

mollified with ointment. The soul, like Saul under David's playing, is refreshed and is well.

God, in his character as the Hearer of Prayer, encourages us to pray, not only by His promises beforehand, but by the answers he gives. It follows, that if God answers prayer, the man who waits continually on God obtains more blessings in answer to prayer, than the man who seldom approaches God. And Christian experience testifies to this. The more we look for answers, the more answers we will find ; not merely make discoveries of blessings waiting for us, though unseen before, but rather find blessings hitherto withheld, but given now to enrich the worshipper.

Given, the necessity and blessing of prayer—and given, the liberty of approach, by the guidance of the Spirit, in the name and for the sake of Christ—the origin of meetings for Prayer is not far nor hard to seek. Men who have been blessed in communing with God, will recommend such interviews to others ; nay more, they will offer to pray with them, and pray for them ; and men less acquainted with God will be glad of the sympathy of the others, and be encouraged by the freedom of their access to God. These, in their turn, become mighty in prayer, and greatly help the faith of others.

I once heard a minister, a stranger, pray for "all praying societies connected with this congregation," when there were none in existence. It was, in its manward aspect, a sharp though undesigned rebuke. No church is complete, or doing its proper work, without its social prayer-circles. A church's work is to gather in sinners to the fold of Christ, and to build up in holiness those already gathered in. In both respects the Prayer-Meeting is admirably adapted to benefit the soul. The sinner's mind is touched and led, as his needs are spread out in the confessions and pleading of the others ; and the saint is led very near the gate of heaven in his own and others' prayers, and returns to the affairs of this life more than ever resolved and encouraged to live as a Christian ever should—with his Master consciously beside him.

Like as some departments of learning, which if not acquired in youth, are scarcely ever acquired, so if a convert be not led forward at once to the practice of prayer with, and in the hearing of, others, he never becomes mighty in prayer. Scarcely any young convert will much hesitate, in his first warm feeling toward Christ, to pray with and for others. And the practice will be a wondrous gain to his own soul. And there is no department of Christian work to which he can be so immediately introduced, as that of helping to sustain the Prayer-Meeting.

In the conduct of such meetings there are no sets of stiff rules to be laid down. If no one is appointed or asked to lead the meeting, some one will find it necessary to lead without being asked ; and it is probably always better, in connection with an organized church ; that some one should be appointed or expected to lead every such meeting. And if taking part in Prayer-Meetings draws out the talents and graces of the persons so engaging, the conducting of the meeting still more so ; and thus appears the advantage of giving to many this privilege, either by multiplying the meetings, or varying the leadership, or by both.

Nor is an unvaried routine best in the meetings themselves. At times they may include more of praise, and at other times more of exhortation or experience ; and again they may be prayer only. At times the leader may find it necessary to call on one after another to pray ; at other times he has but to intimate that the "meeting is open," to find prayers in abundance, spontaneously offered.

We have not, because we "ask not," or because we "ask amiss." The great fault with our Prayer-Meetings is three-fold—want of definiteness, naturalness, and warmth in our prayers. Time is consumed over mere commonplaces. We come to the Great Provider professing to have felt the famine, but which sack we are to hold up to be filled we don't know. A general flavor of want and need has been faintly present in our utterances ; but our desires have been so indistinct, even to ourselves, that to give us a special blessing would not seem to be in connection at all with our prayers ; and the Lord only answers us in a general way,