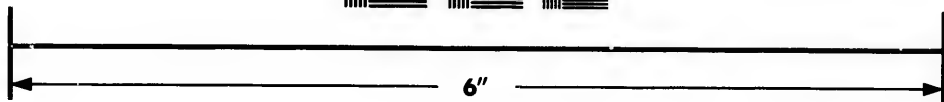
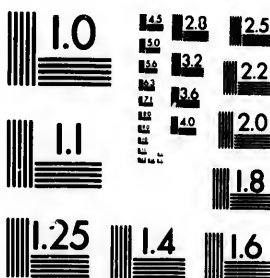


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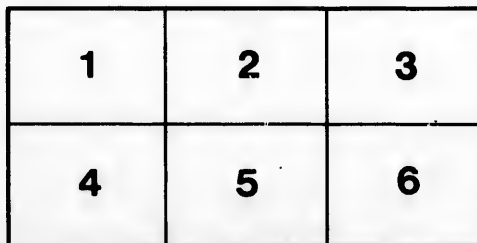
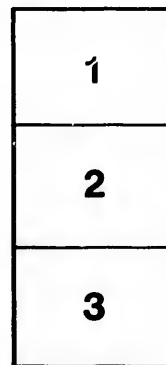
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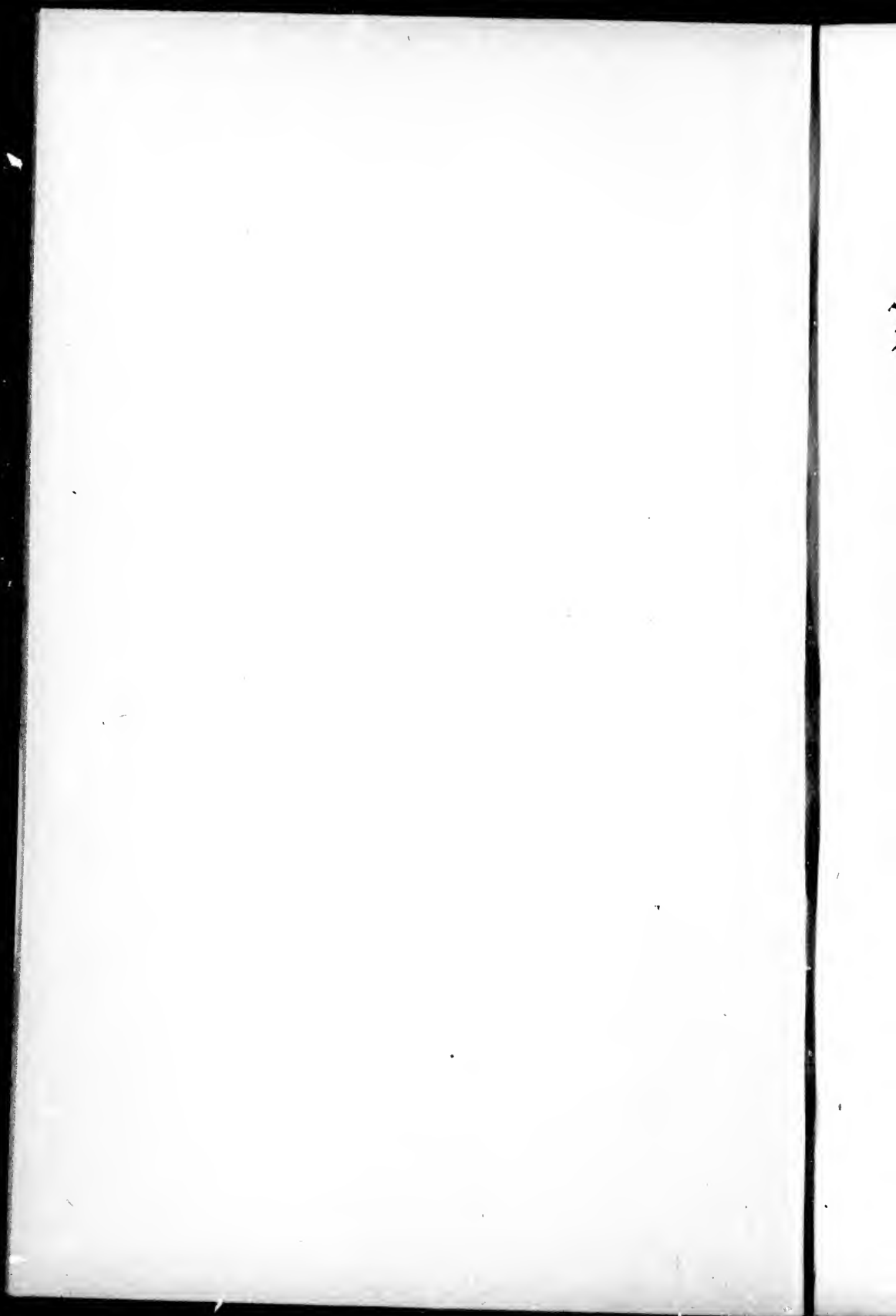
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A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

