

Banquet Speech

Edgar Adrian's speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, December 10, 1932

Your Royal Highness, your Excellencies, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen

In my College at Cambridge - Trinity College - all of us know of Stockholm as the beautiful capital of a country which has a great history and is now in the forefront of modern civilisation. There are some of us who try very hard to copy your artistic enterprise and to decorate our houses in the Swedish manner, and our learned societies can be divided into two classes - those who have attended an international congress at Stockholm and those who have not, and do not know, therefore, how pleasant such events can be.

Trinity is a very large College, but however large we were we should still be immensely proud of the fact that in the past no less than eight of us have had a special reason to praise your hospitality. Eight of the Fellows of Trinity have had reason to look back on their visit here as an outstanding event in their lives, for eight have made the winter journey to attend the Nobel celebrations and have gone back far the richer - richer in pocket of course - but richer too in the tremendous encouragement which comes from such an award.

Eight Nobel prizemen is a large number, and however great your admiration for science you may wonder whether one cannot have too much of a good thing! You may fancy that a College in which eight Nobel prizemen live together would not be a very comfortable place for anybody else. But I have really exaggerated our good fortune for in fact only two of our prizemen live in the College and only four in Cambridge.

And now I make the ninth to come on the same errand and even after today's impressive ceremony I still find it very hard to believe that so high an honour should have fallen to me. But at least I have had one special advantage among scientific workers. For five years I lived in Cambridge in the rooms which belonged, nearly 300 years ago, to the great astronomer and physicist, Sir Isaac Newton. He had a living room and a study looking out on to the Great Court of Trinity and a small and very cold bedroom.

Newton was our greatest English scientist and I do not think that anyone living in such surroundings could fail to be infected with the spirit of scientific enquiry. Perhaps in these days we do not regard the laws of gravitation with the same reverence as did our fathers, but we have, unfortunately, more reason to be impressed by his ability in another field - for much of his life was spent in London in the Government Service reorganising the coinage of England in a way which did much to restore prosperity at a time when it was badly needed.

But although I have lived in such inspiring surroundings, in another way I suffer from my upbringing. As you know from [Mr Galsworthy's](#) novels, in my country we are not skilled at expressing our emotions and we are not encouraged to do so, whatever we may feel. And so now I feel very great happiness and very deep gratitude to the memory of Alfred Nobel, to the Committee and to you all, but all that I can find to say is "Thank you very much indeed!"

From [Les Prix Nobel en 1932](#), Editor Carl Gustaf Santesson, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1933

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