academy as a

whole, to 'supply the Council and the Annual Meeting with candidates of appropriate immaturity'. This Section, with which I admit I am connected, has complied. It had lost three members recently by death and found that its depleted list, always short, contained one Fellow of 85 and another of 87. There was a call for young blood.

Might I refer to an argument for early election based not on the interests of the Academy but of the man? The election of an old or elderly scholar may be to him a great pleasure, as an act of recognition, but can seldom be of any direct use. In Royal Society circles you hear of early election being brought forward as an argument in favour of a man's academic promotion, or in some other way affecting his career. With us men have generally got as far forward as they can ever hope to get before we find room for them. If we could see our way to increase the number of elections of men in early middle life I believe we should help both ourselves and them.

On what scale this can be done without increasing our membership of 150 is doubtful. Into that I will not go. The third year of a war on whose course and issue the clouds still hang is no time for opening constitutional questions. We have to settle back to our old oars; to keep as much way on the boat of learning as the needs of the present allow or those of the future urgently require; and to fortify our faith in it and in our country's cause.