Register 18th June '07

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

"UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF MODERN LEGISLATION."

Professor Jethro Brown, LL.D., Litt. D., delivered the first of a series of three University extension lectures on "The underlying principles of modern legislation" at Jagoe Street Hall, Semaphore, on Monday evening. Dr. Brown dealt with "The ideal of modern democracy," and at the outset defined that which determined the course of political and legal change in the nineteenth century. It was, he pointed out, the result of a slow development, in the course of which special phases were brought into prominence by the peculiar character of time needs, and by the idiosyncrasies of the most capable statesmen and thinkers. Government by the people was still a popular ideal, but the ideal which was to determine legislation must embrace more than political machinery. Government must be for as well as by the people. Dr. Brown traced the growth of democracy in the nineteenth century, and showed that liberty, interpreted as absence of restraint, being inadequate to cope with new industrial conditions, had resulted in the demand for State intervention taking the place of the older doctrine of laissez faire. He also pointed out the defects of the older interpretation of liberty, and quoted Lord Shaftesbury's triumph over Bright and Gladstone in the direction of legislation for the improvement of the condition of mine and factory workers. State intervention was not in conflict with the liberty of the subject. All liberty implied law, and men and women were freer because of the restraint of the strong arm of the law. The lecturer spoke of the danger of substituting for the old fetishism of self-help a new fetishism of State aid, and said the avoidance of both extremes was the great problem of twentieth century politics. The newer interpretation of liberty demanded freedom for all, embraced the earlier formulations of the democratic ideal, was in harmony with the best democratic thought, and was reflected in modern art. Professor Brown's next lecture on Monday, June 24, will deal with "Illustrations from life and thought in the nineteenth century," and on Monday, July 1, he will discuss "Fundamental legislative principles."

LECTURE ON "HAMLET."

At the University of Adelaide on Monday evening Professor Henderson repeated his extension lecture on "The language of Hamlet," and was listened to by a large audience.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

In the Jagoe-street hall, Semaphore, on Monday evening Professor Jethro Brown delivered the first of three University extention lectures upon the underlying principles of modern legislation. There was a small attendance. The course, it was announced, related to the general ends of legislation rather than to their application to the problems of practical politics, and to the general ends which were recognised, rather than to those which perhaps ought to be recognised. Dr. Brown on Monday night dealt with the ideal of modern democracy, which determined the course of political and legal change in the nineteenth century.

Register 19th June '07

THE MOST FAMOUS TRAGEDY.

CHARACTER OF HAMLET.

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR HENDERSON.

A quarter of an hour before Professor Henderson began his second Hamlet lecture on Tuesday evening there was not a vacant seat in the Prince of Wales Theatre—a testimony first to the reputation of the speaker, and then to the popularity of Shakspearean drama. Illuminating studies like these stimulate interest by revealing unrivalled beauties of language and emphasizing the genius and artistic power of the great poet-artist. People want to hear about Shakspeare from the lips of a cultured student, and the announcement that no more tickets may be had for the present course has caused considerable disappointment. The repeat lectures will not wholly obviate this, so it must be patent to the University authorities that in future Professor Henderson must have a bigger building for his enthusiastic auditors. The suggestion to engage the Town Hall for the next gathering is a happy one.

—A Splendid Failure.—

On Tuesday night, when the audience included His Excellency the Governor and Lady Le Hunte, the character of Hamlet was selected. The professor introduced the subject by the observation that many of the more obvious qualities were revealed by contrast with the personae dramatis, especially the King, Queen, Horatio, and Fortinbras. There were conflicting opinions concerning Hamlet's character. Carl Rohrbach found the explanation in the lines after his death—"Bear Hamlet like a soldier (not as a soldier) to the stage; for had he been placed there, had Fate called him to the stage instead of the throne he would have proved most royally." To Rohrbach therefore Hamlet was an actor who would have done well on the stage; in action he was a failure. To people of that way of thinking he was "a sort of German half-professor, all tongue and no hand, for ever cackling and hatching nothing, like a dog wagging his tail at the sound of his own barking." The best answer was that the world would not permanently interest itself in such a character. Carl Werder took the opposite view, and as that critic held second place among interpreters of Hamlet's character they must take him seriously. Werder would have them remember the extraordinary difficulty of the task. "Hamlet's aim is not the crown, nor is it his first duty to kill, but his task is justly to punish the murderer of his father, unassailable as that murder is in the eyes of the world, and to satisfy the Danes of the righteousness of this procedure." The tragic fault was to be found in rashness rather than excess of meditation. There was nothing in the play to lead them to believe that Hamlet in killing Polonius wanted anything but personal revenge. Goethe had said:—"Here is an oak tree, planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces." Goethe might have said that Hamlet was a Prince of noble nature, who by reason of his grace and culture could have been an ornament to the society in which he lived and moved. But a terrible task was imposed upon him, and the effort to perform it shattered his nerves and ultimately destroyed him. Hamlet was a "splendid failure," and his failure was inaction.

—Intellect and Emotion.—

But Hamlet was not incapable of action. He was stirred by impulse, and was clever at scheming and counter-scheming. He had not the action of the statesman—the man who conceived a policy and carried it through to a finish. Hamlet failed in the highest form of action, which was based upon the union of intelligence and will. The point was more definitely put in the great soliloquy:—

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry
> And lose the name of action.

It was important to note that conscience meant speculation, "casting about in one's mind, and when he ought to proceed to action he goes on thinking." Touching the emotional nature of Hamlet, the speaker said he had a profound moral sense. He idealized his father's virtues, brooded over his mother's o'erhasty marriage, and the sense of duty remained to the end. Hamlet, too, had aesthetic feeling, although the shocks at Court might have temporarily paralysed it. His tenderness, however, had been exaggerated. His language was that of a disappointed idealist.

—Did Hamlet Love Ophelia?—

Hamlet might have loved Ophelia in early years, but the Hamlet of the play did not. He had no more than an aesthetic appreciation for her beauty. His feelings were not under control; he was passion's slave, and his words lacked the force of genuine love. Hamlet practically confessed the weakness of his emotion to Horatio:—

> And blest are those
> Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
> That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart
> As I do thee.

—What is Wrong?—

Hamlet's character had to be judged in its completeness. He suffered from melancholia—was a mass of nerves. He had not the Greek virtue of temperance. There was want of self-control, of sustained energy; there was something wrong at the heart of the man's nature. Hamlet was in many respects noble, but he lacked force in the core of his being. Strong faith was missing, and the fault was discovered when it was too late:—

> Our wills and fates do so contrary run
> That our devices still are overthrown;
> Our thoughts are ours; their ends none of our own.