Parish Church of the Holy Trinity,

SAINT JOHN, N. B.,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 6, 1851,

IN AID OF THE FUNDS

FOR THE ERECTION OF A NEW CHURCH IN THE PARISH

BY

JOHN ARMSTRONG, A. B.,

LAT BRITISH CHAPLAIN OF MONTE VIDEO, SOUTH AMERICA.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.:

J. & A. McMILLAN, PRINTERS, PRINCE WM. STREET.

1851.

duplicate

TO
THE RECTOR,
CHURCH WARDENS AND VESTRY

OF THE PARISH OF ST. JOHN, N. B.,

This Discourse,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

1840

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S E R M O N .

I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids ; until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.—*Psaln cxxxii.* 3-5.

SUCH was the language in which a king and a prophet, “the sweet Psalmist of Israel,” expressed his desire to build a temple suitable to the dignity and holiness of the great Being whom he loved and worshipped. And although this privilege was, from peculiar circumstances, denied him, much of his time and thoughts, and of his wealth, were employed in collecting the materials for the intended edifice ; and his dying hour was cheered by the knowledge that the honor refused to himself would be granted to his favorite son. It was in that season of deep feeling and solemnity that he presented to Solomon the “pattern of the porch” of the “house of the Lord,” of “the altar,” and of “the cherubim ;” and at length addressed him in these striking words: “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee: he will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.” (1 Chron. xxviii. 20.)

The Rector and Vestry of this parish, my brethren, have requested me to commend to your further regard and liberality the Church now being erected in the Lower Cove, setting forth to you the progress made in the erection of that edifice, and the additional means required for the completion of the building, and fitting up of the same, so as to make it fit for the

service and worship of Almighty God. The mode by which I propose, in dependence on the Divine blessing, to fulfil this request, is, to consider, in accordance with the spirit of the text,

I. THE BENEFITS OF A CHURCH TO A PEOPLE; and

II. THE DUTIES OF A PEOPLE TO A CHURCH.

I. And, first, I am to consider THE BENEFITS OF A CHURCH TO A PEOPLE.

The word Church admits of various significations: without, however, enumerating these at present, I shall confine myself to the one which most suits the present occasion. By the word Church, then, I mean, a building consecrated to the service of the Most High—a *house of prayer for the people*; “in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance,”* by a minister scripturally called and lawfully authorized and appointed to perform the same; and to attend to all those nameless and various duties which pertain to his sacred office—to visit the sick, to comfort the mourner, to bind up the broken-hearted, to recal the wanderer, to warn the wicked, to rebuke the scorner, to relieve the destitute, to “set forward quietness, peace and love among all people, and especially among them that are committed to his charge:”† in a word, to fulfil the high office which he bears most effectually for the general benefit of his people.

Such a Church; such an established agency, or instrumentality in a parish, cannot fail to be attended by the greatest benefits to the inhabitants of it.

1. Such an established agency is nothing less than a *solemn public recognition of the truth of Christianity*. Consider the fact, that from week to week hundreds are brought into the house of God, there solemnly to proclaim their assent and consent to all the main doctrines of religion: the acknowledg-

* Article 19.

† Ordination Service.

ment, indeed, may sometimes be insincere, and often unmeaning; nevertheless, it is an acknowledgment which can scarcely fail to give religion a stronger footing in a parish. In some degree, it answers the purpose of miracles in other days, leading the mind to the careful and favorable contemplation of those truths which the Spirit of God alone can enable us to embrace.

