

It might not be amiss to notice another line of effort for the general good that lies close to the hand as it lies close to the heart of the minister,—I mean the relief of the poor, the administration of charity, and this not merely as pastor of a congregation that may have some needy members, but as a citizen with destitution not very far away from him.

In the rural districts of our Province there is little extreme poverty, scarcely any pauperism, though there are occasionally some requiring help. But, no doubt, some of you expect to be city ministers, and therefore you must look forward to have claims in this connection made upon you, not merely on your purse but on your brain and heart, on your power to devise and plan, on your sympathy to lay hold and lift.

In our towns and cities, I think every Presbyterian congregation looks after its own poorer members; but there are poor among the people who cannot claim Church membership. If steps be taken to ascertain the professed Church connection of every citizen, a number will be found who are outside of the congregations, neglecting the Church perhaps because the Church has neglected them, yet needing sorely all the comfort that the Church can give them. The congregations of a city are like so many circles laid side by side; but while the circles touch each other, there are between them intervening spaces; and the larger the circles the larger are the areas that are not included in them. These represent the people that have no Church connection, and it is among them that you find the greatest destitution. Their poverty may be their fault quite as much as their misfortune, for, as Guthrie used to say, there are the devil's poor as well as the Lord's poor; but, none the less, their poverty must be dealt with by those who are their brother's keepers, and our first duty is not to censure but to help.

It may need wisdom and patience, time and labour, to deal with it helpfully, and it may be the case in most communities, as in Halifax, that prudent and charitable men from the different Churches are found willing to work together for the relief of the poor. But this is a work that needs organization; and, if no proper provisions be made for it, there is no class of citizens that might more fitly take the lead in such a work than the ministers