

And the man was sorrowful and went away murmuring: "Woe is me! I can neither live with her nor without her."

Editorial Notices.

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Waipawa Church Gazette.

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The Alms in Church.

(By Norman Crawford).

"Contempt" is not the only evil that familiarity breeds; its worst product is a certain satisfaction, a certain willingness to endure conditions other than the best; the moral incapacity to recognise evil in its true colors. Babylon, before the exile, to the pious Jew was anathema; seventy years of Babylon accustomed him to its wages, and but few, when liberty was regained, returned to Palestine. Doubtless the devout parishioners before Cromwell's day regarded with horror and repulsion the cold worship of the Puritans, devoid of outward help. The Commonwealth was their captivity, and since its passage the return to the fulness of joy in worship, though certain, has been with slow and halting step.

Such blindness I saw evidenced in a country church some years ago at a harvest festival—that spontaneous thanksgiving at which some people so unjustly scoff. The Church was redolent from many fruits of earth. Lesson and hymn told of the offerings of first fruits to God. Here were the people's bounties, or that which signified the fruits of the field, offered to God with thankful heart. So I thought and in youthful zeal when our bright service was over, asked to what hospital they were to go. Then I found it was the custom of the people that they should take them home and use them themselves—these offerings to the Lord!

Once on a time the alms we took to

church were our offerings to the poor, no man thought of them as for anything else. Then must have come a time of transition when the springs of finance ran low, and the wardens, with a conscience that could not have been quite at ease, began to appropriate them for the upkeep of the church. And now OUR captivity—"the people love to have it so."

The Bishop of St. Alban's, among other cogent remarks, has been telling the Diocese of London of the better way. "You will only get enthusiasm for your endeavor if you are prepared to put the whole question of finance on the highest level as being a means to win the whole world for Christ, not merely to get money for your own parishes." "When you pay for lighting and cleaning of the church, you are no more giving to God than you are when you pay your own house bill." You see, you probably disagree with him, yet our alms are not rightly used when they are reabsorbed in the machine that produces them—the local church.

Recently I was in Winchester Diocese and came to a village where such blindness had long existed, saving that the offense was added to by the vicar having to buy all Sunday School prizes and books, as also many sundry things. A year of teaching changed matters. "You are not giving to God if you take it straight back again. What you pay for rates and church expenses, for lighting and heating, is not charity, it is simply what you owe—your dues." Working on this principle he finally had the people subscribing for the upkeep of their church entirely through other channels than the collections. And as experience has shown wherever such endeavors have been made, the recognition and payment of such "dues" by the parishioners has not led to any diminution in the collections, every penny of which goes to charity or some other activity outside the local church, with its upkeep of minister and of worship.

"You will only get enthusiasm if you put the whole question on the highest level as a means to win the whole world for Christ, and not merely to get money for your own parishes." True, indeed, are your words, Bishop of St. Alban's! Many a time has one gone into some wealthy church which reeks with luxury, and felt little compulsion to give with effort money that would be absorbed in new kneelers and such accessories. Many a person wishes to give to God, and knows that the shot he fires will stop with the impregnable target of the local church.

Another evil of this absorption system is it helps to create a false division in people's minds between things sacred and secular. In Christ there

is neither Jew nor Gentile, I should be inclined to comment. But somehow we have come to think of famine funds, hospital funds and a thousand such things as secular; and as sacred, those self-absorbed funds we high exalt with profound ceremony each Sunday when we present the brazen plate. Yet the collection plate, with its weekly dole, is a convenient way of collecting the people's moneys, whatever their purpose be. To give in one great amount each year is convenient; to give each Sunday keeps a duty ever in front. To give each Sunday, however, may be systematic, instead of depending on the chance collections of a pocket, and the vagaries of our clime.

Perhaps the best solution to the problem is the duplex envelope system. This, in England, is revolutionising giving, and everywhere where applied new moneys have been available for Christian missions. Two envelopes conjoined, though perforated, like separable Siamese twins, are allotted to each parishioner (provided he desires it) for each Sunday of the year. On one envelope it is stated that the contents are to be placed for church expenses, on the other for missions. Perhaps a modification of this system would prove well. Were one envelope marked "dues" and used as a means for paying systematically those expenses we incur in worship and in looking after our soul's health, the other could be marked "alms" or "contributions," and into it the giver should place his gifts according to his special desire to render thanks, or make special offering to God. With such a fund at hand the church council could be entrusted to dispense moneys to the poor, thus restoring the collection to its proper function. Not to the mendicant poor, the thriftless poor (by-product of imperfect economics) in the main, but to the poor in mind, body or spirit—the poor in soul, benighted, unenlightened heathens, to orphanages, to famine-stricken lands, to great non-political causes. Thus on a special Sunday a special cause could be favored and the "dues" would be untouched. Thus, too, would we help to widen people's ideas of the application of the Incarnation through the collection, and save them from that narrow parochialism that is the curse of our Church.

Parish News.

Otane.

Well done, Elsthorpe! The sale of work was again successful; £100 is a very good sum to raise, and we hope the sheep drive to be held later, will swell the amount. Our share, being