

Advertiser July 24th 07

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"A DAY IN ROME, 100 A.D."

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR NAYLOR.

There was a large audience in the Prince of Wales theatre, Adelaide University, on Tuesday evening, when Professor Darnley Naylor delivered the first of his series of extension lectures on "Life in the classic time in Rome and Greece." The subject for the evening was "A day in Rome, 100 A.D." The lecturer prefaced his remarks by deploring the English, into which the works of the ancient classics were translated, "from the stilted language of Lytton to the unspeakable jargon of the public schools." For example when a Roman said—"Now, Jones, mind you don't hit your foot against the step going out," an English commentator made him say, "It behoves thee, O Jones, to beware lest thy foot cometh into contact with the marble stone at the entrance." In a dream he had visited Imperial Rome in the year 100 A.D., and visited the classic writer, who was known to modern English as Martial, which was about as much his real name as "Shakey" was Shakespeare's. From a ground plan on the blackboard he described the ancient Roman house. He found Martial reclining on a couch trying to find a rhyme for one of his lines. Rolls of manuscript were in the room; the pen used by the poet was a reed, and the ink lamp-black. Martial's dress was a sleeveless shirt of soft cloth, with a belt at the waist, the Roman tunic, the toga being worn when abroad, or on festive occasions. Martial requested him, in the course of a genial conversation, to "look at a few of his little things, and explain the points to those English commentators," which he did. Roman authors gained popularity and fame by public readings of their works, and Pliny, junior, confessed that he was a regular attendant at those readings, and said in one of his letters, "This year has produced a great yield of poets." The lecturer gave a number of selections from Martial's inimitable epigrams, and described the daily life of the poet. He rose at 5.30 a.m., took bread and cheese and wine, and paid his respects to his principal patron at 6. Then he wrote till 11, and took lunch, after which more writing, exercise by "punching the ball," a bath, and dinner, at 3 p.m. A description of an imaginary dinner followed, with Pliny as host, and Tacitus, Martial, and the lecturer as guests. The guests reclined on a semi-circular couch, and dinner was served on a round table, supported by one ivory leg. There were no tablecloths, but a fresh table-top, of costly wood, was screwed on to the leg after each course. The first course was composed of lettuce, oysters, and eggs; then followed three courses of meat, and afterwards fruit, cakes, sweetmeats, and wine, the latter always being mixed with water. The guests were each presented with a chaplet, and the wine bibbing began. In conclusion, the lecturer delivered an appreciation of Pliny, whom he described as prosy at times, but otherwise an educated, benevolent, and pious gentleman. He was also the first Roman who tried to understand nascent Christianity. Professor Naylor was exceedingly humorous all through the lecture, and frequently had his audience convulsed with laughter, although he proved that he could be impressively serious at times. The subjects of the other two lectures will be, "Men you would meet in Athens—300 B.C.," and "Theatre-going in Athens."

MARTIAL'S EPIGRAMS.

AMUSING TRANSLATIONS.

"By Hercules," cried Marcus Valerius Martialis, better known nowadays as Martial, in an imaginary interview which Professor Naylor had with him in Rome in the year 100 A.D., and which he recounted to an Adelaide audience this week. "You're the very person I want. Will you have a look at a few little things of mine, and tell me what you think of them, and explain the points to those English commentators? It is positively painful to hear one's best epigrams ruined in the lecture-rooms. If you would only bring them up to date, with names people can understand, I'm sure there's money in it. Not that I ever made much out of them. Old Tryphon, my bookseller, the vagabond, gets a profit, selling a book at 4d., so you see I'm fairly popular." I exclaimed, "Why, you fetch 4/6 in Adelaide." "Ah, but the beggarly slaves have to copy them out for nothing," rejoined Martial. I saw how pleased he really was, and did not like to explain that where 10,000 people gave 4d. in Rome, one person gave 4/6 in Adelaide. After some further conversation he handed me an epigram, and asked me to put it into English. "I want the point, mind, not the words. You see Maronilla was ugly, wealthy, and consumptive, so Cemellus was willing to marry her." I read my attempt, mostly borrowed from Professor W. T. Webb:—

Brown begs and prays his darling May
To fix at once the wedding-day,
Sends gifts and pleads with all his might
Is she so fair? A perfect fright!
What then her charms? (Pray pardon my
presumption),
Why, money, and—a galloping consump-
tion!

"That'll do," he cried, "though it's too long. Try this one." I tried as follows:—

Dear Jane to wed me is inclined;
"No, no, dear Jane," I told her,
"You're old," that's true, nor would I mind
If only you were older.

"That's better," exclaimed the poet;
"now, what do you think of this for a
valentine. Phoebus, you know, was a bit
bow-legged. Now then—

"Your legs, so like the moon at crescent,
A bathing-tub will scarce look neat in,
So, sir, I send you for a present
A drinking-horn to wash your feet in."
Now, for another—
'Tis Mary, rawin calls his dear
Mary his dear? Pray, sir, which one?
The one-eyed Mary! Faith, 'tis clear
She has but one eye; he has none!

