

St. John's Church Record, And Parish Notes.

EDITED BY THE RECTOR, ASSISTED BY MEMBERS OF THE
YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION.

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PARISH NOTES.

The month past has furnished no materials for parish history. The vestry met as usual, and transacted formal business: a resolution to paint the chancel, as a first step towards a future general renovation, being the only item of general interest. The Rector informed the Vestry that having seen an advertisement of the proposed sale by auction of a pew in our Church, he had purchased it from the owner (who was quite unaware of the recent resolution of the congregation), and intended to assign it as a gift to the church corporation.

As some members of our congregation have not fully understood the nature and aim of the movement connected with our church sittings, it may be well to remind them of the history of that movement. The question was first brought up in 1888, at the general meeting of the congregation, when a member of our present Vestry pointed out the evils of owned and rented seats, and offered to surrender his own seats to the Church, with the hope that this example would be generally followed. There was some discussion at the time but no vote was taken, it seeming to be the view of the majority that a change so radical needed the ripest consideration. For such needful thought four years will doubtless be deemed sufficient, and at the Congregational meeting of last April it was revived in the form of the following resolution: moved by Mr. G. E. Faiweather, seconded by Col. Armstrong: "That the Vestry be instructed not to sell in future any seats now belonging to the corporation, and (so far as possible) to obtain possession of all pews which are offered for sale, to invite the voluntary surrender of ownership from those who desire that God's house, in course of time, shall be made free."

A suggestion was made that the second portion of the resolution be omitted, not in opposition to its purport, but as a matter of expedience. This was agreed to by the proposer, and the resolution as far as the words "*offered for sale*," was then carried with hardly a dissentient voice.

It need hardly be added that the congregation themselves must be the judges and the agents in the future course of this movement. All questions in which temporal interests are intertwined with spiritual should be handled if possible by the laity, while a minister can once for all express his own opinions and hopes. We are not in the habit of making our 'Parish Record' a vehicle for the publication of the Rector's sermons: but it may be as well to place on permanent record

the position he has taken up, and the arguments which he has submitted to the congregation and leaves henceforth for their own verdict and consequent action.

"CLEANSING THE TEMPLE."

In the course of a Sermon preached on May 8th, upon John ii: 16; the following words were uttered:

It is always with extreme reluctance that I touch upon controverted subjects in the pulpit, since none feels more deeply than I do the objections against saying anything that may provoke a desire to reply, prevented by the immunity of the pulpit. But since it is not possible in any other way to speak at once to a large number of our church members, suffer me to say a few words, in all gentleness, with regard to a matter intimately concerning our Church's welfare.

At a meeting not largely attended, but legally representing the whole parish and congregation, it was decided that all steps should be taken to prevent any further sales of sittings in this church, to gain possession of the pews, and so far as possible, to vest their ownership in the church corporation itself. I know well that there are some who cannot see the need of any change. They think there is no harm in the practice. They believe that there is practical utility. They deprecate any agitation upon a matter which certainly is not of the first order of spiritual requirements. I grant this last assertion, as readily as I grant the absolute sincerity and conscientiousness of those who hold these views.

The matter of sittings is not of the "weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith," but at least it is more important than the tithing of herbs, and yet Jesus carefully added, that even this should not be left undone. But to those who consider that there is no scandal, and no desecration in a public auction, I would ask, would they go further and be logical, as the Jews of old, and some churches in this continent of which we all have heard. Would they be prepared to have the auction in the church itself: to let the auctioneer take his stand at the lectern, putting aside the Bible, and there describe in glowing terms the situation and advantages of the pew. No, that would be desecration, we all say. But would it be only a matter of *degree*, or would it be simply the same desecration in broad daylight.

This is a matter of public opinion, and if I could think for an instant that I were the representative of merely English ideas, I would never give utterance to them. But Canadians, —yes, Canadian Evangelicals have proclaimed this, and their words have been accepted by Canadian laymen, merchants, and lawyers of Toronto and Montreal and Halifax, and they have had reason to rejoice at the fruit of their faith.

I utter no harsh word concerning those who differ. Public opinion is slowly educated. Only ten years ago, I was shown a South American journal, in which slaves were advertised for sale: and with all one's horror, one could recognise that the people of Rio Janeiro might see no harm in this. They had been accustomed to it all their lives. But their sons will be ashamed of the past; and remote posterity will have difficulty in realizing how such things could have been possible.

I do not appeal to the argument that this is the *only*