

many of them at all are problematical. For the strangers and those who are little known in the congregation usually sit in the back seats and so leave first after the service. It seems rarely to occur to them to remain, or perhaps they are not sufficiently interested, or do not wish to take what might seem so decided a step.

Now, there are various ways of meeting the difficulty here. The one thing needful would seem to be the spirit and determination on the part of the congregation to overcome it in some way the best.

If any one is anxious to do what he can in encouraging what is called the "floating" element to settle down into some Church home of their own he can invariably find some missionary work of this sort, ready to his hands. In deed, we have need to remember that this is one way of doing good, as we have opportunity; this is one way of bearing others' burdens. For those whom we bring to God will be as stars in our crown for rejoicing. We should endeavor to get rid of our habit of isolation in Church, get rid of the habit of greeting there or welcoming by our greeting, only our own personal friends, the very ones who need this greeting the least. It is a gracious and a goodly habit to learn the being alert and attentive to any chance that may be offered us to greet the new face, to welcome the stranger and those who come to God's house, alas, with the timid consciousness that they are not wanted there much, that nobody is concerned about them, that nobody cares to welcome them, who sit during service and sermon impressed with that feeling and go away, saying: "I cannot feel at home there, I will go no more," and so drop off into that great concourse called "the floating element," or else become habitual non-church-goers, and we wonder why they do not come.

The second prominent cause, I think, is the lack of hearty and sympathetic cooperation of the laity in the work of the Church. Of course, there are always a faithful few who labor in Sunday-school and parochial work as best they may, to make the parish an effective organization. They do their work well and nobly, but they are too few. That is the trouble. The mass of the parish concerns itself but little and knows less about what these are doing. It is the common experience that it is exceedingly difficult, generally impossible, to get the men to take hold of the Sunday-school or give their service in the missionary work of the parish. Hence the Sunday-school, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along, becomes a nucleus and no more; a mere semblance of what it ought to be and could be. We should remember that the people who are floating, waiting for some wave of interest to draw them into the Church are invariably attracted by the working parish. The reason is simple. They are convinced that this is an earnest Church, and earnestness is the one thing which "draws," best as the modern phrase runs, and deserves to do so.

The Kingdom of God has its own laws of success which must be followed, or parochial prosperity comes only with lagging step, or comes not at all. These laws are not satisfied with fine music or popular preaching, and hence parishes which put their dependence upon these alone are almost invariably disappointed. Even the earnest preaching of the Word cannot work effectively alone. It is the one most necessary element of spiritual life. But it cannot draw the load alone. It must be supported by that earnest lay co-operation which it strives to build up, which in truth cannot be built up without it. Mere meagre, pecuniary support does not fulfill the conditions; tithes of personal service must also be rendered ere the windows of heaven will open

to pour down the full blessing of God. That parish which is not willing to sit still and wait for the people to come, but nobly takes up the lesson of the Master's parable of the feast, and in its earnest spirit goes out into the highways and by-ways of people's lives, compelling them to come in by proving its love and interest in their salvation—such a parish will not be troubled with the appalling fact of empty pews in scores, for it will soon fill them. While just so far as it fails to do this, so far will it sprinkle its pews with occupants here and there, like drops of summer rain.

The third prominent cause of empty pews lies at the doors of the *very classes we would reach*.

They will not come to Church because they think they are not properly welcomed by the congregation. Now, let that be granted heartily; still, does that furnish an excuse for them? Surely not! It is a clear case of unreasonable pride. The spirit of the Master, the spirit of humility, is a spirit we all equally need, and these people have no more of it than any others. Going amongst his people generally, the pastor soon finds out the grievances, and it is plain that he must see things impartially. For he belongs to no part of his parish. His own overpowering anxiety and desire is that all should come that can be brought to come; he belongs, after his Master, to all of them equally, and if he has at all risen up to the high level of his stewardship, he will welcome and greet all for Christ's sake, and out of the fullness of his own heart. What he wants is that people should come to Church.

