

NOTES AND COMMENTS ON THE METHODIST RULES.



N a former article we placed before the readers of *EARNEST CHRISTIANITY*, the Rules of the Methodist Societies as originally published by John and Charles Wesley, with appropriate Scripture proofs and illustrations. Already we have heard of at least one instance in which good has resulted from the publication of these Scripture passages. An intelligent Methodist lady, after reading the Rules with the accompanying texts, remarked that she never before saw so clearly the eminently *Scriptural* character of the Rules—it really seemed that almost every sentence was based upon a plain Scripture precept. We doubt not there are many others who could give a similar testimony; and who have been surprised to find that our Rules are not merely in some vague, general sense, Scriptural, but that they embody the very essence of Scripture teaching on all that pertains to Christian conduct, expressed almost in the very words of Holy Writ.

To attempt to “explain” the Rules would be a superfluous task. They are, without exception, plain, clear, and directly to the point. Still it may not be amiss to place before our readers a few “notes and comments,” chiefly of a historical and practical kind. The material for these notes we have gleaned partly from Wesley’s works, and partly from a series of articles by the Rev. W. S. Caldecott, in the *Methodist Family*. In the January article we omitted the introductory paragraph, as found in our Book of Discipline; but now we will “begin at the beginning.”

A careful reading of the Rules themselves will show that they consist of an Introduction, three General Divisions, and a Practical Application, or Conclusion. The Introduction gives a brief historical statement, and defines the terms of admission and the duties of the Leader; the three divisions comprise the three great branches of Christian duty, viz.:—1. Avoiding Evil; 2. Doing Good; 3. Attending upon the Ordinances of God; while the conclusion applies the whole in a few brief but forcible sentences. We will now take up these various parts in their regular order.

I.—THE INTRODUCTION.

“RULES OF THE SOCIETY OF PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS.

“In the latter part of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day), that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on *Thursday*, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices, from time to time, which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meetings with prayer, suited to their several necessities.”

Rules of the Society, &c.

The original title was,—“The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,” &c. Twenty-two