

BISHOP LAURESS J. BIRNEY

W. W. Reid
Board of Foreign Missions
Methodist Episcopal Church
150 Fifth Avenue, New York City.....

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Bishop Birney was born in Dennison, Ohio, on September 11, 1871. He received his education in Scio College and in Boston University School of Theology. In his early ministry he served pastorates in Plainfield, Ohio; South Walpole, Mass; Park Avenue Church, in Worcester, Mass.; Hyde Park, Mass.; Newton Center, Mass.; and Malden, Mass. Scio College and Wesleyan University gave him honorary degrees of Doctor of Divinity.

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A copy of the issue
containing this article
would be appreciated by
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BISHOP BIRNEY SPEAKS FROM RADIO STATION WEEI

Bishop L. J. Birney of Shanghai, China, formerly dean of Boston University School of Theology will broadcast a talk on "New Days in Old China" from Radio Station WEEI Boston, on Sunday afternoon, May 30 from 5:15 to 5:40 p.m.

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Bishop Birney at the Lacy Funerals

DR. WILLIAM H. LACY and Mrs. Lacy died in China within a few days of each other and it fell to Bishop L. J. Birney to speak at both funerals. On Aug. 29, speaking at the services for "Mother Lacy," he said in part:

"Now again the world has changed; changed for the home that Mother Lacy loved and of which she was the queen; changed for the whole set of conditions and relations affected by her translation, changed for those for whom and with whom she wrought in daily service. But God has not changed at all! The God she knew and worshiped is precisely the same God as in the hour of her crowning human experience of happiness or love. In that great faith she lived and in that same great faith we meet today this sudden surprise and grief when we find her not here to resume her wonted ministries of love and service.

"The inalienable security of human life in the service of a God whose nature is seen in Jesus, is another of life's divine certainties. In a world like our world, with a God like our God, the human soul that trusts Him is inviolably secure. Vicissitudes that have shattered the faith of millions may break every human tie, blast every human plan, leave us nothing but precious memories the loveliest experiences of the past, and do any other cruel thing that brings us down to the sackcloth and ashes of Job, God's great ancient saint—but God's child is safe.

"Touch not his life," was God's warning to Job's arch enemy. "No harm from Him can come to me on ocean or on shore." To *me!* Oh, not to this crumbling flesh; but to *me*, a spirit in the image of God. For we are spirit and God is spirit and to that world of spirit, not to this world of stuff and things, do we belong. It is of that world of spirit that the poet continues triumphantly to sing—

I know not where His islands lift
Their fringed palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

He who lives with that world of the spirit as his supreme allegiance is forever safe, whatever human winds may blow.

"The third great certainty for human life in a changing world is the triumphant power of the changeless God, who is love. To make the whole of human experience in the obedient life to achieve the ultimate ends of our human existence—That makes life not less than sublime. The supreme end of all our human life is a character which attains the likeness and achieves the will of God. To the soul that lives and moves and has its being, not in the world of flesh and things, but in the world of spirit, the whole sweep and compass of human experience—the tears and the laughter, the toil and the playtimes, the partings and the greetings, are caught up in the power of an eternal love and transformed into the supreme end and aim of all our living. God defeated? Never!—unless we defeat Him. In the soul that obeys and lives in the spirit, God always attains his ends.

"But there was another fact about Mother Lacy which ought to stand out today and always in our thought of her with undimmed strength and beauty. It was her faithfulness to the things she was given to do—the task or duty which she believed was hers. Here again I ask of you who knew her best—was it not even so? In all the many activities to which she gave herself—and they were many and varied indeed—she neglected not nor shirked her part. Among these ministries were two of which I had constant knowledge. One of them was to meet the steamers and the trains as they came and went with missionaries and others whom she might help and send on their way rejoicing, and have we not seen her waiting at the cheerless jetty in heat of summer or chill of winter, day or night, to fulfill her task. Another was to buy and send by every way or means every kind of mortal thing for those who needed and could not secure. And many of you have seen that little room of hers, packed with every kind of thing that human need might send for, dredged up as pearls from the ebbing and flowing tide of this great city's marts by her minute and tireless care, to send somewhere. And those of us who have had the sacramental privilege of carrying hither and yon that precious medley of freight for human need, have felt the beauty and the humanness of that faithful service. I have found myself marveling again and again at her capacity to carry unconfused in her mind the multitude of things to be accomplished, forgetting none. And we all knew well, when the sad word arrived, what was at least one of the reasons why the end had come. The steady drain upon her strength by undiminished tasks had left her undefended against disease when it came.

