

Alexander Irvine, Kicked Out of Pulpit, Takes to Stage to Reach Larger Audiences

THE man who is kicked out of a New York church is supposed to retire and starve. But I refuse to be an ex-President. My socialistic ideas did not suit my millionaire congregation at the Church of the Ascension, but I am reaching a far greater audience now—that of the vaudeville theatre. I don't see any comedown about it if I do it effectively. I'm proud to say that I once drove a milk wagon—and did it courteously!

Mr. Irvine's frown relaxed and he stopped pacing up and down to throw story, but none of the lads who had tormented me were in the professors' seats. "Like all Irish boys I had dreamed of America, so I took what was left of my money and sailed for New York. And there I found that though I was young and strong and willing to do anything, there was no work to be had. The Bowery was the Great White Way in those days, and as I wandered up and down among idle men and the poor painted women, I made up my mind that something must be wrong that such things could be in a new country with plenty of land and work for all. "After I got my milk wagon job I heard a man preaching on the street

"But that wasn't enough when the hard times came, so we organized a co-operative coal company and said we would pay only \$6 instead of the \$16 the retail dealers were charging. But we couldn't get any coal from the big companies, so we sent for a shipload from Glasgow. A rich man offered to lend us the \$15,000, but it wasn't necessary, for our people came up and paid their \$6 in advance. The company is still prospering. "I began to work for a public bath-house so my people could have a bath between summers, and in agitating the matter I discovered that the water company paid nothing for their franchise, so I went to the Council and said, 'How

men that I recommended to remedy conditions. "They were even worse in a coal mine worked by convict labor. I heard that the men were forced to stay in the shaft until they had sent up five tons, and I went to the Sheriff to see how I could get in. "Flash a gun and I'll give you thirty days," he said. But that looked like a little too much proof to me, so I got the chaplain to get me in to talk to the men on Sunday nights. I found that the men not only had to send out the five tons, but if they were slow about it they were whipped. "After I had finished I went back and lived in a writers' club at 5 Fifth avenue, leaving the little folks on the farm, where they were better off. I did well with my writing and found myself for the first time in my life earning a really comfortable living. I spent my evenings talking on character to audiences in West Side factory workers. "It was at the club that I first met Percy Stickney Grant, rector of the Church of the Ascension. He became interested in my work and finally said: 'If you can gather these audiences outside the church why not inside? The temptation to connect myself with such a church was strong, and I yielded, though it cut my income in half, and became the Sunday evening preacher. It was perfectly well understood by every one concerned that I was a socialist, for it was one of the first things I told Mr. Grant. He of course told the vestry. In the three years I was in the church, however, I never talked on socialism from the pulpit but twice, and that at the request of one of the millionaires in the congregation. "But after service we had what was an innovation then, though many churches have since adopted it—a forum. We adjourned to one of the vestry rooms and talked on any subject that interested us, from farming to anarchism. There were special speakers, and the crowd was sometimes so great that the police had to turn them away. "But some of the members of the congregation got tired of having me as a socialist connected with the church, so I resigned. Everything was peaceable, and Mr. Grant was my friend to the last. 'Irvine,' he said, 'if I were a socialist I would leave this church tomorrow.' My friends in the congregation gave me a farewell dinner at the St. Denis.



Alexander Irvine, formerly assistant at Church of Ascension, now appearing in a local vaudeville theatre.

