

Is London, Ont. to be the Boston of Canada? By Verne Dewitt Powell

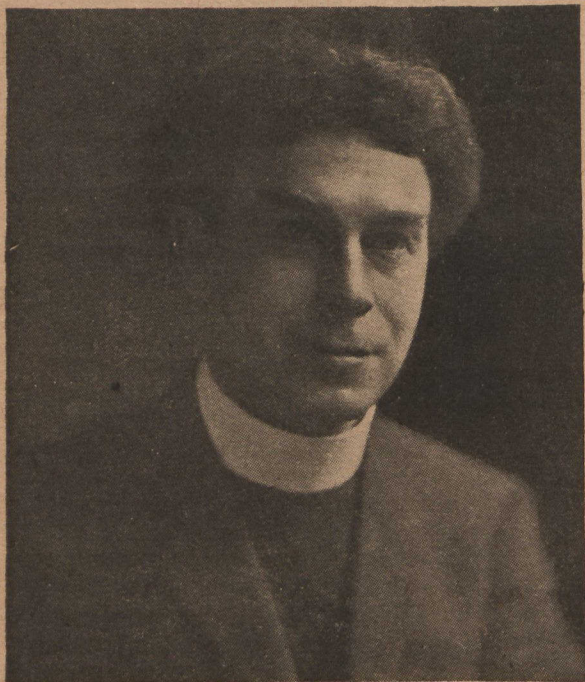
Why Did Stringer Go Back on the Muses?

The Editor Has a Moment With a Poet. Have You a Poet in Your Town?

Why Have We No Canadian Masefield?

Preacher-Poet Heralds New Literary School

IN London, Ont., they will tell you with a good deal of pride that Arthur Stringer and Harvey O'Higgins once worked on the reportorial staffs of the local newspapers. Here have also resided in their younger days many other writers, actors, musicians, composers and painters now famous, and priding itself on its reputation as an intellectual



If the activities of the Rev. Robert W. Norwood carry out some of his admirers' expectations, London, Ont., will be the Boston of Canada.

centre, the town is a famous stamping-ground for John Cowper Powys, Earle Barnes, and others of the type.

Now, in "London in the woods," as it used to be poetically called to distinguish it from its mighty namesake over the sea, there is a remarkable renaissance of literary and intellectual activity, the central figure of which is an Anglican rector who came from Quebec in 1912 to take charge of Cronyn Memorial Church. The author of three volumes of verse already published, two shortly forthcoming volumes and a number of plays, Rev. Robert W. Norwood has gathered about him a following of authors, magazine writers, teachers and others whose local activities have been referred to by newspaper writers as "building a new Olympus," the remarkable progress of the coterie promising to make London the "Boston of the Northland."

A newly organized "London Literary Club" announces as its sphere of usefulness the according of modern verse-writers the full recognition of their merits unshadowed by the homage that conventional literary critics lavish on the dead poets of the past. The president of the organization, Dr. E. E. Braithwaite, is also president of the Western University of London, Ont., and the interests and activities of the club and university are being closely connected up. Miss May Wilson, a novelist who has chosen as an especial field the characteristic of rural Ontario

life, is vice-president, and Rev. Mr. Norwood, the poet-preacher, is an active member of the advisory committee, and a dozen other writers with from one to six volumes of verse or fiction as monuments to their industry are members. Among the London writers interested are Rev. A. P. McKibbin (Mack Cloie), Mrs. (Rev.) D. C. MacGregor (Marion Keith), Peter McArthur, a former New York journalist, now the "sage of Ekfrid," where, like Horace of old, he has a kind of Sabine farm; Dr. H. A. McCallum, dean of the medical department of the local university and noted for his advocacy of mental healing, bread diet, nutrition treatment and other doctrines not usually held to by leaders of allopathic medicine; Miss Grace Blackburn (Fanfan), reputed to be the greatest Canadian dramatic critic and also a writer of vers libre, and a score of lesser Olympians who some day hope to spur their spirited Pegasus to the mountain top.