"Where are those countless services? What has the Almighty God, in the order of His spiritual providence, to do with these innumerable things His children have to do that seem so small and secular and insignificant in themselves, but which make up so much of life? Hear me. Not one of them is forgotten or lost in the divine economy of God. In a spiritual world like ours, where not even a cup of cold water is forgotten, nothing can be lost. All of life's slightest ministries are caught up by a slumberless love and power and made like all other human experiences, to achieve the supreme end of all our human existence, in every life that loves His law. He still and forevermore, as at the miracle on the Galilean hillside, gathers up the fragments that nothing be lost. I once knew an old Southern melody, all of which I have forgotten except a snatch of the chorus. It seemed to be the meditation of an old Christian slave, as the end drew near, singing

O, I wish I had forgotten
How I used to hoe the cotton,
On the old Virginia shore
But the Lord has not forgotten
How I used to hoe the cotton,
On the old Virginia shore

"Though there be no single point of contact, except a common faith in God, between a forgotten humble

toiler in an unknown rice field long ago and far away, and her whom we mourn today, whose life constantly touched and shared the greater currents of our modern day, yet a life of faithfulness to simplest as well as greatest duties, such as Mother Lacy's, lifts and glorifies the simple faith of that humble and forgotten toiler and of all God's workers, into a very noble meaning, aye, into a kind of vital and invincible creed by which the world can daily toil and triumph.

"Yes, Mother Lacy, we had you there today among the flowers as one among the crowned. You have been faithful unto death; you have fought a good fight; you did not shirk, you finished the course; and God touched your crown into which the silver was creeping and turned it into a crown of gold, for your eternal life. You kept the spirit of youth, aye, the heart of a girl, on into the years, straight up to the end yonder on the hilltop where it was not far to God. You have given yourself unstintedly to those outside your home, but you were first of all a wife and mother. You have given a whole family to Christ and Christian service—yea, more—a whole family—to the redemption of another people in the spirit of Christ. There could be no other witness so great as that to the kind of home you made. You have left not one but many places vacant, and tomorrow and tomorrow we will hear upon the lips of many, spoken in affection and regret, the name by which we all know you, for you were Mother to us all."

"Sad and Beautiful"

Seven days later the same Bishop stood by "Father Lacy's" bier and spoke the rest of the eulogy on these two lovely and undivided lives:

"Sad indeed, and beautiful! And the fact that an experience like this can be both, on the same lips and in the same heart, has a profound significance. It means that we are met together today in our new and deepened sense of loss and grief, under the power of the only faith in the world that can reconcile and harmonize life's ever-recurring extremes of sorrow and of joy, and make of our puzzling human life and experience a consistent whole. See how life's sharp contacts are vividly expressed through the whole historic sweep of revelation, enabling all true seekers after God to say to life's hardest hours, 'Sad, and beautiful.' It was deep in the heart of the ancient singer—'The valley of the shadow—but I shall fear no evil.' It rises from the ash heap glorified by faith. 'Worms destroy this body—but without my flesh shall I see God.' The prophet sings it to a stricken people. 'Walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned'; 'through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.' Jesus, faith's divine dynamic whence life's transformations come, set it in the heart of all his teaching. 'In the world, tribulation I have overcome the world.' 'Though he were dead shall never die.' 'Now sorrowful—shall be turned into joy.' Paul catches the triumphant strain and sets the world to singing major music. 'This mortal—shall put on immortality.' 'This corruption—shall put on incorruption.' 'Death—swallowed up in victory.' 'Shall tribulation, distress, peril, separate us from God?—in all these more than conquerors through Christ.' 'Troubled on every side—not distressed.' 'Outward man perish—inward man renewed.' 'Light afflictions exceedingly eternal weight of glory.' 'My infirmities if long in them that the power of Christ shall rest upon me!'

