

THE CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

MEMOIRS OF THE EARLY DAYS

(Contributed.)

SOUTHLAND.

During the mid-sixties the principal settled portions of Southland were visited by the Marist Fathers, the first missionaries being Father Moreau, who made the then rising town of Dunedin his headquarters, his confrere being Father Martin. As previously mentioned, the mission of Father Martin was to travel through the back country searching for members of his scattered flock, an occupation which kept him almost constantly in the saddle. In the *Southland Times* of October, 1864, an account appeared of the opening ceremony of the first humble church in Invercargill (St. Mary's), erected by Father Martin. The recently erected church in Clyde street, for the use of the Catholic congregation (states the report), was dedicated on Sunday last by the Right Rev. Dr. Viard, Bishop of Wellington. He was assisted by the Vicar-General, the Very Rev. J. J. P. O'Reilly, and Rev. Father Martin. At half-past 10 o'clock, the hour appointed for the opening ceremony, the sacred edifice was filled in every part, many of other denominations being in attendance. In an inaugural address the Bishop warmly complimented the Catholics of the district on the perseverance they had displayed, under difficulties of no ordinary nature, in the erection of a place of worship; fully acquainted as he was with their love of the Church, he had come amongst them to confirm and strengthen them in their holy work. At a later stage in the proceedings the Very Rev. Vicar-General took the opportunity of thanking all those who had contributed towards the erection of the church. He mentioned particularly the name of Mr. Davies, who, although belonging to another denomination, had given most liberally towards the erection of the building, and among the members of their own congregation the name of Mr. Murray, to whom they were much indebted for his perseverance and exertions in their cause.

From the *Tablet* report of the recent opening of the fine new St. Mary's Church, which replaced the historic one just referred to, I extract the following:— 'Some idea of the rapidity with which events have marched during the past forty years may be gained by the fact that "Old St. Mary's" (as it is now called) was the first Catholic Church in Southland. That of Riverton (which was erected in 1877) was the second, and until so late as 1882, when the church was erected at Gore, there was no Catholic place of worship between Invercargill and Milton. So recently as last Sunday week (April 30, 1905) there were interred in Invercargill the mortal remains of Mr. Maher, of Kew, who was one of the active promoters of the first Catholic Church erected in the southern capital. His interment took place on the day on which the last Mass was celebrated in the old church, erected in 1864. Father Martin left behind him in Invercargill and Tuapeka and elsewhere in the diocese of Dunedin a name and memory which are a benediction. He was succeeded by Father Billiard, then followed Father Carden, and after him came Father Higgins.'

To Mr. James Kennedy, of Greymouth, a resident of Southland during the period he writes of, I am indebted for the interesting particulars which follow: From about 1882 to 1887 Invercargill and the surrounding districts were served by the Jesuit Fathers. The Rev. Father McInroe was parish priest, with Fathers Reidy, Keenan, and Dooley as assistants, and in the rotation named. During their term of office the Dominican Convent was established, and the nuns introduced. The first Superioress was Sister De Ricci, who died some time ago at Geraldton, Western Australia. The opening of the convent was a red-letter day for the district. On that occasion the Rev. Father McInroe, who had a wide reputation as a ripe scholar and as an eloquent preacher, declared the open-

ing of the convent to be the greatest blessing that could be bestowed upon the congregation. Under the guidance of the eloquent Jesuit, religion made rapid strides in the district. He made long and frequent journeys on horseback, visiting the people in out-of-the-way places. Father Reidy was an exceptionally active man, and an adept at the once popular game of handball. Father Keenan, who came later, also led a strenuous life. He was invariably accompanied on his travels by an Australian friend, a huge kangaroo hound. Then came Father Dooley, and he and Father McInroe were the last of the Jesuits in New Zealand. The last-named, together with Father O'Malley, were originally brought from Australia by Bishop Moran to conduct a high school at Dunedin. Father Dooley was a brother of the parish priest of Galway, and as a large proportion of the Irish Catholics of Southland were from the vicinity of the City of the Tribes he was at home amongst his co-religionists. He was engaged in what promised to be a monumental work, the 'Lives of the Archbishops of Ireland.' Bishop Moran frequently visited Invercargill, and many a stirring address did he deliver in the old church. Another welcome visitor in those days was Father (now Dean) Burke, the present pastor of the parish. There were not many who dared to cross swords with this doughty champion of the Church, who on one notable occasion in those days routed a whole host of assailants, who rushed to assist each other in the columns of the press. Father Burke was in temporary charge of the parish when Mr. Redmond arrived on his first Home Rule mission. He read a splendid address to the Irish member of the House of Commons, who delivered a magnificent oration in Sloan's Theatre. At its conclusion Mr. Denniston, editor of the *Southland Times*, was heard to declare that it was beyond comparison the ablest address ever delivered in Southland. The clergy took an active interest in the Catholic Literary Society, which at that time held an exceptionally strong position. The then Catholic schoolmaster, subsequently M.H.R., and now Native Judge Gilfedder, frequently took the floor in debates and literary contests. About this time Father McInroe rendered a notable service to the cause of truth. One of the local papers went out of its way to publish in full a tirade of an alleged 'escaped nun.' An election was looming in the near future, and one of the proprietors was an aspirant for parliamentary honors. It was the general opinion that the publication mentioned was a wretchedly conceived bid for political support from a special section of the community. But Father McInroe was not the man to sit down tamely and hear the Church of which he was such a zealous pastor maligned and reviled. On the following Sunday evening, to a packed congregation, the valiant Jesuit scathingly denounced the tactics of the journalist in question, who by the way was defeated at the election. Father McInroe was killed in the streets of Sydney a few years ago while endeavoring to save a child from being injured by a runaway horse.

(To be continued.)

THE AMERICAN FLEET IN MELBOURNE

THE CATHOLIC WELCOME

The Queen City of the South (writes the Melbourne correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal*) excelled herself in giving a right royal welcome to the American fleet. All that is brightest and best in Melbourne, and for the matter of that, Victorian citizenship, did honor to by honoring the Americans. When the odds come to be summed up it will be found that the generosity of the Melbourne celebration was on a level with that of Sydney. Of course, we could not vie with the Mother State in regard to the natural advantages of the harbor, but we gave a welcome from the shore which was lined for thirty miles, beginning at Port Phillip Heads. The Admiral's progress through the

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