PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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14 July 1943

AS I sat engaged in what the ritual of the old Scottish home called, I believe, 'gathering in my thoughts', before not family prayer or public worship but the composition of this discourse, someone opened my study door and said 'We have invaded Italy'. It was not a quite accurate report; but that was how it came four days back. In that form—or even had 'Sicily' been substituted for 'Italy'—it was enough to set the bells ringing in the mind of any member of any Section of this Academy, unless perhaps that of a very highly specialized member of Section VII or Section IX. As destruction poured down on Sicily from above I had been thinking of Monreale and Cefalu, of the quarries at Syracuse and of Greek temples near which, for all I knew, Italians might have negligently sited their airfields. Scylla might very easily have been shaken out of her cave. And now it was war, war above and war below, on Sicilian or Italian soil, or on both. What would the end of that be? What the end of the war would be I now at last knew well. I find that a year ago I spoke of swaying campaigns and the fortifying of our faith in our cause: the first six months of 1942 had not been a bright spell in the chronicle of the *gesta Dei per Anglos*. To-day one can speak differently. There are still no illusions. Campaigns will sway again; but now for eight months the swaying has been all one way, with only slight backward jerks, as of a tree under the axe. It is possible that this will be so to the last. But what may not the tree crush in its fall—of temples and palaces and all the beauty of Italy?

That sorrow for the Italians, to which we all so easily incline, rises again. I spoke of sympathy for them some time ago to a Fellow of the Academy who, of all others, has the best right to judge: he has written of Italy and for Italy, and has in effect fought for her. Him I found stern and I cannot but think just. Their sufferings, he maintained, were the wages of moral cowardice. Nine-tenths of them did not want this war, but they let themselves be flattered and led into it. I am saving up my sympathy, said he, for good people—like the Greeks. Yet one can sorrow for the probable loss of ancient and beautiful things, without condoning moral cowardice in nations. I am glad to

think that I can hardly imagine a campaign that might endanger my beloved Aosta: the Great Saint Bernard leads into Switzerland.

And one can sorrow even without condoning wilful murder. For damage to the cathedral of Cologne our grief would probably have its bounds. (We, at King's College, Cambridge, have left a half-window of 1843 to take its risks.) But if, as the President of the Society of Antiquaries fears, one of our earlier raids damaged that of Aachen—at a time when the enemy was not yet advertising his losses—I should be very sad. The Imperial Palace ruins and the Church of Our Lady at Trier, the Porta Nigra and the Roman piers of the bridge, have probably escaped our one daylight attack on a single site there; but the raid photographs show clearly enough the damage along the ancient main street of Lübeck; and the great church at Lübeck is—maybe was—of brick. For the fabric of Berlin no lover of beautiful or noble things would weep; but there are buildings, also of brick, in Danzig for damage to which I should be most sorry. Not, however, for the Germans' sake. I have come with regret, as have so many others, to think that damage, deep and bitter, to their own country is the one thing which may suggest to them that war, loosed at their chosen moment, is not a noble adventure or a profitable *razzia*, which may be won—or even as in 1918 lost—on the soil and to the damage of others. And those who in cold blood blew up Coucy-le-Château in the last war, and are said to have defiled the ancient churches of Novgorod in this, must not complain if—at the finish—there are many *gesprengte Türme* in Germany besides the one that the French blew into the castle ditch at Heidelberg in—was it?—1693, whose remains were so piously preserved in memory of crime.[1]

[1] In this connexion it is satisfactory to be able to report that active steps have been taken to safeguard ancient monuments in the Mediterranean theatres of war. On 29 March, in reply to representations made by the Academy, the Secretary of State for War gave assurances that the matter had not been overlooked, and that appropriate arrangements were being made. On 13 July he forwarded a detailed report of the measures adopted in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, where the Italian and Arab curators had been reinstated under the British administration. The Director-General of the Alexandria Gracco-Roman Museum (Mr. Alan Rowe) had been asked to make a full inspection of Cyrenaica and to advise on any further measures needed. After the earlier occupation of the province by British troops the Italians had issued a propaganda pamphlet alleging extensive vandalism, supported by photographs of destroyed sculptures in the museum at Cyrene. Mr. Rowe's investigation showed that the photographs were not taken in the museum, and did not, as alleged, represent the handiwork of Australian troops; they were

'Invasion of Italy' has led me a little distance out of the strict academic way. I turn back into it, to ourselves, our activities, and our losses; to what is only a running commentary on the Annual Report that is in your hands. So I may be brief. We have been able to fill all our lecturerships and with worthy scholars. We have found fit recipients for all our medals and prizes, except two. We have been partly responsible for the organization of an ancient monuments defence force in North Africa. And we have spent that half of the Treasury Grant which was restored to us two years ago in helping other learned societies through these hard years, among them the ancient and honourable Royal Asiatic Society. I say we; but no one knows better than your President how each and every bit of business, and every enterprise, has been prepared and executed by your Secretary.