"It is this transcendent power of our Christian faith

to give beauty for ashes—distill the oil of joy from mourning, turn the sackcloth of heaviness into garments of praise—that will ultimately defy any anti-Christian movement in this or any land to keep that faith from the hearts of men. More than subtleties of argument, more than strength of its philosophy, more than truth of its theology, will living power to transpose our human life and experience from the minor to the major key, be the vital force that will one day put the Christian faith above every faith and His name above every name. In the light of that power we meet this or any other grief or loss and see it clearly, face it frankly, feel it deeply, camouflage it not and know how real a thing it is. For who must deny that pain is real and say that suffering is but mortal error, in order to escape it, shatters the moral integrity of the only capacity by which reality is discerned. The sorrow of these human partings is real indeed, as any normal soul well knows who has listened for a voice that is still, but the faith that was in Father Lacy's heart can set aflame the lamps of glory around the silent tomb of any man whose heart that faith illumines. . . . And that faith was the faith by which he lived. In no emotional way was it manifest. He was not emotional, though he had deep emotions. . . . In no obtrusive way was it expressed, though it was always ready for expression. It was the quiet controlling conviction of his life that gathered up the day's work and the whole of life and carried them into direct relation to the conquering God. It was that faith that led him nearly fifty years ago up to the great dedication of life for Christian service. It was that faith that more than forty years ago led him, . . . Abraham of old, to go out to a strange land, seeing the beckoning hand of Him who is invisible. It was that faith that has kept him strong and steady through these twoscore years of constant service.

"I pay tribute to him as one who held through all his busy life the warmth and vigor of his loyalty to Christ, who knew what first things were and kept them first; who never suffered the details of task or business to smother the breathing soul of his faith.

"I pay tribute to him as one who was the soul of accuracy, of order, of promptness in the conduct of affairs. It was the recognition of that capacity in him which made him the almost inevitable choice of any group with whom he met for the consecutive transaction of business, to keep their records true. In this I have never known his superior. Where he was mentor, details were not forgotten nor could they be slurred over. This it was, with other qualities, that made him the guiding spirit of two of the most important and comprehensive organizations in the Methodism of China.

"I pay tribute to him as human in his sympathies, loving those human qualities and ways, sharing those human intimacies of friendship that kept him close to life, as it is today—straight up to the end.

"I pay tribute to him as one who loved God's beautiful world, its trees and flowers, the soul in which they grew, and for his needed exercise found joy in turning his environment into a bower of beauty till every shrub and flower about our mission homes speaks eloquently of him.

"I pay tribute to him as a straightforward unevading follower of Jesus, in business and in pleasure, in church and home—in every relation of life.

"And in Christ's name I echo the word in all your hearts, 'Well done, good and faithful, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"



TWO CHINESE LEADERS

When the North China Conference was in session, Bishop Birney visited the camp of General Feng. He made an address to the soldiers. In reply, General Feng, who had been apprised of the fact that the day (Sept. 11) was the fifty-second anniversary of the Bishop's birth, offered him graceful congratulations. In the picture the General stands at salute by the Bishop's side. General Feng is a lay delegate to the General Conference which meets at Springfield, Mass., next May.

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understood and being enthusiastically promoted. If the pastor were to be cut off from the Advocate subscription list he would quickly drop to a local and provincial atmosphere. He knows what it means to him when his Advocate doesn't come. Has he ever thought that to probably three out of four people in his church the Advocate never comes and never will unless he starts it.

This year the Advocate-minded pastors are to have all the help they want in starting new subscriptions. A post card to the Circulation Department will tap the supply. More than 600 pastors have already given this token of their intention to take hold this year and make up for the time which was lost last year through concentration of interest in the Centenary emergency. Last year there was practically no "Good Literature Day." This calls for double effort now.

General Conference is just around the corner. Never so many great and vital questions were under discussion. Nowhere can a Methodist get such a close-up view of what his fellow churchmen are thinking, saying and doing as by reading THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE for 1924.

Advocate subscriptions come easier now than at any other time in the quadrennium. A General Conference, that promises to be epoch-making, is just ahead (May 1, 1924). THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE will have the fullest preliminary discussion, and the most comprehensive and accurate news report. Every Methodist will want to know what is going on. Subscriptions entered now at \$2.50 run until December 31, 1924.

