

These events occurred on the first Sunday of the month; before the end of the month nearly £920 had been received, of which no less than £685 16s. 6d. was contributed anonymously. During the same month, an offer was made by one residing in a distant parish, an almost entire stranger, to lend £2,000 for the work, at 3 per cent. less than the current rate of interest. He had heard that many of the contributions promised would extend over a term of years, and as ready money would be needed, he was willing to lend it for as long as it was required.

The work had now been begun, and was progressing rapidly in spite of all predictions to the contrary.

At this point, the architect advised that certain carving, which it had been proposed to leave for future execution, should be done as the work proceeded, and, as the clergyman believed that niggardliness in carrying out God's work was not conducive to His glory, the extra outlay, which amounted in the end to £400, was authorised. By the time the walls were up, it became clear that the tower might be undertaken, and thus another work originally designed for posterity was accomplished; until, at last, every one became anxious for the final completion of the building. A meeting was held and subscriptions were promised for the erection of a stone spire, the crowning point of the finished edifice.

Meanwhile a peal of bells had been provided at a cost of £750; the organ worth £800, the pulpit, reading desk, and the font of white Tasmanian stone, were all anonymous gifts. The beautifully-carved communion rails were also a gift of the value of ninety guineas. Thus proving, that according to his faith God had done unto him. The church itself is built in the early English decorated style; of stone obtained from Pymont, Sydney; the wood work is of Kauri pine. Each window is surrounded with beautifully illuminated scrolls, bearing a precept and a promise.

The total cost of the building, with its accessories, had reached almost £12,500, an expenditure more than double that at first contemplated for the work of the present generation.

On sending in his account for commission, the architect congratulated the minister upon its completion, and said it was the first church he had known, erected by voluntary contributions, which had proceeded uninterruptedly from foundation to final—no unimportant statement, coming from the chief ecclesiastical architect of the colony. The church was now built, but they had to consider the repayment of the £2,000 loan, and as the payments for the tower and spire had been arranged to extend over an additional period of five years, the liberal-minded lender agreed to accept £500 at the end of six months, £500 two years later, and the remaining £1,000 at the end of other two years. It will suffice to say that as the money was needed it was supplied.

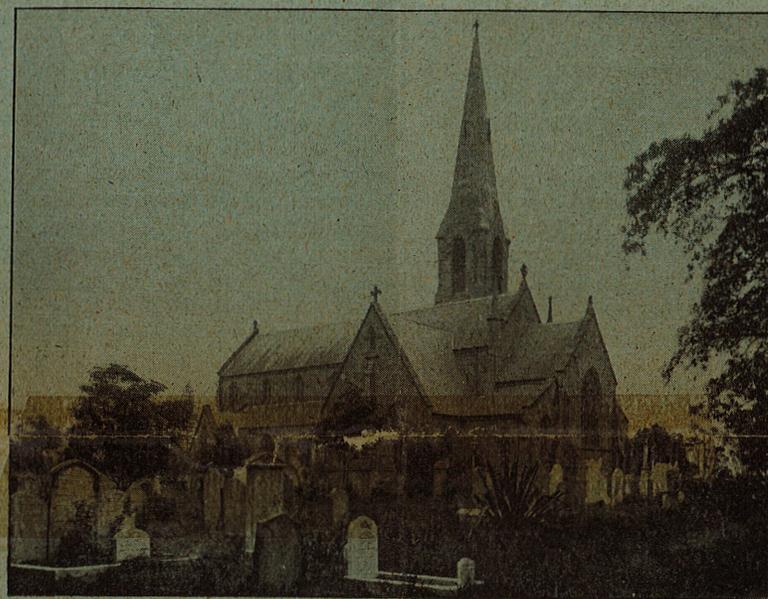
As a remarkable instance of our wonder-working, God's dealings with His children, it may be stated that three months before the last instalment fell due, there seemed little hope of its being raised. Money, however, gradually came in, until nearly the whole sum had been received, when, four or five days prior to the date of payment, a generous member of the Church of England sent, asking the treasurer to call at his office, and promised a draft for the balance required.

