

SCADDING

NOT MANY
FATHERS

1882



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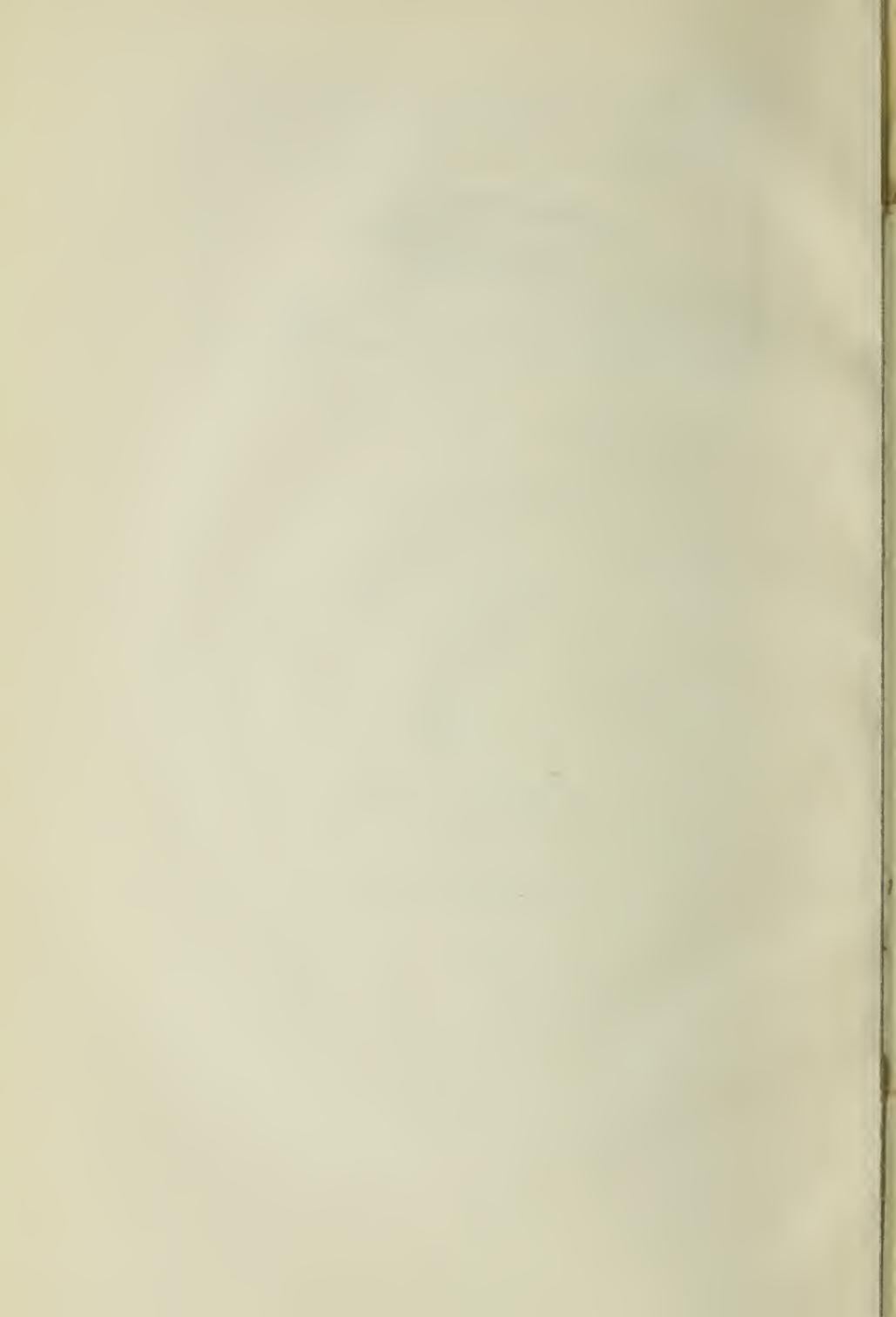
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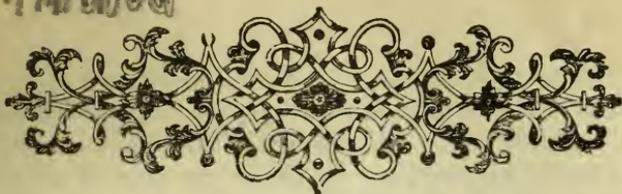


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“Not Many Fathers.”

