

THE DOUKHOBORS.

So much has been said in the public press about the Doukhobors that it will be of undoubted interest to hear a little about these remarkable settlers in Canada. They tried the island of Cyprus at first but the climate was intolerable to them, and they have now professed the greatest satisfaction with the great, free, healthy northern zone. Canada is very slowly drawing together the elements of an enduring nationality, and as a factor in this evolution they will certainly contribute a valuable influence from their sturdy spirituality. Mrs. Rose Glason Osburn and other theosophical workers at Winnipeg did much to see the travellers on their way to the new settlements and the favourable impression made by the Doukhobors has not been sufficiently recognised. Mrs. Osburn, writing in the spring, gives some bright glimpses of their character. "Very few, outside of members of our study class interested themselves. We have looked after the comforts of the sick and clothed the destitute. Of the 900 quartered here the past three months the last 200 are leaving this week, and I really feel an ache at heart at the loss of them. These people had become very dear to me, and the children—I love them. They are so apt, and polite, and well-behaved, show such a brotherly feeling among each other and toward every living thing, and their simple, unbounded joy and gratitude at the receipt of a poor little gift of some kind is as pathetic as it is gratifying. In all my intercourse with them I never saw any wrangling or fighting, and in answer to my question on that point, one said: 'Doukhobors never fight.' Swearing is also not known among them. And the little ones but reflect their elders. I never met such a gentle people, possessed at the same time of a dignity in manner and bearing that seems quite incomprehensible in such a simple unlettered peasantry. And some of their history is so sad, hardly a family among them but has suffered imprisonment and torture. I have in mind a brave boy of fourteen who is a special protege of

mine. His mother died heart-broken just before embarking for Canada, because her husband and son could not come with them. Both had been exiled in 1895 to Siberia to work in the mercury mines. This is only one instance. Their leader (for you know they have no priests or elders) has been in exile for ten years past at hard labour, but he still directs them when he can, and his letters are an inspiration. These people have suffered for the cause that H. P. B. has taught us to uphold and to spread. They are our elder brothers in the movement, and if we are under the impression that the theosophic movement died in the last century we are mistaken, for these people are the living witnesses of its perpetuity. Is it a coincidence only that H. P. B. was born and reared right among them? Is it not possible that in the light of our teaching she is the efflorescence of the spiritual thought of this brotherhood? And is it also only a coincidence that they call themselves the Christians of the Universal Brotherhood? They had to take the name 'Christian' because they were looked upon as non-Christians, as they did not baptise nor worship an external Christ. Then their whole spiritual teaching and history, even to its disruptions, is similar to our own, so that I feel the identity strongly, and know the Great White Lodge is behind them. Sooner or later we will have to recognise the connection."

"The foundation of the Spirit-Wrestlers' teaching consists in the belief that the Spirit of God is present in the soul of man, and directs him by its word within him." They "deem that all externalism in the work of salvation is utterly useless." "Not only the parents, but every Spirit Wrestler regards it as his duty to teach every child something useful whenever he has the opportunity to do so." "They also condemn the practice of calling oneself a sinner, and making this a kind of boast, a sham meekness, to excuse oneself from trying to correct one's errors." "For a man to save his soul they do not think it necessary for him to belong to their Society. They say that conduct brings a man salvation,