Born at Christ Church rectory, New Ross, Nova Scotia, March 27, 1874, Mr. Norwood was educated at Bishop's College, Lennoxville, Quebec, and King's College, Windsor, N.S., where his professor of literature was the Canadian poet, Charles G. D. Roberts. He is a son of Rev. Joseph W. Norwood. Already he has published "Paul to Timothy," "His Lady of the Sonnets" and "The Witch of Endor," favourably received last year by the critics. He has now ready for publication "The Modernist" and "Rahab," two additional volumes of verse. A number of his plays, something of the Maeterlinck "Blue Bird" type, have been produced by a local dramatic company with favourable receptions, among them two charming child-fairy plays, "Curly Locks" and "Jumbo."

An exponent of "New Thought" and the "New Theology," Rev. Mr. Norwood, soon after coming to London, leaped into fame as an insurgent minister, and although his denomination is regarded as the most conservative in Canada, he throngs his church twice on every Sunday with an overflow audience of theosophists, New Thoughtists, Vedantists, Bahaists and other latter day non-conformists.

His lectures on "The New Movement" and "The New Thought" in Canadian poetry have attracted wide attention, and his reference to the "Spoon River Anthology" as one of the "worst abominations" ever printed, threw the local admirers of Edgar Lee Masters into a veritable panic. "The unity of all life," "the brotherhood of man," cosmic consciousness and other ideals and dogmas of New Thought psychology and transcendental idealism are shown to abound in the writing of Canadian poets like Dr. Albert D. Watson, a Toronto physician; Helena Coleman, Albert Stafford, Ethelwyn Wetherald, Lloyd Roberts, Bliss Carman and the other maritimers. Dr. Watson is heralded as the greatest of the new Canadian writers, but to an 18-year-old London girl, Miss Hilda Hooke, Mr. Norwood awards an unrestricted field of laurels and styles her "the greatest of them all."

An enthusiastic admirer of the late Rupert Brooke, Mr. Norwood finds in many of the Canadian poets still living in Canada, unlike Carman, Stringer, and C. G. D. Roberts, who have hied them away to the United States, equals of the distinguished English writer who died of wounds at the Dardanelles. "Canada is great in poets, artists, painters and musicians, because her people at heart are poets," he declares.

Some day, when Mr. Norwood has concluded with the new Canadian school, he will perhaps extend his field of criticism and pass judgment upon the New

Thought poets of the United States, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Edwin Markham, William Rose Bent, Herbert Kaufman, Robert Loveman, Nixon Waterman, and the rest.

Singularly conducive to nourishing the new New Thought school is the soil of London, for here Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, friend of Walt Whitman and Horace Traubel, wrote his "Cosmic Consciousness," which has ever since been to New Thought what Mrs. Eddy's "Science and Health" is to Christian Science.

Why Did Stringer Go Back on the Muses?

PROBABLY the majority of people who read Arthur Stringer's novels and short stories never knew that he was originally a poet. But he was. Had he remained in poetry for a livelihood he would have been dead now. Yet he wrote some very auspicious poetry. In fact, it's only about a year since his latest volume of verse came out, headed Open Water. He had previously published a book of resounding poems called, I think, Hesperus. And it was in reference to this earlier, more Homeric, and by no means cynical volume of verse that his old author friend, Arthur MacFarlane, wrote such a glowing eulogy of Stringer's affairs with the Muses. MacFarlane detected in Stringer the promise and potency of great poetics.

Well, of course, no man with an Ontario summer farm and a New York establishment both on his hands could afford to be stigmatized as a mere poet. Stringer was busy grinding out ten-cent-a-word short stories, movie yarns and exciting, saffron-sheathed novels to waste more than the thin edge of his leisure making poems. As a prose-producer—but is it prose?—Stringer has made a wide reputation and a good bit of money. He has absented himself from the springs of Helicon and has gone without the



The Indian-Canadian poet, Pauline Johnson, whose death anniversary is Tuesday next.