

whom they are called to minister. The time required by the clergyman in town for preparing for his public duties is usually greater than that demanded of his rural brother, inasmuch as services in the same church and congregation are more frequent. When, amidst bewildering hurry, he has prepared for sermons, lectures, catechizings, and bible classes, he will find his time eaten up by numberless, yet unavoidable occasional duties. The poor will devour his mornings, and the investigation and relief of their distress does much, at least in winter, to consume his afternoons. The sick, of which he is sure to have a permanent list, must be visited; the dead must be interred—a duty that involves a great expenditure of time. He is also sure to be placed upon various committees, whose meetings being almost invariably fixed for the afternoon, which is his most valuable time for regular pastoral work, seriously interferes with its efficient discharge. With all these draw-backs, it is no marvel that parochial visitation in towns, with the great number of people, and the small number of clergy, should be very inadequately carried out, and no one who has had any practical experience in such a sphere of duty can wonder that complaints of parochial neglect should be loud and frequent on the part of those who never, perhaps, reflect upon the countless calls upon a clergyman's time and energies.

Evans, in his valuable work on "The Bishopric of Souls," sets down eight as the average number of parochial visits which a clergyman, in a good sized parish in England, should pay daily. This is a high average even in such circumstances, to be maintained steadily throughout the year. Experience convinces the present writer that five visits daily is as high an average as even a very diligent priest can maintain, after the fulfilment of the multifarious other duties which in a city are forced upon him. As Saturday must generally be regarded as a *dies non*, as far as visiting is concerned, (unless it be to the upper class of his parishioners,) he has but five days in the week for the prosecution of this work, and if, with the other calls upon his time, he can maintain the rate of five visits a day, or one thousand two hundred and fifty in the course of the year, he cannot fairly accuse himself of idleness. The writer has kept up the average to eight, or two thousand in twelve months, but it was, when being little known, the calls for the discharge of occasional duty were comparatively few.

The question presents itself, how in the dense population of a city shall the system of visitation be carried on, so as to be most efficient? It is a question which is not easy to answer, if we regard ourselves as responsible for all who, in a certain locality, would be willing to accept our ministrations, which is certainly the theory of the church. There are two circumstances, however, which in this country tend to obscure this theory, and to turn the clergy into the chaplains of the few, and not the spiritual pastors of many. These are, first, the want of properly constituted parishes with clearly defined territorial limits; second, the prevalence of the pew system. The operation of these two facts is very injurious both upon priests and people. The first leaves the clergyman without any knowledge of where his work commences, or where it ends. He is sent forth with the most awful responsibility resting upon him, responsibility for the welfare of immortal souls, but he is not told who those are for whom he has to answer. With the burden of this indefinite charge resting upon him, and after suffering from the bewildering hopelessness of being able to fulfil it, the second fact, namely, the pew system comes in, and presents an almost irresistible temptation to sink from the high character of the

shopfold of a definite, but often wandering and wayward flock, into the chosen chaplain of those comparatively few who, perhaps, least need his care; hence, clergymen may be heard to declare that as no limits are assigned them, they hold themselves responsible for only those who attend their church, and that they recognise no claim of right on the part of any others, either to temporal relief or spiritual ministration, i. e., they become chaplains of those who, having some earnestness about their souls, choose, of their own mere notion, to place themselves under his pastoral care, by renting or occupying sittings in the church which he is appointed to serve.

The temptation to act in this way arising from our present want of ecclesiastical order is extremely great, but it is a course of action very different from the vow of our ordination, "that we would seek Christ's sheep, which are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever."

Such, however, being the state of things existing in our principal towns and cities, we had better enquire how we may best fulfil the important part of our work, under the difficulties alluded to.

Our communicants or pew-holders—or where there are no pews, the regular worshippers in the church which we serve, have unquestionably the first claim upon our pastoral attention. Where a church is pewed, the clergyman having only to apply to his churchwardens for an absolutely correct list of the names and residences of the holders thereof, can have no excuse for omitting to visit them, and in carrying out that visitation, he might easily proceed upon those general principles which have been adverted to as necessary for the efficient discharge of this duty in village or rural parishes.

