

4012  
Oxford Univ.  
Bodleian

CONVOCATION  
SHELDONIAN THEATRE

24 OCTOBER 1946

*Translation of the*  
LOYAL ADDRESS  
TO THEIR MAJESTIES  
THE KING AND QUEEN  
DELIVERED BY  
THE PUBLIC ORATOR

MOST AUGUST SOVEREIGN, Stabliſher of Britain's name, and you, Madam, Most Excellent in your Majesty, Queen of the hearts of a whole people:

No oratory could do justice to the gracious kindness of your visit, nor to the happiness brought to every one of us by the great honour of receiving you. Yet the refuge of silence is denied to the Public Orator by respect for antiquity; for the office which he inherits was once held by Thomas Bodley himself.<sup>1</sup>

Be assured that we greet your return<sup>2</sup> to Oxford with a loyalty too deep for full expression. We know the weight of the duties laid upon you. We know the many journeys you have undertaken. We know how your high example of courage, strenuous effort, and endurance guided our country through the dark night of war into the fullness and splendour of day.

1. Cf. the *Life of Sir Thomas Bodley, written by himself*, p. 3 of reprint in *Trecentale Bodleianum*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1913): 'After this' (i.e. his Proctorship, to which he was elected in 1569) 'for a long time, I supplied the office of Universitie Orator.'

2. 'Your return to Oxford.' H.M. the King, as H.R.H. the Duke of York, received the Honorary Degree of D.C.L. on 27 June, 1928; H.M. the Queen, as H.R.H. the Duchess of York, received (by diploma) the same degree on 22 October, 1931. Both ceremonies took place in the Sheldonian Theatre.

3. 'Initiated by your Mother and your Sister.' H.R.H. the Princess Royal formally opened the extension to the Radcliffe Science Library on 3 November, 1934, just in time to give relief to the Bodleian book-stacks by transference of all the science sections (cf. Sir Edmund Craster's *History of Bodleian Extension*, p. 11).

Her Majesty Queen Mary laid the foundation-stone of the New Building of the Bodleian Library on 25 June, 1937.

For you, Sir, the King-Emperor, even the overthrow of your enemies brings no release from national service. We dare call you away from imperial cares only because a task initiated by your Mother and your Sister<sup>3</sup> awaits the final touch of your own hand. The service we ask is worthy of a king; for 'Bodley's munificence embraced the whole lettered world'. It was said of him that 'he thought poorly of his achievement, unless his own huge disbursements evoked the bounty of posterity'.<sup>4</sup> Today he might even claim to have brought two hemispheres together in eager contribution to a single cause.<sup>5</sup>

Last of all, a prayer. Lord God, who hast raised up this Britannic Empire to so proud an eminence, uphold us in this high station. Preserve and protect our King and Queen, the Queen-Mother, the Princess Elizabeth, and all the Royal Family. Grant our King the fullest span of mortal life, and prolong his royal line from generation to generation.<sup>6</sup>

4. The quotations, slightly adapted, are from John Hales's funeral oration on Sir Thomas Bodley, delivered in Merton College on 29 March, 1613: see *Trecentale Bodleianum*, pp. 136, 141.

5. 'In May, 1932, the Rockefeller Foundation made the generous offer to contribute three-fifths of the estimated cost, provided that the University found the remaining two-fifths within a stated period. . . . Although the University had been given four and a half years in which to find the money, the sum required was raised within a single year.' (Sir Edmund Craster, *loc. cit.*, p. 6.)

6. The last nine words of the Latin are directly quoted from a prayer for the reigning emperor with which Velleius Paterculus, writing A.D. 30, concludes his history of Rome. Other echoes have also been introduced from Velleius's prayer, which Milton may have had in mind when he wrote: 'O thou that . . . of thy free grace didst . . . build up this Britannick Empire to a glorious and enviable heighth with her Daughter Ilands about her, stay us in this felicitie' (*Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*, sub fin.).