

Literary Talent Is Lacking in America

Modern American literature was severely criticised by John Farrar, editor of the Bookman, in his address, "The Literary Scene in America," delivered before students in advanced composition and others at the lecture-lunch in the home economics cafeteria Tuesday evening.

"There is an appalling lack of genuine talent in America," declared Mr. Farrar. "England produces 15 outstanding literary figures to our one or two. Slipshod, careless phrased English seems a characteristic of the present-day American novelist."

In regard to poetry, Mr. Farrar was far from optimistic. "It is true that the poets of the younger generation have swung back to rhyme and rhythm, leaving free verse to their elders," he said, "but their verse, though conventional in form, lacks vitality and depth. It is, for the most part, feminine in quality."

"This adherence to convention, by the way is a striking trait of the younger generation. Contrary to common belief, there are few radicals among us," he added.

Amy Lowell, Louise Untermyer, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and Sarah Teasdale, who make up the "old guard" poets, are giving way before the younger group, of which Edna St. Vincent Millay is the leading representative, declared Mr. Farrar. He praised Miss Lowell's part in awakening a love for poetry in the American public by means of her lectures and writings.

He also had a good word for Edgar A. Kuest, whose verse, he said, we should not condemn as long as it reaches the hearts of so many people who otherwise would never read poetry.

To show the trend in popular novels Mr. Farrar took examples from the Bookman's monthly score, which is compiled from the reports of librarians throughout the country.

Books by such writers as Zane Grey and Mary Roberts Rinehart are always sure of quick popularity, stated Mr. Farrar. They usually tell a good story, although "Zane Grey's writings," Mr. Farrar confessed, "are often atrocious."

Sentimental novels, on the order of "Robin" and "The Head of the House of Coombe," vie with the satirical

type of "Babbitt" and "Main Street" for a place in public opinion. When the satirical novel is humanized and combined with a wholesome sentiment, Mr. Farrar feels that a lasting and admirable type will be evolved. The works of Willa Cather and Dorothy Canfield, he said, are steps in this direction.

"The popularity of nonfiction during the last year is surprising" Mr. Farrar stated. "The outlines of history and science were usually at the head of the list. Recently Coue's 'Self Mastery' displaced the 'Outline of History.' For some strange reason, books on etiquette are in demand."

"Autobiographies still hold their own. The two most popular, 'Up Stream' and 'The Americanization of Edward Bok,' show a marked dissimilarity in the immigrant character. Mr. Lewisohn's book is a fine piece of work, splendidly written, but I must confess that I do not understand his viewpoint."

One of the hopes for American literature Mr. Farrar offered is the assimilation of the imaginative immigrant, who can add a color and richness often sadly lacking in the modern novel.—Ohio State Lantern.

An artist is the tall giraffe, with his long neck he draws a laugh. When climbing up a ship's mast, a playful novice had better hold fast.

Stockholm — The well-preserved skeleton of a man who lived in the stone age, 6,000 years ago, has just been found on the west coast of Sweden by a commission of archaeologists which has been combing the countryside for ancient relics to be placed on exhibition at the exposition in Gothenburg this summer.

The Swedish experts, fifteen in number, have been at work for about seven years, and have succeeded in collecting 20,000 relics of antiquity. The results of their labor has been an accumulation of proofs that the North Sea coast of Sweden was inhabited as early as 3000 B. C.

The stone age skeleton, which is now being mounted in Gothenburg, was found during excavations at Kungsbacka, a few miles south of this site. The ancient site of Kungsbacka has been chosen by some critics as the probable seat of Beowulf, the hero of the oldest epic poem in English literature; but Beowulf was a newcomer compared with the stone age man who lived about 4,000 years before him.

The relics now brought to light include flint tools and weapons, ornaments, etc. In one of the graves about 2,000 years old, were found the remains of a woman and her belongings, consisting of an amber necklace.

weaver's reeds and distaff.—Michigan Daily.

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