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News 28-9-23

Defence.

Professor Strong dealt first with defence, the aspect of community life most prominent in the minds of the Elizabethans themselves. He, himself, doubted the statement that of the population of between 4,000,000 and 5,000,000 in England in that period "the muster of men available for active service in 1574 and 1575 were 1,172,474," but these conscription statistics had been accepted by eminent Elizabethan scholars. There were armouries in every town and village, and their contents (shirts of mail and corslets of steel) —were always ready to be donned at an hour's warning. The largest Elizabethan gun was 9,000 lb. in weight, with a calibre of 8½ in., and the weight of shot was 60 lb. The rapier and the dagger had recently ousted the sword and buckler. The great factor of defence was, of course, the Navy. The life of all England was at that time a kind of chorus of the sea. Every Englishman knew his life depended on sea supremacy. The British Navy consisted of 24 ships, including the Dreadnought, the Revenge, and the Elizabeth Jonas (named because Elizabeth had escaped from her enemies as Jonas from the belly of the whale). In addition there were about 900 merchant ships able on need to be converted for purposes of war. Nor was it only as a means of liberty and defence that the sea rang and clashed throughout the thoughts of every Elizabethan Englishman. He was equally proud of the great discoverers — those almost supermen — who had risen to such heights of heroism and endurance. The spirit of Davis and Frobisher, of Raleigh and Drake, breathed through Elizabethan literature. Their exploits inspired the common man as they inspired the poets of England. Drayton became the first poet of England's Empire, and the pride of colonization and discovery was bound up in all the literature of the age.

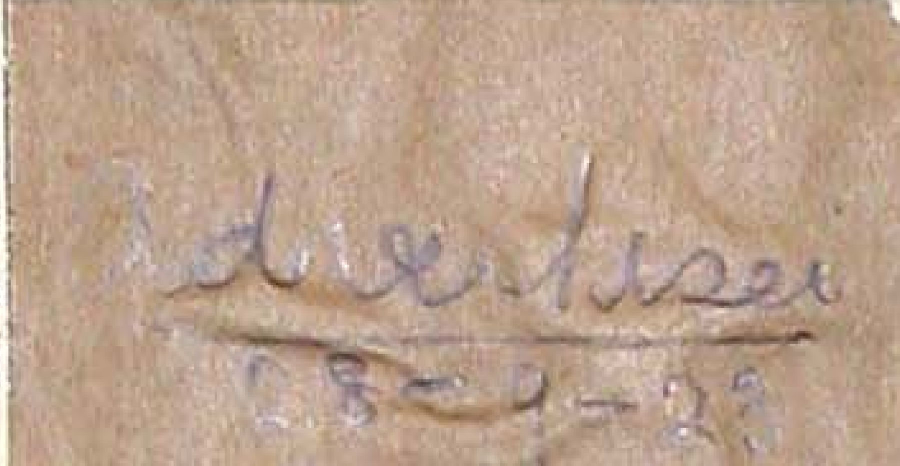
Country Life.

English country life in Shakespeare's day was a strange mingling of beauty and mirth, with squalor and discomfort. The Elizabethan village was full of dreaming charm, but the highways were almost incredibly rough and beset with as much danger as discomfort and difficulty. The inns were good, and "gentlemen dined at a common table, and there had abundance of all good fare, including choice fish, for sixpence and sometimes 4d." On the other hand, the ostlers, tapsters and serving men were frequently in league with the highwaymen, and passed on to the latter most useful hints about the weight of a careless traveller's purse. Besides the highwaymen, there were professional vagabonds. The worst of these was the "upright man"—king of the road and lord over all sorts of beggars. "Upright men" slept in barns and had regular meeting places. Sometimes as many as 40 would assemble in the barn of some unfortunate farmer, threatening—and meaning—to burn him out if he made any objections. "He must have been a formidable fellow, this Elizabethan sundowner," added Professor Strong.

Men of the Road.

Other pests were fresh water mariners, priggers of prancers (horse stealers), counterfeit cranks, Abraham men and hookers and anglers. The last-named went fishing by night with a small iron hook attached to a long pole, and were capable of fishing the blankets off a bed and drawing them out of the window. From the countryside, if he had the least aspirations to fashion, a man must go to London. The Elizabethan fop, or "gull," frequently sold his land to buy clothes and make a fine figure in London. Fashionable dress, male and female, was derived in style from many different countries, and was more gay than beautiful. Elizabeth had 3,000 dresses, and brought over women from Holland to starch and "do up" her ruffs of lawn. Quite young and beautiful women wore wigs of different colours from day to day. Old St. Paul's was then a place of worship and a den of thieves, and the "gull" would attend a fashionable promenade there in the afternoon. The main aisle was a business meeting place, and a spot for the posting of advertisements for serving men, and thieves and swindlers plied their trades within the building. If a "gull" was in debt for his fine clothes—which he probably was—he would spend the whole day at St. Paul's near the tomb of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, and would be described as "dining with Duke Humphrey." There were schools for teaching young "gulls" who had but recently come up from the country "the gentlemanlike art of smoking." Apart from that, the "gull" would probably frequent the theatre, and would sometimes be accommodated with a stool on the stage, from which he might make a running fire of comments on a disapproved play. The theatres, including the Globe, were nearly all on the south banks of the Thames, outside the city bounds proper, by reason of the city council enmity. The city council always opposed players and theatres, partly on moral and religious grounds, partly because they were supposed to attract brawlers, and partly because the close crowding of people was considered likely to spread plague. On the other hand, the Queen's Council favoured them highly, on account of the Queen's love of plays, and most of the history of the theatre was a struggle between the two bodies. The Court had an Office of the Revels, with a regular staff, and the Master of the Revels had to go to the theatres and carry a Royal command to players. Players therefore argued that to be ready to appear at Royal command they must have some means of living in times when they were not playing at court, and that was a powerful defence for them. After the theatre the "gull" would stroll among the ballad hawkers, the cook shops, and the strange medley of humanity that jostled in an Elizabethan street. Between Bread street and Friday street, with their cook houses and fish shops, he would find, with a frontage to each street, the Mermaid Tavern, the most famous hostelry in the world. It was fitting that the last places described should be the Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare gave his plays to the world, and the Mermaid Inn, where he gave his soul to his friends.