back his head, with its thatch of wavy brown hair, in a burst of hearty laughter. "Driving the milk wagon was my first job in America, and glad enough I was to get it after weeks of starving on the Bowery, though I was just out of Oxford. But it wasn't my first job of all. That was being a scarecrow back in County Antrim. "I was only 9, but none too young to go to work with twelve of us in the little mud cabin. I used to sit on the fence or walk up and down my twenty acres of potatoes thinking about nothing but crows. I had never been to school or to church, for the Irish Protestants go to church only when they have decent clothes, and I had nothing but what my older brothers had finished with. "One day, sitting there on the fence, I had a vision and I made up my mind that I would be a preacher. I rushed home and told my old Irish mother and she cried as she hugged me: 'I knew it would come to one of the twelve!' "We knew I must have schooling, but try as I might I couldn't get it. There were no public schools; nothing but the parochial schools for the Catholic children. Finally in desperation I joined the army, where at least I would be taught to read. "During the three years that I spent in the Royal Marine Light Infantry on board the Alexandra, then the biggest man-of-war afloat, I worked so steadily that, though I could neither read nor write at the beginning, at the end I had the Queen's certificate entitling me to a commission. And I had studied my Greek history on the very fields where the battles were fought, for we were stationed in the Mediterranean. I had been in the Holy Land and Africa. Incidentally I had become a fine boxer, for farm work made me tall and strong. "But underneath it all I didn't forget that I wanted to be a minister, not a naval officer. And so at the end of my three years I left, and with the wages I had saved I entered Oxford. "My book learning was good enough, but I had picked up little polish in the navy, and I spoke with a thick Irish brogue. And so, when some of the little golden haired kings in their hard hats began to gape and call me Mick—you may call any Irishman that, but Mick means a real Celt—it was too much for my trained fists, and I knocked some of them about. So I was asked to leave. Twenty-five years later when I went back to Oxford to lecture I told that

corner one night, and I offered to preach for him on the Bowery for one night a week. I couldn't do more, for the milk wagon kept me busy fourteen hours a day. I gave it up finally and went to work running an elevator on Twenty-third street, so as to have more time. "Finally I stopped all other work and became the first missionary on the Bowery. Everything I had ever learned anywhere came into play, even my boxing. I used to go from one lodging hole to another—there were 25,000 men living in them then according to Thomas Byrnes, who was chief of police—holding meetings. One night I went into Steve Brodie's place, supposed to be the toughest of them all. I had hardly got my Bible opened when a man stepped up to me and said: "You'll hold no meeting here.' "Why not?" I asked. "Because I don't want to listen to you. And I'm Connelly the prizefighter." "Well, Mr. Connelly, I used to be good with my fists myself," I said. "If you want to clear out the room I'm at your service. And after it's over I'll preach you a sermon on prize fighting from a text in the Bible." "What's that?" says he with his coat half off. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," I replied. "It means that Christ shall overcome the devil. But it means more than that—it means that there is enough good in every one of you to overcome the evil. For you all know that when a fighter's head is bruised he's out." "They listened to me for half an hour, and when I'd finished Connelly shook hands with me. We were friends after that and I took him round to the priest and he went to confession regularly. "After a while the uptown ministers found out what I was doing and made me minister of the Church of the Sea and Land until they could sell it. But I made up my mind I would make it too useful to sell, and I filled it with homeless men. I used to serve coffee and rolls in the basement, for it's no use expecting religion to do any good on an empty stomach. I don't approve of charity, however. It simply makes more poverty. "Then I got a church out West. But I felt the need of more training, so I saved my money and went to the Yale theological school. After I finished my course I was made minister of the Pilgrim Church in New Haven. It was one of the old wealthy churches of the town, but I made it a church for working people and asked my own congregation to stay at home in the evening to give them room. I established a Lowell House for them on the lines of the University Settlement.

