

THE OXFORD GROUP IN AMERICA.

RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT HOOVER.

By Loudon Hamilton.

The series of meetings which have been held at Washington close to-night. The ballroom has been well filled. Many stood last night. The gatherings have been very representative. A number of Congressmen and Senators, with their wives and families, have been coming, as well as Government officials, a Justice of the Supreme Court, the Governor of a bank, and others in important Government positions. Influential people in Washington are writing to endorse the work of the Groups. Diplomats and internationally known statesmen have been coming to the meetings regularly. One Congressman said, "This is the answer to America's needs to-day." He is arranging for some of the Team to visit his city, to reach some of the crowd there who are drinking too much.

There are just over sixty people in the Team, and they have been kept hard at it, taking all the opportunities that have been offered in private homes, in schools, in churches, and at other times, to pass on the message of the Groups. The level of the evening meetings has been tremendously high. Miss Grace Potter, of New York, who has three Bishops in her family, has been here with us. A member of the New York Stock Exchange travelled down to be with us here for two days. He arranged a lunch for twenty-five men in the Stock Exchange, to hear about the Groups. Three of his friends asked afterwards why they were not invited. He found, to his surprise, that one of his friends whom he thought most successful replied at once that this was the experience he had been looking for for some years. Another broker said he was glad to find someone on the Floor of the Stock Exchange whom he could talk to about these things.

A NEW FREEDOM.

One of the younger women spoke of coming in contact with the Group some time ago, feeling that she was quite good. At the same time, she was secretly engaged, without her family knowing. As a Christian, she believed in helping people, but found that she was jealous of a girl with a pagan background whose life had only been recently changed and who was being used more than she to help others. She had been a conventional Episcopalian, but her consecration was unreal because she had not paid the price. She saw that she had to be willing to share with someone else. She did so, and prayed aloud. Later, she did the things she said she could not do, and witnessed at a large meeting, to her new decision. It was a struggle to let go, seeking the approval of others. She began to find new freedom from petty faults. She told one of her former mistresses that she had been dishonest in examinations. She began to put her whole life under guidance, including her marriage. She also began habits of daily discipline in keeping early morning Quiet Times. She described the experience as being "like a chicken coming out of the shell and discovering a new world."

Another very impressive witness came from an actress. She described how, before meeting the Groups, she had successfully achieved ways of self-glorification. All went well until her fiancé was killed. From that moment she hated God with a deep resentment. Two years' success on the stage only taught her distrust of a lot of people. Her life was self-willed and unhappy; her family was breaking up. Fourteen days ago she had come, under protest, in contact with the Groups. She had thought that a religious meeting must be depressing. She was amazed, however, to find the compelling and attractive quality of the Christian life of the Group. Through fear of her friends laughing at her, she at first withheld from making a complete surrender of herself to Christ, but finding that compromise did not succeed, she took the step. She was used at once in the life

of an atheist friend. Her change was the means of uniting her family.

A MORAL CHALLENGE.

A college graduate said that when he heard of the Groups he at once adopted an "attitude of mind" towards them which largely consisted in disliking sharing and conversion. However, he took a friend of his to a House Party in the hope that his friend would get the help and he himself would get the credit for it: he, however, faced the moral challenge of the Groups, for his life, and thereafter adopted a second attitude—this time, of approval—but from a distance. He compromised for one year as a theological student and remained dissatisfied. Finally, the Groups challenged him, that not winning people to Christ was sin. He accepted the challenge and made a complete surrender of himself to Christ. The old desire to dodge the discipline of fellowship disappeared. He began to experience peace and release. His religion was no longer an "attitude of mind," it had become a living experience of Christ.

With such witness, it is not to be surprised that people stayed till midnight and after to talk individually and in small groups. A Roman Catholic lady, who broadcasts nationally, has been sitting in the front row every night. She says that Washington is a critical audience, but Washington has not been criticising, but is held and gripped. The congregation of an important church here actually broke out into applause at one point in the sermon when the clergyman gave the Group message. A business man came, intending only to stay a short time one evening; instead of that he stayed until nearly 1 o'clock and made arrangements to bring his whole office staff the next day. One of the leading Senators said that he has had letters from twenty of his friends in the city endorsing the work of the Groups.

THE PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION.

President Hoover received the Groups yesterday, and H. Alexander Smith presented the Team to him. To-day, the Dutch Minister has arranged a special reception for the Groups, while the British members of the Team are also invited to the British Embassy. The South African Minister had Dr. Buchman and the South Africans to lunch to-day. The General Methodist Conference at Atlantic City has been so profoundly shaken by the visit of some of the Team last week that the matter has been brought up by several speakers in General Conference and arrangements have been made for a Team to return there this week-end and hold House Party meetings. After that, the Team divides—some going South to Asheville, North Carolina, and the others do Boston. Later they will unite for meetings in Detroit at the end of the month.

MEETINGS IN A BALLROOM.

A series of four evening meetings in the ballroom of the Plaza Hotel, New York, has just finished. The hall was packed to capacity, and many stood for over two hours. The attendance rose to almost twelve hundred. People of all grades of society attended and listened enthralled to the testimonies of those whose lives had been changed by the power of Christ.

One woman said she had attended many Society functions and balls in that same room; but nothing in her experience could match these evening meetings. She said they made her feel a new person, as if she had left an old cloak behind.

The message of Christ was presented from many angles. Jimmie Watt spoke powerfully of the disappearance of class hatred and the substitution of a constructive Christian programme.

DEFEATS TURNED INTO VICTORY.

Count John Bentinck told of his experiences in the distressed districts (on the Danube) in Hungary, and the response there to the message of Christ. A Stock Exchange broker told of his family being restored, his fears gone, his defeats turned to victory, his friends interested and challenged. He held a lunch party in the Stock Exchange of 25 men to meet members of the Group. Three of his friends asked why had they not been invited. The comment of one Stock Exchange member was that, however little he thought about religion, he and his friends had never seen a man so changed as our host.

Foraging among the outskirts of the evening meetings, one elicited interesting stories, without much difficulty. To the question, Why had they come? one got really impressive answers. One Group of three had come because of the change in a business man who had been worried and unhappy till coming to the Briarcliff house party two weeks ago; and they wanted to know what had changed him. They themselves had lapsed from Church. They stayed till close on midnight to learn how they might find the secret for themselves.

STRIKING TESTIMONY.

Meanwhile part of the team spoke at a dinner given at the Methodist General Conference, to hear the message of the Group—150 guests stayed till nearly 11 o'clock and this was followed by a request for Dr. Buchman to speak in General Conference to the 800 delegates, which he did next morning. One of the most striking testimonies given there was from a Professor of Religious Education, whose life and ministry had been transformed and vitalised by contact with the Group. He spoke without preparation (a thing, he said, he never before would have dared to do before that august assembly) and gladly identified himself fully with the movement.

At the Plaza the whole meeting stood in a moment's silence on receipt of the tragic news of the Lindbergh baby's death, a second meeting followed at 10.30 p.m., at which many people spoke from the floor of the hall till after midnight. The varied character of the speakers was an impressive factor. People high and low, religious and otherwise, all witnessed as Christ gave them grace.

The continuance of the work centres at Calvary Church here. Then we go on to Washington, where Bishop Freeman, of Washington, welcomes the Group at the first of a series of meetings to be held there for a week.