THE POSITION OF AN ACADEMY IN A CIVILIZED STATE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

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MY first duty—to be discharged briefly, because it is of a personal nature, and yet earnestly, because I feel it deeply,—is to thank the Academy for the honour which it has done me in electing me as its President. I value it highly, because (as I hope to show before I have finished) I rate highly the importance of an Academy in a civilized state; and the greater the importance of the Academy, the greater the honour of being for a time its President. I know, of course, that absence from London and multiplicity of engagements preclude many much better qualified than myself to be the titular leader of British scholarship from accepting the post; but at least I may take your election of me as a mark of your belief that I have the interests of the Academy at heart. That I may claim to be the truth. I had the honour to have a share in the discussions and negotiations which preceded its foundation; I have had the good fortune to see and take part in much of its working; I have the utmost confidence in its future, and in the share which it should take in the intellectual development of the country; and I should indeed be proud to think that I had in any way promoted its welfare.

A year ago the Academy listened to a Presidential address which I think no Fellow who heard or read it will easily forget. I am almost ashamed to follow a President who by his example set so high the standard of the office. In that address Lord Bryce showed himself the ideal philosopher in the highest sense of the term, θεατὴς παντὸς μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας. He took all knowledge for his province. He passed with sure and unostentatious familiarity over wellnigh every department of humanistic knowledge, as he has in the course of his long and vigorous life passed over wellnigh every country on the habitable globe. One who could appreciate so well

what has been done, and what remains to do, in every branch of knowledge with which our Academy deals, was incomparably equipped to be an ideal President. And Lord Bryce showed himself, during his four years' tenure of the post, to be not only the philosopher but the philosopher-king, able to come down from the realms of study and contemplation to take his part in guiding and governing his fellow-creatures, and to place at the disposal of the Academy that experience of men and affairs, that influence acquired by long and distinguished service to the State, which make him the Ulysses as well as the Nestor of our age.

The task of a President of the British Academy at the present time is not an easy one,—not easy, at any rate, to perform with any satisfaction to oneself. There is so much to be done, and the means and opportunities of doing it are so inadequate. The Academy is a new growth,—only fifteen years old as yet,—and like all new growths in this country, it has to make good its claim to exist in the face of a good deal of indifference, a good deal of prejudice, a good deal of criticism, in which its own members, according to our wont, take an ample part. It is like a newcomer into a well-established county society, who is expected to go softly until people have become accustomed to his existence, and to realize that he is a worm who should be thankful that he is not trodden upon. The British Government, like Providence, helps those who help themselves. It does not see a need and provide for it; but if private individuals make the required provision, it may, after a due allowance of discouragement and delay, be pleased to act upon the principle that to him that hath shall be given.

The duty of the Academy, therefore, during these fifteen years has been, and for some years to come will be, to make good its claim to the position which is the only one for which a national Academy has the right to exist, namely that of the leader and official representative of the studies which come within its sphere. It must, on the one hand, earn the confidence and support of the great constituency which it claims to represent, and, on the other hand, make good its claim in the eyes of the government and the country to be regarded as the representative of that constituency. Success in the former task depends on the wisdom of its elections and the due adjustment of the number of its membership; in the latter, on its ability to persuade a somewhat unsympathetic and unresponsive world that it has something to offer which that world would do well to accept.

I do not think that the present time is wholly unpropitious. It is true that *inter arma studia*, as well as *leges*, *silent*; that when the

fate of the nation hangs in the balance, people have not much attention to spare for matters of scholarship ; that it is useless to hope for those subventions from the public purse which are essential if the Academy is to do the work for which it exists. Yet there are countervailing considerations. The war has brought about a revision of values. It has forced us to think what this country stands for. We have seen our civilization, our ideals of life, our religion, challenged, and not merely our material welfare. One would fain believe that many people have been brought to realize, more fully and more consciously than before, the value of the things of the mind. There has been a great stirring in matters of education. It is becoming a matter of common acceptation (so much so that even the professional politician has to recognize it) that the future welfare of the country depends on our putting a good deal more brains into our daily life, and therefore on our spending a good deal more thought, a good deal more money, and above all a good deal more interest, on our national system of education. Now the thesis which I want to lay before you to-day is that a most important place in that system,—from one point of view the crown and summit of that system,—should be held by such bodies as the Royal Society and the British Academy.

