

Latin or the English must be wrong when 'xiii. sterlingos' (p. 117) appears as 'twelve pence sterling'. (This amount, by the way, was all that King John gave to the Abbey.) '1120' on p. xvii of the introduction should obviously be '1020'.

S. A. H. WEETMAN.

IDEAS AND BELIEFS OF THE VICTORIANS. (Sylvan Press; 21s.)

The series of talks and readings on the Victorian Age, broadcast on the Third Programme last year, was the most ambitious piece of serious broadcasting yet undertaken by the B.B.C. Fifty-seven talks and twenty-six readings were devoted to variations on a single theme, that of the Victorian idea of Progress. It is true that the range of discussion went beyond a narrow consideration of an abstract idea, but the series as a whole was a conscious attempt at examining the culture of an epoch in the light of a general theme.

The interest of the collected talks is therefore not confined to their contribution to scholarship, though in fact the speakers—from Bertrand Russell to Ronald Knox, from G. M. Young to Julian Huxley—have an initial authority that assures seriousness of treatment. The published volume has, as Mr Harman Grisewood suggests in his preface, importance as illustrating a technique; it has value as the herald of a new tradition of literature. The medium of broadcasting remains new, and its full potentialities are still to be realised. The technique of writing for speech can elude a practised writer who is used to the autonomy of the essay or the extended book. Oratory, sermonising, lecturing: superficially they suggest a parallel, but it is one that fails. In broadcasting sincerity is all, and content and style alike need to be reduced to what is essential—and therefore communicable.

By this standard *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians* must be considered a notable achievement. For many of the contributors brevity must be an unfamiliar determinant; and even the listening public of the Third Programme must be reduced to a common denominator. And the most accomplished broadcasters are often themselves acknowledged prose stylists who have gone to the trouble of adapting their writing to the demands of a different medium. But broadcasting is fundamentally discontinuous, and the material of even a closely-knit series must lend itself to repetition and to a failure in sustained argument.

The talks are divided into five main themes: the theory of Progress, Victorian Religious Belief and Controversy, Man and Nature, The Liberal Idea, and The 'Working-Out' of Victorian Ideas. A short notice cannot attempt to give an indication of the variety of this material, nor of its generally brilliant treatment. It would be true, however, to say that the series reflects a refreshing reaction from the fashion of slick judgment associated with the name of Lytton Strachey. We are sufficiently far removed from the Victorian Age

to be able to appreciate its solid virtues, and, in view of the experience of our own times, to wonder at much of its confidence. It is too easily supposed that there was a uniform liberal optimism that characterised what is discernibly a distinct era in English history. If there was a Herbert Spencer, there was too a Ruskin; and Newman is as Victorian a figure as Darwin. Perhaps the most enduring factor in this ambitious series is its warning against generalisations. They are usually false, and rarely can they survive the impact of a humane judgment.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

WORLD REVOLUTION. By Lionel Curtis. (Blackwell; 7s. 6d.)

EUROPE UNITES. (Hollis and Carter; 3s. 6d.)

It should be said at the beginning that although Mr Curtis's book is well-intentioned, it is nonetheless extremely boring. His aim is to contrast the completion of the American Revolution in the eighteenth century with the problem of Western Union in the twentieth century. In itself such an aim is admirable. The book is divided into three, and by easy stages an account is given in the first part of what led to the completion of the American Constitution, as drafted by the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. The second part is contemporary and mainly documentary: it includes a chapter on the Hague Congress of last year. The third part is interpretative: it draws a number of conclusions, contrasting the earlier American scene with the present European one, and attempts to formulate from these conclusions the precepts for true peace. Now although these precepts as they are stated in this book read as a string of platitudes, the fact that they are platitudes does not invalidate their original truths. On the contrary, what these platitudes do is merely bore the reader in exactly the same way, and for the same reason, that today so many political speeches bore their audiences. One knows political responsibility, social welfare and a balanced economy can only become realities when the threat of war is abolished—it has been the cry of all the three parties for the last twenty years: one knows too that the threat of war can only be abolished by international means—it has been proclaimed again and again at conference after conference; it was the purpose of the League of Nations in the 'thirties and it is the purpose of the current European movement towards Western Union. Yet these remedies at best are only half remedies: the real revolution must lie elsewhere—in the soul of man. Mr Curtis, in his plea of good heart for peace, only skims the surface of the problem in his book. In making a number of obvious points, he omits to mention the one point which really matters: that politics cannot be divorced from religion, save to the detriment of men.

This point is brought out far more satisfactorily in the short preface which Mr Churchill contributes to *Europe Unites* (a hand-