Bishop Laress J. Birney

Bishop Laress J. Birney died in Pasadena, Cal., May 10, after a long illness. He struggled, as perhaps few men have done, to overcome a pulmonary weakness, which sent him to Arizona in 1925, to Japan in 1926, and the next year to Switzerland. In March, 1931, while en route from Switzerland to Shanghai, he had a stroke which detained him in Hongkong for three months. While there he wrote a letter to his "Yangtze Folks Beloved." We quote a paragraph taken from *The China Christian Advocate*, which shows the intensity of his love for China and his eagerness to return there. He wrote:

"What a meaning that word 'Yangtze' has acquired for me in these eleven beautiful years! What a transformation since early school days when my teachers taught me to call it the 'Yangtze Kai-ang River'! Then it meant nothing, but a river somewhere in a country of queer people where I didn't want to go. And today! It is crowded full of many of the richest and most rewarding memories, experiences, friendships, and



Bishop L. J. Birney

tasks that life treasures most. The 'queer people' have lost their queerness, which they never had, to God, and among them are the choicest spirits. And there's where I do want to go more than any other place in the world, not even California or Boston excepted. Dear Yangtze folks! Nothing muddy about that stream of association. It's as crystal clear as a New England brook. But like the real Yangtze it does bring down continuous deposits from the upper country that perpetually enrich today and tomorrow."

Laress John Birney was born September 11, 1871, at Dennison, Ohio, the son of a farmer, Nelson Law, and his wife, Harriett Ann Birney. His early ancestors came from Scotland. He received his education at Scioto College (A. B., 1894), now Mount Union and Boston University School of Theology (S. T. B., 1899). The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Mount Union, Wesleyan, and Yale Universities, and the degree of Doctor of Laws by Chattanooga University. He served a pastorate in Ohio at Plainfield and in New England at South Walpole; Park Avenue, Worcester; Hyde Park, Newton Center, and Centre Church, Malden. He served with distinction as dean of Boston University School of Theology from 1911 until he was elected to the episcopacy in 1920 and appointed to Shanghai Area. He was a delegate to the General Conference in 1912 and 1916. In 1932, though still twelve years from the retirement age, his broken health made necessary his request for the retired relation.

He is survived by his faithful wife, Laura Close Birney, who was his constant companion over roads that have been pleasant and those that were hard, and his daughter, Dorothy Gene, of New York City.

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paid a nominal sum for admission to the sessions.

Thinking of "Christian Youth Building a New World," the young people selected as their theme, "Youth and the New Church." An outline of the development of this theme is indicated by the addresses: "Forward Through the Ages," by Prof. Roland H. Bainton, of Yale University; "The Church in These Times," by Dr. L. O. Hartman, editor of *Zion's Herald*; "The Church We Need," by Prof. Halford E. Luccock, of Yale Divinity School; and "Youth in the Church," by the Rev. William H. Stewart, pastor of the Chester Hill Methodist Episcopal Church of Mount Vernon. The Rev. Lester Ward Auman, the dean of the conference, gave the closing summary and conducted the communion service in which more than five hundred participated.

The Wesley players of First Church, New Haven, presented "The Unlighted Cross." A panel discussion, "Youth Looks at the Church," was held on Sunday morning with Ellen Lund as chairman, with Mary Lanc, Fred Letson, Ruth Pardee, and Robert Shaw, participating.

The conference was divided into eighteen quest-action groups, according to ages. Each group kept a record of its findings, which were combined in a report and presented and adopted on Sunday morning. This report listed some of the shortcomings of the church, and also the good within the church, and made definite suggestions for youth action in making a better church. In order to facilitate follow-up work and better conserve the results of the conference, it was voted to hold the Youth Conference of 1938 in the early fall. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year:

President, Miss Eleanor Ericson, of Norwalk, Conn.; vice-presidents, Roy Echardt for Brooklyn South District, Charles Saum for Brooklyn North District, Philip VanKirk for New York District, and Miss Ruth Huff for New Haven District; secretary, Miss Luella Chapman, of Patchogue; treasurer, Miss Gertrude Child, of Jamaica; national councilman, Robert Shaw, of Rockville Centre.

