

ample, twenty-seven Canadian novels were published, an increase of over twenty-eight per cent. over the previous year. Publishers would be apt to smile at the spectacle of an Authors' Association requesting them to put on the brakes, but I feel bound to say that when we consider the limited market for new books in Canada, even granting that it is much better than ever it has been before, the total number of native books published each year is altogether too large. When the lists are crowded, it is a foregone conclusion that the majority of the

authors will have but a poor financial return for their hard work. It would be better for both publishers and authors if a self-denying ordinance were accepted, so that not more than eight or ten new novels would be brought out in any one season. A higher standard of composition and a satisfactory sale would be the result. As things are at present the market is being flooded each fall with Canadian fiction and the new writer is apt to perish in the deluge.

In conclusion I wish to say that through our affiliation with the British

Authors' Association, and by reason of its good offices in support of our representations, it has been decided that a Canadian author, whose works are published in London, is no longer required to pay twenty-two and one half per cent. of his royalties under British Income Tax law. If a Canadian author employs a London literary agent to look after his interests, he is absolved from income tax because his agent pays a percentage of his profits into the coffers of the British Government.

## Troubadours and Bards

ANNIE CHARLOTTE DALTON.

*Read at the reception given by the Vancouver Poetry Society to members of the Canadian Authors' Convention, August, 1926.*

Duncan Campbell Scott has said that poetic friends take fire from one another, and how true that is all of us know, therefore without fear, one may prophesy that the future alone will reveal to us the full extent of our present privilege in having with us tonight so many of our well-known poets, for what greater service can we render to each other than to hasten the golden moments of divine inspiration?

If the sole purpose of the Authors' Association were to bridge the gulf between Eastern and Western Canada, its value would still be incalculable. The subtle intimacy of the small country is denied to us, and until science has made us closer neighbours, the strongest bond between us must be that of literature, and by far the most important strand in that bond is poetry.

It requires some courage to speak of the vastness of Canada, for the wide separations and isolations of our country have become a truism. Yet, these facts have such a strong bearing upon our poets and our poetry, that we can hardly speak of one matter without mentioning the other also.

For a parallel case, we must go back to the dark ages, when Arabia was developing a poetry which stands alone in the magnificent growth attained under almost insuperable difficulties. The laws of this poetry were touchingly simple, but in power and grandeur it became supreme at a time when all the rest of the world was in darkness.

We can think with honourable envy of the great song-contests which were held at Mecca and at Okad. There the tribes met periodically, to give such encouragement to their local bards as must be the despair of modern singers.

As time passed on, civil dissensions caused a disturbance of these delightful conditions, but contact with Persia and Greece, the Crusaders, the Troubadours and Moors of Spain, more than made up for the loss of the original advantages,

and resulted in a new school of poetry remarkable for its brilliance.

We ourselves seem to have reversed the order of these things. Close touch with European, and in lesser degree, with Oriental schools of poetry, has resulted in the dominating influence of these upon our literature.

Our most crying need at the present time is to adopt the primitive methods of the Arabs, and to found a poetical Mecca of our own. It may be a long time before any of us have our names inscribed on scrolls of gold, as was the happy fortune of the successful Arabian aspirants, yet the noble idealism and generosity of Dr. Lorne Pierce has already given to us an earnest of gracious things to come.

It is a paradox that the lonely Arab of ancient times set out for distant places with less hesitation than that with which we take train for the verge of the Dominion. It is not that we are less adventurous than they, but because our interests in life, the very best things which increase our comfort, have become our spiritual fetters, so that with increasing facilities for moving from place to place, our personal energy shows no corresponding advances. With a multiplicity of amusements, a surfeit of pleasures, which entail no long and wearisome journey, it is doubtful if many of us would make the effort to reach Ottawa or Montreal, even if those cities were endowed with all the glamour of ancient Mecca or old Okad.

And yet, the advantages of such a pilgrimage would be enormous, for with the public recognition and encouragement of song, the vitality of our national life would be assured. This fierce, this gentle, this beautiful, this terrible flame of poetry is smouldering in hundreds of undiscovered places, and it is for us to search for, and to transmit its splendour to its rightful home, the holy altar of our national honour.

Those widely separated and smouldering fires of the Arabian desert lived, per-

haps, in the hearts of the people and warmed them also, but what irreparable loss to the world had no embers been carried to sacred Mecca! All that beauty and inspiration would, sooner or later, have been engulfed by the eternal sands, were it not for those divinely-inspired song-celebrations.

It is obvious that art suffers frequently from the advantages of civilization. The medieval system of patronage had much to recommend it. Whatever happened to the artist, his art at least was nourished and preserved in its perfection, and he himself made secure of immortality.

But, it may be said, have we not our printing presses? We have, and therein lies our weakness. Books of poetry fall

## Poetry Contest

### \$25.00 Cash and Book Prizes

The **British Columbia Monthly** announces that a first prize of \$25 in cash, and other prizes in books will be awarded for the best poems appearing in forthcoming issues of the Magazine.

The books will be those of Canadian Authors.

The result of the Contest will be published in the December issue.

Poems may be from sonnet length to seventy-two lines. Only one poem may be sent in by each contestant, and only subscribers, or those sending in new subscriptions, to the **British Columbia Monthly**, may enter. The Editor cannot undertake to return poems.

Address poems to: Editor of the Poetry Page, B.C. Monthly, 1100 Bute Street, Vancouver, B.C., and mark on the envelope "Poetry Contest."

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