"Oh, I see; you mean love is blind," I
commented. Martial scowled, and asked
me if I came from Caledonia. There was
an awkward silence, and then the poet
exclaimed, "Have you ever heard of Ly-
coris? She was a female poisoner, you
know. I can tell you she did a roaring
trade. What do you think of this?":—

Lycoris, sir, has seen the end
Of many a precious female friend;
She's lovely now; upon my life,
I wish she'd chum up with my wife!

"I suppose you never came across Sym-
machus, the surgeon? I did, and catch me
at it again. Here are a few lines on the
gentleman:—

Came Dr. Fitz to ease my pain,
A hundred students in his train;
A hundred hands as cold as ice
Bethumbed my carcass in a trice;
Fever, Sir Fritz? before I had none,
But now I've got a very bad one!

"I suppose you didn't know that we
Romans wear false teeth, or false hair
for the matter of that?" asked Martial.
"Oh, no," I stammered. "I've heard of
such things, but then this is impossible in
English, you know; we don't talk about
such matters. In any case it's a bit in-
delicate." "Indelicate," he cried. "Why,
you should read some of Catullus. Well,
if you must, keep the Latin names." I
read with burning shame:—

This for black; Laecania
For snow-white teeth is known;
For why? Laecania's teeth were bought,
While Thais wears her own!

He nodded, as if fairly satisfied with my
attempt, and then said—"Don't imagine
this is the only sort of thing I can write.
Just try your hand at this. It's about my
little slave girl Erotion. She was only six
when she died, poor little mite. I sent
her back to her parents before the end.
Someone had been frightening her with
bogies and devils, and Cerberus, in the
other place. These were the lines I sent
after the funeral." I read, and as the
words shaped themselves in our awkward
language I realised how truly that critic
wrote who called Martial the "Tom Hood"
of Roman literature. I read to him as
follows:—

To you, dark spectres to forefend,
And Cerberus, the monster dread;
This little maiden, I commend,
Dear parents of my darling dead.
Had only my Erotion's span,
While just so many days were told,
Been lengthened out to dwell with man,
She had been then six winters old.
Still, sportive may she spend her days,
And lisp my name with prattling
tongue,
Nor chide her little wanton ways,
Mid friends so old, and she so young.
"Soft be the turf that shrouds her bed,
For delicate and soft was she;
And earth, lie lightly on her head,
For light the steps she laid on thee!"

"That's very pretty," I said, with genuine
admiration. "Have you any more like
them?" "Yes," he replied, but, as I
thought, with a suspicion of disappoint-
ment. "There's one on poor little Canace.
She took Erotion's place, and died of cancer
on the lip a year later." Again I was
charmed with the simple pathos of the
verses:—

To loving little Canace,
Who lies beneath the marble floor,
Seven winters did my darling see,
And after them no winter more.

Ah, cruel fate, untimely bane.
Nay mourn not thus, kind passer-by;
Alas we may not here complain
That she, while still so young, should
die.

For cruel cancer's hateful doom,
Her child face wasted in its ire,
Devoured her kisses' fragrant bloom,
Nor left whole lips to grace her pyre.

Thrice sad is death that comes like this,
For if the Fates were purposed still
To seize with sudden swoop, I wis
There yet were other ways to kill.

But death with hasty footsteps went
To close the doors of speech for fear
The stony fates might once relent
If her sweet voice should reach their
ear!

In conclusion, the lecturer translated
Pliny's epistle to Cornelius, in which he
tells the news of Martial's death, as follows:—
"I am profoundly grieved to hear that
Martial is dead. He was a man of genius,
acute and keen, and one whose writings
were unequalled for humor and stinging
satire—a satire, however, which was never
unfair. I gave him a farewell gift on his re-
turn to Spain, his native land, a gift partly
in return for some verses he wrote me. Our
fathers, you know, were accustomed to heap
honors or money on those who had sung the
praises of cities or citizens. In these days
this custom, like so much that is good and
excellent, has fallen into disuse. Once cease
to do what merits praise, then praise itself
becomes a thing for fools. But you ask me
what were the verses which earned my
gratitude. Here they are. The poet, ad-
dressing the muse, bids her seek my house
on the Equiline, and approach with due
reverence:—

Beat not at learning's gate,
Untimely muse, but wait,
For daylight opens the door
To nought but dreary lore.
He writes for judges' ears
What men in after years
Shall teach their sons to know,
As worthy Cicero.
Nay; wait till lamps are bright,
Till Bacchus reigns to-night,
Then, 'mid the roses seen,
And perfumed locks, not e'en
A Cato would refuse
To hear thee, timely Muse!"

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UNIVERSITY PRIMARY EXAMINATIONS.

Entries for the Adelaide University pri-
mary public examinations closed on July
22 and the list was completed on Friday
afternoon. The record number of 1,198
was received, as compared with 981 last
year. The examinations will be held in
August.

PRIZES FOR MUSIC.

In connection with the new scheme of
public examinations in music to be brought
into operation by the Universities of Ade-
laide and Melbourne in September it has
been resolved to award two bursaries—one
worth £8 and the other £4—for each of
the following subjects:—Pianoforte play-
ing, violin, singing, and theory of music.
The prizes are to be used in furthering the
successful candidates' education in music
under a teacher of repute, who may be
selected by the candidate and approved by
the council of the University making the
award. Exact details of the method of
allotting the amounts have not yet been
decided upon.