But the plain, unvarnished truth, is that often those whom it is his duty especially to seek out and welcome, get *offended* at very small stumbling-blocks and then *persist in remaining offended*. They unconsciously ask him to apologize for his people's shortcomings and his own. They by their manner insist on being apologized to continually, which attitude is both tiresome and un-Christian; eventually it defeats the very object both are aiming at, their attendance upon services and becoming members of the Church. No one who wants to come to Church need doubt that he is wanted. He is wanted. And if he will persevere a very little and introduce himself to the pastor, he will very shortly find that the congregation will receive him as heartily as he can ask. No matter who he may be he will be made welcome and at home. He will soon find he is wanted there just in proportion as he wants to be there. The Church wants him, the people want him, God wants him, and all this he will discover if he comes earnestly seeking. Naturally a door will not be opened unless one knocks at it, and the people of a parish do not wish to intrude upon the stranger's privacy; they have a sense of diffidence as well as he. They are afraid that the stranger would resent their intrusion as officious. In very truth this is the greatest reason why strangers are not more generally spoken to or sought out. The congregation has its own becoming modesty as well as the individual himself.

Another cause for empty pews is, beyond question, the shortcomings of the pastor. But this is a point upon which he is not qualified to speak wisely. If he is alert and listening, he can soon find out the grievance against him.

There are other causes upon which I can only touch. There is the neglect of parents to be *systematic and conscientious in bringing their children with them to Church*. The Sunday school is meant to be the vestibule of the Church, neither more nor less, and if it be permitted to take the Church's place in so far as it does this it is unmistakably an evil.

Again, there is that habit of *non-attendance on the regular services*, a habit fruitful of trouble to the Church and oneself. For as one stays away he comes to want to stay away, until

finally, it costs him an effort to go at all. It is fruitful of evil to the Church, since it is setting a ruinous example, and we may be sure, we each have a personal influence, which is exerted, whether we will or no. Just as we attend or stay at home, so we are doing our best to influence some others to attend or stay at home. Health and imperative necessity are the only valid pleas to be rendered for absence from the House of God, at least once on the Lord's day. Church men and women need to be specially reminded of this, since their presence on Sundays is just the *one personal service* which all can give. It is the only public Christian duty which the mass of the congregation can render at all.

Again, there is the cultivation of a Christian sociability outside the Church in our daily life; and there is the habit of non-communication, the neglect of the Sacrament of the "Supper of the Lord." It must be evident that a parish can enter upon and continue a hearty, vigorous life only as its members recognize that they *each* have an *individual duty* to render beside the payment of their pew rental or subscriptions; they must own and attend to this duty. This will make a working parish, and that is the only parish which reaps the full harvest of God's blessing and man's gratitude. The parish that sows its good seed thus will surely reap its reward.

#### MICHAELMAS DAY.

S. Michael and All Angels, called also Michaelmas. The day we now observe has been very generally kept in the Church in honor of S. Michael, the Archangel. In the Greek Church there is a festival in honor of S. Gabriel, the other Archangel mentioned in the Canonical Scriptures. Raphael and Uriel are spoken of in the books of Tobit and Esdras, which are not Canonical. S. Michael is the patron Saint of the Church Militant.

It has always been the tradition of the Church that angels attend at the ministration of Holy Baptism, and at the celebration of the Holy Communion; and as Lazarus was the object of their tender care, so in sickness and death they are about the faithful, and carry their souls to the presence of Christ in Paradise. The Trisagion in the Communion office shows what has been the feeling of the Catholic Church in regard to the Holy Angels; for from the very first she has never ceased to sing, "Therefore with angels and archangels," &c.

The dedication of S. Michael (and All Angels) was a very favorite one in England during the Middle Ages, especially with the Normans, probably from the fact of William the Conqueror reaching England "on the eve of S. Michael's Mass." About a hundred Churches still retain it.

#### ANGELIC OCCUPATIONS.

1. "Angel" messenger attendant. (Dan. ix, 21; S. Luke i, 26; S. Matt. xxv, 31; Heb. i, 6; Rev. v, 11, and vii, 11).
2. The eyes of the Lord. (2 Chron. xvi, 9; Prov. xv, 3).
3. Deeply interested in Christ's work for man. (1 Pet. i, 12; 1 Cor. iv, 9; 1 Tim. iii, 16; S. Matt. xxiv, 36).
4. Ministering spirits to the baptised. (Heb. i, 14).
5. Infant guardians. (S. Matt. xviii, 10).
6. Adult guardians. (2 Kings vi, 16; Psalm xxxv, 6; xci, 10; Acts xii, 7-15).
7. National guardians. (Dan. x, 13; xii, 1).
8. Fight for men against Satan. (S. Jude 9; Rev. xii, 9).
9. Fight for men against their bad passions. (Num. xxii, 22).
10. Joy over penitents. (S. Luke xv, 10).
11. Panish impenitents. (1 Chron. xxi, 15).