

"NOVEL WAY OF COLLECTING PEW KENTS."

DEAR SIR,—Will you allow me to correct an error in your notice of the paragraph in your last number, copied from American exchanges.

You state that the plan adopted in Zion Church, Montreal, has been "adopted in many other churches and *with invariable success.*" As a matter of fact, I know that two Montreal Presbyterian Churches, who tried the scheme, have long ago given it up, as untenable. In Zion Church itself, a very respectably signed remonstrance against the system, was lately presented to the trustees. So very doubtful is the success, and so many the drawbacks, that I believe the trial would not be repeated were the church safely back to old system. There is a smack of republicanism, however, about the view, that pleases many; the so-called "free pew" catches the ear so pleasantly, but in reality the pews are less free, less under the control of the church and its officers, than under the old system. Nor are they even so "free to strangers." One might have come in long times as a stranger for months, and have been gratified with a sitting, but under the new system a person has no sooner been found out, than there is a desire to allocate him, the inevitable linen bag follows him from pew to pew with the request for a voluntary subscription, pressed on by the wants of the church, in a way that reminds one unpleasantly of the cabmen's well known, "What you please, sir?" But the pews are less "free to strangers" also because the allocated pew occupants hold to their allocation with a tenacity greatly in excess of those paying a fixed rent. There seem also to be more numerous causes for irritation. One does not like to see the unoccupied part of his pew, allocated to strangers. The pew allocator has to handle this matter with so much delicacy, he must solicit leave to allocate, where he knows there is plenty of room. Then again, families hold to the best pews in the church, which they should be no longer able to retain, that is, if a conscientious regard to the interests of the church were taken into consideration. It is impossible, without offence, to convey to them what they evidently have ignored, that strangers are kept out of the church, who, not being sufficiently enlightened, deprecate the system. In short, "free to strangers" turns out in the working to be quite a fallacy.

That the plan should be incomparably more successful than the old one, in raising dollars and cents, the two Presbyterian Churches and others referred to, having tried both plans, now deny. It is however so low ground to assume in a christian church, that I care not to dispute the point.

In correction of the paragraph commented on, however, I may be allowed to say further, that it evidently owes much to the American editor's gloss. That we have "*all the children weekly contributors to the church,*" is true in no sense that would not be true under any system that passes round a collecting bag. I have this moment accidentally before me, a list of the contributors; and not only are there no children's names, but there are few, very few of the names of the young of either sex on that list. Again, "*little and often*" was our motto, and many still conscientiously adhere thereto, but the number is diminishing fast, and annual subscribers and those in arrears are quite considerable.

Permit me to notice one more objectionable feature in this novel way, and it is the old fact that while the allocated pew is held to be as much the property of the allocated person, or persons, and indeed after a lengthened occupancy, is by them deemed almost inalienable property, yet, being unpaid for, this tenure is, in case of any just or unjust cause of offence, very lightly held.