

Vicar's Notes

The arrangements outlined in last month's magazine could not after all be carried out. Mr. Morton found that his family had not recovered sufficiently from a chapter of illnesses and accidents—including a fall from a bedroom window—and so he had reluctantly to withdraw. I had an anxious few days trying to make provision for the Sunday Services, but all was settled in time to enable me to go on holiday with a quiet mind. I am very grateful to those who rallied round to help, and so made this possible: our own Reader, Mr. Bishop; the Readers from Harrow and Heston whom Mr. Lewis, Secretary of the Readers' Board, sparing himself no time or trouble, found for me; the Clergy of All Saints', Hanworth, and Mr. Melville, who undertook their transport.

The actual holiday in a Railway Camping Coach, despite some days of bad weather, we found came up to all our expectations. It took my wife and myself back to the first days of our marriage, when we lived in some rooms in a farm-house and depended on oil-lamps and oil-cooking—and it was fun for a change to pump water from a well instead of having it run freely from a tap. The coach was situated in a very quiet and pleasant spot, the old cattle-siding of a small country station on a single-track branch line. Our station was important because here the single-track formed itself into a loop, and trains could pass each other—a complicated process involving much activity in the signal-box, and safeguarded by the giving of tokens to ensure that only one train could be on any section of line at one time. We became very much identified with all that went on, and the children specially got to know the inner workings of signal-boxes and shunting engines and other delightful mysteries. We made long or short journeys by train nearly every day, and were much impressed by the courtesy and friendliness of all the Cornish railwaymen we met. They were always greatly concerned about "the little girl with the bad leg," and went out of their way to make things easy for her.

This "Grace of God in courtesy" of which Belloc wrote seems to be a strong feature of life in Cornwall, and must come from the strong

Christian tradition which still prevails there. We worshipped in one of the ancient centres of this tradition—the Parish Church of St. Newlyn East. It has many striking features, one modern one being the bold array of Cornish choughs on the Altar back-cloth, so vivid and life-like that one would think an actual bird was there, perching on the service-book. A much older one is the historic fig-tree, growing out of the south wall of the church, and making people wonder where its sustenance comes from. This fig-tree provided me with the theme for a sermon which I have preached since returning home. Near it is an alms-box on which this verse is inscribed:

"In ancient days Newlyna came,
The saint who gave this place its name;

Her staff she planted, and she prayed:

'Let here a church to God be made.'

This fig-tree is her staff, folks say;

Destroy it not in any way,
Upon it lies a dreadful curse—
Who plucks a leaf will need a hearse!"

These are rather grim and frightening lines, if taken seriously. I will not repeat what I said about them in my sermon, but just briefly refer to one or two points. There is no power in a curse except the fear or hatred which it might arouse in those against whom it is directed. When a man is said to die from a curse, he really dies from fear, not from any power inherent in the curse itself. But even if there were such destructive power in the curse of a saint, no saint would use it—if he did, he would immediately cease to be a saint! Such things have often been attributed to saints and prophets (e.g., the story of Elijah's calling down fire from heaven to consume a hundred innocent men who annoyed him) because lesser men are all too prone to ascribe to their heroes motives and actions which would have come all too easily to themselves in similar circumstances.

The same thing has happened, of course, in regard to our Lord Himself in the incident of the so-called "cursing of the fig-tree"—an event which the curse connected with the fig-tree in Newlyn immediately brings to mind. Our neighbour,

Professor S. H. Hooke, that venerable and learned Biblical scholar who is always ready to place his great reserves of wisdom and knowledge at the disposal of others, has dealt with this incident on more than one occasion, and he shows, I think conclusively, that Jesus never cursed a tree at all. Peter mistakenly assumed He had, and Matthew changed Mark's account so as to make it accord with Peter's view. Peter, of course, wanted to believe that our Lord would use power to destroy His enemies—and seeing a withered fig-tree, he immediately, but almost certainly wrongly, assumed that it was the same tree which Jesus had found barren the day before, and jumped to the conclusion that the power was there all right. If it could be used to blast a tree, then it could also be used to blast Herod, the Romans, the priests, the whole crew—so everything would be all right! It took Peter, as it takes all of us, a long time to understand God's mind in regard to the use of power—but it is amazing that for so many years the Church should have thought that Jesus could **curse** a fig-tree—and

also amazing that people today can still believe that a saint could wish the death of anyone who plucked a leaf from a tree.

