

- '(1) "Many years ago statements came to me," etc.
'(2) "On one occasion I was informed," etc.
'(3) "Several persons spoke to me," etc.
'(4) "One gentleman particularly was very indignant," etc.
'(5) "On several other occasions other persons spoke to me," etc.
'(6) "One gentleman spoke to me seven years ago," etc.
'(7) "A few years ago a gentleman told me," etc.

Gossip and old women's tales! And gossip has been defined as 'tails (tales) with a twist.' Some of them are suggestive of the gimlet or corkscrew tails of Lewis Carroll's 'toves.'

'Except in one case,' says our Sydney contemporary, 'Wools Rutledge neither said who told him nor what he was really told; he seems to have lived in a mist of suspicion and hysterics, like Mrs. Snagsby, in 'Bleak House,' who had fits of violent jealousy among the cockroaches re the "goings-on" of parties unknown. A cold business-man would have asked for the statements in writing; then he would have looked up the Public Service List to see whether the alleged convert was really engaged at the magnificent salary alleged; and he would have sent an intelligent individual to find out, at a cost of perhaps 7s 6d, about what date Hall began to frequent the R.C. church, and he would have compared the date with the date of re-appointment. But the unbusiness-like parson, living in an atmosphere of old women and tea and buns, seldom does things in that fashion. He holds up his ear like a vast paper-bag for the collection of rumors, and when his ear is full he slops over. He hears the vague suspicions of the old lady with her face tied up in a red cloth, and the shadowy apprehensions of the partially deaf man who thinks he read somewhere that the Pope is a quadruped, till he becomes a large, foolish coal-scuttle, filled with vague reports about nothing in particular.'

CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL

THE BISHOP'S LETTER

Bishop's House,
Christchurch,
Feast of St. Mark,
September, 1905.

Rev. Dear Father and Dearly Beloved in Christ.

Whilst engaged in the arduous task of appealing throughout the diocese for our Cathedral in the course of construction, the amounts given or promised in each parish, together with a financial statement, were published from time to time.

Now that the magnificent building is completed, and dedicated to the service of the Most High, it has been suggested that it would be of interest to you and the cause to receive a brief review of the past, a financial statement of our present position, with an expression of our hopes and expectations for the future.

In a circular addressed to you in April, 1905, you were told that when lack of funds made us desirous to stop the works, the contractors urged us to go on, repeatedly assuring us that they would accept whatever we could pay them as the work proceeded, and allow us five or more years to pay off the balance. Suddenly we were amazed to learn that they could no longer fulfil their promise. To stop the work at that most critical juncture would have been a very great disaster. In fact, all who knew the circumstances, unanimously declared that to stop were impossible. We had already disbursed to them about £24,000 of their contract price. The cost of the metal ceilings, the coverings of the flanking towers, and the grand dome, together with the fees for the Architect, the Clerk of Works, and other inevitable expenses, brought up the total expenditure to £29,000. To meet this we had to borrow £5000 from the bank. Up to that date we had received in cash a little over £24,000, with promises of between £7000 or £8000

more. Fully half of these promises have since been realised. Last year another critical period arose and our difficulties increased.

The Right Hon. the Premier, having incidentally heard of our painful position, kindly suggested that the only way out of the difficulty was to issue debentures, or negotiate a loan on mortgage, for which purpose it would be necessary to get a private Bill passed through Parliament. We took the best legal and other advice, and consulted the Holy See, by whom we were authorized to borrow the amount of £20,000. The most distressing part of this procedure is the yearly interest of £1000. With a view to the meeting of this annual charge, and the gradual reduction of the capital, various schemes have been proposed and discussed. The first was to ask each parish to take over a portion of the debt. I am deeply grateful to the few priests and people who warmly entered into this plan, and contributed their proportion. The second was to solicit offerings in cattle and kind for a monster sale to be held during the course of the coming year. This scheme, I confidently hope, will be carried out in due course. The third was to beg the bulk of our people to contribute a small sum of sixpence a week till the whole debt were paid. The Cathedral parish had already adopted this scheme, with the result that since it was started, barely three years ago, it has brought in the sum of £1362 13s 5d; St. Mary's, Christchurch, started it more recently, and added £253 0s 2d, making a total for Christchurch of £1615 13s 7d from the small offerings of sixpence per week. Since our last appeal in their respective parishes, Temuka, thanks to the zealous devotedness of its parish priest, the venerable Dean Foley, generously contributed as its quota to the 6d collection, or pro rata for the district, the sum of £587; Waimate and Geraldine followed suit; Ashburton, Darfield, Fairlie, Holditch, New Headford, Rangiora, Hawarden, and Timaru contributed sums ranging from one hundred guineas to smaller amounts, bringing up the total to £2738 14s 3d.

Our devoted priests have assured us that the 6d collection cannot be relied on in country districts, especially on the West Coast, where we are advised to adopt the more effectual course of a personal appeal on the occasion of our visitation. All, however, realise that some strenuous efforts must be made to pay not only the heavy interest, but liquidate the whole debt in as short a time as possible.

We venture to suggest a simple and practical way out of our difficulty. The Catholic population of the diocese is between 20 and 22,000. If half this number would give £1 a year for little more than two years, the entire debt would be paid off during that short period. If but one-fourth of the population gave the same amount £1 every year, the debt would be blotted out within the space of four, or, at the most, five years. The Cathedral and St. Mary's parish might, we firmly believe, be relied upon to pay the yearly interest from the 6d collection now being re-organised by Father O'Connell, whilst the efforts of the rest of the diocese could be directed to the gradual extinction of the capital. To make this plan a thorough success, all who possibly can should pay either yearly, half-yearly, or quarterly their promised subscription, until the whole debt is cancelled. Those willing to do this, and surely none will refuse, will kindly fill up the subjoined Promissory Note, and give it, with their offerings, to the local priest, or, if they prefer, send it direct to the Bishop or Rev. Father O'Connell, the recently appointed collector for the Cathedral. The priests of the diocese are earnestly begged to distribute a copy of this letter, with the Promissory Note, to as many of their flock as they can. Whilst again renewing our heartfelt thanks to the devoted priests, religious communities, and faithful laity, who have so generously helped us all by no other than God and His Church, may we not express the ardent hope that they will rally around us in the hour of our greatest need? God alone knows the sleepless nights, the anxiously wearisome days we have had since the great work was begun. Even since the day when the glorious Cathedral was solemnly dedicated, the unexpected demands of those from whom we had a right to look for due consideration, if not gratitude, forced us to pass through a most trying ordeal, and thrust upon us fresh financial difficulties. Two years ago the supply of stone having run short we allowed the contractors to substitute another kind, better, it is true, for which they claimed £1000 extra for the working of the same. Altogether they claimed over £1000 for extras, for which they had no authority from us. This claim was, by arbitration, reduced to £2000.

You will be good enough, dear Rev. Father, to read to your flock this letter and the financial statement, and

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