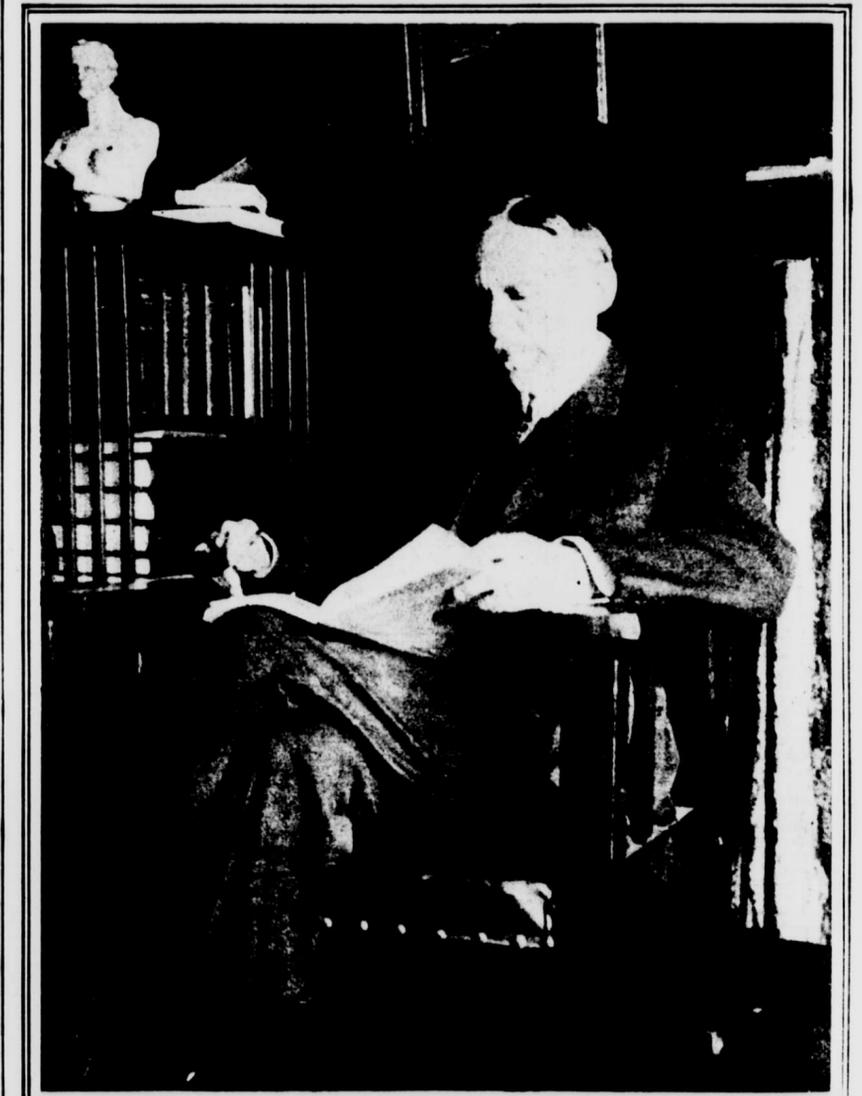
is it that you charge a banana pedler \$2 a year and this great corporation nothing? Their only answer was to call me a socialist. I found most of the accusations coming right from my own congregation, where the water company stock was owned. "I had never thought of myself as a socialist, but if thinking of the poor man first was being one I was willing to march in the ranks. So I resigned and established a People's Church. But after a time I found that the working-men in my congregation were being dismissed from their jobs. Membership in my church militated against their business, so I decided to give it up. It was a terrible struggle. My wife's mind gave way under the strain and she has never been herself since. "Making up my mind that if I couldn't preach what I believe I wouldn't preach at all, I took a little farm, with Donald Mitchell (k. Marvel) for a neighbor. But I found that farming was an exact trade as anything else, and in spite of my early experience I knew nothing about it. "One day Jack London came to see me and finding I was getting along poorly in spite of hard work and the children's help, he said, 'Why don't you try writing?' A man with your experiences ought to be able to tell about them. "I've written for religious magazines for years, I said, 'but always for nothing.' "Write for the sinners,' Jack said, 'they pay.' "So I wrote four stories and sent them to a popular magazine. The editor liked them and made some suggestions. Finally I got on the train in my red beard, flannel shirt and overalls, and went to see that editor. "I understand there's poeagone in the Alabama lumber camps," I said. "I want to go down and find out." He sent me. "The first step was to get a job, and I went right down to an employment office in my overalls and asked for a place as a teamster. I had driven as a boy. But the dago agent wouldn't have me. 'No Irish,' he said. 'All a time kick up a hell!' "So I hunted up another man and said to him, 'I'm a Finn. Want to hear some Finnish?' And I spoke to him in a language that neither of us understood. But I was hired. "I found conditions frightful. The camp was guarded by bloodhounds at night and the men were held for their fare down, though a law passed in 1867 makes it illegal to hold a man in bondage for debt. The men, most of them East Side Jews with no skill or taste for the work, were frequently flogged into insensibility. President Roosevelt became interested in my articles and wrote to me. Later he appointed two

