

**HELPS TO OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH: INDICATING
THEIR POWERS, DUTIES, AND PRIVILEGES; AND
SUGGESTING SUNDRY MISTAKES, METHODS,
AND POSSIBILITIES WITH REGARD TO THEIR
RESPECTIVE DEPARTMENTS OF SERVICE**

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Helps to official members of the Methodist Episcopal Church: indicating their powers, duties, and privileges; and suggesting sundry mistakes, methods, and possibilities with regard to their respective departments of service by James Porter

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JAMES PORTER

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WITH REGARD TO THEIR RESPECTIVE DEPARTMENTS
OF SERVICE; DESIGNED TO RENDER THEM
MORE EFFICIENT AND USEFUL.

BY JAMES PORTER, D. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

THOUGH Methodism originated under God by the agency of ministers, and has been thought by many to belong chiefly to them, its operations are largely controlled by laymen. This is true of all its denominational branches, and of the several departments involved in each. Nor is it any new arrangement; it has been so from the beginning. As the necessity for lay agency appeared, it was introduced, and charged with responsibilities and duties to meet the demand.

In the Methodist Episcopal Church each local society is required to have three permanent classes of lay officers, Trustees, Stewards, and Class-Leaders. We do not mean to say that preach-

ers are never allowed to hold any of these offices, but simply that they are generally held by laymen. Besides, our Discipline provides for other lay officers, such as Sabbath-school Superintendents, etc., which constitute a fourth class.

These offices were devised for high and holy purposes. In many cases they are a grand success, in others a comparative failure. The following pages are designed to help all who have the honor of holding them, that they may be more useful. In writing them we have endeavored to mark the points of danger, and indicate the methods of success.

If we have said some simple things, and furnished some simple formulas and plans of operation, they will meet the wants of young and inexperienced officers who have every thing to learn, as our old officials had forty years ago.

Our work is as new and strange in much of this world which we have undertaken to Christianize, as it was in the State of New York in the days of Asbury. All the foundations are to be laid, and the temporal and spiritual superstructure is to be reared. Besides, many of our more experienced officials are not beyond the need of instruction and advice. They may be going on to perfection, but they have hardly reached it. We are not without hope that this little work may benefit them.

Preachers get line upon line from the bishops and others as to their duties; but our lay officials, especially those who are particularly concerned with finances, seem to be comparatively overlooked, and they fare little better in the matter of prayers. While leaders are often commended to the divine favor, trustees and stewards

are seldom mentioned. But this arises from the *secular* nature of their duties. Ministerial financiers suffer in a similar manner. Our object is to assist all these officers, that they may be more efficient, with less inconvenience and vexation.

JAMES PORTER.

BROOKLYN, *January 1, 1877.*

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