

**PRAYERS FOR
MOTHERS'
MEETINGS**

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Prayers for mothers' meetings by Mrs. Goodwin Hatchard

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MRS. GOODWIN HATCHARD

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PREFACE.

WHILE sending forth this simple collection of Prayers for Mothers' Meetings, I must offer a few words of explanation to those who may take it into use, of the motives which prompted its publication.

At the request of many friends I put upon paper, with some difficulty I must confess, these few extempore prayers, to be employed only by those, who lacked courage or a ready utterance in offering from their own hearts their requests unto God. I cannot but trust that they will soon cease to employ any poor human assistance, such as this; and be Divinely aided to pour out, with fervour and earnestness, their desires, praises, and thanksgivings, for themselves, and for those among whom they labour for their God.

I will not dwell here upon the duties and privileges we enjoy in prayer, when uniting at a throne of grace, at our happy 'Mothers' Meetings.' Feeling the solemnity, importance, and difficulty of this subject, I have prevailed upon a Clergyman who takes a deep interest in the matter, to write a short Introduction to this little volume.

In its extreme simplicity and inefficiency, I nevertheless here affectionately commend it to those who have already so kindly received my small works on 'Mothers' Meetings,' in which so deep an interest is being increasingly evinced in almost every parish throughout our highly-favoured land. That God may prosper this unpretending effort as a *help* only, to others in this work and labour of love, is my earnest hope and prayer. May it foster the spirit of supplication so acceptable to Him, who hath Himself said, 'Before they call, I will answer : and while they are yet speaking I will hear.'

INTRODUCTION.

FOR the spiritual sustentation which Mothers' Meetings are designed to provide, Prayer is an ingredient of paramount importance. Many who come to them live in an atmosphere of suspicion and doubt, and to these, especially when in any 'distress of mind, body, or estate,' it will often, as a matter of experience, supply more strength and comfort than the exposition of the Word itself. I suppose it is because, as in common life, especially among this class of people, a personal interview is deemed more satisfactory than a letter, so a visit to their Father's throne of grace conveys to these anxious, sorrowing hearts a greater sense of reality even than the reading of His message. It is,

therefore, a matter of the highest importance that the attention of the conductress of the meeting should be directed as much to the consideration of the Prayer, as to that of the Exposition.

There are certain features which, I venture to think, should characterise it.

1. It should be simple in *language*. The vocabulary of the poor, and more especially of the rural poor, is far more limited than many of those in the classes above them ever imagine. They can sometimes understand the drift of a long word or two in a sentence when listening to a Reading; but if we put words into their mouths, they must be simplicity itself. Long words in prayer are as cumbersome to them as the king's armour to the stripling shepherd of Bethlehem: 'They cannot go with these, for they have not proved them.' It is always difficult to mould our minds to others' ideas, and our mouths to others' language. For the poor to assimilate theirs to those of the conductress, unless the latter be

exceedingly simple, would be well nigh impossible.

2. The prayer should be simple in *idiom* and *expression*. The sentences should be short. There should be no inversion. The 'nominative case,' the subject, should stand first. If metaphors be employed (which should be sparingly) they should be exclusively Scriptural, or at least of the simplest order. Uneducated persons are apt to take such expressions literally.

3. The prayer should be simple in *detail*. It should reach to the minutest wants of those in whose behalf it is being offered. 'In *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' 'In *everything* give thanks.' There is no possible limit to the scope of these commands.

4. The prayer should be *special*. Besides petitions for Christian graces, and against faults common to all, there should be special reference to the peculiar cares and trials, per-

plexities and temptations, of those in whose name it is uttered. These the skilful and observant conductress will be able to gather partly from private intercourse with the mothers at their respective homes, and partly from their conversations among themselves. I need scarcely add that intercessions for those in whose behalf the members of the meeting may be in any way interested, should form a prominent feature in the Mothers' Meeting prayer.

5. The prayer must not be an *oblique sermon*. While aiming at the expression of the needs of each, it should contain nothing which could possibly be interpreted as a reflection upon any of the persons themselves.

6. Lastly, there must be in the prayer that without which all other qualifications will be useless, '*a spirit of prayer and of supplication.*' It must be full of '*unction.*' It must be *real*. It must be drawn from the depths of a heart which fully realises its own needs, and thoroughly sympathises with those of others.