

VANCOUVER,

BRITISH COLUMBIA,

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1929

ENGLISH POETRY IS SEEN AT LOW EBB

But Sir Archibald Strong of Adelaide Predicts Revival.

LITERATURE AND LEISURE OF AGES

Says Decline of Poetic Drama Greatest Tragedy of English Letters.

English poetry is at its lowest ebb. With the growth of materialism, poetic genius and poetic inspiration has declined. Sir Archibald Strong, MA, Litt.D., professor of English at the University of Adelaide, told an audience that filled the Vancouver Theatre Monday afternoon at the triennial conference of the National Council of Education.

But there is hope, he added, that even from the depths into which poetic feeling has descended there might arise other great geniuses such as shone in the Elizabethan days—the halcyon period of literature, made glorious by the inspiration of such men as Spencer, Bacon, Milton and Shakespeare.

It was an address of compelling interest that Sir Archibald gave, as he traced the relationship of literature and leisure through the ages. Himself the author of many books and essays on the poetry, prose and drama of the English people, he dealt exhaustively with the rise and decline of letters, showing that in periods when men employed their leisure moments in the study and contemplation of good writings, literature blossomed to sublime heights and great and inspired authors, poets and dramatists rose to greater accomplishments in verse and prose and to immortality among the cultural figures of the history of mankind.

DECLINE OF POETIC DRAMA.

The greatest tragedy of English letters, he said, is in the almost total obliteration of the poetic drama, which has been divorced from the modern theatre.

Such was, in his opinion, the value of the style of metric lines of the stage of Shakespeare's day, that its passing had been a sad blow to the cultural progress of the race, as the realism and materialistic tendency of the modern play left but little scope for the flights of such genius as marked the productions of earlier dramatists.

The decline of the poet had, in a measure, been compensated by the advancement of the novelist, and in passing Sir Archibald paid high compliment to Ernest Raymond, the distinguished English novelist and playwright, who occupied the platform with him, at the same time assuring the audience that his notes, including the pleasing reference to Mr. Raymond and other contemporary novelists, had been penned before he knew he would meet in Vancouver the author of "Tell England."

One of the causes to which the decadence of poetic thought might be attributed, he explained, was the fact that life today is staggering under a material burden it had not learned to shoulder.

Just what form a renaissance of poetry would take, could not be predicted, he added, for a great culture never repeated itself. But he was confident that new harmonies would be found; new inspiration would be born, and new geniuses would yet ascend to supreme heights.

PROMISE OF REVIVAL.

It was evident, Sir Archibald emphasized throughout his discourse, that great literature developed when good reading was general. They were complementary, and this he illustrated in quoting from masters in the world of letters and from students in the world. They were the days when the sonnet was gloried in, and rhyme and reason went hand in hand.

In a later period, in Ben Jonson's day, men delighted in the matching of wits; in clever sallies and sparkling satire, and the literature of the times reflected it.

While it was in the Elizabethan era that poetry and the drama were immortalized, great essays were also written and the literature of the seas and of travel was placed upon a solid foundation, the latter particularly so by Hakluyt.

So concerned was Sir Archibald about the decline of poetic drama that he suggested it would be in the interests of culture for the nations of the Empire to construct and operate theatres in which plays of such a character could be produced. It would result, in his opinion, in a revival of the poetic drama and inspire the awakening of new geniuses.

In his concluding remarks, he again emphasized that the nature of the leisure reading of the public was reflected in the character of the productions. The London of Shakespeare's day claimed but one-eightieth of the population of the London of today, yet the century in which he lived was illuminated by a galaxy of the brightest stars in the firmament of English literature.

THE DAILY PROVINCE, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA,

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1929.

LAUDS EMPIRE TRADE PARLEY

Educationist Favors Wider Extension of Vancouver Conference.

URGES ORIENT STUDY

Empire trade, the relation of business and education, and the value of the interchange of views featured the address of Sir Archibald Strong, one of the Australian delegates to the National Council of Education before members of the Board of Trade at luncheon on Wednesday.

Having just come from a conference between the Board of Trade and the Australian and New Zealand representatives on the question of trade development between Canada and the Antipodes, Sir Archibald said he was impressed at that meeting with the amount of idealism expressed at a purely business gathering. This was but natural, however, he added, for one should be as suspicious of idealism, not based on fact, as of the practical without idealism.

MORE CONFERENCES.

The principle of such conferences could, with great benefit, be adopted by all parts of the Empire, he declared, for it was highly important that all parts of the Empire should know each other better. The basis of loyalty, he added, must be understanding.

Misunderstanding is responsible for much bitter feeling, the visitor continued. For instance, India did not understand Australia's policy of Asiatic exclusion. The Australian policy was enforced not because Australians hated the East Indians, but rather to prevent conditions arising that would make Australians dislike the Asiatics. He had explained to an East Indian friend of his that Asiatic emigration to Australia would bring racial hatred and strife. He had urged his friend to explain to his countrymen that it was for their own good the exclusion policy was enforced.