It is unfortunate that most persons in this country derive their idea of what an Academy should be from a superficial acquaintance with the French Academy. The Académie Française is, no doubt, the most famous body in existence which bears the name of Academy. Hence the man in the street,—and likewise the man in the club and the lady in the drawing-room,—who hears of an Academy which is not the Royal Academy of Arts, assumes that it must be a body which deals with literature, which comprises the principal authors of the day, and takes a motherly, or perhaps a step-motherly, interest in contemporary language and literature. And when it appears that the members are not the most eminent men of letters of the day, the tendency is to conclude that they have arrogated to themselves a place to which they have no title.

The first stage therefore in making good the claim of the Academy, not merely to exist, but to hold a certain place in the intellectual equipment of the country, is to convince people that the French Academy is the least characteristic Academy in the world. Putting aside academies of fine art, which are a different class of institution altogether, it is fair to say that it is an exception, and a very rare exception, for the national Academy to be primarily a literary body. The really typical Academy is an Academy of learning, not of literature. Even in France,—I apologize for stating facts so well known

to every person present, though so little appreciated outside—the Académie Française is but one of the five Academies which together constitute the Institut de France. The other four,—the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, the Académie des Sciences, the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques—are true Academies in the sense in which the term is used in other countries. The Académie Française is an exception,—an exception occupying a great place in its own country, with a distinguished history in the past and a great position in the present, but in no way to be regarded as a normal Academy or a model for other countries.

Nearly all other Academies,—the ancient and distinguished Accademia dei Lincei at Rome, the Academies of Bologna and Turin in Italy, the Academies of Berlin, of Munich, of Göttingen, of Leipzig in Germany, the Imperial and Royal Academy of Vienna, the Imperial Academy of Sciences at Petrograd, the Academies of Holland and of Portugal,—are academies of learning. Their normal formation is in two classes, one comprising what we now commonly call humanistic studies, i. e. history, philosophy and philology (in the widest sense of the latter term), the other mathematics and natural science. Their members are scholars, not men of letters; or if men of letters, not because they are men of letters. Their business is, not to make orations about one another, not to act the part of policeman to the national tongue, but to promote learning in the departments of knowledge with which they are concerned, and to place the resources of that knowledge at the service of the state. In this country the Royal Society corresponds to one of these classes. The British Academy was founded to play the part of the other.

It may be of use to set down some facts and statistics with regard to foreign Academies, which will assist the comprehension of the position which they hold in their respective states. Most of them are definitely local institutions, consisting of professors in the leading state-university, with a few additions. Thus the Prussian Academy consists mainly of professors in the University of Berlin; there are thirty members in each class, all of whom must reside within twenty miles of Berlin. In addition, each class may have ten non-resident members, one hundred corresponding members, and an unlimited (but in practice very small) number of honorary members. The Bavarian Academy, which comprises three classes, history having a class to itself, apart from philosophy and philology, has twenty-four ordinary members in the class of mathematics and physics, and twelve in each of the other two, all of whom are required by statute to have their residence in Munich. The Academy of Bologna has

twenty-four ordinary members in its scientific class and sixteen in the humanistic, almost all being professors in that University; and Turin is nearly in the same case. The Accademia dei Lincei at Rome (fifty-five members of the scientific class, forty-five of the humanistic) is less locally limited, including many members from other parts of Italy, as well as residents in Rome who are not university professors. The members of the Academies composing the Institut de France reside in or near Paris.

