

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

THE WHIG HISTORIANS

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THE British Academy, to my great regret, opens its Winter Session under a new President. Lord Balfour has resigned the Chair upon which he conferred so much lustre, and I have been chosen, not indeed to take his place, which is impossible, but to discharge, as best I may, the functions which he has relinquished. My task will, however, be lightened by the fact that Lord Balfour consents to retain his seat upon the Council, so that his ripe wisdom will still happily be at the disposition of the Academy. I can also, like my predecessors in the Chair, count upon the ready help of our Secretary Sir Israel Gollancz, who from the first has rendered continuous and invaluable service to our Society; but, looking at the names of my colleagues, and as I realize the weight of learning and scholarship which these names represent and how small are my own accomplishments by comparison, I must plead for all the charity which my colleagues can spare me. Their indulgence will be appreciated and is much needed.

In the course of this summer we have lost by death three distinguished members of our Society. Of these the youngest was Professor Carless Davis, who was cut off suddenly in the prime of life not three years after he had succeeded to the Regius Chair of Modern History in the University of Oxford. For sheer intellectual power Professor Davis was one of the first men of his generation, at home in all periods of history, ancient, medieval, and modern, competent to edit Norman Charters, or the latest volume of the *Dictionary of*

National Biography, and able to write with equal ease, grace, and certainty of scholarship, upon the smallest, as upon the largest, scale. Few men, who have taught so much, have been able in so brief a space to leave behind them so large a body of the finest kind of historical work. He had learning and judgement, grasp, and the power of expression, and as in his literary compositions he drove always to a point, so when the war called him to a desk at Whitehall, this modest and reserved student revealed himself as an administrator of the highest quality.

Lord Haldane was closely associated with the work of this Academy. He was, as we all know, a great national figure, a statesman, a lawyer, a metaphysician, a fervent apostle of educational progress. At one of the most critical periods of world history he was in the forefront of our public affairs. It is not for me here to conjecture the place which he will occupy in the estimation of posterity either as a master of our Jurisprudence or as an administrator at the War Office, though I can hardly doubt but that he will be regarded as, in the second of these capacities, supreme, and, in the first, most distinguished. What more nearly concerns us here is to note the large place which academic studies played in Lord Haldane's life. At the age of seventeen he had made up his mind that of all living philosophers Lotze had most to say to him, and accordingly he obtained his mother's permission to go out to Göttingen in order that he might sit at the feet of that wise and humane teacher. What he learned from Lotze was not forgotten. A substantial legacy to the Georgia Augusta University shows that Lord Haldane retained to the end a grateful sense of the debt which he owed to German philosophy, and constitutes a noble attestation of his belief in the international brotherhood of learning.

Others will appraise the value of Lord Haldane's contributions to metaphysical thought; but that he was a man of true philosophical temperament, living in high intellectual altitudes, came out in all his dealings, whether as

lawyer, as judge, or politician, as well as in private converse. So closely was he wedded to philosophy in his pilgrimage through life, that he was able to deliver extempore and without notes to a Scottish audience a course of lucid metaphysical lectures, afterwards published in a volume entitled *The Pathway to Reality*, in a year in which he earned more than twenty thousand pounds at the bar. For him philosophy was more than an exhilarating dialectical exercise. It was a religion which sustained him through all vicissitudes, supporting him under the flail of calumny, and giving him so large an outlook upon the problems of life and mind that the accidents of personal fortune appeared immaterial. When he left office in 1915 he threw himself into the half-neglected cause of public education, speaking of it in the House of Lords and addressing innumerable gatherings, many of them small and unreported, up and down the country. The application of science to industry, the need for a better organization of education in all its branches, the claims of adult education were his principal themes. Since the days of Lord Brougham no statesman of the first rank in England has thus exerted himself to spread the idea of education through the country and bring home to the hearts and minds of the people the need and dignity of knowledge.

Lastly we have lost Sir George Trevelyan. Of his work I propose to say something at the close of my lecture.

Until recent years the character of our medieval constitution was ill-understood. Even the most important objects of traditional veneration such as Magna Carta and the Jury and the medieval Parliament were conceived under a misleading light. Few people realized how little of democracy there was in the Charter, how much of monarchy in the régime of the Jury, or how little of legislation in the work of our early Parliaments. Even Bishop Stubbs, whose mind was free of the political prepossessions of the seventeenth century, did not fully appreciate what