In a large church which is absolutely free, the difficulty of this department of pastoral work is immensely increased by the extreme, and often insuperable difficulty of learning the names and residences of the worshippers. If a clergyman assumes a district of the town as that which naturally pertains to his church, and confines himself thereto, he leaves unvisited, it may be, the larger part of his congregation, who, perhaps, reside beyond the limits to which he directs his efforts, while they are not visited by the clergyman within whose bounds—or rather supposed bounds—they live, because they are not pew holders or attendants at his church; and the result is, that smarting under the idea of neglect, they often become alienated from the church, and unite themselves with some dissenting body.

On the other hand, however, if he devotes himself to the very arduous task of endeavouring to discover and visit those who actually form his congregation, he will find it necessary to traverse the whole city, and will often spend so much time in looking for those whom he does not know, that he must neglect those with whom he is acquainted, and this, from want of thought or knowledge of the multiplicity of his engagements, will often prove a cause of offence to such persons.

The order, then, in which (it appears to the writer) we should devote ourselves to this part of our work, is the following:—

1st. To the sick, some of whom in a large town will always be upon our list.

2nd. To the poor, the urgency of whose sufferings, especially in the winter, often brook no delay, and the danger of being deceived by whom is so great as to demand personal investigation.

3rd. To the communicants, especially those of the humbler class who have recently been confirmed. This is a kind of parochial visiting which, carried on in a kindly, earnest spirit, is often followed by great rewards.

4th. The general worshippers (pew-holders or attendants) at the church in which we minister.

Any one able to reflect must know that when one clergyman (or even two in a populous parish) has attended to these various classes, he can have but little time to give to another and most important class, of responsibility for whom no earnest-hearted parish priest, who seeks to realize the value of the souls for which Christ died, can wholly divest his mind, however occupied he may be. I mean

6th. The great mass of careless, worldly, ignorant, Godless, and vicious people, who throng on every side, and who, though Christians in name, privilege, and responsibility, are heathens, and often worse in life and practice.

Now, according to the theory of our church, these are part of our flock, and a part of it requiring very earnest, wise, and loving labour, and yet how miserable are the attempts which, with our countless engagements, and insignificant numbers, we are able to make on their behalf. These are Christ's sheep, which through their own waywardness indeed are dispersed abroad; these are his children, deeply erring and disobedient it is true, but still his children, who are in the midst of this naughty world, and whom, with his own commission, He hath sent us forth to seek, that, being saved through Him, they may not, by reason of their sin, perish under a deeper condemnation than the heathen can ever know.

What then, in the way of pastoral visitation, can be done on their behalf?

There are many of course who utterly refuse our ministrations, in consequence of schism.

They place themselves beyond our reach by declaring themselves attached to various dissenting bodies, and Christians. They not unfrequently avoid good influence from every quarter, by asserting to the denominational minister that they are strong churchmen, while they declare to the clergyman that they belong to "the meeting;" many among them, however, profess to belong to the church, but as they habitually abstain from all religious worship, there is no way to discover them but by regular domiciliary visitation, begun at one end of every street, and carried on faithfully and impartially to the other. Now, after years of effort in this special work, and thousands upon thousands of applications made at the doors of the houses in the neighbourhood wherein he ministers, the writer has been brought to the conclusion, that without a large increase in the staff of clergy, it is a work that cannot adequately be carried out by the parish priest—in fact it is not the work of the priest at all, but that of the deacon. In the practical abeyance of that office in the church, the system of lay co-operation, known by the name of district visiting, has been resorted to, often with good effect. We cannot, however, expect a human device, however excellent, to produce results which would flow from a divine institution, and therefore, while district visiting is under proper direction, most useful and desirable, we need something more regular and systematic, and more immediately under the controlling hand of the clergyman.

In view of the difficulties which appear to surround the question of the restoration of the diaconate, the writer has been convinced that measures involving little outlay might be adopted in town parishes, which would secure us many of the advantages which would arise from the restoration of the order named, and which advantages we could secure at once, without waiting for the settlement of the vexed question alluded to.

In carrying on parochial work with the assistance of others a cleric should be recognised as such; and a laic should remain distinctly a laic.