One result of these local limitations is that the number of ordinary members is small, but that each Academy has non-resident members and correspondents of its own nationality. At Berlin each class is entitled to ten non-resident members, and one hundred correspondents; in 1914 sixty-four correspondents out of an actual total of one hundred and forty-seven were of German nationality. The Bavarian Academy has six extraordinary, twelve non-resident, and thirty-two correspondents of German nationality in the philosophical-philological class; seven extraordinary, three non-resident, thirty-one German correspondents in the historical class; and three non-resident and fifty-four German correspondents in the mathematical-physical class. The Accademia dei Lincei has fifty-five Italian correspondents in the class of physical, mathematical, and natural sciences, forty-five in that of the moral, historical, and philological sciences, the numbers being equal to those of the ordinary members, many of whom, in addition, are not resident in Rome. At Bologna there are thirty Italian correspondents in the scientific class, twenty in the historical, legal, and philological class. In the Institut de France, the Académie des Inscriptions had in 1918 thirty French correspondents, the Académie des Sciences thirty-eight, the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques twenty-seven. The net result is that very considerable additions must be made to the figures of the ordinary members in each of these Academies (which may be taken as fairly representative of foreign Academies in general), if we are considering how far these bodies represent the scholarship and learning of the countries to which they belong.

Now, how is an Academy, such as I have described it, to carry out its duties and fulfil a useful function in the State? It may promote the welfare of the studies in which it is interested by holding meetings at which papers are read and discussions take place. All academies, so far as I am aware, do so; but I cannot regard it as their most important function. When teaching was mainly oral, lectures were an essential element in education; and they still serve a useful purpose in dealing with those who cannot or will not read.

But, after all, the printing press is quite a well-established institution by now, and most scholars can, and often do, read; discussions after papers are almost necessarily perfunctory, not merely because people want to get away to tea or dinner, but because few of the audience are usually in a position to discuss the subject on equal terms with the lecturer; scholars of sufficient eminence to be members of an Academy have many organs of publicity open to them; and on the whole, except for epideictic purposes,—*orationes honoris causa*, such as we are looking forward to hearing this evening, and *ἀγωνίσματα εἰς τὸ παραχρῆμα*—lectures are, to adopt the phrase of a statesman once eminent, a method of barbarism.

The true functions of an Academy, to my mind, are two in number: to advance learning by a wise use of funds committed to its charge, and to be the official representative of learning in the State. On each of these points I should like to say a few words.

The revenues of Academies are derived from two sources, viz. grants of public money and the income from benefactions received from private individuals. All Academies except our own receive regular subsidies from their respective States. The Institut de France has a State grant of about £28,000; but £20,000 of this is expended in salaries, each member receiving £60 a year, and each secretary £240. The Academy of Berlin has a grant of over £16,000, besides £6,000 from interest on invested capital. Here, again, salaries account for a large proportion of the income, about £10,000 in all. The Bavarian Academy has a State grant of £5,000, Leipzig £1,000, Vienna £9,000, the Lincei £4,500, Turin £600.[1]

These State grants are, however, only the lesser part of the income of the older Academies. The French Academies in particular have benefited enormously by the generosity of private donors. According to a necessarily rather rough computation, the Institut as a whole administers over three hundred foundations, with a total annual income of about £35,000. The Berlin Academy administers nineteen foundations, some of them of considerable amount,[2] with a revenue of over £6,000 in 1913, which has been materially increased since by new donations. The Bavarian Academy has twelve foundations to handle, and other Academies are more or less well off in this respect.

[1] These figures are taken either from the official publications of the institutions concerned, or from the latest available issue of *Minerva*, and have been converted approximately into English values.

[2] The Wenzel-Stiftung has a capital of 1,500,000 marks, the Albert Samson-Stiftung one of 1,000,000 marks.

With incomes on such scales as these foreign Academies are able to promote the studies in which they are interested most effectually. In France this encouragement, in addition to a considerable series of official publications, takes the form of a large number of prizes or rewards for contributions to knowledge on themes either propounded by the Academy concerned or undertaken on the initiative of the author. In Germany expenditure is mainly devoted to the financing of definite schemes of publication or research. Thus the Berlin Academy has no less than thirty-five series of publications in hand, including such extensive undertakings as the great collections of Greek and Latin Inscriptions, a Corpus of Greek medical writers, a Corpus of the Greek Fathers, a Corpus of Greek Coins, editions of the political correspondence of Frederick the Great, of the works of Kant, of Leibniz, of Humboldt, and of Ibn-Saad, lexicons of Latin, of Egyptian, and of German, encyclopaedias of the animal world and the plant world, and many more. The Lincei, besides ordinary volumes of proceedings, produce the elaborate and valuable Monumenti di Scavi, which record the progress of the various archaeological excavations conducted in Italy.

