

THE  
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FILLING THE PEWS.

EVERY little while the question crops out in our religious exchanges: whose business is it to fill the pews? Particularly is this the case at this season of the year, when all well-ordered churches hold their annual business meetings, and so many of them find the balance on the wrong side of the account. "In debt to the treasurer again! How is this?" And the easy solution of the question is, "The house don't fill up; somehow, our minister don't draw." As the "Advance" says:

"The voluntary system of raising money to sustain public worship, after various swingings back and forth between subscriptions, pew-rents, taxation and free-will offerings, tends ultimately to settle down on the ability of the minister to influence the people to pay him, for his salary is the chief item in home expenditure." This, it says, "is a sharp, and in some respects a not unsound test of a pastor's real usefulness." But in many cases it thinks it works injustice to the pastor. Failing to fill the pews, however else he may succeed, that wrong "balance" will be almost sure to kill him.

"There is no end to the faults which idle, busy, discontented brains will find. He is pious, dignified, earnest, at times even eloquent. He loves the aged and the little children, and they love him. He edifies thoughtful minds in the pulpit, and wins respect and affection by social intercourse. But some of the pews are not rented. The treasury does not fill itself. A debt is growing. He must go."

Now, this is all very well if "filling the pews" is one of the New Testament qualifications or requirements of a "bishop," or if the said pastor undertook, on his settlement, to fill them, with good paying subscribers. In that case, the contract is broken, and the church should be free. It undertook nothing, and kept its word! How is it to blame? But we never saw any such stipulation in the settlement of a minister. On the contrary, we have often heard it insisted on that the church had as much to do with filling the pews as the minister. It has, at least, been generally understood that the people were to do the inviting and welcoming to the house of God, to pay attention to strangers, and to live so that the name of Christ should not suffer reproach through their ungodliness or neglect. Undoubtedly, the obligations are mutual. The pew and the pulpit must both work, and work harmoniously, in order to successful church-building. But to expect the pastor to fill the house, and replenish the treasury, when perhaps there is not another Congregational family in the place to draw thither,—or "re-sign"—is, well, expecting a good deal! We

doubt very much whether Spurgeon, or Newman Hall, without the influence of their great name, would "fill the bill."

FORGOTTEN OUR CATECHISM.

THE Rev. Dr. Shaw, a Presbyterian minister, of New York State, lately preached a powerful sermon on "The Church of the future." In racy, wise, and temperate statements the doctor outlined the principles of the coming Church. There will be—in his opinion—a backing down from the prelatial and dogmatic claims now advanced in many quarters by the Church, and a return to primitive simplicity and power. The self-made fences will be taken down, and no surly dog in one communion will bark at those in other communions. Faith in Christ, and work for Him will be the only Shibboleth for entrance, the only term of membership. There will be more work done for the bodies as well as for the souls of men. The sermon in which these and kindred thoughts occur has flown over the whole continent, and—except in a very few quarters—has been greeted as a word in season. As Congregationalists, we reciprocate the kindly feelings of the Presbyterian divine, and are glad he has been bold enough to utter his opinions in favour of greater simpleness in Church faith and church working.

The doctor's definition of "a Congregationalist" is characterized by terseness and force. He defines him as simply "a Presbyterian who has left his catechism at home, and forgotten where he laid it down." For clearness and humour this will stand in fellowship with Mr. Beecher's utterance at Yale: "A Congregationalist is a dry Baptist, and a Baptist is a wet Congregationalist." Both these epigrammatic statements contain truth. But we are now dealing with Dr. Shaw's.

As the Congregationalist goes forth to his pilgrim journey, he is not empty-handed. Take out a search-warrant, and examine his personal baggage; his Bible—well-thumbed as if often appealed to—will appear. But the examiner will find no catechism, for—well, he has left it behind. Dr. Shaw is right; the catechism has been forsaken, because the Congregationalist prefers the divine word to any human interpretation of it. And "he has forgotten where he laid it down." Yes; and the curious phase of the matter is that he never tries to remember where he laid it, and would not thank anybody for jogging his memory.

We are somehow inclined to the belief that the day is at hand, when the catechisms of the various churches will suffer what some Canadian banks have lately been suffering, viz: a decline in stocks. Elizabethan prayer-books, Westminster confessions, Wesley's notes, Cambridge and Saybrook platforms, and the catechism of "adult immersion only," may all decline, as Dr. Shaw and others predict; but out of the unrest and perhaps panic which may

ensue, there will come a simpler faith, a deeper love, a broader plan, a grander brotherhood. And if a better life, and wider fraternity, and stronger affection for Jesus Christ, are to be the embroidered vestments of "the Church of the future," one can only wish her blessed advent may not much longer be delayed. All hail!

LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

WE have received the "report of the Inspector of asylums, prisons, and public charities for the Province of Ontario, for the year ending 30th September, 1878." The Inspector, Mr. J. W. Langmuir, enjoys no sinecure. His duties are of a nature requiring the exercise of the greatest care and attention, while at the same time they are very extensive, and every year becoming more so. He has the general supervision and control, and the statutory inspection of 101 different establishments, some of which he visits several times in the course of the year.

The report is so voluminous that we cannot deal with it as a whole. We must take it in instalments. And we begin with the Lunatic Asylums. Of these there are five, situated respectively at Toronto, London, Kingston, Hamilton, and Orillia. The Orillia asylum is specially reserved for the class known as Idiots. The entire number of persons of unsound mind under public accommodation at the close of the past official year that is on 30th September, 1878—was 2,214, located as follows: Toronto, 677; London, 707; Kingston, 418; Hamilton, 201; Orillia, 146; Kingston penitentiary, 21; common gaols, 44. This is 162 in excess of the previous year. The largest increase seems to have taken place in the London asylum, but this is owing to the opening, in the early part of the year, of two new groups of cottages for the chronic insane, which were speedily filled by transferring patients of that class from other institutions. In making some remarks on the report for 1877, about this time last year, we expressed the hope that we should hear no more of insane persons being confined for any length of time in the common gaols; but to our disappointment, we find from the present report that, so far from such a desirable object having been accomplished, the number of those so situated has increased. The report says that this is to be accounted for by the want of sufficient accommodation for idiots at the Orillia asylum, and by the fact that many aged persons are sent to gaol as lunatics who are only afflicted with harmless senile dementia which does not necessitate their being sent to any asylum. Well, as to the first mentioned class, the accommodation at Orillia ought to be increased without delay; and as to the latter class, why are they kept in gaol? If they do not require to be confined in an asylum for the insane, or in an asylum for idiots, why should they be kept in confinement in a common prison? They ought