The group leaders and resource men were as follows: the Rev. William H. Alderson, the Rev. John D. Atkins, Miss Lois Beach, the Rev. Theodore C. Boblin, the Rev. Paul DuBois, the Rev. Wesley H. Hager, Prof. Samuel L. Hamilton, the Rev. Edgar N. Jackson, the Rev. Hubert D. Jones, the Rev. Gerald E. Knoff, the Rev. James H. Link, the Rev. Edward L. Peet, the Rev. Larry Richards, Miss Ethel Roberts, Mrs. Lillian White Shepherd, the Rev. John J. Snively, the Rev. Joseph R. Swain, the Rev. Arthur T. Tedcastle, Miss Edith P. Welker, the Rev. Wayne White, the Rev. E. Ralph Wiborg, the Rev. Lloyd F. Worley, and the Rev. John Zeiter.

The Rev. Gustave Laass

Rev. Gustave Laass of New York East Conference, died May 1 at the Methodist Episcopal Hospital in Brooklyn, N. Y., after a long illness. He was born eighty-two years ago in Waukegan, Ill. In 1888 he entered New York East Conference and served thirteen charges with faithfulness and ability, retiring in 1925. From 1912 to 1935 he was Conference biographical secretary. Funeral services were held in Brooklyn, N. Y., May 5, with burial in the Lutheran Cemetery in Queens L. I. Those officiating were District Superintendent Hubert D. Jones, the Rev. Eugene W. Shrigley, and Alfred L. Faust. Surviving are his wife, Nelie L. Beal Laass; two daughters, a sister, and a brother.

The Rev. Arthur J. Smith

Dr. Arthur J. Smith, retired member of New York East Conference, who died suddenly on April 24, was born in Waterbury, Conn., May 14, 1856, the son of the Rev. Joseph and Matilda Ward Smith. In 1885 he entered New York East Conference and served pastorate in Oyster Bay, Naugatuck, New Haven, East Norwalk, Shelton, Danbury, Brooklyn Heights, and Astoria. Retiring in 1926, he went to his home in East Village, Conn., where

Bishop L. J. Birney:

An Appreciation

BISHOP F. T. KEENEY

BISHOP BIRNEY and I went to China on the same steamer in 1920 following our election to the Episcopacy and remained in continuous service together until the General Conference of 1924. Following the Springfield General Conference I remained in America and he returned to his beloved China to serve for eight additional years when failing health compelled his return and retirement. Out of the intimate and loving fellowship of those years I am prompted to voice this appreciation of the Bishop's remarkable and sacrificial service in China.

Those whom I have met who knew Bishop Birney in the earlier years of his ministry as pastor and later as dean of the Boston University School of Theology never failed to tell of his unbounded love for his task and for those with whom he worked; but China was his supreme affection. In his election to the Episcopacy he saw first of all an opportunity to give himself to China's millions and thus follow in the foot-steps of Bishop Bashford whose life and work he held in highest esteem. Had he followed the advice of physicians and friends, he would have returned to America at the end of eight years of service in the Orient; but he was so wedded to China that he preferred to die serving her than to live elsewhere. The greatest cross he ever bore was when he faced retirement in 1932.

As an educator Bishop Birney brought to China the same passion for scholarship as did Bishop Bashford in founding our Union Universities and Theological Seminaries that through these our Church might have a trained native leadership. His counsel and enthusiasm were invaluable in building securely on the foundations already laid and in promoting plans covering the whole range of scholastic training from kindergarten to post-graduate work. He was equally interested in the movement, following the World War, to introduce a simplified form of writing and through night schools with volunteer instructors and other agencies carry education to the masses.

Naturally the necessity for a trained ministry made strong appeal to Bishop Birney. The theological schools, therefore, were ever present in his thought. The young men entering the ministry were like sons to him and received from his lips, both in his Conference addresses and in private interviews, such counsel and inspiration as only a father in the Gospel could give.

Perhaps the Bishop's greatest contribution, if one may distinguish between values, was his zeal for Evangelism. All that Wesley experienced at Aldersgate was reproduced in Bishop Birney's warm heart. The overflow of his consuming passion quickened the pulse beat of every Annual Conference where he presided and visioned for many a pastor a larger and more dynamic spiritual life. He not only taught the importance of a vital evangelistic program, but illustrated his teaching by himself conducting revival services, inviting seekers to the altar, and then dealing with them one by

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one, as did the fathers in England and America with the same miraculous results notwithstanding the handicap of having to speak through an interpreter. In personal evangelism he also was equally successful as he contacted college men and officials of high rank.