2. In the next place, consider the tendency of such an agency to promote *the purity of religious opinion and practice.*

Whilst human nature remains what it is, both the principles and conduct of men will discover a strong tendency to decay. The grand object, therefore, of the friend of human nature, will be to check the progress of this decay. How great is the superiority of such an instrumentality, as a Church and its services, when efficiently ministered, as to this point! Look at facts: refer to history. Where are now the once flourishing Churches of Asia Minor—of Ephesus, of Smyrna, of Pergamos, of Thyatira, of Sardis, of Philadelphia, and of Laodicea? Where the purity of opinion and of practice which once adorned those Churches? Alas! their instrumentalities became corrupt; the doctrines of the Gospel were adulterated; their services degenerated into mere forms and ceremonies: and the consequence was, a general decay in the principles and practices of the members of those Churches, and the very Churches themselves have, almost all, for many centuries, ceased to exist. There must be, therefore, not only a house of prayer for the people, but an efficient ministry, a sound and vigorous instrumentality, connected with it to make it actually beneficial to the people; and wherever these exist, their very existence has a tendency to promote Christian principle and conduct. In proof of this, reference might be made to many of the new districts which have been set apart in various parts of England, and in which the agencies we are speaking of have been established; where, before, the people were abandoned to vice and immorality,—to riot and insubordination; whereas, now, “the wilderness and the solitary place have

been glad for her, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose, and the parched ground has become a pool, and the thirsty lands springs of water." (Isa. xxxv. 1, 7.)

3. Another benefit is, the tendency of such an establishment to promote *the exercise of Christian charity*. Objects of benevolence are brought before the people, and recommended to their attention. Our domestic institutions—the Church, educational, district-visiting, and friendly societies, are all advocated in their turn; and besides these, the dissemination of the Scriptures abroad, the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, and the dispersion of sound and useful knowledge throughout the world, are successively introduced and urged upon their support and patronage.

4. There is yet one other benefit which the establishment of a Church is calculated to confer upon a neighborhood, which I must not forget,—a benefit, indeed, which includes all the rest; I mean, *the education of immortal souls for eternity*. The Church, my brethren, like a tender mother, follows us through every step of our earthly pilgrimage, and watches over our wants, and dangers, and interests. No sooner is our child brought into the world of sin, and danger, and sorrow, than she takes him from our hands, and presents him, by a deeply interesting service, to the care of the Great Shepherd. After a short interval, as the child rises to thought and intelligence, she comes again, and calls him to "go up to the house of the Lord," there to consecrate himself by a most solemn ordinance to the Lord, as his soldier and servant. She next invites him to that table where the Saviour himself may be supposed to preside, and to distribute with his own hand the riches of his love and grace. Nor does she leave him here, but follows him into all the scenes of domestic life. She it is who ties the knot of his family joys. She accompanies him to the sick bed, and administers to him, as he lies there, the sweetest consolation. She passes with him into the valley of death, points to his crucified Lord, cheers him with the most delightful promises, and displays to him the glories of the invisible world. And when, at length, his remains are consigned

to the cold earth, she stands as chief mourner at his grave: she sings over him the song of sorrow and gratitude: she discharges the office which he can no longer discharge for himself, but which, could he return to earth, it would be his soul's first desire to fulfil,—she makes the dead the teacher of the living; and leads other sons to glory, by presenting to them a hallowed and glowing picture of the joys of him who has fallen asleep in the Lord: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

My brethren, are not these benefits of the very highest order—benefits, which we ought to appreciate as beyond all value—benefits, which we ought to support and sustain to the very utmost of our power? Let us then, in the next place, consider,

II. THE DUTIES WHICH A PEOPLE OWE TO A CHURCH.

1. In the first place, then, suffer me to inculcate upon you, as members of our Church *the duty of maintaining a strict adherence to her principles, and a constant attendance upon her services.* I know it to be the language of some well-intentioned persons, "If the Gospel is preached, what does it matter where we worship, or whom we hear?" Now suppose the fact to be conceded that "the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel" is preached, in whatever place of worship may spring up in a parish, it appears to me that respect to our own Church—a sense of the almost immeasurable value of harmony, unity, and co-operation in all the things of God—should indispose a sound Christian to that spirit of indifference and vagrancy which is too much the fashion of the day. Division, it is to be remembered, is not only an evil, but a sin, where there is no just ground for a division. Let not, therefore, the man who sees no ground for separation, minister to it by his own example. But, after all, my brethren, is it reasonable to assume that the whole Gospel is preached in *every* such place of religious worship? Are Unitarianism and Antinomianism, the Gospel? Are Rationalism and Universalism, the Gospel? Is that species of Cal-

vinism which excludes the precepts of the Bible, or that species of Arminianism which sets aside the influence of Divine grace, the Gospel?