Professor Kirchwey Urges Revolution in American System of Education

A REVOLUTIONARY change in the system of American education is proposed by Prof. George W. Kirchwey, one of the most distinguished members of the faculty of Columbia University. It directly affects the daily life of every teacher and every pupil, commencing at the close of the kindergarten and continuing through elementary school, high school, college and professional school. "Through this new method, which is now for the first time publicly announced, Prof. Kirchwey thinks it possible to add from two to four years to the active, productive life of every child in America. The importance of the plan may thus be seen at a glance. For a number of years the idea has been in course of development. Wherever leading educators have assembled Prof. Kirchwey has sought to urge it, and as a result the plan has been quietly discussed from one end of the country to the other. "While many teachers approve the revolutionary proposal others are strongly opposed to it, and it is said that medical men are also divided in their opinion. The chances are that it may be put to practical test by various boards of education, so that actual results can be observed. "There are about 18,000,000 children in the American elementary schools and 1,000,000 in the high schools. In other words, eighteen out of every nineteen boys and girls leave school and go to work at the average age of 14 years, never beginning the high school course, and therefore commencing their life career unprepared to fill positions requiring trained minds and commanding high wages. For this reason they are handicapped at the start for the struggle under modern conditions of skilled

consideration of the kindergarten and commence with the elementary school, which has vacations of some ten weeks in summer, and at least two other weeks distributed through the year—at Christmas and Easter—together with occasional holidays. It would be perfectly feasible to add ten weeks to the school year and yet allow plenty of time for vacations. By thus keeping the school in session the year round, excepting for brief vacations, the child who now spends eight years in the grades and four years in the high school would save 120 weeks of study, or more than two years during the entire period of elementary training, graduating from grammar school at 11 or 12 and from high school at 15. "The same simple plan should be followed in vocational school, college and professional school. There is no reason why it should not be carried out and every reason why it should. But," Prof. Kirchwey added with impressive earnestness, "before undertaking it it will be necessary in large measure to revolutionize our present system of instruction and thereby remove strain and fatigue on the part of both pupil and teacher. With the artificial and false ideas of education existing to-day it would be hazardous to put this plan suddenly into operation. Of that I shall have something to say later. "Do you think the young men and young women in college would regard with favor the idea of a practically continuous course of study the year round?" Prof. Kirchwey was asked. "All I need answer," he said, "is that this past summer we had 4,600 students attending the summer sessions at Columbia and corresponding success could be shown by others of the leading institutions throughout the country, like the University of Chicago, for example,

to a desk hour after hour, forbidden to move around, forbidden to speak to companions close by. "I think most men will agree with me that five hours a day in school for a boy or a girl is equal to eight or nine hours of work for an adult. And I would like to know how easy it would be to find grown men and women willing to work eight or nine hours a day if they were forbidden to stand up when tired of sitting down, if they were forbidden to speak to each other, if they were not even permitted to move around a little to rest themselves by change of position. "Furthermore, particularly in large cities, one principal cause of breakdown on the part of high school and elementary students is insufficient nutrition and the bad hygienic conditions in the school. I regard it as essential that public schools furnish a substantial luncheon to pupils at bare cost. "At the risk of incurring criticism I am willing to say that the teaching force in most of our elementary and high schools to-day is made up of teachers woefully untrained in their important work. What our boys and girls need are teachers of personality, full of sympathy for those in their care and possessing the faculty of interesting pupils in their work. "All over the country we have the buildings, the laboratories, the equipment, the books, but we lack teachers of the right kind. As far as possible the work done in elementary and high schools should deal with the actual problems of the pupils' daily life and be largely constructive in character, with increased attention to manual and vocational training. "If we pay attention to such essentials, if we give the boys and girls less book work and recitation, and more work which would enable them to move



