

# Banquet Speech

Sir Charles Sherrington's speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm,  
December 10, 1932

Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I rise in response to the kind toast given by Professor Gunnar Holmgren, and I esteem it a privilege to tender my thanks to him, in this company and in this City renowned for its hospitality, for the generous words which have been spoken. The compliment of the award of a Nobel Prize I value the more since I can interpret it as a sign of sympathetic interest in the efforts of experimental neurology, no less than a generous encouragement to myself.

Several circumstances enhance for me the enjoyment of this visit to Sweden. In the first place it is a pleasure to meet here Swedish scientific men whose names are known the world over, and among them some whom I have known long enough to venture to call them old friends. Then, for one whose study concerns nerves and their activity, it is since nerves express themselves through muscular action, of special interest to visit Sweden with its high tradition of masters in the science of muscular action, for instance Magnus Blix, and Professor Johansson. Further, it is delightful to be associated in this visit with my friend, Professor Adrian, who treats the nerves as a sort of electric power house, and makes even their minutest leakages audible to us. With him we can, so to say, hear the gold fish 'thinking', a new fairy-tale for Christmas Eve, now nearly here.

May I take this opportunity to pay a word of tribute on general lines to the work of the Nobel Foundation for the welfare of Science. It must be a difficult thing to adjudicate prizes where so much research and discovery are going on and where so many researchers are deserving. I am sure I am voicing a universal opinion when I say that the considerate care and sympathetic width of view which the Foundation has consistently shown has enhanced the prestige of the Prizes themselves in the eyes of the cultivated world. Its doing so has been a source of deep satisfaction and encouragement to Science itself.

May I remark that a happy and inspiring note in this annual celebration which must have impressed us all in the Concert Hall today is the dignity and charm of the ceremonial observed. Such observance proclaims that Science is worthy of an aesthetic as well as of a purely intellectual setting; and that emphasis is of itself a service to Science.

When we think of Alfred Nobel we cannot but remember that along with his devotion to Science, he was an idealist with lofty ideals. He was, for the thing, an ardent advocate of international friendship and of cooperation between nations. He saw as every thinking man must see, an illustration of the possibilities of that cooperation in the collaboration of scientific researchers the civilized world over in the advance of Science. Nothing can have exemplified better the solidarity of the civilized world in the pursuit of Science than

the record of the awards of the Nobel Foundation since their inception a quarter of a century ago. That record instances now this country, now that, often two different countries together, according as the international stream of progress winds. It is the progress of the stream which matters. That holds an added pleasure for each recipient - because each can then feel that his recognition has come to him not in virtue of anything he has done for himself in the sense of for his own sake but because he has contributed a piece - in my case I feel it is a very humble piece - to the advancement of a great common cause. I thank you.

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

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