But as it is not the object of this discourse to meet particular errors in religion, I will not enter further into detail. I will only say, that with every respect for a Dissenter who cannot adopt my views of religion; with a hearty desire to cooperate with him, as a friend and a brother, in all the concerns of our common Christianity; with a persuasion that all pretence to infallibility would be as absurd in myself as in him; I yet entertain a strong persuasion that neither Churchmen nor Dissenters gain any thing by a desultory and vagrant mode of worship. It tends, as far I can see, to create a controversial spirit; "itching ears," a love of change and excitement. It impairs the legitimate influence of the minister, and endangers the peace and stability of the congregation. It is not, then, as I think, intolerance, but a due regard to unity and good order, which prompts me to call upon every Churchman to drink at his own stream, and feed in his own pasture. Respect those real members of the Christian body who may happen to differ from you; bear with them and pray for them; neither misrepresent the principles, nor calumniate the men; but seek your instructions, and offer your prayers and praises in your own Church.

2. In the next place, I must call upon you to labor, as a duty, to surround your Church with its best ornaments,—*a body of sincere, spiritual, affectionate, devoted worshippers*. The vices of professed Churchmen have been, without doubt, one among the principal causes of dissent. If the principles of our Church have no power (as some persons lives would lead us to suspect,) to rescue men from the grossest follies and vices, who would wish to belong to her? Give her, then, my brethren, her proper evidence and attestation. Let "wisdom be justified in her children." Show the worth of the Church by her influence upon yourself; show the truth of her doctrines by the scriptural character of your own creed; show the purity of her precepts in the strictness of your own life; show

the sweetness of her spirit in your own mildness, meekness, and charity. Compel the world, as they contemplate her influence upon yourselves, to value the "tree" for the sake of the "fruit" on its branches.

3. In the last place, I must urge you to *a liberal discharge of the duty to which you are especially called*. When David called upon his people to contribute towards the building of the temple, it is said, "the people rejoiced, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy." (1 Chron. xxix. 9.) How fine is the picture which this simple statement presents us, of the happiness felt by the monarch in requiring a right thing, and by the people in fulfilling it! May such be our own case, my Christian brethren, in the present instance. May every heart rejoice liberally to comply with the appeal now made to us. This is not merely a duty, but a privilege, if viewed in a proper light. There is, indeed, a saying—"Cold as Charity;" but it is a libel upon that blessed spirit: for if there be a grace which not only warms the heart of another who partakes of its fruits, but warms the breast of him who exercises it, it is Christian love or charity. And yet how often does it require the hand of God himself to open the door of man's charity. And with regard to Christians generally, how great is their torpor and indifference in this heavenly cause! Tell me, my brethren, is there one among us, who, if the offer were made, would be satisfied to stake his salvation on the question of his charity? Surely, not one! and yet our consciences are at rest: we flatter ourselves we are charitable. If there be any ground for such a thought, why has it become necessary that the cause of benevolence should be pleaded with the language of flattery, in order to extort from vanity what ought to be given from a principle of religion? Why should it be necessary to purchase the charity of many through the no very legitimate channels of pleasure and amusement—through bazaars, and concerts, and the tumultuous assembly? My brethren, these things ought not to be; for though our charity cannot atone for one sin; yet it is our duty

to exercise it with as much self-denial and assiduity as though it were the cause of our acceptance with God.

But let me come to the immediate object of this discourse; namely, to commend to your regard and liberality, the Church now in the course of erection in the lower part of the parish. You are aware that considerable progress has already been made in that erection (see Appendix A): all the interior fittings up, however, such as the flooring, pews, pulpit, desk, communion rail, with staining, varnishing, &c., remain to be done, and the means of accomplishing them to be provided for. Many things also will be necessary for the decent performance of Divine Service; a list (see Appendix B) of which will be made known to the friends of the undertaking, in the hope that it will meet the eye of some who may be disposed to present to the Church the articles themselves, and which will be lasting and pleasing mementos for years to come. (See Appendix C.)

