

he soon found it necessary to appoint in each place some one to represent him—to lead the meeting, to give counsel, and to pray, with those who had assembled. The first society was formed in London, and consisted of sixty members. Soon after, another one was established at Bristol, then at Bath, Kingswood, and at many other places in England.

#### ITS PURPOSE.

At first the sole purpose of these meetings was to promote and watch over the personal holiness of its members. But soon another and important department of work was added. The members of these meetings were divided into groups of twelve, one of whom, as the collector, was expected to meet each member weekly and receive his penny towards the payment of the debt on the meeting-house. Soon, however, the collector, instead of calling on the members individually, had them come to a common meeting-place; and when the pennies had been paid, they sang and prayed, and talked together of the religious life which all the members enjoyed. Beginning with a financial purpose, the gathering soon became an assembly for religious inquiry, having, generally, the collector for its leader. This was the origin and original purpose of the class-meeting which has since been introduced into all parts of the English-speaking world.

#### ITS PROGRESS.

There was a time, two generations ago and later, when every Methodist belonged to a class, and was under the care of a leader. Testimonies were given, counsel in response, and visits were made by the leader on the members of his class. Once in three months, a union meeting of all the classes was held, called a "love-feast," and for this meeting tickets of admission were issued to the members, signed by the leaders, so that none outside of the society could be present. The love-feast is still perpetuated in Canadian Methodism, and the class-meeting also in more or less of efficiency.

#### BENEFITS OF THE CLASS MEETING.

1. One great benefit of the class-meeting is the fact that it brings the member face to face at regular intervals with himself, and calls upon him to tell how it is with his soul. This requirement exercises a wholesome restraint upon the conduct.

2. There is not only a restraining, but also an upbuilding effect in the class-meeting testimony. We need something more for our growth in grace than merely to listen to good sermons and read good books; we need to think and to speak of God's work in our own hearts. The class-meeting has given to Methodism a generation of Christians who could speak and pray and exhort with a clearness and directness and intensity unequalled even by people of higher intelligence and larger knowledge but who have missed the training of the class-meeting.

3. The class-meeting gives to the young Christian the fellowship of older and more experienced disciples. It is one draw-back to the young people's meeting that in it the young follower of Christ, just entering the way and forming his ideals, listens only to the testimony of those who are young, like himself. He needs also the benefit of a class-meeting where old and young meet together. Each age needs the other; the one to gain knowledge, the other to gain sympathy. In an ideal church, the old and the young, the educated and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the fervent and the calm, all meet together, and each type of character learns something from all the others.

#### REFLECTIONS.

Great as has been the gains of our church in wealth, in social position, in general culture, and in Bible knowledge, it is doubtful whether we have gained

enough to compensate for the loss in a certain power which has resulted from the decline in the class-meeting. May we not hope that the Epworth League, which is quickening the pulse of our young people, may yet revive the former interest in this time-honored institution of our church.

#### POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

A study of the following passages from the Bible will show the place which testimony has in the Scriptures. There are six passages; give them out to six members, and ask each to prepare a two-minute talk on the passage assigned. It will make an interesting feature of the evening: Mal. 3, 16; Ps. 66, 10; Heb. 3, 12; 1 Cor. 14, 31; Heb. 13, 15; Hosea 14, 2. In addition to this, utilize to the best advantage the material given above on the Origin, Purpose, Progress, and Benefits of the class-meeting. Encourage all present to be true and loyal to the Scriptural practice of Christian testimony.

#### What There's Time For.

Lots of time for lots of things,  
Though it's said that time has wings;  
There is always time to find  
Ways of being sweet and kind;  
There is always time to share  
Smiles and goodness everywhere;  
Time to send the flowers away,  
Time a gentle word to say,  
Time for helpfulness, and time  
To assist the weak to climb;  
Time to give a little flower,  
Time for friendship any hour,  
But there is no time to spare  
For kindness anywhere.

#### Affliction a Discipline

I am often impressed by the different ways in which different persons are affected by sorrows. Some seem to have no rallying power after a great affliction; the wound never heals. On the other hand, trials that consume some persons only kindle others into greater exertions. "The financial gale has carried away all your spars, and swept your decks," I once wrote to an eminent Christian merchant after his bankruptcy, "but you have got enough grace stowed away in your hold to make you rich to all eternity." That brave servant of Christ repaired damages, resumed business, rallied his friends, and "at evening time it was light." Smitten down, he was not destroyed.

The afflictions which are sent of God or permitted by him are never intended for his children's destruction, but for their discipline. The Shepherd casts his flock into deep waters to wash them, not to drown them. "You will kill that bush if you put that knife into it so deep," said a gentleman to his gardener. "No, sir; I do this every year to keep it from running all to leaves; pruning brings the fruit." We pastors often find God's faithful ones bleeding under the knife, but afterward they yield the peaceable and precious fruits of righteousness and triumphant trust. It is that "afterward" that God has in his mind when he sends the trial. Affliction is the costly school in which great graces are often acquired, and from which grand characters are graduated.—Theodore Cuyler.

We are His witnesses. Can we decide where He most needs our testimony?—Anna Shipton.

A living, loving Christian—true of thought, honest of heart, pure of conduct, and yet lovable in daily life, is the most unanswerable argument for Christianity.—Rev. T. L. Cuyler, D.D.

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