

are suffering some impoverishment by the neglect of that fellowship meeting we used to have, when, without the suggestion of cant, without the most distant hint of a manufactured unreality, we could speak together like men of the truth of God, and commend each other singly and together to the God of all grace. But this may be the fellowship meeting of the ministers and the officers of our churches. God give us grace to make it so, and this week at Swansea will bear fruit through years of service, and this house in which we meet shall be proved to be a place of Pentecost, whose efforts and fruits shall be found in the great ingathering in every nation under the earth. Amen.

The Chairman's address was on the Secular Element in our Church Life; and elicited some rather unfavorable comments, because it seemed to reflect upon certain portions of church life which embraced the æsthetic, the recreative, and the new. For myself, I could see no cause for any dissatisfaction. At the May meeting, Dr. Green gave an optimist view of Congregationalism; with confidence he looked into the future, and lifted up all by the hopefulness of his view. His autumn address must be read in the light of his spring utterances. In the fairest weather, quicksands will wreck, if not avoided. Dr. Green uttered a warning note, that the brightness of his earlier prophecy should not be dimmed. Self-complacency has wrecked many a soul, many a church. The chairman warned, and in our judgment warned wisely. It was an important question he put. "Is there not some danger of the Lord Jesus Christ being dethroned; even amid the abundance of well-intentioned benevolence, and the show of a Christian nomenclature?" and his closing illustration was but a further presentation of the truth Mr. Berry had pressed, on the preceding evening:—

All that I have been saying has a striking and concrete illustration in the little ancient Congregational Church at Antioch. A handful of African and Cypriote Jews fled to Antioch from the persecution that followed on the death of Stephen; they carried the facts of Christ's death and resurrection and ascension fresh in their minds, and the love of God in their hearts. Drawn together by these spiritual bonds and the attractions of the new life they formed themselves a church. So rapid was their growth and so potent their influence, that without placarding themselves, or being aided by the press, or affecting any singularity other than the singularity of the spiritual life, their fame spread to Jerusalem; they had to be reckoned with by the authorities of the city; they received a nickname which happily hit off the characteristic of their profession; they were the first to sympathize with the famine-stricken saints of Jerusalem; and lastly, and best of all, it was from their midst that Paul and Barnabas were sent out on a mission to the heathens; and as I read their history, it was the highly spiritual condition or state of the life of that Church that made all

this possible to it. The same infinite energy is around us, but this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

But I cannot transcribe a volume, in recording what was said. I will conclude by recording a few impressions. And firstly:—We readily recognize that men are largely influenced by their surroundings. Whether the brethren caught the glow of Welsh fire or not I cannot say, one thing was certain, I have seldom felt at such gatherings strong intellectual forces so thoroughly permeated by spiritual fervor, and directed towards practical ends as on this occasion. It was refreshing to hear nothing about the strife of creeds, to be at an ecclesiastical meeting where the *odium theologicum* had no place, and to hear men earnestly enquiring how they should set the battle in array against the hosts marshalled to defy the Lord of Hosts and his anointed. The conviction is deepened that the social problems which bulk so largely in this age of restlessness and change will be settled, and settled on Christian lines, by the vigorous Christian principles manifestly grasped by the brethren of the Union. The unanimous and hearty determination to attack the opening of the public-houses on Sunday, is a plain step in the right direction; indeed, to the writer, it is plain as the sun risen in a cloudless sky, that one of the very first steps in social reform is the dealing with this monstrous traffic, a traffic that rivals in its atrocities the horrors of the "middle passage" of the infamous slave trade. There is not much hope of the Established Church's dealing vigorously with it as long as its wealth bestows wherewith cathedrals may be restored; but the Free Churches of England can, and we rejoice that they are beginning.

I have mentioned "Established Church." To one like myself whose sojourn has been so long in a land of Free Churches, no impression could well be stronger than that made by the recognition of the ever present feeling that a privileged ecclesiastical caste was permitted to mar all social, political and Christian relations. This is an impression that was just as strong as I read the reports of the Church Congress, sitting at Hull, contemporaneously. At the Union, a constant sense of injustice was expressed which certain facts mentioned certainly seemed to justify—a deep feeling that men in free England were being kept back