

FREE AND OPEN CHURCHES.

The Dean of Bristol, at a public meeting at Exeter (Congress week), said, I have been asked to say a few words because I have had experience of appropriated seats in parish churches, and I have now the happy experience of unappropriated sittings. I have no doubt in my own mind which of the two is preferable. You see the people flocking in an hour before the service of Bristol Cathedral, as they did last Sunday night, when the building was filed from end to end: first come first served. I think that we may hope that we shall keep our hold over the masses if we can keep the churches open. (Cheers.) You all know George Herbert's lines:

"Quit thy state:

All equal are within the church's gate."

And is it not a striking fact that no respect for persons is recognised in the offices of the Church? Whether it be the Queen, or whether it be the humblest person of the land, we address them on the occasion of their marriage as 'this man' or 'this woman.' And I certainly believe that there is nothing that is more estranging a large class of our fellow citizens from religion than the abominable system of letting pews. Upon one occasion I was visiting a church in which there was a fireplace with a fire laid, and the pew was most luxuriously furnished and had a table in the middle. I said to the pew-opener, 'Do you ever have tea here during the service?' 'Well,' she said, 'it would be nice, wouldn't it? I am sure that the working men in this country and the poor and impoverished do not like being labelled in the House of God, nor do I think that we have any right to so label them, seeing that the Gospel is to be preached to the poor. We are constantly hearing of the 'lapsed masses.' Shall we ever bring about their restoration? Is it Utopian to hope that the day will come when this real obstacle shall be effectually removed? I was at Zermatt a few days ago, taking part in the Grindelwald Conference. I thought I would like to walk early in the morning to the little English Church for prayer, but found that, after the British fashion, it was locked and padlocked. Across the street there was a Roman Catholic church free and open to all. What I mean by free is free. People have said to me, 'This is a free and open church.' 'No, it is not,' I have said, 'because you leave your Bible and Prayer Book; and if the church were free there would be none left.' The opening of a new church always seems to me to be a golden opportunity for insisting that the seats shall be undoubtedly and unquestionably open and free to all—first come, first served. Then as to the offertory. We are only slowly learning the way to give. I do most strongly maintain that we have been particularly defective in teaching our people that the giving of their substance is part of Divine worship. When I first came to Bristol Cathedral I found scarcely any offertories at all, but I established an offertory at every service. The offertories in one year rose to £1,120. When people give in that way they never feel that it is a tax. You have to rid people's minds of the idea that they are taxed for their religion. That is a very different thing from giving them the opportunity through the offertory of voluntarily giving of their substance. It may take some time to unlearn old habits, and to inoculate people with new. Yet what a grand idea surely it is of Divine worship that the poorest in our midst can come into the House of God and sit where they like. And surely He who searches all hearts, and who noted what the poor widow put into the treasury, sets His own seal and value upon the humble pence of the poor, as He would upon the more costly offer-

ings of the rich. I have never heard of a bag or plate passing a poor man without his putting something into it. Let us hope that what is said to-night will stimulate this great and very blessed movement—a real evangelising movement—so that our churches may become increasingly free and open to the poorest worshipper, and open at all hours, that they may be able to escape from the distractions of their daily life into the quiet recesses of God's sanctuary and learn, in moments of still devotion, that it is possible to sanctify and to hallow the most commonplace life. (Cheers.)

