

## Our Contributors.

### The Pentecostal League.

BY REV. PROFESSOR JORDAN, D.D.

One evening when I was staying in Sunderland a friend informed me that he was going to a meeting of the Pentecostal League. It had been with me a busy, chagelut day, but as I desired on this visit to take an all round sympathetic view of the religious life of the country, I decided to accompany him to gain information and get profit from this new movement. My only previous knowledge of this particular league had been gained from notes and controversies in the religious journals; such notices usually circling around the name of Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., the founder of the Pentecostal League. The statement was made that a booklet giving the plans and purposes of the league could be had for the modest sum of one halfpenny; but as I neglected to make that investment I must confine myself to what I saw and heard. The meeting was held in a convenient, commodious hall in the central part of town, and for a Friday evening meeting was fairly well attended. There were two or three clergymen and a few "leading people" from various denominations, as the league is unsectarian and interdenominational, and I was told that the Church of England contributed the largest share. On this particular evening the conduct of the meeting was in the hands of a gentleman who is at the same time a man of business, a town councillor and an active "evangelist." He announced the hymns in a lively, emphatic manner and read a lesson from St. John's Gospel, sometimes paraphrasing a verse and sometimes interjecting an explanatory remark. A clergyman of the Church of England was called upon to pray and offered a few brief, fervent petitions. I noted a peculiarity in the form, namely, that the prayers were addressed directly to the Holy Ghost. This grated somewhat on my feelings, as without professing to be able to fathom the mystery of the Holy Trinity I believe in the view that we pray to the Father through the Son by the aid of the ever blessed Spirit. It is a natural result of a movement of this kind that is started to give, as it is claimed, prominence to the work of the Holy Spirit and the dominant idea should seek expression in the hymns and prayers as well as the speeches.

The address of the evening was given by a Primitive Methodist, who has charge of a mission church in the town. The address was evidently a sermon, and I could not be certain that it was made for the occasion, or the movement. It was based upon II. Chron. xx. 25-26, the victory of Jeoshaphat over the Ammonites. The preacher referred constantly to these as "Amorites," but that was from his standpoint a matter of small importance as he was dealing not with history but with the spiritual life and trying to show us that faith enables us to get the victory over all the "ites." In a vigorous, homely way he dwelt upon the conditions of receiving divine help; a felt need, a realisation of our powerlessness to meet the need; a complete surrender of the matter into the hands of God; a waiting upon God. He commented on the fact that this was a case of deliverance through singing, that the saving sugges-

tion came from a man in the choir; whereas now too often the choir is the place through which the devil gets into the church. We are told that there were two classes of Christians, the trying and the trusting; those trying to work out their own life, and those leaving it in the hands of God; those on "the low plane" and those having a high, joyous life.

With the aim of the preacher one could have full sympathy. That aim, as I understood it, was to lead men to place their lives more completely in the hands of God; and to have such rich, joyous faith that they could face the ills and temptations of life in a buoyant, hopeful spirit. But as to the theology, there was a crucial point where that came out. He warned us that we could not grow into this life; it must come from an act of trust; it is a sort of second conversion. He used conversion as an illustration, and remarked as we could not grow into salvation, so we could not grow into sanctification. In pressing this point he quoted a verse from a Methodist hymn; and that verse, it seemed to me, destroyed his point, though he was not conscious of that. The verse speaking about the act of faith involved in process of conversion, says: "The Holy Spirit entered and I was born of God." Now, is it not the characteristic of a thing that is born that it may and must grow? Does not sanctification begin with regeneration, and is it not by its very nature, if real, a growing process? That was my silent thought as he proceeded, and it still seems to me to be valid. That is, of course, the point where discussion arises between the teachers of this particular form of faith and the orthodox theologian. We admit that all possible effort should be used to stimulate the soul to new trust and more living faith. Sudden impulses are not to be despised, devotional helps may be used; but when it is set forth that sanctification is a second conversion received by a direct act of faith, not in the Lord Jesus, but in the Holy Spirit, then it seems to us that such teaching is incorrect and dangerous.

However, the thing at which I stumbled most was the fact that at the conclusion of the meeting the leader called us to engage in silent prayer, and before our eyes were closed, or immediately after, he began to preach to us; at first in the form of preaching to himself and then directly appealing to us. "Am I ready to give up all for Jesus? Am I ready to give up all now?" and so on indefinitely. These are not the exact words, but that is the style and temper of it. The thing seemed to me to wear thin and sound rather hollow. As to that, of course, something depends on the hearer as well as on the speaker. Then anyone ready to make this great surrender was asked to stand up for a while. Later all who had thus stood up were asked to stand altogether; and at last the meeting was closed with another hymn and the benediction. I mentioned this feeling to a Methodist minister who is quite of the evangelical type. He said he often read Mr. Reader Harris' articles in the "Tongues of Fire," enjoyed them and found them helpful; but he was not in full sympathy with the league, either as to its theology or manner of conducting meetings. As to the leader of this particular night he said that recently he had to address a "Methodist Family Gathering." He rose and made the statement that he

had been very busy, but had gone down on his knees in his office and asked the Master for a message and this was what He gave. Afterwards someone privately remarked that it was not fair to place on "the Lord" the responsibility for a speech so carelessly prepared. Another friend again spoke with respect of the leader as a devout, faithful man. A true statement, no doubt; but we must all guard against a fatal facility of speech in regard to sacred things, and against making prayer a substitute rather than an inspiration for work. One gentleman mentioned in connection with this movement the name of the late Rev. C. H. McGregor, who visited this town a few years ago. He spoke on "Power for Service," and after conducting a very effective meeting led many to decide to seek "the higher life." Such times of refreshing are helpful and leave abiding influences. In these days of coarse materialism and fevered haste we need high hours of devotion and sweet times of mystic fellowship; but we need always, and in all cases, to remember that the treasure is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may really be of God and not of ourselves.

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### Chinese Traits

While China is as autocratic as is Russia, she is, says the Hon. Charles Denby in the "Forum," at the same time the most democratic country in the world. This may seem a paradox, but, at the worst, the Chinese Government is a patriarchal despotism. In the village the head man rules as a father would rule a family. Law suits are abhorred. There are no lawyers, no jury trials. Equity governs the judgment of the Courts. I knew of a case in Shanghai in which there was a finding for the plaintiff; but because his conduct had not been perfectly just, the amount assessed in his favor was ordered to be paid to a charitable institution. If a magistrate fails of his duty, he is set upon by a mob and dragged from his chair, and the insignia of his office are removed, especially his official boots. The gods are treated in like manner. They are put out in the sunshine in times of drought that they may see for themselves the inconvenience of the hot weather, and during rains which last too long they are lashed with whips as a punishment.

High and low are imbued with superstition. No two houses in Pekin are set on the same line. One is always farther back or farther forward than its neighbor. The reason for this allocation is that it is believed that the evil spirit cannot turn a corner, and then when they get started they must continue in a straight line, and so go out into space and be lost. Little clay dogs are placed on all the ridges of the houses, with wide open mouths, to catch the evil spirits as they approach them. The chief function of the great Almanac, which is published by the Government every year, and controls Chinese action in every particular, is to name the lucky days for doing every act in life—particularly for marriages. A dog is supposed to be eating up the moon at the time of its eclipse; and the population of the Empire turns out, beating gongs and tin pans to drive him away. Several years ago, at Tientsin, a wretched little water snake was caught in the Peiho River, and the populace took