A LETTER

Addressed to a Pewholder of St. James's Church, Toronto.

BY THE REV. HENRY SCADDING, D.D.

DEAR FRIEND,

It is rumoured that the pewholders of St. James's are all quite willing that the cathedral character of their church should be abolished. I can scarcely bring myself to believe that such is the case. But supposing it to be so, I am moved to offer to you one or two considerations which, as it seems to me, ought to make thoughtful persons desirous of keeping things somewhat as they are. If I think I can aid in guarding a neighbour from a serious mistake, I am bound to do so; and if my words are disregarded, I still enjoy the pleasure of having done what I could.

You know what a deep interest I have taken in the Life and Career of our ever-memorable bishop, Dr. Strachan, and in the history and reputation of St. James's Church, especially on his account. As evidence of this, I of course point to my “First Bishop of Toronto, a Review and a Study,” and to “Toronto of Old,” wherein the annals of St. James's Church fill thirty-five octavo pages.

Now it is the memory of Bishop Strachan which, as it appears to me, ought to act as a bar to such a change in the character of St. James's Church as is said to be contemplated.

There can be no doubt that it is a part of the Church of England system to have in each of its dioceses a representative church-edifice. This has evidently been a principle in the outward economy of the English Church wherever practicable, in the dioceses of modern foundation, as in those of a foundation many centuries old. Such a representative building is not only a seemly symbol of unity, but an actual subsidiary to unity, not at all to be despised. With the true instinct of a bishop, and following the example of great bishops in other parts of our communion, Dr. Strachan laboured, long before he had himself attained to that office, to create a representative church-edifice for Western Canada. He rendered as noble as possible the church which was likely in the future to be the chief church of a diocese, and where the bishop of that diocese would probably exercise his functions. While still a presbyter, in 1818, he transformed the unpretending barnlike shell, in which had assembled the infant congregation of St. James during a period of about twelve years, into a churchly edifice, with appropriate arrangements within, and marked, without, by a graceful tower and belfry and spire. And when, after the lapse of some fourteen years, this structure was found altogether too small for its congregation, he caused it to be taken down, and its place supplied by a church of much larger dimensions and more dignified in point of style, fashioned in fact closely after the plan of the English cathedral at Quebec, and the then Christ-Church of Montreal, and constructed as they were, of massive stone. Through the instrumentality of Dr. Strachan, the English Church was thus as worthily represented in Toronto, in 1833, as it was, at the time, in Quebec and Montreal. In 1839, however, the solid and spacious building, expected to suffice for the prospective needs of the English Church for many a year, was desolated by fire; and this at the very juncture when its pastor was about to be summoned to England for consecration as first bishop of Toronto. The prompt energy of the bishop-elect, as by a slight anticipation we may style him, was equal to the occasion. The loss was quickly repaired. His devoted people, ever ready at his call to assist him in his heroic enterprises, were now doubly forward to do so, being proud of the fact that their pastor was to be their bishop, and their church-edifice further distinguished by becoming his cathedral. St. James's was restored, and, by the completion of its tower and spire, made even more seemly than

before. And the edifice, thus reconstructed and perfected, might have been, at this hour, doing duty as the cathedral of Toronto with a certain modest dignity, just as the original cathedral at Quebec, built in 1804, is still doing. But disaster again came. Like its predecessor, this church was also destroyed by fire. Again the bishop passed through the ordeal nobly. Again the enthusiasm of his flock stood him in good stead, and the outcome of the crisis was the beautiful building which now graces our city, and gives character and finish to its whole aspect. Here to his dying day the ever-memorable bishop sat, ruling with wisdom and justice; and here most fittingly, amidst surroundings which he had toiled to create, to preserve and to perpetuate, his mortal remains were deposited.

