NOTES

The Colonial Press

Perhaps you read the daily papers, in spite of the advice of wise people. If you do, you will probably remember that on his arrival in Auckland Harbor, before landing in New Zealand, Lord Northcliffe was asked what he thought of the press of the country. "Great!" he cried; "nothing to beat it: stunning; bosker; bonzer; my word!" Not his very words, to be sure, but still the substance of what he said as well as he could with his tongue in his cheek. A clever man Northcliffe. It was by telling people what he thought they liked being told that he made his millions. Hear now J. H. Curlie on the Colonial newspapers, their methods, and their correspondents—of Melbourne this scribbler is talking:

> I was staying in Melbourne, and a request came from a leading paper to write a critical article on the mining industry of Victoria. "Ah," I thought, master of my subject, "I will show these Colonials how things are done!" I sent it in. It duly appeared; *not* my strong and reasoned critique, but an emasculated thing of flabbiness.
>
> "Why have you done this?" I asked. "I had your word you would alter nothing."
>
> "Yes, we know, but we didn't like to offend advertisers. But your article is causing discussion; here are three letters for you." I opened them. Two were from lunatics; and the third from a geological crank. It was quite irrelevant, and left me mentally dazed and jaded.
>
> Enough said.

The Englishman

On the average Englishman, the same writer has an interesting word:

> The Englishman is insular, that is to say ignorant and intolerant of others; and his dislike of foreigners is a fixed thing even among the educated. His yellow press, his sensation novelists, are taken literally. All Americans, men mostly of his own blood, be it noted, are thought to be corrupt; Colonials are doubtful people with accents, but without manners; all Russians are political despots or Nihilists, all Chinese cut-throats; all Belgians slave-drivers, while the German waiters in London look for the signal to plunge their knives in English breasts. So much ignorance in a great people is pitiful. Yet what do they care? They eat and drink and marry, they go to church, they discuss the latest divorce, the football news and the price of beer. They are satisfied. To them the Briton is first, the rest nowhere. . .
>
> Our education is appalling. The fools must stay fools, and the lower classes get along as they can, but the people who count should be turned out fit. . . If the English had brains they would be politically irresistible. But they have not. They coerce white people. . . . History shows that they coerced Ireland unjustly for hundreds of years. They bullied the American colonists and lost the richest country in the world. They tried the same with Quebec, nearly losing Canada. With Bourbon-like persistency, they started again on the Boers.

The people with no brains have been very lucky. They had a long and lively innings, from the spacious days of Queen Bess and her pirate Empire builders, down to the day when a handful of Boers fought the Empire to hysterics for three years. That was the first notable step down from the throne. The great war was the second. The Irish war was the third. The Canadian treaty with the United States was the fourth. Downhill now, and the pace is rapid.

Butler

Many readers of old English literature rub their eyes when they find that in an article on Samuel Butler, it is not the famous author of *Hudibras*, but a modern writer of whom they know but little, who is discussed. In spite of the attempts made to boom the author of *Erewhon* it is probable that he will never attain to the fame of his namesake of other days. He will never become popular, and even among critics he is not likely to be universally considered as the great writer some would have us hold him. People who have read *Erewhon* or *The Way of All Flesh* will find much to agree with in the following critique by Leonard Woolf:

> Here is a mind which thinks, not other people's thoughts, but its own—honest, clear, argumentative, singularly unemotional; and here is a style which never sinks below or attempts to rise above a certain level. In *Erewhon*, Butler found both a subject and himself. The elaborate satire on English life and society in the nineteenth century gives scope for the qualities mentioned above, and also for his eccentricities, originalities, and humor. Yet it remains in many ways the queerest satire that has ever been written. It is extraordinarily unemotional. With Swift or Cyrano de Bergerac or any other of the writers who have created these inverted Utopias somewhere on the other side of the moon or the mountains, one always feels that they are animated by some human emotion towards the customs or institutions which they are satirising. They feel anger or indignation or pity or mere amusement at the antics of mankind which they show us through the telescope or microscope of satire. But when Butler describes the Musical Banks or the attitude of the Erewhonians towards disease, it is impossible to detect the least flicker of emotion either towards us and our ways or the Erewhonians and their ways. This makes *Erewhon* a very queer book, for what can be more strange and disquieting than a humorist who is apparently never amused? It appeals to me personally, I repeat; I happen to have a particular liking for cranks, and the explanation of much which is puzzling in Butler should be looked for in crankiness. But this kind of queerness, crankiness, and unemotional frigidity is bound to narrow the circle of an author's readers. I will not enter upon the question whether it also precludes the book from greatness, whether, in fact, a great book, as some of our modern critics declare, must have something in it capable of appealing to all men. I rather suspect these vague generalisations about greatness and goodness. But in Butler's case, I think, the qualities which prevent him from being widely popular also prevent him from being a great writer. *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, despite their originality of thought and humor, are not great books, and the reason is that the thought is always twisted a little, and kept from soaring by a twinge of crankiness, while thought, humor, satire, and language, owing to the absence of emotion, lack the warmth or glow which seems inseparable from great literature.

Death of Bishop Brodie's Mother

With regret we learn of the death of Mrs. Bridget Brodie, mother of his Lordship Dr. Brodie, Bishop of Christchurch, who passed away at Auckland on Friday last, at the age of 79 years. The deceased lady, who was a highly respected colonist, was born in Kinvara, Co. Galway, Ireland, and came to Sydney in 1864. Arriving the following year at Greymouth she was there married to the late Patrick Brodie, and in 1869 came to the North Island. After residing for a number of years at Thames and Coromandel, the family removed to Auckland, where Mr. Brodie died at an advanced age. Besides Dr. Brodie, the family includes Mr. Patrick Brodie (Auckland), Mrs. T. Darby (Auckland), and Mrs. Stephenson (Australia). The funeral was largely attended.—R.I.P.