Before the message reached its destination, a sum, £5 beyond the amount needed, had been paid in to the treasurer.

This is the story of "How the Church was Built," and I would ask my readers to note how, from beginning to end, pecuniary help was sought from none but our faithful promise-keeping God. Does it not justify the assertion "The Lord liveth, and none of them that trust in Him shall be confounded?"

How the Church was Built.

WHEN the clergyman first came to his large parish he found a small church, at which the average attendance for the previous year had been about 75 adults and 100 children in the morning, and 25 adults in the evening.



ST. STEPHEN'S NEWTOWN, SYDNEY.

But soon the church was filled to overcrowding, so that when the district visitors urged the people to attend Divine Service, they met with the rejoinder, "What's the use of going to church? there's no room."

At length an urgent desire for a larger church became general throughout the parish. Yet how could it be built? The parish was large and populous, but the majority of the people were poor—for Australia; and the work was felt to be too great for their resources.

Meanwhile discussion was frequent, and after a time a leading parishioner inquired if the clergyman had any scheme to propose, by which he thought the work could be accomplished. His reply was, that a building suited to the requirements of the place would cost £8,000; but, that its tower and interior decoration might safely be left for posterity to complete. Of the £6,000 actually necessary, £1,000 could be raised by the sale of an unsuitable site already in their possession; another £2,000 would doubtless be given by the friends of those buried in the cemetery, where the new church would be built; and the remaining £3,000 could be furnished by the parish if the payments were allowed to extend over a period of five years.

The proposed scheme was regarded as wholly impracticable, the sale of the old site being considered its only feasible point. (Curiously enough,

this was the one expectation not fully realised, the nett proceeds amounting to little more than £800.)

The clergyman could only reiterate his conviction that the church could be built, basing his assurance upon the promise, "God shall supply all your need." His questioner acknowledged the need, but still doubted that it would be supplied, upon which, the minister asked if he would be satisfied that it could be done, if God would send £1,000 in answer to prayer, without personal solicitation of any individual, man or woman. To this, his friend could only reply, that in that case nothing could be considered impossible. So prayer was offered, day by day, and during the next ten weeks, subscriptions were promised to the amount of £957 16s., according to the Minister's calculations. Then the supply stopped, and week after week went by without any further promises, although prayer was offered as persistently as before. The clergyman was puzzled, until he remembered that an offer of help had been made without naming any sum; this would probably make up the desired amount, and God, having given what was asked of Him, had now stayed His hand.

The people had also begun to move; they had heard that a thousand pounds was promised towards building a new church, and at a meeting now held to consider the advisability of beginning at once, a committee was formed, and it was resolved to have plans prepared. Thus the work was inaugurated.

At the close of the meeting, the gentleman already referred to, came forward and said, "Four years ago I promised £50 whenever the church was begun; that promise still holds good, but you have not included my name in the list of subscribers." This sum had, indeed, been forgotten, and when the further indefinite promise was fulfilled, and proved to be a gift of other £50, it was found that God had given, as He always does give, liberally.

At this time a great difficulty arose in the parish, causing great diversity of feeling and opinion. At a special meeting, it had been resolved to obtain an Act of Parliament, found to be necessary for carrying out the work; this Act, it was stated, would cost from £50 to £70, whereas, the charges actually made, amounted to £135 16s. 6d. Some of the parishioners objected to pay a sum so much in excess of the given estimate; others urged that it might be regarded as the purchase money of a site, and should be made a first charge upon the Building Fund.