Compared with figures such as these, how does our Academy stand? From the Treasury we received in the years 1914–1916 a grant of £400 per annum in support of the series of Social and Economic Records. This grant has been suspended on account of the war, expenditure on intellectual objects being regarded as a luxury on which economies may legitimately and naturally be enforced. It is humiliating to confess that our country stands alone in this conception of wise economies. To the best of my belief and information, no such view has been taken in Germany, and it certainly has not been taken in France or Italy, where the state grants to the Academies continue practically unchanged. From the Government of India we received for ten years the sum of £200 a year as a contribution to the cost of the Encyclopaedia of Islam. This has now been commuted into a subsidy of £80 payable on the appearance of each fasciculus of the Encyclopaedia. This exhausts the list of our receipts from public funds. We have no income from that source, such as foreign Academies have, available for administration at our own discretion to promote the objects for which the Academy exists.

Private benefactors have been more liberal. Almost wholly through the intervention of our Secretary, and his influence with generous and enlightened friends, we hold a capital of nearly £20,000, the income of which is available for certain specified purposes. More

than half of this total belongs to the Schweich Fund, which endows an annual course of three lectures on subjects connected with Biblical archaeology, and has a considerable margin available for exploration and excavation in Bible lands. We hope it will be possible to put this fund to the use for which it is specially intended in the near future, when research in the Holy Land will be practicable under conditions more favourable than ever in the past. Three other endowments support a series of lectures: the Shakespeare Lecture, the Warton Lecture on English Literature, the Henriette Hertz Lectures on Philosophy, on Art, and on a Master-Mind, and the Italian Lecture. In addition, under the Hertz Trust the income of a capital of £1,000 is available 'to promote the publication of some philosophical work or to reward some meritorious publication in the department of philosophy'. Further, the late Earl of Cromer gave the Academy £1,000 to endow an annual prize for an essay on some subject connected with Greek literature or archaeology. A large and liberal subsidy has been received from an anonymous donor towards the cost of a photographic facsimile of the Old Testament portion of the Codex Sinaiticus. Recent events in Russia prove the wisdom of thus perpetuating the evidence of valuable manuscripts. Finally the Academy now administers, under a scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners, the Rose Mary Crawshay Fund for the award of annual prizes to works written by women on subjects connected with English literature, with a preference for works dealing with Shelley or Keats.

These funds are very useful, and fall wholly within the proper sphere of the Academy's action. They are of the same nature as many of the foundations administered by the French Academies. One cannot express too warmly the gratitude of the Academy to the generous benefactors who have chosen this way of demonstrating their sense of the value of intellectual culture, and who have selected the Academy as the medium of their gifts. I hope their example may be widely followed. It is to be hoped that in this country, as has long been the case in France, it will become a thing recognized and taken for granted that persons with money at their disposal, and interested in the progress of the human intellect, and in the honour of their country as a leader in intellectual culture, will give or bequeath sums of money to the Academy, either for specific objects in which they are interested, or to be administered at the discretion of the Academy.

Such benefactions may take the form of endowment of lectures, such as we have at present; or grants of medals or of sums of money,

to reward good work done in any of the fields of knowledge with which the Academy is concerned. Awards of such medals are a practice well established in this country, as notably in the case of the annual medals of the Royal Society and the Royal Geographical Society; and there is no reason why they should not come to be equally well recognized as a form of reward for work within the sphere of the humanities. But better still, especially when funds on a larger scale are in question, would be foundations providing funds which might be used, at the discretion of the Academy, for the assistance of research. To my mind, this is the greatest service which Academies can render to the subjects which they are founded to promote, and constitute the real justification for their existence. In every department of knowledge work is needed which costs money, and which cannot be remunerative in the ordinary sense. We are constantly, as individuals, receiving invitations to subscribe to special funds for such objects. In some instances there are already existing societies for the support of these causes, and they are very proper recipients of gifts for such purposes. But often it is not so, or people to whom the appeals come are unacquainted with such societies or unable to judge of their standing. The British Academy should be recognized as being, beyond all question, in a position to judge of the merits of all such appeals, and to decide how money can best be applied to promote any subject coming within its purview.

