

**CHURCH FOLKS. BEING  
PRACTICAL STUDIES IN  
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE**

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Church Folks. Being Practical Studies in Congregational Life by Dr. John Watson

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**DR. JOHN WATSON**

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## Church Folks

# CHURCH FOLKS

BEING PRACTICAL STUDIES  
IN CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

*By*

"IAN MACLAREN"

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"THE MIND OF THE MASTER," "THE CURSE OF SOULS," ETC.

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## Church Folks.

### I.

#### HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A SER- MON.

UNTO the success of a sermon two people contribute, and without their joint efforts the sermon must be a failure. One is the preacher and the other is the hearer, and if some art goes to the composition of the sermon, almost as much goes to its reception.

In the art of the hearer the first canon is practice, for it is a fact that the regular attendant not only hears more but also hears better than the person who drops into church once in two

months. No doubt if the preacher has lungs of brass, and the hearer is not stone deaf, a casual can catch every word on the rare occasion when he attends, although for the past six weeks he has worshipped at home or made the round of the neighboring churches. There is some difference, however, between a steam whistle which commands its audience within a given area without distinction, and a musical instrument to which ears must be attuned for its appreciation.

#### THE CHIEF CONDITION OF SUCCESSFUL HEARING.

The voice of a competent speaker is not so much sound merely, but is so much music, with subtle intonations and delicate modulations; his pronunciation of a word is a commentary upon it; his look as he speaks is a translation of it; his severity is softened by the

pathos of his tone; his praise is doubled by its ring of satisfaction. A stranger's ear is not trained to such niceties; it is the habituated ear which reaps the full sense.

Besides, every speaker worth hearing creates his own atmosphere, and one cannot hear with comfort until he is acclimatized. The speaker has his own standpoint, and one must be there to think with him; he passes every word through his own mint, and one must be familiar with the stamping. Casuals are puzzled by the man, but his familiar friends are at home with him. "He said this or that," the casual urges. "Oh, yes," answers the expert, "but with him that means something more." Perhaps the chief condition of successful hearing is to know the speaker, his working axioms, his special devotion, his unconscious prejudices, his characteristic message, and this knowledge can only be got by continual hearing.