The clergyman found himself between two fires, and as usual in such circumstances, could give no satisfaction to either party. To the one, he said, "We ordered the Act, and common honesty requires that we pay the cost of obtaining it." To the other, he said, "We have no right to take the money given for the actual building and appropriate it to the payment of these legal charges without the consent of the donors." How correct this latter decision proved was shown by the fact that a member of the congregation called on him, later, on behalf of himself and others, to say, that, if any portion of the money given by them were thus applied, they had resolved to file a Bill in Equity against him.

Other hindrances arose. In all the neighbouring parishes, bazaars, concerts, tea meetings, &c., were regarded as lawful means of raising money for God's work. This Clergyman thought differently, and, in all his previous ministry, had acted according to his convictions. Strong efforts were made to induce him to alter his practice in the present instance.

While such attempts came from individuals, he was content with simple refusal, but when a strong general desire for his compliance was evinced, he felt uncertain whether he would be able to stem the tide of the popular persuasion.

This led him to preach from the text, "According to your faith be it unto you," and in the course of his sermon, to declare his own views upon

the lawful methods of raising money for Christian work. The subject was brought to plain and practical issue, when he told them that, if a large majority of the congregation could not be content unless he adopted the general practice, it would be necessary for them to obtain another pastor, since, for himself, he could only teach and act as the Lord taught him. On the other hand, if there were only a few anxious to resort to these usages, it seemed to him desirable, in the interests of peace, that they should attach themselves to some of the neighbouring churches, in which these practices were approved. He went on further to say, that, if only the praying people would pray, day by day, and also meet weekly for united prayer, they would find their church prosper beyond any other of which they had had experience. He also warned them that, in the beginning, they would be laughed at for relying on simple prayer to attain their desire, but, as the work prospered, and said he, "It will prosper," these same people would turn round and say their success was due to an influential committee, or a favourable combination of circumstances; in short, they would explain it in any way rather than give God the glory. All of which, it is needless to add, became literally true.—The sermon created much sensation; in house, workshop, and street, in omnibuses, and railway carriages, this novel mode of raising money was freely discussed. Some common-place incidents will serve to illustrate the state of popular opinion. A working-man was overheard to say, "If my head never aches until that church is built, I shan't have a headache for many a year to come." Another, when the contract for the foundation was accepted, "They'll do that, but no more." When the next contract for stone walls 17 feet high was accepted, it was said the walls would never be finished. But more difficult to cope with than this outside criticism, was the continued disbelief of those who were his true friends and fellow-workers. One of the most influential men in his parish called upon him one Sunday morning, before 8 o'clock, to advise him of his faults, of which the chief was stated to be this. Whilst Huxley, Tyndall, and others were asserting that prayer was attended with no beneficial results except in its reflex influence on the human mind, he was teaching that people had only to open their mouths and God would pour money into their laps; that he was doing wrong in telling them they could do without bazaars, concerts, and so on, that the work was a great work, and if he did not adopt the same course of worldly expediency as his brethren in the surrounding parishes, he would but begin to build, and never be able to finish; and that he had no right to expose his people to ridicule wherever the matter should become known. When reminded of the thousand pounds already given solely in answer to prayer the reply was, "Oh, yes! you have got all the plums, you won't have anything more." Müller's Orphanage, at Bristol, was next cited as an illustration of depending wholly upon God, but that was too far away to touch the visitor's opinion. Much more passed between them that afterwards proved very helpful in carrying out the work, and very grateful was the minister for the friendship that prompted open reproof and advice, rather than covert reproach and ridicule behind his back, even though he could not acknowledge as a fault his full reliance upon God's promises. When his visitor had gone, he cast his burden upon the Lord and left it there. It was God's business to vindicate His own truth—not man's.

In the afternoon of that same day, another friend said to him, "I am so sorry for this division among our people about the legal expenses, for I fear it may stop the building of the church. If you can arrange that my name shall not appear, I should like to pay that bill myself." This offer, coming in such an unexpected way, for a special purpose, was of more value than a gift of £500 to the General Fund would have been, for it healed the breach, and enabled the people again to work unitedly.