Professor Strong was sincerely thanked by Mr. Cecil Maddigan and Mr. J. Carlisle Macdonnell. An interesting discussion followed.



LIFE IN THE SPACIOUS DAYS.

THE ELIZABETHAN ERA.

"Life in Shakespeare's England" was the title of a fascinating lecture delivered by Professor A. T. Strong at the Art Gallery on Thursday evening.

The chair was occupied by Mr. S. Talbot Smith.

Professor Strong said the literature of the day, and especially that of Shakespeare himself, was a mine of information concerning the period. A good deal of light was thrown on the subject, not only by direct historical narrative, but by the dramatic fiction and satirical prose and verse of the period. They were thus able to get a very accurate idea of the Elizabethan armor and of the men available for fighting and of the types of cannon then in use. Shooting with the long bow was going out in the great queen's time, and the small gun and pike were taking its place.

It was interesting to learn that the navy which defeated the Spanish Armada actually consisted of 24 ships, among which were numbered the Dreadnought, the Revenge, and the quaintly-named Elizabeth Jonas. This last name was devised by Queen Elizabeth herself in memory of a time when she had been miraculously delivered from her enemies, "even as the prophet Jonas from the belly of the whale." In addition to this regular navy there were 135 merchantmen of 100 tons or over, and 650 ships between 40 and 100 tons burthen. It would be seen that the navy was really largely made up of these converted merchantmen.

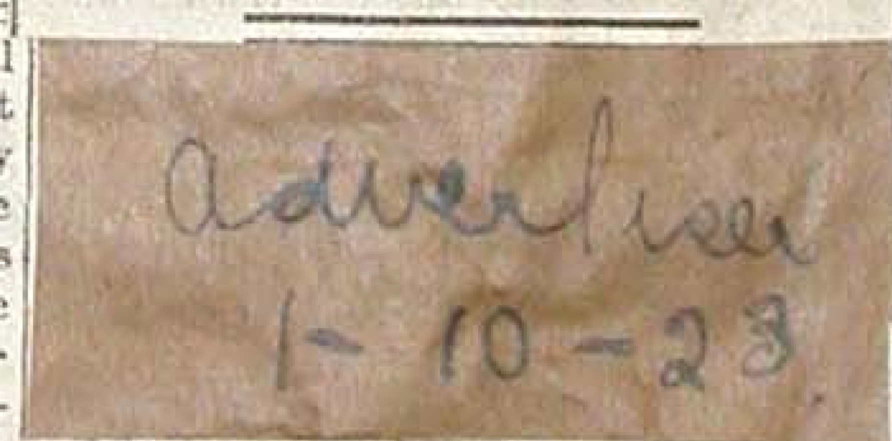
In dealing with the subject of exploration and the great Elizabethan seamen who had carried their country's flag to far coasts, Professor Strong drew an interesting parallel between the spirit which animated these hardy adventurers and that of the great writers who directed their minds to the quest of literature in new fields.

A description of the English countryside during Shakespearian times, its manor houses and castles and the villages clustered close about them, showed much of the life of the people beyond London. The inns of England would appear in those days to have been as good as the roads were bad. The highways were infested with thieves and vagabonds, and the "upright man" was the king of them all, for the term did not refer to any moral rectitude he might have been supposed to possess. It merely meant that he was a stalwart "king of the road," and while all sorts of beggars were obedient to his behest he surpassed all others in pilfering and cheating.

Fashions in dress were varied and startling. Dekker, in his "Seven Deadly Sins of London," complained bitterly that an Englishman's dress resembled a traitor's body which had been hanged, drawn, and quartered, and set up in several places. Harrison had compared the fop in his short French breeches to a dog in a doublet. Queen Elizabeth had her full share of feminine vanity, and was the possessor of 3,000 dresses. She found it necessary to import several women from Holland to starch her great ruffs. In common with other fashionable dames, she had several wigs of different colors. A foreign visitor who had noted her red hair in London, was surprised to observe when he saw her, a few days later, that it was then black.