No representative of the Methodist Church in China has ever commanded greater respect or won larger recognition among the leaders outside the Church in educational, civic and political life than did Bishop Birney. His counsel was often sought by leading statesmen and he was included in well nigh every general committee meeting in Shanghai to consider national, religious, or educational matters.

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1936 provided that all collections taken for World Temperance Sunday should go to the Board of Temperance outside the ratio. The action taken by the World Service Commission at its annual meeting in 1937 also provided that the collections for World Temperance Sunday should go to the Board of Temperance in addition to the amount provided for that Board out of other World Service funds. This means that each local church taking a World Temperance Sunday collection for the Board of Temperance will not only receive full World Service credit on the local church's apportionment but will add just that much to the support of the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals, and thereby just that much more for the local church's World Service giving. World Temperance Sunday therefore presents to each local church an opportunity for help toward reaching its full apportionment or in going over the apportionment.

Notable alike for author, subject and medium is the article on Governor Frank Murphy of Michigan by Dr. William L. Stodart of Boston as told in the September number of True Story magazine.

Mrs. Mary E. Chalmers of Prescott, Ariz., who died September 5th, was the sister of Rev. E. S. Robertson a retired member of the California Conference. She was 81 years old.

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Bishop Laress J. Birney

W. S. Bissonnette

THE news of his death in Pasadena, following an illness of about six years, reached China a few weeks ago. It was not entirely unexpected, for he was sorely stricken and lingering under heavy disabilities of body and mind, even while the soaring spirit turned sunward and disowned defeat.

Laress J. Birney was a son of eastern Ohio, born in 1871 in the valley of that name at Scio, where he received his early education in a Methodist home and college in the strongly Puritan atmosphere inherited from the Scotch-Irish settlers of that beautiful region. The militant crusading quality of the Christian spirit was dominant in the Church of the seventies and eighties, with evangelism and idealism blending naturally in an enlightened outlook upon the moral and social problems of the time. The great temperance movement was gathering strength and cohesion preparatory to its nation-wide fight of a later decade and there was an awakening to the ethical implications of civic and political problems. Traces of the young man's social and religious environment were discernible in the attitudes of the mature Christian leader whose career was to extend geographically from the New England seaboard to the center of China. He was graduated from the Boston University School of Theology in 1899. After eight years in the active ministry, he returned to Boston in 1911 as Dean of the School of Theology, making an invaluable contribution to the training of young men for the church. He was serving in this capacity when he was elected bishop in 1920. He came to his episcopal appointment in China with a happy enthusiasm for the task, the land, and its people. One of the great lovers of China, of whom our Church has given no mean quota, he served his chosen people unsparingly for twelve years. He was on his way back to China when seized by a sudden illness in Hongkong, which was prolonged until his heavenly homegoing a few weeks ago.

Some competent observer, writing about the General Conference, described the inauguration of bishops in 1920 thus: "Tall unsmiling, solemn as an angel, Dean Birney strode along the aisle and mounted the platform for presentation." This picture will be recognized by those who made contact with him in those moments when the sense of the high calling of an ambassador of the Lord Christ was upon him in its weight and fulness. Those moments were not rare and when he stood in the pulpit with head back and the word leaping from his lip; the sense of wings fanning the light called for no stretch of imagination. His auditors heard, and in no unreal way, saw the word.

A fair number of Bishop Birney's middle years were given to the institutional service of his Church and his work as an educator and trainer

of ministers cannot be minimized in a balanced estimate of his career. Yet the impression persists that he was predominantly a preacher. He was an amiable and able administrator, but more a leader calling his comrades to the fight. It was "Follow me" as he pressed on himself, pointing to the Lord. His message as an evangelist was as broad as the salvation of God. He had a tender word for the erring, for sinners, for those who had lost out and cried for help. But his intellectual appeal was on a very high level and reached the student class with most effect. His last sermons in Tieng Ang Church in Foochow, given at a time when the ferment of national feeling was surging at a dangerous height, on freedom and personality, were among the finest contributions from the Christian mind to China for that, and indeed, for any time. Liberty, the freedom of choice, as the master work of God in the human spirit and the true imprimatur of the Christian life, was made understandable and desirable. This eagle quality, mixed with temperamental kindness and sunlike optimism, was the soul of Birney.

He will have—or is having—high companionship with his predecessors in China. Bashford and Lewis, of whom, in the ways of light and love, he was reminiscent. One likes to think of three shepherds on upland pastures, bending earthward, and seeing with better eyes than ours, much to concern, much to cheer them, on that part of the globe which is localized in China.