It is rather disappointing to find that so little progress has been made with the re-decoration of the small hall, and it now looks a grisly mess—a necessary stage in its improvement, but it is obvious it cannot be left like this. Four or five members of the Young Wives' Group have put in many hours of hard work, but they have had no support, though earlier in the year a number of people had gaily offered to tackle the whole hall. But as so often happens, when it comes to the point, it is very difficult to get such things carried through. I have already learnt this by personal experience in another parish, where after an enthusiastic start, in the end I was left as the only volunteer, and only one-quarter of the intended work could be completed. I hope to put in 2½ hours at the job on my next free evening, and I very much hope others will rally round and do the same. Please let Mr. Geer know when you will be able to help.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about
people, activities & organisations

THE MOTHERS' UNION

My dear M.U. Members,

Our new session commenced with a most helpful talk from Miss Gough of the C.E.Z.M.S. Those of you who were unable to be present missed a very happy afternoon. We listened to a talk on "Women of India," several of our members dressed in the colourful costumes—one as an Indian bride. The boxes were opened and it was most encouraging that eight more members became box-holders. The C.E.Z.M.S. has now amalgamated with the C.M.S.—negotiations for this unity have been proceeding for some time; the change of status of women in India has made it quite impossible for C.E.Z.M.S. to maintain its own distinctive work. I feel sure our members will give their support to C.M.S. and will pray for blessing upon this unity.

Dates to note:

November 6.—Quarterly Service in Church, 3 p.m.

December 4.—Branch Meeting, Parish Hall, 3 p.m. Speaker: Mrs. Stevens.

On Saturday, November 2nd, a M.U. Jumble Sale will be held in the Parish Hall at 2.30 p.m.

We shall be grateful for any jumble and will gladly collect any articles. Please contact Mrs. Bird or Mrs. Beckett.

Altar Flowers:

Offers of help to provide flowers for the Altar will be much appreciated by Mrs. A. Lewis, 50, St. James Road.

N.S.P.C.C.:

Collections for the above society will be taking place during September—gifts, however small, will be welcomed.

M.J.B.

THE SCOUT GROUP

Although the morning of Saturday, September 7th, was wet and dismal, by the time the Mayor arrived to open our Fete the sun was shining and it proved to be a lovely afternoon.

This was our first large effort to raise money for our Building Fund and the result of £87 was very gratifying, though undoubtedly the uncertain weather must have kept many people away—otherwise we might have passed the £100 mark.

TWICKENHAM APPEAL FOR REFUGEES

Wayside was open for two days, staffed by members of the Mothers' Union and other helpers, to receive gifts of clothing for refugees. The total result from all centres in the Borough has now come in, and amount to 383 sacks. The organisers are very grateful, and ask me to thank all who helped from St. James's to bring about this gratifying result. Cash gifts would still be very gladly received by the Hon. Treasurer, T. Thomas, Esq., Barclays Bank, 2, York Street, Twickenham.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

- Oct. 1.—8.0 p.m. Prayer Group (W).
- Oct. 2.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union. Speaker: Mrs. Garrington (place of meeting to be announced).
- Oct. 3.—7.15 p.m. Service of Thanksgiving for Harvest. Preacher: The Rev. G. H. Stevens (Editorial Secretary, C.M.J.; formerly Rural of Derby). 8.45 p.m. Harvest Supper and Entertainment (Hall). Admission by ticket 3/6.
- Oct. 6.—Continuation of Harvest Festival. 8.0 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. Holy Communion.

- 11.0 a.m. Matins.
2.30 p.m. Children's Gift Service.
6.30 p.m. Evensong.

- Oct. 7.—7.30 p.m. R.D. Conference (St Mary's Hall, Twickenham).
- Oct. 18.—St. Luke. Holy Communion 7.15 a.m.
- Oct. 21.—8.0 p.m. Annual Meeting of Hampton Council of Churches (W).
- Oct. 26.—7.30 p.m. Parish Social (Hall). N.B.—This is a provisional arrangement, and further details will be announced later.
- Oct. 28.—SS. Simon and Jude. Holy Communion 7.15 a.m.
- Oct. 30.—8.0 p.m. Young Wives' Group (W).
- Nov. 1.—All Saints. Holy Communion 7.15 a.m. 7.30 p.m. Magazines should be ready (V).

