

be an exception in our meetings, for it is seldom one man can reach every person in an assembly, and for that reason he should not monopolize the time.

In reading the writings of early Friends, I have found that in the beginning there was no difference between the ministers and other Friends, except, perhaps, in the matter of daily living. It was not such an awful thing to be a preacher then, as it seems to be now, and I've been led to wonder if some of our modern improvements in the way of recommending ministers and giving them minutes to visit other meetings are not somewhat to blame for our lack of good preaching.

We are told that ministers were acknowledged by their respective meetings and given credentials in the way of minutes to visit other meetings, to protect the Society from imposters. In this age of travel and easy communication, that precaution is entirely unnecessary. The recommending of ministers has become a mere form and a very objectionable one, it seems to me. It exalts our ministry above the rest of the meeting, but why should they be exalted? They only fulfill their duty by teaching to the very best of their ability, educating themselves, if need be, that by the aid of learning they may the better fulfill their divine commissions. But I firmly believe we hinder that teaching by our recommendations, and certainly we deter others from becoming ministers. And why should ministers from other places come to us recommended. If they are true ministers their presence will strengthen and aid us whether they bear testimonials or not. But, as it is, after a visiting minister has been with us, we often feel relieved that he is gone. Because as a recommended minister he seems to feel in duty bound to preach—to preach much and often. The few good seed he plants, he waters to death.

Another thing I think we should guard against is the paying of the ex-

penses of travelling ministers. In theory, that is all right. We send them to preach where we think they will do good, and we help them because they cannot afford to bear their own expenses. Many of our best ministers are not good business men, and it is hardly right that their usefulness should be narrowed by lack of money. But practically, we spoil a number of our ministers by giving them such help.

In its childhood our Society was a home for the oppressed. Without inquiring into belief and requiring conformance to no creed, it welcomed all who wished to become its members. Its testimonies against war and oppression and in favor of simplicity, and its identification with all good work, have made it known on both sides of the Atlantic. There was a time—we hope it is past now—when Friends digressed somewhat from their pristine liberality, and there was much unpleasant feeling among this people of brotherly love. The only way to avoid that is to open our doors and hearts to all people—and I think we are trying to do it—and in spite of differences of belief welcome all to our body. We are told that we are declining in numbers and usefulness, and that our days are numbered. We may be declining in numbers, but certainly not in usefulness; and when we exercise our full capacity for usefulness, we shall not decline in numbers. A society of right-livers and truth-seekers, which opens its arms to all people, and only asks them to come to it that it may do them good, instead of requiring them to conform to its belief, is much needed in the world to-day; and I believe we have the capacity for that large usefulness.

But it is by our meetings for worship that we are largely known, and until each member performs his or her duty in those meetings, others will not come to us for the help we can give them. This duty may be a silent one or it may be to speak a few words of love and encouragement to those assembled, or