

A NIGHT WITH THE P.P.A.

(By J. ROBINSON.)

It was a most interesting meeting—interesting in many ways. It explained things hitherto inexplicable. A glance at the audience explained how Massey managed to return to the Treasury Benches, and how horse-whipped cads are able to live without doing any work. The vast majority of the audience were of the fair sex—spinsters of uncertain age whom one would associate with crunched bonnets and prunella elastic-sides. One could not help thinking of "Miss Wardle and Alfred Jingle." The male section recalled "Little Bethel," and, as a whole, the countenances of the gathering were as full of soulful expression as a picket fence newly whitewashed. One fellow in particular interested me very much. He seemed to be one of the "head peas." When I looked at him I thought what a pity it was that Haeckel had not seen him in time and he would not have needed to resort to fakes to prove the Missing Link.

The chairman of the meeting was very eloquent. I once heard a Yankee drummer selling a patent potato-peeler at a show. He was very eloquent, too, and sold quite a lot of peelers without letting anyone test them. The rev. chairman said he was introducing Howard, but it sounded more like an appeal for cash and a boast about the way in which the poor, despised parson had made the politician his creature. He said that Howard was the Protestant champion, but he didn't say anything about horsewhips.

Then Holy Howard sidled up to the front with a sugary smile and commenced to tell us what a fine lump of country the Empire is, and how Rome and the Reds were bent on its destruction. When the Great War broke out, Pope Pius X. tried to stop it, but before he could bring his influence to bear upon Germany he was smothered in his chamber. (Chorus of tchets—tchets—tchets.) The Cardinal Secretary of State, however, was determined to carry out the late Pope's programme, but Cardinal Merry del Val admitted a German servant into the Vatican who poisoned the Cardinal-Secretary. (Tchets—tchets—tchets: very loud, and exclamations of "the wretches!") He didn't offer any evidence in support of his story, but with an audience like that evidence would be superfluous.

He spoke about the case of an escaped nun which was being heard in Australia, and darkly hinted that there would be an attempt on the part of Rome to suppress the facts. However, his hearers were to read the *Sentinel*, which had made up its mind to tell the whole truth of the matter, and I sincerely hope it does.

Another frightful case was that of a girl who was nameless and who had sworn a declaration before the ex-Mayor of Christchurch that she had escaped from a convent that was also nameless at a place that didn't seem to have any name, either. She swore that her letters were read by the Superiors, and that she was forced to work stoking two furnaces in the laundry. So far as the letters were concerned I could not help thinking that the nuns might have been afraid that the girls may receive letters such as Howard wrote to himself, which, according to the Commissioner of Inquiry, "were such that only a man lost to all sense of decency could concoct."

An interjector asked the lecturer during a momentary lull "what the magistrate said to him up north," and was ejected forthwith.

Question time provided much amusement. Howard was asked if he was going to take action against Bishop Cleary for calling him a forger. He said he hadn't time; all his leisure was to be devoted to getting the editor of the *Tablet* locked up. (Loud applause and much wowser cackling.) The president of the Labor Party, in asking a question about Russia, said that the audience present was an unthinking one. A faded spinster who sat near me chewing "Frisco-kisses" waxed wroth, and exclaimed: "The cheek of him. No wonder there's strikes when they are allowed to say things like that!" Another man asked Howard if, having

read Mr. Bullitt's evidence concerning Russia, he adhered to the statements he had made that evening. Howard said he did, at which there were thunders of applause. One stout pillar of Protestantism, while clapping and stamping, and hear-hearing, turned to inquire of a neighbor, "Who is this Bullitt anyway?" About this time, if I remember rightly, the collection was taken up, and a stout man with the facial expression of a bullock, looked at me and said, "You didn't sing the National Anthem." I handed the collection box to him as it had just come my way. He handed it on to the next man, muttering something about having come out without any change.

The chairman paid a glowing tribute to Mr. Massey for his interest in the P.P.A. and asked the audience to sing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." I am not sure whether Mr. Massey or Howard was to be the "good fellow," but there's not much difference between them. The song was interrupted by some Sinn Feiners at the back singing "God Save Ireland."

THE JOY OF BEING.

Whither my road is leading me
Perhaps I do not know;
But, oh, the path is fair to see,
And sweet the winds that blow!
In sun or storm, by day or night,
If skies are lowering or bright,
The highroad holds so much delight
I run with heart aglow.

The lanes may thorny be, and lead
To steep heart-breaking high;
The forests wild with bush and weed
My strength may mortify;
Yet, with resolve to do and dare,
I hold within my soul small care
For hazards spread o'er pathways where
The goals worth winning lie.

It is enough to live and plan,
To joy in earth and sea;
To do what things a mortal can
With spirit blythe and free:
To prove one's strength of soul, and will
To meet and overcome the ill,
And in the end to gain the thrill
Of manful mastery!

—JOHN KENDRICK BANGS, in *Munsey's Magazine*.

What is prayer for? Not to inform God, nor to move Him unwillingly to have mercy, as if, like some proud prince, He required a certain amount of recognition of His greatness as the price of His favor but to fit our own hearts by conscious need, and true desire and dependence, to receive the gift which He is ever willing to give, but we are not always fit to receive.
—Alexander MacLaren.

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