

Trans-Atlantic Retrospect.

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES IN THE THEATRES.—A very "proper" Peer, Viscount Dungannon, proposed to the House of Lords recently, a resolution condemning the new services in the Theatres, on the ground that they were "highly irregular and inconsistent with order," and so on! quoting some stories from the newspapers to the effect, that refreshments were as freely passing around during the services as on an ordinary night. Lord Shaftesbury, in reply, made a right manly and Christian speech, "not to justify, but to explain," what had been done:

"The noble Viscount said ginger-beer bottles, nuts, apples and oranges were hawked about while the services were going on. He (Lord Shaftesbury) solemnly denied that: he knew it to be untrue. What might have been going on outside the theatres he did not know, but he could bring forward the most credible witnesses—clergymen, Nonconformist ministers, and City missionaries—who had been at all these meetings, and who would testify to the utter untruth of the noble lord's statement. He himself had attended three of these services in succession, in each of which there were 3,200 people, and those of the very lowest description, and he solemnly declared that never in the whole course of his life did he ever see a body of men so attentive and so impressed with the great truths of religion. With regard to preaching by these persons in theatres, let their lordships remember that it was not the locality that would desecrate the word of God, but it was the word of God that would consecrate the locality. The noble lord then read a communication from Sir Richard Mayne, the Chief Commissioner of Police, stating: 'The conduct of the people attending these services continues to be most decorous, and I have been able to reduce the number of policemen on duty at each of these places since my letter of the 6th February;' and this (said the noble Lord) *simultaneously with the necessity of sending sixty policemen in full uniform to attend the religious services at St. George's-in-the-East.* (Cheers.) What the people of England wanted was not patronage, but sympathy—that heart should be brought to heart—and that persons of all conditions and all degrees of wealth should show that they regarded the poor as persons of like passions, like feelings, and like hopes with themselves. If this sympathy were shown, the difficulty of governing the great masses of society would be materially lessened. He would proceed to show the numbers of those upon whom influence had been produced. These services had been going on since the 1st of January—during the preceding five weeks at five, and last Sunday at seven theatres. The total number attending these services on Sunday last was 20,700, and if ten per cent. were deducted for persons who would otherwise have attended other places of worship, that would leave 18,630 persons coming to these places to hear the word of God who never had attended any place of worship, nor would be likely to do so but for these ministrations. It had been said that these services drew from the churches and chapels many who were in the habit of attending them. That was an assertion that could be emphatically disproved by the statements of those clergymen, City missionaries, and others who assisted at these services. The noble lord read communications from various metropolitan clergymen and non-conformist ministers, including the incumbent of St. Mathew's, Stepney, the Vicar of Plumstead, Rev. Newman Hall, Mr. Brock, and others, to the effect, that the people who attended the Sunday services in the theatres were those who never went to church or chapel, and that since these ministrations had begun the City missionary meetings were better attended and the moral tone of the lowest stations of society had improved. They were told that the effect of these special services had been to reduce the congregations in the churches and chapels around, and that many had been drawn away to these services simply by curiosity, but it was just the reverse. He had the testimony of a large number of clergymen and Nonconformist ministers, stating that there had been no abatement whatever of