

tary this on their Christian profession! If they are tried upon it in the great day, they will hear the astounding words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me—depart from me!"

It is a maxim of infidels, that money spent on religion is money thrown away, and it is astonishing how many illustrations of the spirit of the maxim may be found within the pale of the Church. If pleasure or pecuniary profit makes an appeal, every means is put in requisition to respond to it; but if religion is the solicitor, so far from being welcomed with smiles, it is regarded as a common beggar, to be treated with supercilious haughtiness, or at best to be answered by giving grudgingly.

Now, it may be thought that conducting so criminal as this cannot be charged with congregations in the cities. We should be glad if it were so, but it is not. The same niggardliness and want of conscientiousness are to be found everywhere. The pew-rent system is as liable to abuse as the country subscription one. Although a minister's salary depends on the revenue of the church thus derived, pew-rents are often the very last debts which are paid; and they are often paid with manifest reluctance, as if it were an actual loss of so much money! Other forms of meanness are not unknown. Persons of substance will refuse to take more than one-half or one-third of a pew when the accommodation of their families require a whole one, and when they are able to take several pews, and should do it if the wants of the church require it; or they will, to save a little money, take the cheapest, and of course the least eligible, pew they can find. In other cases we have known persons of wealth, who could afford to spend several months in travelling with their families, or in enjoying a country retreat, as a preliminary give up their pews for the time, that they might thus filch from the cause of Christ, a few dollars to spend on their lusts. Others, where they may, from circumstances, have the opportunity, will sub-let portions of their pews, so as to sit comparatively rent-free themselves; and it is not unfrequent, that persons calling themselves Christians will attend from church to church without a definite association, that they may have *nothing* to pay. Sometimes the revenue of a church absolutely requires a rise of rent, which, although small in each case, will be considerable in the aggregate; and yet who does not know, that the proposition is generally provocative of a storm, some giving up their pews, or substituting half pews or cheap pews in a corner of the house, to evade the additional tax? And it is true that these are the expedients of persons abundantly able to pay, and not of the poorer classes who are often willing to deny themselves for the pleasure of supporting the gospel.

We have known even more repulsive cases than these. We have known, in a church struggling under embarrassment, its wealthy

office-holders, who had pecuniary claims on the building, insisting upon the payment of their interest in the first place, little caring how the poor clergyman was to manage without his salary, which his necessities had forced him to anticipate. This might all be *legal*, but was it *christian*? And we have known, too, the pew-rent collector put off from time to time under various pleas, and then at length paid in depreciated bank bills, thus saddling the church with the expense of discount! This surely was neither *honest* nor *christian*.

We make such statements with pain and with shame. They are a sad commentary on the doubtful character of the piety of the Church. When persons professing to be the children of God do such things, and at the same time are zealous for religion as far as mere words go, they give occasion to such sarcasm as a shrewd man once uttered in describing the church to which he belonged, when he said it consisted of two classes—the *paying* class and the *praying* class.

The irreligious often have a clearer view of the advantages of a Christian ministry than many who profess to be Christians. Of the spiritual benefits of it, they, of course, can form no adequate conception; but of its moralizing and humanizing influence they can, in a measure, form a judgment. On a certain occasion a man wholly devoid of religious character, and even sceptical in his opinions, favored the project of building a church in his neighbourhood, and made a grant of a suitable site for the structure. His argument was, the presence of a minister will improve the moral character of the people, give the neighborhood a better reputation, and thus enhance the value of property! He reasoned correctly; and should not Christians, with greater light, argue that the comfortable maintenance of a minister among them would greatly conduce to their own spiritual edification and the salvation of their families?

We were once asked by a gentleman what we thought of the piety of professing Christians who could act with such niggardliness, and we were constrained to answer, that we had no opinion of it at all, for we deem it an utter impossibility that any one whose heart God has touched can show such utter indifference to the support of the ordinances of Christianity. Rather than associate the sacred name and love of Christ with such meanness, we would prefer to believe that the number of Christians is much less than the rolls of the Church indicate.

While the cases to which we have adverted, not without a deep sense of shame, are so common as to be detected under some form in most of our city churches, we should be very sorry to make them the ground of a sweeping charge against all. Many, no doubt, make their church dues sacred debts, always to be discharged with punctuality, and even at a sacrifice of personal comforts, if necessa-