

"LATE COMERS"

We used to have trouble with these when we were on the farm. Every year we had our crops of "late comers." An old hen, maternally minded, announces with much gusto some late September morning a fine brood of newly hatched chicks. What a fine addition to the farm-yard but for one thing—poor old bidy, four or five months too late.

A little lambkin makes an appearance but so late in the season that "old man winter" gets it before it has become sufficiently strong to withstand the hardships of cold days and colder nights.

Late grains, late vegetables, and late fruits are all more or less bothersome to the farmer. Late comers to work, late comers to meals, to parties, to weddings, to funerals, always contribute their share of annoyance and bother. But the "late comers" I wish to more especially call your attention to in this article are those "Sunday morning" stragglers, who infest our churches. Their name is Legion; their habitat is universal; and their capabilities for living up to their weakness (or perhaps I should say, THEIR strong point) are astounding.

For them to be at church on Sunday morning when the first hymn is announced might have a serious effect upon their whole system. It would be like one investigating a charge of dynamite to determine the results only to discover when he reached the place that the charge had not yet gone off. You can see it would be very difficult for them to control their emotions under such unusual circumstances.

Having myself lived so near the "boundary line" of these "late comers," I am able to speak with some authority on the whys and wherefores of this class.

Considering them negatively: their late coming is not a result of their failing to observe time. This may seem contradictory, nevertheless it is a fact. They always say to themselves, "I left for church last Sunday morning at such a time and I arrived there at the same time I have been getting there for the last ten years. So, come now children, get your faces and hands washed for we must be getting away not later than we did last Sunday. You remember they had sung the opening hymn, read the scripture, and the pastor was praying, when we went in." Oh no, it isn't that they do not watch the clock, for if they didn't they would get there some morning or on time.

Again, it isn't that they live so far from the church. The most habitual offenders, in most cases, live within a few blocks of the church. The members of our congregations who are obliged to come for some distance are seldom late. So distance cannot be blamed.

Again, it is not because they have such large families. Anyone who looks them over as they come in will be convinced of this. I know so many of these "stragglers" who haven't a chick nor a child. And in this, what reasons has the world to rejoice! This fact alone may eventually result in the extinction of the species. We have marvelled sometimes at the wisdom and kindness of God in this respect. For if they had a half-dozen children to get ready the only meeting the poor souls would ever get to would be a "watch-night" service.

Again, it is not because the service commences too early. I have lived in places where the morning service began at ten o'clock. I have lived where it began at ten thirty and at present I am living where it begins at eleven, but as far as this deplorable habit of coming in late is concerned these results are no different. So early,

medium, or late, will neither correct nor aggravate the ailment.

Now we will state a few reasons why people are late.

First, no convictions. If they were taking a train, going to work, or going to bed, they would make it on time. But going to worship, and to worship God, doesn't matter. I know they have no conscience in this matter of being late by the expression of their faces when they have seated themselves. That sort of a "Well! I got here at last. I'm not so late as I had feared. Yes, I'll have a chance to see who's here and get a little of the sermon."

That is part of the trouble, no conviction. I have known of people, sitting down and reading a book or listening to the radio until they were made late for church. They don't exactly propose to be late, they just think it doesn't matter.

Then there are those who are late because they stay in bed too late. They do not allow themselves sufficient time to do what needs to be done before leaving for church. Sure, they make every minute count after they get up, but, ordinarily, one cannot get up at a quarter past ten and get to church at ten thirty. My father told a doctor, who arrived at our house after a long anxious wait on our part, "that he came fast enough but he didn't start soon enough." That may find some.

I would name habit as another reason why people are "late comers." Nine out of every ten people who come to church late, could have come on time but for the fact they have established the habit of being late. Like biting our finger nails, putting our hands in our pockets, or smoking a pipe, we don't know why we do it, but we do.

While this fault of getting to church late effects men and women alike, I think there is more excuse for the women in some instances than for the men. So many women, besides getting through with the breakfast and the other necessary jobs that must be attended to, have not only themselves to get ready but are also obliged to dress their men.

I remember how true this was in my mother's life. When father started to dress for meeting there was one article for dressing, and one only, that he seemed able to find—that was mother. From his back collar-button to his overcoat and hat mother had to find, adjust, and apply. This, by the way, became a blessing to us children since mother's attention was wholly diverted from us while she feverishly searched the house for father's shirt, collar, neck-tie, left shoe and both rubbers. So it was for us to find our own clothes or go back to bed.

My readers of the feminine sex, if you have been spending your much needed moments on Sunday mornings dressing a man, don't indulge in such waste of time anymore. Let him dress himself. He may look like a pitched-pole fence for a Sunday or two but he will work out of it in time and be able to dress himself as well as anybody.

But someone says, "Isn't there something good you can say about these 'late comers' before you close?" Yes there is. When they do come to church they don't all come in together. There are the Late, Later, and Latest.

I pray this article may receive wide and constant circulation.

FRASER DUNLOP

I am prejudiced in favor of him who, without impudence, can ask boldly. He has faith in humanity, and faith in himself. No one who is not accustomed to give grandly can ask nobly and with boldness.—Lavater.

Temperance Column

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging. Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.—Prov. 1:20.

THE PROFITS ARE NOT "NET"

Not from the "American Issue," nor the "National Voice," nor the "Union Signal," but from Alvin Macauley, president of the Automobile Manufacturers' Association, comes the following statement:

"Drinking and driving is a thing with which the manufacturers have no patience. * * * In view of the rise in accidents from this cause, we will concentrate on just one thing—drunk driving."

Commenting upon the situation, the "Literary Digest" remarks:

"Behind this newest ultimatum lie sober facts. This year's traffic fatalities are running ten per cent higher than in 1936, when death reaped a record-breaking harvest of 36,500 traffic victims. Records show that more drunken drivers are being arrested every year; 1937 will be worse than 1936, when 11.7 per cent more inebriates were arrested than in 1935.

"New York figures even shatter the illusion that 'drunks have luck'; normally, one of every thirty-one accidents is fatal, but if a drunk is at the wheel, the ratio climbs to one of fourteen.

"The most surprising fact is that drunken pedestrians are a greater menace than drunken drivers. The National Safety Council, meeting recently in Kansas City, heard that pedestrians not only account for forty per cent of all fatal accidents (in five states studied), but that eleven per cent of pedestrian victims had been drinking, as against seven per cent of the drivers."

Also there is a new \$300,000 safety campaign with the slogan, "If you drink, don't drive—if you drive, don't drink." It appears that the profits of the traffic are not "net."

—Free Methodist.

THEN LOOK AT THE TITHE

Anyone who thinks about it knows that the paying of the tithe as a sign of stewardship has nothing whatever the matter with it.

It saves the Christian's self-respect. He need not apologize either for doubtful or inadequate results.

It conserves the energies of the church for the church's real business.

It puts a stop to the necessity of the church becoming a peddler of pies, oysters, ice cream, chicken pie and notions.

It gives the business men of the place a new regard for the church as a business institution.

It collects itself.

It puts a quietus on all display and self-seeking in one's contributions. Nobody can get puffed up over paying his debts.

It makes the Christian's financial relation to his church a pleasure instead of a perpetual annoyance, and so does a good work on his disposition.

It is the one sure way of proving we are in earnest when we say of God that He owns all we possess.

It links us with God in a real and definite sharing of His work.

It is the plan our Lord approved.

And every time, everywhere, with rich churches, poor churches, city churches, country churches, little churches, big churches—it works!

—Selected.

Life's evening will take its character from the day that preceded it.—Shuttleworth.