

The Friend

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THE FRIEND OF THE FREE STATE

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Week-end Reflection

A Better Life Means a Better World

WHEN the play, "The Forgotten Factor," was presented in Bloemfontein recently my mind went back 20 years to the House Party held during the October holidays in the old Eunice and Normal College buildings. At that time the movement, known in South Africa as the "Oxford Group Fellowship," had attracted people from all walks of life and from many denominations.

My own interest had been aroused some months previously in Zastron when an Afrikaans-speaking youth from Grey University College announced

By

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to a social gathering that although he had just received his bachelor of arts degree, he was more proud of his B.A. which stood for "born again!"

This shook me: for I soon discovered that these people could talk as naturally and as easily about their religious experiences as some can talk about their last operation. They were not, as critics insinuated, "selling tickets to heavenly happiness at reduced prices"; on the contrary, their gaiety and abandon were fruits of disciplined living, of lives brought under the guidance and control of the will of God, and daily tested by the standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.

Buchman

IN order to get a clear picture of this international spiritual movement it is necessary to know how it originated. In 1908 Dr Frank Buchman, a Lutheran minister in charge of a Boys' Settlement in America, had a tiff with the governors and left the place in a huff.

He went to England a few years later, and while in the Lake District he attended a little village chapel at which there were seventeen present including the woman preacher and himself. She held up such a compelling vision of Christ crucified that Buchman saw in a flash that his own sins were separating him from Christ and from others. Up to that time "there had been inner conflict producing ill-health and divided personality."

"That day," he writes, "my life was unified and I began to confess my own sins instead of those who, I felt, had wronged me. In that moment I realised what Christ had done for me on the Cross. Immediately I wrote to each of the governors of the Settlement and told them I had now no resentment against them, and asked for their forgiveness."

Peace and Power

HE found that these confessions were so good for his soul that he proceeded to make further restitutions, and began to live on a basis of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Such peace and power came into his life that he felt impelled to share his experiences with others.

It was in China, where he worked in 1917-18 that he organised the first House Party, at which there were 100 people present. Two young men, sons of American Bishops at work in China, had their lives changed and later carried the message to Oxford where they met in the rooms of a gifted personality, Loudon Hamilton. It was here that the Oxford Group may be said to have been born and where this name became attached to it.

International

FROM that small beginning the Moral Re-armament movement has grown to international proportions, overleaping national and denominational boundaries with its simple Christian philosophy that "if man listens, God speaks, and if man obeys God acts, and when God acts miracles happen."

It reminds us that to make a new world there must be new men, and that they must be born again. This movement has stressed that the secret of international peace lies in our ordinary human relationships and that confession of one's own sin and willingness to make restitution place one in a favourable position to receive the peace and power of God into one's own heart.

Cause

AT Caux in the Swiss mountains, the headquarters of this M.R.A. movement, the World Assembly in 1947 mustered 5,000 people from all walks of life and from 52 nations. People of all shades of political outlook and social standing were drawn together by the love of Christ.

Spiritual Renaissance

MAY it be, in the providence of God that this movement is the spearhead of a new spiritual renaissance, doing for the world what Methodism did for Britain, having a scope more wide-sweeping than the Protestant Reformation?

Any movement which can overleap national and denominational boundaries, bringing men to the feet of the Saviour in this hate-driven, fear-ridden and greed-bitten age, is worthy of commendation. These people with their new approach are a supplement to, not a substitute for the worship and witness of the Churches.

Homely Language

THERE are millions who will not darken the doors of a Church who may be intrigued by a House Party, a morality play or a meeting. They might not understand the filtered language of the Church and its sepulchral voices, but they understand the language of the streets and the market place.