

## Romance of the Pew.

The family pew would seem to be connected more with somnolence than romance; but church pews have a history which may some day be written in a book all to themselves. We are apt to forget that there was once a time when the naves of churches were devoid of furniture. They were simply open spaces such as are still to be seen in some of our cathedrals. At this time they were the only covered meeting places in the village or small town; and they were put to all kinds of secular uses. The naves of churches in pre-reformation times were places where tradesmen assembled for bargain and barter; where owners of property deposited their goods, and where various abuses prevailed. There was a regular thoroughfare across the nave of Durham Cathedral until 1750, and a similar one at Norwich till 1748. The introduction of pews into churches was but gradual, and commenced soon after the Reformation. They were, however, not regarded with approval by the clergy. They considered the portable stools, which some of the congregation used to carry with them, quite sufficient. The well-known story of Jenny Geddes hurling her stool at the head of the dean in St. Giles' Church, Edinburgh, showed that in 1636 fixed seats had not become general in the north. The reason for the opposition of the clergy is easy to understand. Bishop Corbet, in condemning pews, declared that "Stately pews are not becoming tabernacles, with rings and curtains to them. There wants nothing but beds to hear the Word of God on. We have casements, locks, keys, and cushions—I had almost said bolsters and pillows. I will not guess what is done in them. . . but this I daresay, they are either to hide disorder or proclaim pride." Mr. Beresford Hope, in his "Worship in the Church of England," declares that pews were not only fitted with sofas and tables, but provided with fire-places; and Mr. Abbey, another writer, declares that cases might be mentioned where the tedium of a long service, or the appetite engendered by it, were relieved by the entry between prayers and sermon of a liveried servant with sherry and light refreshments. He adds that such an instance was once mentioned to him by Bishop Eden. It is also known that card-playing was not uncommon in the curtained pews, and one of the Georges is credited with card-playing in church. But perhaps the most extraordinary thing in connection with pews is a singular custom, which was annually observed at Otteringham, in Yorkshire, which was called "Flapping the Church." The lads of the parish, armed with cords, invaded the church, and, headed by the bandle—the ringers meanwhile starting a merry peal—"flapped" all the pews with the cords so that flaps or thongs of leather were attached—the whole thing ending in a general scurrage. Similar customs prevailed at other towns,

## Death of Gladstone.

Unlike Ingersoll's.

The new and elaborate "Life of Gladstone," by specialists, edited by Sir Wemyss Reid, describes his last days. On March 18 Sir Thomas Smith announced to him on the same day the results of the consultation, that his disease was cancer, and that it was mortal. The editor testified that "the illustrious invalid received the announcement not so much with calmness as with serene joy." He wished to die at home, and began his last journey from Bournemouth to Hawarden. A crowd met him at the railway. As he crossed the platform some one reverently called out, "God bless you, sir!" Instantly

facing the uncovered crowd he lifted his hat, and "in the deep tones which men knew so well, said, 'God bless you all, and this place, and the land you love!'" These were his last words in public.

In the last days he spoke no words of passing events. But he spoke constantly of "God's infinite mercy, of His free forgiveness for the repentant sinner, of the great hereafter." When lonely he repeated Newman's well-known "Praise to the Holiest in the Height." On the morning of Ascension Day, May 19, 1898, he took his last farewell of servants and friends, children and wife in perfect calm. A little before five o'clock his son Stephen, who, with the other members, was kneeling round the bed, where they had "seen with wonder and reverence how the noble face had lighted up with a joy which was not that of this world," read two of his favorite hymns and offered up a prayer. "At its close Mr. Gladstone was heard to murmur a distinct Amen. At ten minutes to five his breathing ceased."

Thus one characterized by his noble opponent, Lord Salisbury (when announcing his death in the House of Lords), as "a great Christian man," met the pangs of dissolution.—New York Christian Advocate.

## Died.

In Guelph, on the 21st inst., Helen Gerrard, the beloved wife of James Innes, in the 67th year of her age.

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