Without dwelling any further on the history of St. James's, I simply ask if it is not a kind of undoing of an important part of our first bishop's life-work, to strip it of the character with which he had invested it, and divert it from a use to which he expected it ever to be put, in accordance with a universal and beneficial practice in the communion whose interests he had so much at heart? Should not the pewholders of St. James's Church, the successors and representatives of the bishop's own flock, be the last to assent to what would look like an act of disloyalty to his memory? "Ye have not many fathers!" was the aged Paul's pathetic appeal to sons in the faith who had begun to shew themselves somewhat forgetful of him in his absence. I venture to cite these words to you, and leave them to their effect. There is of course a sense in which we must call no man father. *Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri* is a motto as good for a Christian man now as it was for the heathen poet of old. But as between the first bishop of Toronto and the congregation of St. James's Church, in perpetual succession, the term "father," as used by St. Paul, can never cease to be scripturally lawful, and full of force.

In fine, I would ask in regard to the change said to be contemplated, whether, besides shewing a want of fealty to the departed bishop, it would not be likewise a kind of wrong to the Church of England throughout the city and throughout the diocese? Notwithstanding what may be said, have not the members of our

communion, in accordance with the temper of their forefathers, begun to take a degree of pride in the beautiful building which for so long a period has been the outward and visible sign of their church and system? Notwithstanding what may be said, is there not in this feeling a certain tie of oneness amongst the people of the diocese, which it would be a pity to unloose? And would not violence be done to this good and useful feeling, if all the members of the Church of England throughout the city and throughout the diocese were to be told that the representative building of their communion and place of their bishop's chair, was no longer the well-known mother-church of Toronto, but one of its offshoots—one of the lesser and recently founded churches of the city? Fancy the dismay—nay, the honest resentment—among the members of the Church of England in one of the dioceses of England, if they were informed that the noble edifice which from their childhood they had been wont to regard as a kind of ecclesiastical focus and rallying-point, was no longer to be viewed in this light; but that now one of the lesser parish churches of the cathedral town must be substituted in its stead! Suppose the Minster at York or Christ Church at Canterbury thus dislodged from its place of honour in the minds of the church-people of Yorkshire or Kent, and think of the confusion of thought, and real sorrow of heart that would ensue! Would not the effect, in a certain measure, be similar among members of our communion throughout the diocese of Toronto, if the status of a cathedral were to be taken away from the beautiful and conspicuous building which so long has been invested with that character, and transferred to an edifice of comparative obscurity amongst us?

As I have already said—I cannot believe that the pewholders of St. James' Church are, as a body, willing that anything like this should happen. But my long experience with congregations leads me to fear that all this might happen "without their knowing," as people often say when it is just too late. We of the clergy teach congregations, very properly, to love quietness and to be docile; and, to its honour, the great bulk of every congregation is disposed to be so. Stirring advocates of change take advantage of this fact, when a point has to be carried; sometimes for good, as I am quite ready to allow, but also sometimes for the contrary. It has become therefore essential in these days that, to a praiseworthy love

of peace, there should be added watchfulness and intelligence ; and a readiness, should the occasion require it, to come forward and act, even when it may be personally inconvenient and not pleasant to do so. If this line be not adopted, the well-disposed and law-abiding amongst us will find themselves continually thrust to the wall. The few will dominate and compromise the many. The general interests of our church and communion will suffer ; and our prestige and influence will no longer be what they were.

I am aware of the difficulties that beset the cathedral question, now that it has been opened. But I cannot believe that they are so great that good feeling, candour and generosity might not surmount them. It is most desirable that the issue of the present crisis should be an enduring settlement. I can only add my mite of recommendation ; which is, that inquiry should at once be made, if it has not already been done, as to the methods by which similar difficulties, involving probably interests more complicated than any which are presented here, have been met and adjusted, in recent times, in England, at Ripon, Manchester, St. Albans, Truro, Liverpool and Newcastle. Would not all acquiesce in the arrangements and mutual accommodations which English justice and good sense have dictated under very similar circumstances ?

Very sincerely yours,

H. S.

10 TRINITY SQUARE, TORONTO,

June 1st, 1882.