THE CHINA CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE

An Official organ of the China Section of the East Asia Central Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church
In China. One Dollar Mex per Year.
In Other Countries. One Dollar Gold per Year

Editor:—Idabelle Lewis Main

Associate Editors—Chas F. Johnson, E. M. Stowe, Mabel Nowlin, Edward James, L. I. Hale

Business Manager:—W. A. Main

Published monthly, the first week of the month

Remittances may be made by local checks, or in case of foreign subscriptions by checks on any national bank

Renewals should be made according to the dates indicated on the wrapper.

Business matters should be addressed to W. A. Main, Box 751, Shanghai.

Manuscripts and all matters intended for publication should be addressed to Idabelle Lewis Main, Room #10, 109 Yuen Ming Yuen Road, Shanghai.

Editorials

JOHN WESLEY AND MODERN RELIGION*

Such is the title of a recent book by Dr. Umphrey Lee, present Dean of the Theological Department of Vanderbilt University. Rev. Sidney R. Anderson, by whom the following review of his book is written, says of him: "His scholarly approach, coupled with his years of experience as a religious leader among the people called 'Methodists' offers us a new analysis worthy of the most earnest study." In the months preceding the two-hundredth anniversary of Wesley's "heart-warming experience" this book of Dr. Lee's can give us a deeper appreciation of the man who considered the world his parish. Mr. Anderson introduces us to this new study.

"To those concerned with interpreting religion to this generation this book is highly recommended. It is not just another detailed history of Wesley's life, but an analytical study of

that the bias of human nature can only be changed by the grace of God plus discipline and education.' He believed that there should not only be corporate life and worship within the 'Catholic Seminary of divine love' (his definition of the Church), but discipline and education for growth.

"In stirring the hearts of his hearers with such attacks on social injustice as the following the author emphasizes the fact that Wesley helped to lay deep foundation for the humanitarian passion of the reform movement of the 19th Century. Speaking of the unjustly rich distillers, Wesley says, 'The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves.....blood is there: the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood.'

"Quite aware of the extremes to which religious leaders may have carried some of Wesley's finest contributions; and calling attention to other extreme tendencies of our day, the author presents this study as being of value to the modern religious world, especially because of Wesley's 'combination of mystical experience with the ethical, and the institutional elements in religion.' It is offered to a modern world which the author thinks is greatly in need of Wesley's guidance in reaching that happy mean between the 'tendencies toward regulation and control, toward uniformity and universality,' and the contrasting 'tendencies toward emotion, diversity and freedom.' He regards Wesley as a prophet for our extreme-loving times, and quotes Wesley's broad simplification, 'The earth brings forth no corn (as the soul no holiness), without both the care and toil of man, and the benign influence of heaven.'

"The reviewer can offer no better recommendation to those called upon to interpret Christianity to this generation than to quote the author: 'Those who would make normative neither the traditions of past ages nor the latest findings of contemporaries, may well turn to one who stood at the beginning of our modern world, bringing with him old-world conceptions of Christianity and merging them with the intuitions of the newer time.'"

W. W. Reid
Board of Foreign Missions
Methodist Episcopal Church
150 Fifth Ave., New York City.....

1926

BISHOP LAURESS J. BIRNEY

Bishop Lauress John Birney, resident bishop of the Shanghai area of the Methodist Episcopal Church has been in China since his election to the episcopacy in 1920. Under his general direction in this area there are 94 missionaries from America, and a Christian community of about 8,000 people; there are 256 Sunday schools with 16,000 pupils; 140 churches and about 200 day schools of all grades.

Prior to his election as bishop of the church, Bishop Birney was dean of Boston University School of Theology for nine years and was considered one of the leaders of the denomination throughout New England.

Bishop Birney was born in Dennison, Ohio, on September 11, 1871. He received his education in Scio College and in Boston University School of Theology. In his early ministry he served pastorates in Plainfield, Ohio, South Walpole, Mass., Park Avenue Church, in Worcester, Mass., Hyde Park, Mass., Newton Center, Mass., and Malden, Mass. Scio College and Wesleyan University gave him honorary degrees of Doctor of Divinity.

Photographs from this
file have not been
included but are
available upon request.
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