TRIBUTE TO CANADIANS.

Better understanding between different parts of the Empire would make for better feeling and dispel the false impression so often created by the foreign press, he said.

Dealing with the relation between business and education he declared education owed a great debt to men of commerce in the matter of endowments and practical advice.

Sir Archibald paid a tribute in closing to Vancouver hospitality to the conference visitors. His experience in Canada was that it is a land of courtesy, where the whole spirit and atmosphere is virile and clean.

Mr. W. C. Woodward, newly-elected president of the board, presided, at his first full board meeting, and Mr. C. W. Hill, representing the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, spoke briefly of the value of the Empire contracts through the distinguished delegates to the conference.

University Buildings

Mr. F. W. Eardley (registrar of Adelaide University) said that the announcement by the Hon. R. L. Butler (Premier) that the Exhibition Building and land on which it stood would be made available to the University was gratifying.

The University authorities, he said, hoped eventually to erect opposite Ruiteneoy street the great hall, for which funds would be made available through the generosity of Sir Langdon Bonython. It was probable that the University library would be erected behind the present stand of Jubilee Oval.

To further the objects of the Australian Music Examinations Board scheme, and in the interests of teachers and students, a series of recitals will be given in June at the Conservatorium, when the piano syllabus for the year's examinations will be played.

There will be six recitals, and the music of each grade will be presented twice. The recitalists will be Mr. William Silver, Mr. I. G. Reimann, and Miss Elsie Williams, Mus. Bac.

Teachers who intend sending up candidates will no doubt gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of these demonstrations of what is required, and they should be equally valuable to the students themselves.

THE VANCOUVER STAR, VANCOUVER, B. C.,

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1929

LIFE DAZZLED BY GOLD TODAY, SAVANT HOLDS

World Literary Revival Predicted by Noted Scholar

DECLINE TRACED

National Theatres Urged by Sir A. Strong of Australia

Life today is staggering under a burden, dazzled by gold, by material things, but to hold that such a condition will be permanent is as wrong as to deny the presence of the burden, said Sir Archibald Strong, professor of English, University of Adelaide, addressing the conference of National Council of Education in Vancouver Theatre, Monday.

The whole history of the past is good ground for the belief there will be a literary revival, choosing its own harmony, he said. The raw material of art lies to hand in life, suffering is always present, sharing the nature of an infinity, vast in its scope, he said. Wherever there is suffering, wherever there is faith in life, the higher spiritual values are still alive, said the speaker.

Sir Archibald warned his audience it will be well to be on guard lest the machinery of modern endeavor engulf the soul of man. It was his firm opinion that, despite life's complexity of content, there would arise a great new spirit of literature.

Literature Traced

With choice diction, a flawless command in language, and aided by a commanding presence, the speaker traced English literature from the Elizabethan age to the present, garnishing his remarks with copious quotations from outstanding poets and writers who had left an ineffable mark on the literature of their times.

"Literature and Leisure" was the subject of his address, and it might almost be summed up by saying, in his opinion, leisure is life. Man works for his daily bread, for the wherewith to enjoy his leisure, and in those periods of leisure, properly caused, life in its greater sense is lived, he said.

Time, he said, was common to all but leisure was the priceless property of civilized man. Time he pictured as a jungle and leisure as an area reclaimed from that jungle, an area that can be cultivated and made to produce fruits, not of the soil, but of that other garden of possibility unbounded, the mind.

Leisure Termed Bridge

Illustrating his simile he said a monkey knew something of time. To that animal it was something that punctuated its periods of sleeping and eating. Civilized man alone knew leisure which at its best became a bridge between time and eternity, he emphasized.

The speaker granted that to most men leisure was merely a relief

GREAT REVIVAL OF LITERATURE FORESEEN SOON

Sir Archibald Strong Addresses Big Conference

LEISURE ANALYZED

Decline of Poetic Drama Mourned by Noted Scholar

(Continued from Page 9)

from work, but frequently it was a period of dynamic energy producing imperishable song.

That leisure has been so precious to some they have been willing to starve and to fight for it, he said. John Milton was one illustration of that and another he mentioned was Wordsworth.

Sir Archibald told of that period which he termed "supreme in English literature." It was from 1560 to 1660. At that time the area of London was that of a small provincial town about a tenth the size of Montreal, and yet it produced Shakespeare and a round dozen of other playwrights, any of whom would have been a distinction to any nation.

Comparing the time with the present day he came to the conclusion the interest taken in literature then was different from that of this aloof and sophisticated age. There was a strange sense of glory in it, he said.

Referring to changed conditions and its bearing to literature and leisure Sir Archibald said the greatest tragedy English literature had experienced or ever would experience was the divorce of poetic drama from the theatre. Poetic plays are almost dead to the English stage, he said.

He stressed the fact that it was not modern poet's lack of ability because for the last century and a half the greatest poets have been playwrights. He thought it was because the poet had lost his close association, his contact, with the stage.

He suggested the means to overcome the situation thus created would be to establish national theatres and they would tend to