Passing to London, the lecturer gave an account of the chief buildings of the city. Old St. Paul's Cathedral was then not only a place of worship, but at certain hours of the day at any rate was quite literally a den of thieves. Its middle aisle was used as a fashionable promenade. Whitsun gallants might here rub shoulders with the confidence men and spielers of the day. Here, too, lawyers received their clients, and notices for serving men were also posted. The fop might ruffle it at noonday, taking care as he swaggered to show that his cloak was lined with most expensive taffetas. If he were in fear of arrest for debt he would naturally stay in sanctuary at St. Paul's all day near the tomb of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. Hence the origin of the phrase, "to dine with Duke Humphrey." Professional instructors in the art of smoking also frequented St. Paul's. The lecturer then quoted a passage from a play of "rare Ben Jonson," in which it was set forth that a notice had been posted in the middle aisle of St. Paul's by a man who offered to teach the youthful aspirant "the gentleman-like use of tobacco," together with several fancy methods of inhaling.

Another building rich in historic memories was the Globe Theatre, and the riotous behaviour of the gallants at the playhouse was a feature of the times. London Bridge, with its houses along each side, and a number of traitors' heads tastefully displayed at various vantage points, must have been an interesting promenade. This little tour of the London of a bygone day concluded with a visit to the Mermaid Tavern, the lecturer pointing out that as they were concerned with the England of Shakespeare's day, it was appropriate that they should have concluded their brief visit with the playhouse where his master pieces had been given to the world, and the tavern where his soul had been given to his friends.



LECTURE ON BEOWULF.

From JOHN W. ELFICK:—I read with great interest the account in "The Advertiser" of September 27, of Professor Strong's lecture on Beowulf, the great English hero. The professor quoted the story in which Beowulf was instrumental in ridding the King of the Danes of the demon Grendel; and how he (Beowulf) afterwards was mortally wounded when freeing his own country from the fire-breathing dragon who was laying waste the land. I have always understood, however, that, although there seems to be no doubt as to the authenticity of Beowulf's existence, he has, in the dragon story, been made to usurp the place of the mythical Beowa found in several old genealogies. Perhaps Professor Strong will enlighten us on this point.

NEW ORATORS

Silver-tongued team of University Shows Rare Ability Against Picked Men of East.

NO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

It was a proud moment for the University and, in fact, for South Australia, when the Adelaide University debating team proved victorious in the recent inter-university debating contest.

They were opposed by no mean adversaries—the very cream of the eastern States' debaters—and the subjects of debate were by no means easy; but the masterly handling of the latter by the Adelaide team, their technique, team work and delivery augurs well for the future of oratory in this State.

But—and this is the amazing and incomprehensible situation—the Adelaide team—the champion university debaters of the Commonwealth—have as yet received no official recognition by the University, where as the vanquished teams have a high status, and an honored position in their respective universities.

It is high time, in view of the results that have been obtained by voluntary efforts, that a University Debating Society were formed, and questions of public interest considered in debate by what is, to all intents, the chief centre of thought in South Australia.

ALL LAW STUDENTS.

The members of the victorious teams are all law students. Mr. F. Penoyre Adams, the leader of the team, and chairman of the University Students' Council, is well known in debating circles. Among his many successes in this sphere, he was a member of the famous St. Andrew's team, which won the championship of the South Australian Literary Societies' Union in 1919. He is a brilliant, cool, and forceful speaker, and combines an excellent delivery with a thorough knowledge of his subject.

Though a trained elocutionist, Mr. Adams, unlike many debaters and politicians, does not rely merely on the sound of his voice, but mainly on his subject matter and its organisation—his treatment of the economic side of the Ruhr problem was worthy of an expert economist.

Professor Phillipson, one of the judges of the final debate, in his summing up, spoke of Mr. Adams' speech in glowing and eulogistic terms. Such a tribute, coming from a world-famous international jurist, certainly speaks well for Mr. Adams' future career, and there is much hope that the sparkling oratory of a Burke or O'Connell will soon liven up the rather dull atmosphere of our Courts of Justice.

Mr. J. R. McCabe, the third speaker, though born in Glasgow, has nevertheless been sufficiently susceptible to the Australian atmosphere to become a dinkum Aussie. Like Mr. Adams, he was at one time on the staff of the Public Library, and gained thereby invaluable information regarding available authorities and sources of information.

In debate he possesses an unfortunate tendency to be somewhat overwhelmed by the emotional aspect of his subject, but, aside from this, his technique and fighting spirit leave nothing to be desired.

The second speaker, Mr. M. C. R. Kriewaldt, B.A., is a South Australian by birth, although he has spent much of his life in the United States, being a graduate of the Wisconsin University.

AMERICAN COMPARISON.

Mr. Kriewaldt probably knows as much about the theory and practice of debating as anyone in South Australia. When he was in the United States he not only represented his university, but also coached the teams of various other universities for important contests. It certainly speaks volumes for the Adelaide team that Mr. Kriewaldt can say, without regard for his own powers, that it is equal to any university team, and better than most, in the United States.

The importance of these inter-university debates should not be held lightly. They provide an opportunity for the future