REG. 13.5.27

"THIS WOODEN O."

Lecture By Professor Strong.

"It is safe to say that if Queen Elizabeth had not been fond of witnessing plays, there would have been no Shakespeare." So said Professor Sir Archibald Strong, in the course of a lecture last night.

With the quaint title taken from a well-known quotation in "Henry V.," "This wooden O," signifying the shape of the theatre inside, Professor Sir Archibald Strong, M.A., Litt.D., was responsible for an interesting address on Thursday evening. The occasion was the opening of the 46th session of the 1927 season of the Adelaide University Shakespeare Society, which proudly boasts of being one of the oldest Shakespearean organizations in the Commonwealth. There was a large gathering at the Classic Room, University, North terrace; and Miss Ruth Harman, hon. secretary, had made splendid arrangements. Mr. A. G. Thornell, President of the society, was Chairman.

Professor Sir Archibald Strong commenced his address with a description of the Elizabethan playhouse, and referred to the circular shape of its interior. He also described the stage and theatre at which Shakespeare wrote, and the kind of audiences who might attend it. A general view of Elizabethan stage conditions was made also. The lecturer said the building was evolved structurally from the inn-yard in which earlier dramatic performances had been given. The court yard of this contained the stage, and the part of it allotted to the audience eventually became the Elizabethan "yard" with its own modern "pit." The balconies—to be seen until recently in many old English inns—afforded a convenient circle or gallery; and many other features of the modern stage went back to that origin. The first theatre built in London was erected in 1576, by James Burbage, father of the more famous Richard Burbage, the great actor of a succeeding generation over the tenure of the land, the theatre was broken up and transported across the Thames, where it became, in its reerected state—the world-famous Globe Theatre. This was the chief theatre in which Shakespeare's plays were acted. A secondary venue must also be taken into consideration, the open-air city theatre, for a small part, to the air, and the performances were given in the daylight. The Elizabethan theatre, like the private ones of its type, was in the form of a room, and performances were given by artificial light. The chief Elizabethan playhouses lay either on the south side of the Thames, or on portion of the northern side, outside the jurisdiction of the City Council. This council was consistently antagonistic to stage performances within the city bounds—partly because, through overcrowding, they helped to spread plague; and partly because they were considered immoral.

Th Influence of Elizabeth.

Continuing, Sir Archibald Strong remarked that it was here that the Royal Court, or Court Players came to it, stepped in, and saved Elizabethan drama from destruction. It was safe to say that, if Queen Elizabeth had not been fond of witnessing plays there would have been no Shakespeare. Those who provided such performances for her, and drew upon the public funds for them, kept up a running fight with the arbitrary and tyrannical City Councillors, and thus made the continuance of theatrical companies possible.

The structure of the Elizabethan playhouse had an all-important bearing upon the type of play produced by Shakespeare and his fellows. In the distinction between the Elizabethan platform-stage and the modern picture stage was to be sought, in large measure, the reason for the difference between the romantic and poetic drama of Shakespeare, and the realistic prose-drama of Pinero, Shaw, and Galsworthy. There was only one curtain on the Elizabethan stage, and that covered but a very small portion of the stage at the back. The greater part of the stage jutted out promontory-wise among the audience, and, therefore, illusions of the kinds obtained through modern stage scenery and setting, was impossible. Consequently, the playwright had to supply—by means of poetic description—effects which were now achieved more realistically through the art of the scene painter. The playwright's imagination was thus put upon its mettle and given increased freedom. Partly in that stage exigency they owed the beautiful descriptive poetry which they found throughout "The Midsummer Night's Dream," and in the last act of "The Merchant of Venice." After the Restoration, the stage gradually receded, until it achieved its present form, which was no longer than that of a promontary-like platform, but, in its typical manifestation, resembled a room out of which one side had been knocked, and into which the spectators were allowed to peep, as it were, by stealth. Such an arrangement was obviously made for realism and for prose; as contrasted with romance and poetry.

The professor concluded with an account of the average Elizabethan audience, including the gallants who sat on the stage while the performance proceeded; and, in some cases, kept up a fire of noisy chaff with the "groundlings" of the pit. The professor also gave an account of Elizabethan costuming, and of the development of Elizabethan scenery, showing that, at the beginning of Shakespeare's career, the latter was very scanty indeed, but became comparatively elaborate before the plays of Shakespeare's last years.