MARRIAGES

- Sept. 21.—John Arthur Townsend to Patricia Saunders.
- „ 21.—Henry Richard Hunt to Beryl Edith Andrews.

BURIALS

- Sept. 5.—Florence Emily Baker, 76, Windmill Road, aged 76 years.
- „ 7.—Harriet Celia Stout, 95, Hampton Road, aged 95 years.
- „ 7.—Willie Ernest Stuart Thatcher, 14, Eastbank Road, aged 75 years (Interment of Ashes).
- „ 17.—Ellen Miller, Laurel Dene, aged 87 years (at Teddington).

FROM BEYOND THE SPIRE

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS

S.P.G.'s continuing responsibility as the handmaid of the Church

The Standing Committee of the Society at its midsummer meeting always has some of the most important and far-reaching decisions of the year to make. Following on a detailed survey of the whole field of work, fresh promises of support must be given to 48 Dioceses over-

seas, so that they can with assurance enter upon a new year of work. The problems which have had to be considered by the Standing Committee this year have been particularly difficult. S.P.G.'s obligations are spread over a world of unpredictable upheavals in politics, in economics, and in nature, and under each of these headings there have been recent events and circumstances which are having immediate practical consequences for the Dioceses in one part of the world or another, and for us as partners in obedience with them.

The choice before us

Inflation in many countries of the world as well as our own has made it essential for the conditions of service of our missionaries—a prime concern of the Society—to be adjusted. A loss in the value of money is also having its effect in a dozen different ways upon the Society's ability to sustain world financial upheavals is one which has to be met. The alternative is to reduce the front line strength of the missionary force. There is no middle course. Our choice of aim is therefore a simple one. We are not, however, a secular organisation with a static purpose, but a Missionary Society with a divine purpose, and with a huge unfinished task before us, as is demonstrated by the reviews from the Metropolitans and Bishops overseas.

They have this year brought before the Society a long list of urgent help with projects, which may be consequent upon major political changes, or which follow directly from the special endeavours that the Society has made recently on behalf of the Church in the Provinces of South Africa and the West Indies.

Heavy though the extra cost of maintaining existing obligations may be, the Standing Committee is convinced that some of the new opportunities must be seized now. Every item ought to be taken up, but since lack of means compels a choice, the Society has listed from amongst the many, fourteen new items to be included in the overseas budget. These represent a minimum of endeavour. In this difficult decision, a number of really important requests have had to be laid aside.

The sum of these annual additions to the Society's budget amounts to £35,000. (A detailed list of all the needs and opportunities is given, which we have not room to print here).

Meeting the Churches' need

The Standing Committee is confident that by the united efforts of all who support the Church overseas through S.P.G. the policy of development can be maintained. As a guide, we would note that the need will be met if contributions and donations from parishes and friends can be increased this year by one-

sixth, compared with 1956 gifts. That is to say:—

	7d. for every	6d. last year
£1	3s. 4d.	£1
£11	13s. 4d.	£10

Contributions made "to S.P.G." will be apportioned between the General Fund, Medical General Fund and the Emergency in Jamaica (where 110 churches were recently severely damaged or destroyed by an earthquake) so donors will know that the whole work is being assisted. Friends may also, if they so desire, earmark for the General Fund or Medical General Fund or for the Emergency in Jamaica.

We commend this urgent task to the active sympathy of the Church at Home, praying that through the grace of God we may be worthy of our vocation. The initiative and the power are always with Him. Love, patience and faithfulness must be our response as we dedicate ourselves anew to the upholding of the Mission of the Church.

LAMPS FOR THE LORD

A C.M.S. missionary in India reports that "on Republic Day our school was illuminated with hundreds of little oil lamps, placed on all the roofs and every available ledge. To anyone passing along our road it present a lovely sight. The children danced for joy, as they came out into the dark compound to look at it. Then our Principal gathered them all together for prayers under the stars. She spoke of the little lamps, whose wicks the children had made from torn-up pieces of rag, soaked in oil. 'By yourselves,' she said, 'we are only like those torn-up pieces of rag, yet if we are soaked in the oil of God's grace and love, and lit by His Spirit, we shall be able to show forth His light to the world.' So we ask you to pray for that gift of His Spirit for all our children here."

The quarterly "C.M.S. Prayer Paper" contains suggestions for daily thanksgiving and prayer in connection with work in many parts of Africa and the East. It is sent free, on request to Publishing Dept., C.M.S., 6 Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4.