The sum required to meet this concluding expenditure, amounting to £500 or £600, requires that some little exertion should be made to raise it, and it has been proposed that a more general call should be personally made for that purpose. Individually, however, my brethren, it is but little that is required of you—how little the following simple calculation will show you. If only there were four hundred persons who would contribute three pence a week, and three hundred who would contribute sixpence a week; or, if even two hundred and fifty would contribute twelve pence a week, for one year, it would meet the amount required; and less than a similar contribution in subsequent years, would provide for the current expenses of the new establishment. And surely such a contribution would be no great sacrifice for persons in even ordinary circumstances to make: a little *system* and a little *self-denial*, is all that is required to accomplish it. If only Christians would deny themselves in something that *they want*; not give merely what they do not want; and that they should do this quietly and constantly; if every week (see 1 Cor. xvi. 2,) this holy principle of self-denial should be in full exercise; and

if there should be a combination of the produce of such efforts to promote God's glory, the aggregate sums raised for charitable purposes would rise to a large amount (see Appendix D). And if to this, the produce of system and self denial, people would also give liberally of their superfluity; where we have now tens we should have hundreds, and where we have now hundreds we should have thousands, and where we have now thousands we should have millions of Pounds put into the treasury of God. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak." I have confidence in your willingness to assist cheerfully in the good and useful work which I have set before you. I am confident, I say, that my appeal to you on this occasion, will not be in vain, but that your response to the call will be free, generous, and ample. I call upon you, then, my brethren, as you value your own Church, and still more as you love the Great Head of the Church, to do what you can towards this important object! May you contribute liberally! and may your contributions be paid back into your own bosom, by your progress in true Churchmanship,—in the cordial reception of the doctrines, precepts, and promises which the Church, on the authority of God, makes known to you! May you be a people of no party, but the Church of the Redeemer; weaned from the world, and consecrated to God—a people building upon the "foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,"—a people so "knit together in one communion of fellowship in the mystical body of the Son of God, as to be followers of the saints in all virtuous and godly living!"* May the additional Church now being erected in this parish be the nursery of many such children of the living God! And, finally, my dear brethren, may you live peaceably under the wing of the Church; may you die happily in her communion, and meet myriads of her delighted members among the "spirits of the just made perfect!"

* Collect for All-Saint's Day.

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APPENDIX.

A

No. 1. Excavations, Drains, Foundation Wall, and sundry petty expenses, . . .	£120
2. Present contract, including all the carpenters', masons', painters', and glaziers' work, (except smooth floor and deafening, pews, pulpit, reading desk, and communion rail,) for	1150
3. The excepted items, viz.: flooring and deafening, pews, pulpit, desk, and communion rail, with staining and varnishing, can be completed, as per tenders, for	300
4. Commission to Architect Superintendent, say	80
5. Fencing, and contingencies, say	80
	£1730

Item No. 1 is paid by the Vestry,	£120
Of item No 2, is provided by the Vestry,	480
Ditto by voluntary subscription,	530
Wanted for item No. 2,	£140
Ditto Nos. 3, 4 and 5,	460
	600
	£1730

Total required as above, £600.

St. John, April 8th, 1851.

B

A set of Books for the Desk and Communion Table.		
Two Surplices in Irish linen lawn,	£5	0 0
A Font,	7	0 0
A crimson woollen damask Cloth for the Communion Table, . .	3	3 0
A double damask Linen Cloth for ditto, . .	2	2 0
Two square Napkins,		16 0
Pulpit and Communion Cushions, with Tassels to correspond with the Crimson Cloth.		
A set of Communion Plate, from Forty Pounds and upwards.		
Carpets for Communion, Pulpit Stairs and Aisles.		
A set of Registers,	1	8 0

C

The writer of the foregoing Discourse received, many years ago, immediately after Divine Service, a pleasing proof of the warmth and power of the Divine operation of religion on the heart, accompanied by a letter, of which the following is an extract:—

“It has not been mentioned to me that any steps have been taken with regard to the Communion Table, so that one of the most solemn and important Ordinances of the Church may be performed. Perhaps pecuniary difficulties may retard this necessary work; I therefore take the liberty of enclosing a donation of One Hundred Pounds, to be expended in such manner as you may consider most essential. If I had a wish, I might probably desire that it should be applied to such preparations as are necessary for the performance of the Holy Communion.

“I trust it will not appear that I have selected an improper moment to make this communication, since when the heart is warmed with that devotion which the service of the Church naturally inspires, a Christian is led, in a more particular manner, to the contemplation of his duty; and a humble tribute from a creature to the throne of his Creator cannot, perhaps, be offered on any day more appropriate than the Lord’s Day.”

May such an example be not only commended, but imitated!

D

A TABLE

SHOWING THE AMOUNT OF SMALL SUMS WHEN COMBINED.

If 1000 persons save 1s. per week, it will amount, in one year, to				£2600	0	0
1000	—	6d.	—	1300	0	0
1000	—	3d.	—	650	0	0
500	—	1s.	—	1300	0	0
500	—	6d.	—	650	0	9
500	—	3d.	—	325	0	0
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See Mark xii. 42, 43, 44.

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