

**THE
PRAYER-MEETING
ASSISTANT**

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The Prayer-Meeting Assistant by Samuel Backus

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SAMUEL BACKUS

**THE
PRAYER-MEETING
ASSISTANT**

THE

Prayer-Meeting Assistant,

BY

REV. SAMUEL BACKUS,

OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. 18 : 20.

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THE PRAYER-MEETING.

CHAPTER I.

Its Value.

To all who love to meet and together say, "*Our Father who art in Heaven,*" one who has lived and labored longer than most of you, comes with words of friendly salutation. He desires earnestly and affectionately to address you on the subject of Prayer-Meetings.

Prayer is as old as religion, and yet social meetings expressly for prayer, are of comparatively recent date, unless we go back to the early days of the Christian church. Many can remember when "prayer-meetings," as the term is now understood, were unknown.

But though so recent in their origin, they have by common consent come to be esteemed essential. They have not inappropriately

been termed "the spiritual barometer of the churches." As is the prayer-meeting in any church, so do we expect to find the spiritual state of that church, nor can it be otherwise.

Religion is not a dormant, inert principle, like latent heat in physical bodies, waiting some new agency to give it development and life, but it is in its nature intrinsically active; it is a power at work; it is the love of God carried out in its appropriate results. Religion being a great common interest, it will follow that, as this interest is prized, the different parties concerned will come together and seek its advancement; and inasmuch as the interests of religion are inseparably blended with prayer, Christians can hardly do otherwise than meet and pray.

Well may we believe, therefore, that where the prayer-meeting is fully attended by the brethren and sisters, and solemn in its aspects, there will everything pertaining to religion flourish, and that these meetings can be cold, and neglected and formal, only when the spirit and fire and activity of religion have departed. A glance at the dead, cold prayer-meeting, tells us unmistakably that there is the form of godliness without the power, that the things of the world are uppermost, that the flesh rules rather than the spirit. There we expect to

hear dull and pointless preaching addressed to cold and lifeless hearers. In such a case, to hear of an awakened or converted sinner, sounds like thunder from a clear sky.

We in this day should about as soon think of dispensing with the ministry itself, as of withholding from it the aid derived from the prayer-meeting.

Blessed place! Blessed employment! how readily does every warm-hearted Christian say,

"I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."

This unassuming means of grace, from the small beginnings of fifty years ago, has won its way to favor unrivalled.

We have here the prime motive power, which, impelled by the Spirit of God, drives all the divine machinery of the Gospel.

And yet the real value of this agency has hardly begun to be appreciated. In its workings hitherto, such an advancement on the past has been realized, that we have hardly thought of future improvements. We have said, "It is good, very good," and have thought of nothing better.

We have taken the prayer-meeting as we would some newly discovered plant or fruit in its native wildness, good and wholesome as we have it now, and which we therefore think not

of improving by culture. Or we have taken it like some useful and newly invented machine in its first clumsy construction. We exult in its utility, without the least imaginings of what ingenious heads, and skilful hands are yet to make it.

When first we could travel ten miles an hour by steamboat or rail car, we supposed the limits of locomotion attained, and we had no wish to travel faster; now we move fifty miles an hour, and complain of tardiness. Such do we believe will be the case in the progressive power of prayer in its future developments, especially of prayer in the social meeting, to that end purposely convened. What know we yet of the achievements which can be made by those who are "all of one accord in one place," as were the disciples at the day of Pentecost?

That memorable event was prefaced with a long prayer-meeting, wonderful in itself, wonderful in its results. We think of three thousand souls added to the Lord in one day, and we say, "Was there ever the like before, and shall there ever be the like again?" But greater things than these are before us. The time cometh when in one day, not three thousand souls shall be added to the Lord, but a whole nation. No means essentially new will be em-

ployed, but these wonders of grace are to be brought about by a better use of those already prescribed and used; and in no department of Christian effort, have we reason to look for greater improvement, than in using the power of prayer, as an agency for carrying forward the work of God. In no other department do we so fully perceive the pertinency of the divine precept, "Put on thy strength oh Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, oh Jerusalem!"

Oh this putting on of Zion's strength! It is the strength of God, though wielded by man. Is it not a consummation most devoutly to be wished? If my readers do not follow me with patience and delight through the subsequent pages, it will not be for want of a worthy theme.

There are many reasons why this tract may fail of great success, but no new and untested theories are here divulged; none are called upon to experiment in unexplored fields of research.

The views advanced are believed to be scriptural, and sustained also by successful experiment. They have been formed from a long course of careful study and observation on the nature and uses of social prayer. They are believed to be simple and practical.

The writer has mingled familiarly in prayer-