The Archdeacon of Cornwall said, I sometimes think that this great Association suffers a little from the public at large not realising how broad and common-sense its objects are. They sometimes think that it merely has reference to the freeing of seats, but it seems to me always rather to have reference to making our parish churches more homelike, so that the great mass of the people should feel that they are expected there, not only by the clergy, but by their fellow-parishioners, and especially by the churchwardens and the sidesmen. I always feel that the principle of appropriation is not in itself so much wrong as in every case impossible to be carried out under the circumstances. The principle is that the Church should hold all those who wish to attend it, and that there should be no respect of persons. This is, with regard to the great body of our churches impossible. Therefore is it absolutely wrong that there should be any appropriation. I do not say anything with regard to charging for seats, because I hope that is diminishing; or, rather, I would say that it does seem to have some injustice about it that buildings in which a charge is made for seats should be excused rates. But there is a great difficulty about it and I do hope that churches which cannot make all the seats free will make some of them free, and increase the number. We think of our difficulties a great deal, but we ought to be much more satisfied than we are for the extent to which they have been overcome. For years there have been those who have been praying to God, and working and striving under circumstances which were far more difficult than those with which we have to contend. Many years ago, a good old soul over eighty said to me, with a little flippancy, referring to the churchwarden: 'My dear, that old man would not be content if he had let every seat in the church. He would then go about trying to let his lap.' That will give you some idea that there were in the old days those who were trying to do what we are trying to do. I can recall a church in which I was several years ago, in which all the aristocracy were in the gallery, and the finest of the quality had big locks upon their seats. I suggested to the churchwardens that perhaps it would be a good plan if those locks were removed, and the quite tip-top people were allowed to keep a little dog well chained in their seats; and then, if the right person came, there would be a friendly recognition, and if the wrong person came, he would not come again. But that was not well received. Such a thing as I have just described would be utterly impossible to-day, and a very great deal of the good has been done by laymen. Then with regard to the offertory, of course we ought to teach our people that it is part of the worship. It is also a real test of sincerity, and we ought to remember that the offertory is often the means of preserving the self-respect of the poor. Many a man who is very poor may give a far larger sum than a rich man in proportion to his means. If his conscience tells him that he is giving what he ought to give, he ought to be protected from anything like false shame. The offertory is the means of preserving the self-respect of the working man who does not want to worship God for nothing, but wants to give what he can give when he comes into the House of God. We

ought to be very thankful to God for this movement, and for the success which He has given us, and look forward to the future more hopefully than some of us do. (Cheers.)—*Monthly Paper of the Open Church Association.*

News from the Home Field.

Diocese of Fredericton.

ST. JOHN.—The Church of England Sunday School Teachers' Association met in annual session Tuesday 11th Dec., at the Stone Church school house, St. John. Rev. W. O. Raymond presided. After devotional exercises and the reading of minutes reports were presented from the different Sabbath schools. They were of an encouraging nature and showed increases in attendance and in the amount of money raised. Mr. T. B. Robinson read the report of the executive committee. Reference was made to the Sunday School Teachers' examinations in May last. Misses Maud Betts and Edna M. Gregory were awarded prizes for special excellence. Misses K. M. Crookshank and Margaret Gregory received honor certificates, Miss Isabel Bruce, Ethel H. Jarvis, Sarah Murray and Bessie Dougherty were awarded first-class certificates. The work of the association during the past year was reviewed at some length, and the committee pointed out that it had been unusually satisfactory.

The report of Mr. H. H. Pickett, the secretary treasurer, showed the receipts of the year were \$74.75 and the expenditures \$60.50.

The officers elected were: President, Rev. W. O. Raymond; vice-presidents, in addition to the clergy, Messrs. A. H. Hanington, Wm. M. Jarvis, C. F. Kinnear, Thos. Patton, E. J. Wetmore, Wm. Irvine, S. G. Kilpatrick, T. B. Robinson, G. E. Fairweather and Misses J. R. Barlow, Sadlier and M. A. Peters; secretary-treasurer, H. H. Pickett.

Diocese of Quebec.

SHERBROOKE.—The St. Francis Association of the Church Society and the Deanery Board held their annual meeting in this city on the 11th and 12th December inst. At the latter, reports were received and read and action taken thereon in regard to the various parishes and missions within the Deanery.

On Tuesday evening a special service was held in St. Peter's Church at which the Rev. G. Osborne Troop, M. A., of St. Martin's Church, Montreal was the preacher, and who taking as his text Isaiah 53-11 spoke of the "Dark side of Missionary effort" which was claimed by some to indicate a failure in the work of christianizing the world. In illustration of his subject he divided the time from Adam to the present into three epochs of 2,000 years each, and after referring to the missionary work of these epochs said there were still upwards of 800,000,000 of heathen who have never heard the gospel preached. But, nevertheless, he concluded that there was ground for comfort and encouragement, God's ways not being our ways nor our thoughts His thoughts. On the evening of the 12th a missionary meeting was held in the Church Hall, presided over by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, and at which addresses were delivered by the Rev. Canon VonIiland, of Quebec upon the "Universities missions to Central Africa," and by the Rev. G. Osborne Troop on the "Bright Side of Mission work." Canon VonIiland referred in a very interesting