As I have tried to prove, foreign Academies are all, more or less, in the possession of such funds, and are recognized as the natural channels for benefactions intended to promote scientific or humane research. At meetings of the International Association of Academies, the British Academy was in a position of conspicuous inferiority owing to its want of endowments. Other Academies were able to back their advocacy of projects for international co-operation in undertakings of great importance, by the promise of subsidies. We were not. It is somewhat humiliating to urge the adoption of a scheme involving expenditure, and then to have to confess that we can make little or no contribution towards that expenditure. If international co-operation in scholarship continues in any form after the war, this country can never take its proper place in the councils of the nations until the Academy which represents it has a suitable income at its disposal. Our present free income consists of about £60 interest on investments made out of savings, and the annual subscriptions of Fellows amounting to about £300 a year; and this income has to bear our working expenses, including the printing of our Proceedings and the ordinary secretarial charges.

If, therefore, the Academy is to perform the first of the two functions which I have described as the main reasons for its existence, namely to advance learning by a wise use of funds committed to its charge, it is evident that it requires endowments greatly in excess of those which it at present possesses. I hope that private liberality may go some way towards providing them; but I do not think it is creditable to the country that we should be wholly dependent on them. It is not to the credit of a country that it should leave vital needs to be provided for by casual private benefactions; and if a country does leave intellectual research to be so supported, it is because it does not believe it to be a vital need. We cannot be surprised if we are charged with indifference to matters of the intellect while, as a nation (that is, in our public acts), we grudge the expenditure of even small sums on such matters, and regard it as the first subject of retrenchment when retrenchment is needed.

The foundation of our educational troubles and difficulties to-day is the indifference of the mass of the nation to education and to the products of education so far as they cannot be measured in pecuniary profits. The unwillingness shown by all British Governments to sanction expenditure on intellectual objects is partly the reflection of this indifference, and partly also the cause of it. If the present, or any future, Government is in earnest in its desire to reform this evil, it can hardly prove the genuineness of its professions better than by subsidizing a body of experts, such as the Academy, to promote the welfare and progress of the subjects of which they are the recognized representatives. Expenditure on the national Academy (which in this country is represented jointly by the Royal Society and the British Academy) should be the summit and climax of the national system of education.

Correlative with this demand is the second of the two functions of an Academy that I have enumerated, namely to be the official representative of learning in the State. If the State is in earnest in believing in the importance of learning, it needs some permanent consultative body to which it may apply for guidance in dealing with matters of knowledge and intellectual research. At present the State, as represented by its Government, acts in a haphazard and hand-to-mouth fashion. If a Department recognizes that it needs expert advice, it appeals to some individual who happens to be known to, or to be recommended to, some of its officials. Occasionally it refers to established institutions such as the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert Museum. How far it makes use of the Royal Society in matters in which natural science is concerned, I am not

in a position to say; but I do not think I am wrong in affirming that such references are not very frequent. Certainly the State has not formed the habit of calling in the assistance of the organized representatives of knowledge; and such organizations as exist have not acquired, and have not had the opportunity of acquiring, the habit of regarding themselves as the official assistants of the State in matters falling within their competence.

That, I think, is the ideal towards which the British Academy, side by side with the Royal Society, should aspire,—to be the recognized organ of the State in respect of philosophical, philological, and historical studies. The attainment of this ideal needs good will on both sides. Public departments are apt to distrust scholars as unpractical; and some scholars are unwilling to think of their studies from the point of view of their application to practical or educational problems. The Academy must be ready to undertake any service required of it by the State, and to justify its claim to represent the best scholarship of the nation. On the other hand, the State should regard the Academy as its natural resort when advice is needed on matters which come within its scope. The Academy should be taken into council over many educational problems. At present, when an educational inquiry is to be set on foot, the usual procedure is to appoint a Commission, the members of which are selected by the Department responsible for setting up the Commission. The members selected may be in fact Fellows of the Academy, but it is not as such that they are chosen, nor is the Academy associated with the choice. It would be better if, in such a case, the Academy were definitely invited to suggest suitable members. Not only would the range of choice be widened, but the authority of the Academy would be associated with the inquiry, and the whole cause of intellectual progress would gain through such habitual recognition by the State of its organized representatives.

