

New Books

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The Singing Tree Press has recently reissued two important books:

S. Baring-Gould's, *Freaks of Fanaticism and Other Strange Events*, originally published by Methuen in 1891, and Rotha May Clay's *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*. The first of these is too well known to need much comment. It is a collection of examples of the aberrations of the human mentality in religion, with its morbid inclination to persecution and torture and is both a melancholy and horrific history of the extremes of fanaticism and bigotry to which man will go when under the influence of religious sectarianism, and of the horrors to which he will stoop in persecution. Apart from the historical and psychological interest, the Victorian style makes somewhat tedious reading today. Baring-Gould mistakenly calls these Protestant sectarian aberrations, of which he writes, 'mysticism'. They are, of course, no such thing, but merely a pathological fanaticism.

The Hermits and Anchorites of England was first published by Methuen in 1914 and is a study of the life and history of this particular branch of monasticism in England. The Solitary is depicted from the dawn of Christianity in Great Britain until the 16th century when, after the Suppression of the Monasteries and the advent of Protestantism, with its emphasis on a life of works rather than contemplation, the vocation of the recluse fell into desuetude. As the author says, "The aim of this book is to give a picture of the daily life of the lonely dwellers in fen and forest, hillside and cliff, cloister and churchyard, and to show something of the way in which their influence made itself felt". The book is well illustrated.

A New Road to Ancient Truth, by Ittoten Tenko-San (Allen and Unwin, 35s.) gives an account of Ittoten and the teaching of Tenko San, which is summarized as the need for desirelessness through dying to self, (a teaching which is as old as religion) and the need to assume responsibility for the evils of the world and to expiate them in humble, selfless service. Tenko San was a great moral and spiritual force in modern Japan, and this is the first translation of any of his principal sayings and writings. "Ittoten is not a religion, but a way of life".