It has been my practice not to speak from this chair of all the year's losses by death: only to comment on them, leaving the work of full appraisement of our dead to the expert memoir-writers whom the Council selects. We do not, however, compile memoirs of our Corresponding Fellows, and so it will not be out of place if I speak of one of them rather more than cursorily. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard, known to may of us, I last saw at the Harvard Tercentenary in 1936. He was then in his eightieth year, alert and resourceful, a practised speaker, who had to deliver a speech timed to the second. This he did with perfect skill. I shall not forget it. He was to be followed by Stanley Baldwin, speaking from England on the air. Before we assembled he had come to me and said: 'If Baldwin does not come through, you must get up and say something.' He may have heard that I have a carrying voice. So while he played with his watch and turned his sentences, I waited in some anxiety. Happily Baldwin came through to time.

taken in a shed used by the Italian curators as a workshop for the examination and repair of sculptured fragments discovered in excavations. Mr. Rowe's report was very satisfactory.

In Tripolitania particular care had been taken of the museum at Sabatha. Major Mallowan, Lt.-Col. Mortimer Wheeler, and Major J. B. Ward Perkins had given advice, and Major Ward Perkins had been seconded to act as adviser to the Civil Affairs Officer on the care of all ancient monuments.

Further, stringent instructions had been issued to the troops engaged in the invasion of Sicily, forbidding all export of works of art, enjoining the protection of works of art and ancient monuments, placing certain monuments out of bounds for troops, and temporarily closing all museums. It will therefore be safe heavily to discount any allegations of wilful damage to antiquities.

Lowell's very name was a bit of New England history: it is preserved in a certain satirical couplet, not I imagine unfamiliar, about the Lowells and the Cabots. He was an authority on comparative politics when I was an undergraduate. He was President of Harvard for twenty-five years. Few Americans were better known in England and Europe, and very few knew and understood them better. His life spanned the whole gap between our strident, rather murderous, age, with its recurring and quivering contests on the crowns of the bridges of war, and those years of peace, quiet thought, and generous aspiration which have been named by an American writer the time of the Flowering of New England. It was a time when New England and Old England were very near to one another.

Almost Lowell's contemporary was that member of the Academy who insisted on being known as Mrs. Sidney Webb—our sole woman Fellow. I cannot but hope that some Section or Sections will feel justified in putting forward a woman, or women, to fill the place: it is hard for me to believe that there is not one or more worthy of nomination. When the drama of social England and its thought during the last fifty years comes to be presented with full knowledge, I believe that Beatrice Potter, Beatrice Webb, will play not one part in it but several—sometimes in the foreground; constantly active towards the wings; now and then prompting the actors. In thought she passed from service with Herbert Spencer—who found public free libraries too socialistic—to a late and complete appreciation of Soviet Communism. I have been in the habit of condemning the huge Russian book, not because of that appreciation—the wind of appreciation must blow where it listeth—but on the ground of the inadequate acquaintance of its joint authors with Russian. To that criticism I adhere. But this in no way lessens my almost reverent respect for the bulk of their work, for the quality of very much of it, and for her resilient and adventurous personality. May I take this opportunity to state that, in my opinion, the most historically important of their many volumes is the one least known and least read. Part of the History of Local Government, it carries the rather astringent title *Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes*—and it deals with Courts of Sewers, Turnpike Trusts, and those vastly important but half-forgotten bodies of Improvement Commissioners, to whom we owe most of the urban amenities of a great age of urban design between 1750 and 1830.

I am tempted to break my self-made rule and speak of that

many-sided, courteous, and conspicuous man, Stephen Gaselee of my College; or of the seemingly austere, the wise, learned, and witty Francis Cornford of a sister College; or of Carlyle, the Oxford man on our roll of honour whom I knew best, though not so well as I could have wished. But I will hold to the ruling—except for Allen Mawer, whom I cannot bring myself to pass over.

A year ago I mentioned how eagerly I follow the work of the Place Name Society, which he inspired and we help. I anticipated the volume on *Cambridgeshire*: *Cambridgeshire* has come. The loss of Mawer, except for Gaselee the youngest of our dead, we had no reason to anticipate—Gaselee we knew was a sick man—though Mawer had not been consistently robust. No home of learning, someone has said to me, has borne more material and spiritual loss during this war than University College, London—and there are few better homes—its buildings shattered, much of its library gone, Mawer its Provost untimely taken. His successor is not one of us; but as he is a Fellow of the more ancient neighbouring Society I am perhaps entitled to welcome him. Of the work of the Place Name Society the Annual Report tells all that one need know. We confidently wish it continued prosperity under Professor Stenton; and we extend this wish to the other societies and committees, that I may call—I trust without offence—our pensionaries.

This is the third time that I have sat as President at an annual meeting of the Academy in time of war. You have just honoured me with re-election, so I hope to preside once more. I expect it will be a fourth war-time presidency; for I do not anticipate that by July 1944, general peace will have set in. There is, however, at least the possibility of peace in Europe within twelve months—the possibility, no more. I am certainly not counting on it; but that very odd thing the German mind, or should I say those odd things the German emotions, may work in unexpected, or only half-expected, ways to our benefit. There were suggestions of this in connexion with the Tunisian surrenders. We shall see. At least we separate to-day with lighter hearts than at any time these four years.