Prof. George W. Kirchwey.

labor and efficiency. Prof. Kirchwey proposes to graduate the child from the elementary school at 12, to have him complete the high school at 15 instead of at 17 or 18 as at present, to have him spend two or three years in vocational training and at 17 or 18 step out into active life equipped to go ahead as he otherwise could not. "Further than this does Prof. Kirchwey's plan go. It provides just as drastic changes for the 300,000 students in colleges, technical schools and professional schools. To-day, especially in Eastern colleges, the students enter at the average age of 18 and are graduated at 22. Under Prof. Kirchwey's plan they would enter at 16 or less and finish when 19. "At present the college graduate who studies law, medicine, theology, architecture or engineering takes additional study for from two to four years and goes to work for a living when he is 25 or 26. He is able to support himself by the time he is 28 or 30, and he is several years older when he can assume the responsibility of supporting a family. "That is all wrong," said Prof. Kirchwey. "It is not good for the individual man. It is not good for the State, for society at large. It must be changed. "My solution of this serious problem is not to reduce the amount of preparatory training in either elementary or high school or in college or professional course, but to eliminate the enormous amount of time now wasted during the entire period of education. "For the present let us put aside

These young men and young women have found out for themselves the enormous amount of time wasted by the usual collegiate calendar, and everywhere in the smaller institutions like Middlebury, up among the hills of Vermont, as well as in the largest universities, they flock in increasing numbers to the summer schools. "Let me repeat that the grave defect in our American system of education is that, excepting in the kindergarten and in certain professional schools, it is artificial, thereby imposing unnecessary strain, physical and mental, on the pupil. The college student avoids this, especially in the men's colleges, by failing to take his work seriously. "My observation and experience is that the average high school student works very much harder and is subjected to a much more severe strain than the college student, who, as a general thing, does barely enough work to get through and spends most of his time in recreation, sports and delectatory reading. The average young man in American colleges, as I have observed him, does not dream of nailing down to hard work with enthusiasm and determination, day after day, month after month, as does the young man who goes directly from school into business. That is why he does not undergo the strain caused by our system of education as a whole. "What is needed in our elementary schools, first of all, is less book work and less recitation. Think what it means to keep a growing child, full of activity and eagerness, chained down

around and handle tools and materials and talk occasionally with each other, we would remove at once the principal causes of overstrain and breakdown of health. "But how about the teachers?" Prof. Kirchwey was asked, "if the schools were kept open nearly all the year around?" "You know I was actively at work in law practice for ten years," he said, "before commencing educational work. And during those years I was under strain like other business and professional men, a strain such as I do not find among those who teach or who tutor before students. "There is a widespread illusion that the work of the teacher is so much more exhausting than any other kind of work that the teacher, more than any other member of the community, needs the long vacations which our present system affords. I have no such illusion. In so far as there is any truth in the general belief, it is due to the fact that a large proportion of those who become teachers and to the artificial character and conditions of the work done. "Work which is uninteresting and therefore fatiguing to the pupil will ordinarily prove equally uninteresting and exhausting to the teacher. A better selection of teachers and the transforming of the work along the lines indicated will probably demonstrate that the work

Tree Surgery

TREE surgery as now practised is something more than an art. It might be called a science; but there are still to be seen some examples of treatment by old methods that attract attention, as for instance in the case of a tree at the southern edge of Madison Square Park. "This tree, which is a little more than a foot in diameter at the butt, had on one side a cavity that extended upward from the ground for about five feet, tapering at the top to a point, while at its widest it was about half the tree's width. This cavity is filled from the bottom up to a height of two feet or more with cement, and then upon that there are laid, one above another, with layers of cement between, three bricks, and above them, where the cavity narrows, half a brick, and above that the top cement. "Thus the cavity is completely filled, but the filling looks curious with the bricks in it laid up like bricks in a wall.