

# AFTERTHOUGHTS OF AN AUTHORS' ANNUAL

(An Editor's Viewpoint)

Following the complimentary dinner to several Canadian authors, and the inauguration last year in the Hotel Vancouver of the British Columbia Branch of the Canadian Authors' Association, the Society was particularly fortunate in the places selected for its first meetings.

The first gathering took place at the beautiful Point Grey home of Mrs. L. A. Lefevre, who is herself an author in the fullest sense of the word, and a poetess of real charm. Those members who were privileged to be present on that occasion will remember her reading of "A Garden by the Sea" and "Eagle Pass," not only because the verses were her own, but because of the fine spirit revealed in the first poem, and the dramatic interest in the story of the second. It need scarcely be added that the pieces were read with a sympathetic interpretation which left nothing lacking in elocutionary power.

The second meeting of the Association was the first annual one, and it was convened at the home of Mr. Robie L. Reid, in Beach Avenue, Vancouver. Whether or not interested observers get time to note impressions of meetings and events, most of us carry away distinctive memories of functions attended, and perhaps the outstanding one in the minds of many of those present at that gathering would be the address given by the host of the evening on one of his favourite authors. We say one, advisedly, for anyone with literary interests, whose lot it has been to visit the book-enriched home of Mr. Reid and to make even a hasty review of his library, and to hear some of his spontaneous references thereto, could not come away without feeling that here is a man who, whatever else he is in public or private life, is a real book-lover. And fully understood, and rightly applied, perhaps no higher certificate of character can be given to any man. For to love books truly is to have a mind and heart which seek not only to be acquainted with the thought and work of the master minds of humanity who have gone before, and the messages and records they have left, but to aspire to that increasing knowledge of the Source of Life Himself that we may learn even in this preliminary "gleam of existence between two eternities" to live more and more "in tune with the Infinite."

The business part of the annual meeting, as is sometimes unavoidable with new organizations, seemed to be in large measure pre-arranged. In a new society it is well that the Executive, or at least the executive heads, should not be too readily retired; and it seemed wise, as well as fitting, that the first year's committee should be re-appointed. Perhaps it was on the principle that the chief nominal honour should "go round" that the president's position alone was vacated, and Mr. MacBeth succeeded Judge Howay. Also, considering years, as well as experience, it was timely that the author of "The Romance of Western Canada" should be nominated for the Chair in the second year. Nor should it lessen the honour conferred upon Mr. MacBeth to point out that the West is rich in members—women as well as men—not less qualified for the position through literary experience and work than the two gentlemen already associated with the presidency.

The authors responsible for the formation of the parent organization have been liberal and enterprising in the scope they have allowed for its work, and the various classes of workers who are thereby open to become members or associate members. In many cases no doubt the section chosen would be largely a matter of individual choice, and probably the original membership lists will become an interesting subject for review in later years.

Authors themselves may be divided into several classes. The top position may be given to writers of original work which, in fiction may mean those responsible for the 10 per cent. of novels published, which one authority asserts is about all that is worth reading in these days of big production. Writers responsible for the other 90 per cent. of fiction may get present standing in the same class, for who shall say "Ye shall not pass" while they await the recognition or judgment of posterity? Compilers, commentators, biographers and others who publish books based on or dependent upon other men's works or lives, must also be given place, for the time being, as authors. But whether or not many have been entered as full members who might have done well to enter as associates and wait for the invitation "Friend, come up higher," we have observed in the lists of the latter the names of a few who might fairly have been entered in the upper circle.

The bookmakers have been thoughtful in their treatment of kindred workers. The inclusion of librarians and book-sellers as associate members need not be put down merely to commercial interest. Librarians are usually—and should always be—men and women primarily of literary interests, and here and there we find booksellers who are book readers and book lovers. Then, apart from any question of official representation through publications, it is noteworthy that editors of newspapers and magazines have been held eligible for associate membership. That is pertinent, for in not a few cases editors reach their position or take up their work because of dominant journalistic or literary interests and ideals, which often may not be secondary to those of the best writers; and sometimes any literary work they aspire to do may be limited by the unceasing demands of other duties, including reviewing, selecting, and "editing" the copy of others.

In this connection it was notable that a lady member of the B. C. association raised a question at the annual meeting as to whether newspaper editors, not in evidence there, should be retained on the executive. It should at once be added that another lady member of outstanding position among Canadian writers of fiction and verse, afterwards assured the meeting that, though the newspaper editors had not been active in attendance, they had been of real help to the organization in other ways.

In suggesting that the editors be relieved of office, the first lady thought fit to make some remarks about editors generally which clearly revealed that, whatever her personal experience of writing, or of submitting copy to editors, she had little or no idea of what editing work involves.

It is a commonplace to say that editors are glad to get good copy—whatever the rates of payment possible to their publications. Even the casual observer must note that the Dailies are overcrowded with articles of one kind or another, until some of them have replaced larger with smaller type with the view of getting more reading matter into the space available. On the other hand, fortunately for those publications that put literary and social service before money making, it happens that some of the more capable literary workers write primarily from interest in or love of their subject, or inspired by community welfare, and not for the fee which may or may not, be involved.

Some would-be professional writers reveal that they have little groundwork of literary or other experience, or are given to "re-hashing" and passing as original matter, selections from newspapers and periodicals. Such "writers,"

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