

Canadian Authors' Association--Report of Seventh Annual Convention

(Submitted by Dr. Lionel Stevenson at a meeting of the Vancouver branch.)

The seventh annual convention of the Canadian Authors' Association took place in Ottawa on June 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1927, the British Columbia delegates being Mrs. Virginia M. Cummings of Fernie and Mrs. A. M. Winlow and Dr. Lionel Stevenson of Vancouver. Although equally interesting and delightful, the convention was a complete contrast with that held in Vancouver last year, the formality and ceremonial of the Capital being the antithesis of the West's adventurous, unconventional atmosphere.

In addition to the permanent historical and administrative features of interest in Ottawa, there were the decorations preparatory for the Dominion Day Celebration to enhance our sense of festivity and importance. The assemblage of writers, which was particularly inclusive, as the Maritime Provinces were represented by a Halifax group, and Quebec by several members of the French section, provided a vivid revelation of Canada's vastness and diversity, and symbolized also the imaginative and spiritual element which must play so essential a part in unifying the immense territory into a genuine nation. There was an impressive significance in such a meeting being held in the Dominion's capital during the observance of the Dominion's anniversary.

The convention opened with a luncheon at the Chateau Laurier, preceded by the registration of the delegates, who received identification ribbons bearing the thunder-bird insignia of the Graphic publishers. (All the programmes and other printed material, it may be remarked, were donated by this enterprising firm and showed a high level of craftsmanship.) The luncheon was given by the Ottawa branch in honor of the visiting delegates, and the Chairman, Mr. Lloyd Roberts, President of the branch, pointed out in his opening speech how few Canadian authors are able to devote their full time to that calling, the majority being primarily engaged in some profession remote from literature.

Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, was introduced as one of these disguised authors, and the applause, which greeted the announcement that he was a member of the C. A. A. was intensified as Mr. Roberts invested him with the red

ribbon of the convention. Premier King expressed high praise for the achievements of Canadian literature and declared that it had contributed a valuable service to the upbuilding of Canada toward nationhood.

The welcome of the City of Ottawa was extended by the acting Mayor, M. Fortier, with wit and grace. Dr. W. T. Allison responded on behalf of the association and Judge Surveyer spoke briefly in French.

The delegates then adjourned to the theatre of the National Museum, where the business sessions were held. This auditorium was rather bleak and full of echoes, and construction work was in progress in the galleries, so there was a considerable strain on speakers and listeners alike. Professor Allison, in his presidential address, reviewed the leading events in Canadian literature during the year, paying special attention to the volume of Charles Mair's collected writings, and acclaiming Mair as the poet of Confederation.

In the report of the National Secretary the significant fact was the large number of unpaid dues, not merely for the current year but for the two preceding years also. In this respect Vancouver proved to be by no means the worst offender, but not above reproach, with four delinquents of 1925, ten of 1926, and thirty-two of the current year.

The National Treasurer reported a credit balance of over \$1400, which is about \$200 less than his total of last year, but slightly in excess of what he received on taking over the office two years ago.

In the evening we assembled in the National Art Gallery to enjoy a literary and musical programme arranged by Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott and M. Jules Tremblay, which was typical of much of the convention in its judicious blending of English and French elements. The first half consisted of French-Canadian songs, and a group of lyrics by modern French-Canadian poets; the second part began with a group of lyrics by W. W. Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott, Lloyd Roberts and Katherine Hale, the musical accompaniments being by Canadian composers; and the concluding item was Miss Mazo de la Roche's extremely clever one-act play, "Low Life," admirably acted. Mr

Eric Browne, director of the gallery, spoke briefly on the recent successful Canadian exhibits in England and France, and invited the delegates to inspect the galleries while refreshments were served.

The Wednesday session began with a symposium on "My Methods of Work," several successful writers submitting themselves to the confessional. Mrs. Madge Macbeth, in a witty and dramatically vivid disquisition, implied that her methods transcended analysis, but admitted that she dictates to an admiring secretary and frequently pauses to revise and recast, never advancing beyond any point where a word baffles her until it is satisfactorily located. Mrs. Macbeth also gave a few glimpses of her earliest literary experiments.

Mr. Robert Watson described, with specific illustrations, his habit of getting a wide range of productions, descriptive, fictional, and poetic, from a single source, and showed how far the eventual piece of writing often departed from his original intention.

Mr. Robert J. C. Stead, after making a strong plea for the Canadian author to respect the financial standards of his calling by insisting on payment for all material published—even poems in school text-books—stated that he gives only one evening a week to the writing of his novels; and concluded by asserting that his greatest mistake has been his confining himself to the topics most familiar to him, and that his forthcoming book is bound to be more successful, being on a subject that he knows nothing about.

Mrs. Lilian Benyon Thomas of Winnipeg, prize-winner in the recent contest in *Maclean's Magazine*, gave a more technical address on the short story.

Mr. J. Murray Gibbon devoted his talk to the translating of French chansons, which has recently monopolized his interest, and he illustrated his method of singing the French words over to himself until the equivalent English words gradually formed themselves.

The afternoon session was given over to the perennial problem of copy-right. The committee on musical compositions submitted a very thorough report in printed form, and announced