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SUBJECT

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ARTHUR STRINGER RAPS THE COPYRIGHT LAW

Canadian Poet and Novelist Also Has Something to Say of the Place of Poets in National Life



ARTHUR STRINGER.

Noted Canadian author, who addressed the Toronto Press Club last night.

"Is the artist worth anything to his country? Are poetry and pictures worth bothering about? Is a National Anthem a national asset? And is a poet or a painter really worth his salt?" These questions were asked by Mr. Arthur Stringer, the noted Canadian poet and novelist, in the course of an address delivered at the Toronto Press Club last evening.

Mr. Stringer was speaking of his migration from Canada to New York some years ago and explaining the reasons therefor. As a "repatriated Canadian," the prodigal, instead of begging forgiveness, preached the father a sermon. Speaking of his early struggles in Canada, he said that any Ontario author with a limited bank account and an honest appetite was compelled to migrate to earn a living, unless he had a rich uncle or a berth in the Civil Service, or relied upon teaching school or preaching sermons.

Mr. Stringer said the war had startled and stirred Canadians out of their lethargy of mere commercial success. In casting about for some adequate expression for their feelings they had discovered that art and literature could, after all, be an asset to a country. Col. McCrae's little poem telling about the poppies and the crosses in Flanders' fields had proven the value of poetry in sustaining national morale.

The Curse of Canadians?

He said that, while there was much in Canadian literature to be proud of, Canadians were cursed with the by-product of colonialism, which resulted in a sort of national timidity. They were not Imperial enough in their personal judgments, and were apt to be subservient to outside opinions and estimates and to dwell more upon the past than upon the present, instead of encouraging the beginner. Dead poets were not the only good poets.

"What we want to do is to think Canadianly, and treasure every expression of our national spirit. Toronto can't be New York, any more than New York can be London, or London can be Paris. Nobody wants Toronto to be New York. What we want is Toronto to be Toronto, and not a suburb of New York, feeding her mind and soul on the hand-outs she gets from the bigger cities across the line. If we are to follow the calling

of letters—and there is no profession more exacting—it must assume the dignity of an acknowledged profession. Its workers must be given a living wage, or, instead of being workers, they will be dabblers. They must also be given public recognition and encouragement, for authorship, after all, is largely a reaction to one's audience. They must also be given a channel through which to express and find themselves, a chance to develop their individual voices."

Scores Copyright Law

Mr. Stringer condemned the copyright law of Canada as obsolete, inadequate and self-contradictory. It did not leave Canada on the map, from the standpoint of the writer. He said there was a parasitic tendency to depend on the big neighbor for literary product. Canadian editors, while vaunting their Canadianism, accepted at back doors the "residuary carcasses of well-pocked publication rights," because they could be bought cheap.

The dinner was well attended, a number of prominent Canadian literary men being present. Mr. Harry W. Anderson, President of the club, presided, and a vote of thanks to Mr. Stringer was passed enthusiastically, on motion of Messrs. Peter McArthur and M. O. Hammond.