Another direction in which the State could utilize the Academy is in the conduct of negotiations with the universities and great public schools. These great educational institutions are not under the control of the Board of Education, and any sign of interference on the part of the Board is apt to be jealously scrutinized and even resented. On the other hand, it is impossible to carry through any general reform of national education without including these, which are the greatest educational organizations in the country. Would it not be possible for the Academy to serve as intermediary between these powers? It could be invited by the Board to institute an inquiry on a certain question, and it could approach the universities

or the public schools without exciting the suspicion which attaches to the direct action of the Board.

If such co-operation between the State and the Academy as is here suggested were to become habitual, it would involve a certain amount of personal sacrifice on the part of Fellows of the Academy and of such other scholars as might be invited by them to assist. It would involve a readiness to give up time to the service of the State, to sacrifice personal convenience, to abandon personal work and the cultivation of special plots of research. But this is a sacrifice which the State has the right to ask, and which scholars should be ready to give. It is the sacrifice demanded by Plato of his 'guardians'. It is the sacrifice which, on a far greater scale, millions of citizens have learnt that it is their duty to make during these last four years.

During the last year the Academy has made some steps in this direction. A letter addressed to the President of the Board of Education, expressing the willingness of the Academy to place its services at the disposal of the State when a suitable occasion should arise, received a sympathetic reply; and so long as the President of the Board of Education is himself a scholar of the first eminence, and not merely a politician for whom a place has to be found, we may be sure that there will be no unwillingness to utilize the Academy, if occasion should arise.

A more definite opportunity for action arose out of the British conquest of southern Palestine and the occupation of Jerusalem. Assuming that Palestine does not revert to Turkish dominion, it is certain that after the war there will be a great outburst of archaeological activity in that land. Irresponsible individuals, backed by funds collected from a credulous and ill-informed public, and anxious for plunder or for advertisement, will push their claims to be allowed to excavate certain sites or to pursue certain investigations. This is exactly a case in which the Government ought to use the Academy as its agent. Exploration in such a land as Palestine should be controlled by an official body, of recognized disinterestedness and competence, which can eliminate undesirable competitors, arbitrate between competing claims, and conduct negotiations with similar organizations representing other countries.

Representations to this effect have been made to the Foreign Office, and have been received sympathetically, though with characteristic official indefiniteness. Meanwhile a step has been taken, in co-operation with the Palestine Exploration Fund, towards establishing the mechanism for proper control of archaeological work in Palestine by the formation of a British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem.

A public appeal for support for the School has been put out, and several generous subscriptions have been received. It will not be the fault of the Academy if Palestinian exploration, when it becomes possible, is not put on a proper footing; and it will be a great disappointment if the Government, after being warned in time, does not grasp this opportunity of utilizing the services of the organized representatives of scholarship.

This is but one example of what, I hope, may become the established practice. I do not say that all great enterprises in the spheres of history, philosophy, and philology ought to be conducted by the State, through the medium of the Academy. I do not wish to trench on the activities of great organizations such as the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, or the numerous societies which are doing excellent work in various portions of this domain. If works such as the *Dictionary of National Biography* or the *Oxford English Dictionary* can be carried through by private enterprise, let them be so carried; though even here I feel that it would be for the credit of the State that it should support national undertakings such as these. But there are many enterprises for which State aid is sought, and for which private support would be more easily obtained if it were known that they had the approval of the State, expressed through its recognized organ. Such State aid should, to my mind, come through the Academy, whether by the free administration of funds entrusted to it by the State, or by the State using the Academy as its organ of inquiry and of subsidy for a particular purpose.

In such ways as I have tried to indicate, I hope that the Academy in years to come will more and more prove its usefulness to the community, and will have that usefulness recognized. The war, with its insistent claims on us, does not lessen the need of zeal on our part in the interests of the Academy. We are, in a particular sense, trustees of a most important part of that civilization which we are fighting to defend. It is for us (though not for us alone) to keep alive in the recollection of the people those great moral and intellectual causes, which are at once the reason for our participation in the war, and a sure guarantee of our ultimate victory. In serving the Academy, we are serving no narrow cause. We are flying the banner of civilization, which, side by side with our allies, we claim the right of serving and of preserving.