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THE FIRST BUDDHIST MONK IN ENGLAND.

What might conceivably be an important event has happened very quietly. Bhükkhu Ananda Metteyya a Scotsman, whose real name is Allan Bennett MacGregor, has landed in England to preach the gospel of Buddha. Not only is he the first Buddhist priest to set foot in this country, but he is also one of the very few Europeans who have become leaders in the faith of Buddha. Externally he is a strange and picturesque figure, with his clean-shaved head and his dark eyes that have absorbed the magnetic wisdom of the East. A small filter, a rosary, a razor, a begging bowl, an umbrella, and three-parts of the yellow robe are his eight solitary possessions.

There are 272 rules to which he must adhere strictly. One of them confines him to a single meal a day, and, of course, he is compelled to be a vegetarian. Moreover, he must be drawn by no animal, and the first Buddhist priest in England was conveyed, incongruous as it may seem, in a motor-car. He must meet no woman eye to eye, and when lecturing before a mixed audience he conceals his face. Originally banished to the East on account of asthma, after studying science for seven years, this young Scotsman finds himself compelled to travel bare-footed wherever he goes. He was brought up by Cyrus Field, whose name is so famous in connection with the Atlantic Cable, and his first experience of the East was in Ceylon. Here he commenced to study Oriental religions, and a year later was ordained as a Buddhist priest at Akyab, on the Burmese coast. Picture him, then, in modern London, his face screened behind a fan, lecturing to a people who for centuries have sought to teach the East the ways and manners of the West.

So much for his external experience and the external significance of his arrival in this country. But there is another mask besides the fan that covers the eyes that have looked upon the mysterious visions of Buddha. In his soul this Buddhist priest, with his naked feet and his clean-shaven head, is undazzled by the prosperity and the progress and the enlightenment of modern London. The East has come to the West to teach and not to

learn. Some time ago the probability of this was foreseen, and Mr. W. S. Lilly wrote in the "Fortnightly":

The teaching of the Buddha, even in its most fantastic and corrupt form, is infinitely wiser, sweeter, and more ennobling than the doctrine of the school—unhappily the predominant school among us—which makes happiness, or agreeable feeling, the formal constituent of virtue, and seeks to deduce the laws of conduct from the laws of comfort; which insists that not the intention of the doer, but the result of the deed, is the test of the ethical value of an act; which, reducing the moral law to impotence by depriving it of its distinctive characteristic, necessity, degrades it to a matter of latitude and longitude, temperament and cuisine; which robs it of its essential sanction, the punishment inseparably bound up with its violation, and denies the organic instinct of conscience that retribution must follow upon evil done.

Of his own immediate mission Bhikkhu Ananda Metteyya, has written at some length in the "Daily Chronicle." For him Individualism is the great enemy. "Buddhism," he writes, "with its central tenet of non-individualisation, is capable of offering to the West, to England, an escape from this curse of Individualism, which is the deep-rooted cause of the vast bulk of the suffering of mankind in Western lands to-day. That it can do this—not merely should—we have sufficient evidence if we compare together, say, the population of London with that of Burma, both numbering some six millions. In Buddhist Burma we find none of the ever-widening gulfs between class and class so terribly manifest in Western lands." Finally, he urges that it is in Burma and not in Westminster that one learns to respect not wealth but charity, and to revere not arrogance but piety.