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It will be gratifying to his Adelaide friends and to Australian scientific circles generally (writes "Ecivam") to learn that Sir William Bragg, K.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.S., the eminent scientist, who was for more than 20 years Professor of Mathematics and Physics in the University of Adelaide, is President-designate of the British Association which is to meet in 1928. Sir William is an ex-President of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. While he was in Adelaide he received the Fellowship of the Royal Society, the blue riband of the scientific world, for his work in connection with X-rays and crystals. Four years after he came to live in London in the Adelaide University Professor Bragg married Gwendoline, daughter of the late Sir Charles Todd. Their brilliant son, Professor William Lawrence Bragg, M.C., O.B.E., was born in Adelaide. Earlier this year he won the Nobel Prize for physics awarded in 1915. For six years after leaving Adelaide Sir William was Cavendish Professor of Physics at the University of Leeds, and then for eight years Quain Professor of Physics in London University. Since 1923 he has been Director of the Royal Institution in Great Britain, Fullerian Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution, and Davy-Faraday Research Laboratory. As an English newspaper writer says:—"He continues to distinguish himself as one of the most genial, modest, and hospitable of men."

ADV. 13.5.27

LONDON UNIVERSITY.

BIG LAND PURCHASE.

ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION HELPS.

LONDON, May 12.

Negotiations for the purchase of a Bloomsbury site of eleven acres at the back of the British Museum by the University of London, from the Duke of Bedford are practically complete, according to an announcement by the President of the Board of Education at the annual graduation dinner last night. He added that the acquisition was made possible partly by a contribution from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and partly by a magnificent contribution from the Rockefeller Foundation. It was an extraordinary fact that out of 8000 students of the University attending full-time University courses there 30 per cent. were studying at the University of London, and still more that 25 per cent. of the Dominion students studying in Great Britain 25 per cent. were at the London University.

ADV. 13.5.27

LECTURES FOR MUSIC TEACHERS.

A series of free public evening lectures on musical subjects will be delivered in the south hall of the Conservatorium of Music at the University during the next four weeks. The lectures, which will be given under the auspices of the Australian Music Examinations Board, will be delivered by Professor E. Harold Davies who will speak on "The Principles of Harmony and Counterpoint." The subjects, and lecturers for the remainder of the series will be:—May 20, "Bar Training and Musical Appreciation," Miss Ivy Seyer; May 27, "Pianoforte Teaching," Mr. I. G. Reimann; June 3, "The Essentials of Voice Training," Miss Chilcott; June 10, "Violin Teaching," Mr. Charles Schilsky.

ADV. 13.5.27

THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE.

ITS EFFECT ON PLAYS.

A lecture on "This wooden O" ("Henry V.") was delivered by Professor Sir Archibald Strong at a meeting of the Adelaide University Shakespeare Society on Thursday evening. The president (Mr. A. G. Thrall) occupied the chair.

Professor Strong gave a description of the Elizabethan playhouse, and referred to the circular shape of its interior. He also described the stage and theatre of which Shakespeare wrote, and gave a survey of Elizabethan stage conditions. The Elizabethan theatre evolved structurally from the innyard, in which earlier dramatic performances were given. The stage was in the courtyard, and that part of it allotted to the audience became known in the early theatres as the "yard," and in the modern theatre as the "pit." The balconies of the old inns developed into the modern theatre as the "pit." The balconies of the old inns developed into the dress circle and gallery, and many other features of the modern theatre could be traced back to that origin. The first real theatre built in London was erected in 1576 by James Burbage, father of Richard Burbage, the great actor. Owing to a dispute over the tenure of the land, the theatre was pulled down and re-erected on the other side of the Thames. It became the Globe Theatre, and was the chief theatre in which Shakespeare's plays were acted. A secondary theatre used later by Shakespeare's company was the Blackfriars. Like all the theatres, the Globe was open to the air except for a small part, and the performances were given in the daytime. The Blackfriars Theatre was in the form of a room, and performances were given by artificial light. The chief Elizabethan playhouses were either on the south side of the Thames or on a portion of the north side outside the jurisdiction of the City Council, which was consistently antagonistic to stage performances within the bounds, partly because, through overcrowding, they helped to spread plague, and partly because they were considered immoral. It was the Royal Court and those attached to it that saved Elizabethan drama from destruction, and it was safe to say that if Queen Elizabeth had not been fond of witnessing plays there would have been no Shakespeare. Those who provided the performances for her and drew upon the public funds for them, kept up a running fight with the arbitrary and tyrannical city councillors, and thus made the continuance of theatrical companies possible.

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AUSTRALIAN MUSIC EXAMINATIONS BOARD.

The Universities of Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania, Queensland, and Western Australia, and the State Conservatoriums of New South Wales and

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS IN THEORY OF MUSIC.

MAY, 1927.

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