

The Church in New Zealand

CATHOLICITY IN CANTERBURY: EARLY MISSIONARY EFFORTS.

Timaru

This district (Timaru), founded by Father Chataigner in 1869, comprised the whole of South Canterbury, from the Rangitata to Waitaki.

He selected a beautiful site outside and overlooking the town. The view extended over the surrounding plains and over the vast expanse of ocean. There he built a presbytery.

At this time there were but few Catholics in the town, and as these belonged to the working and domestic classes, their resources

able of accommodating 800 persons, a good presbytery, a convent, with a first-class school, two beautiful schools frequented by 300 children, an Hibernian Society, a literary society, an orchestra, and about 900 Catholics.

Shand's Track

This district was separated from Christchurch in 1871, at the same time as Lyttelton and left to the administration of Father Chervier. At that time it comprised the whole of North Canterbury with the excep-



FATHER ECUYER, S.M.

Who succeeded Father Chervier as pastor of Christchurch, in June, 1871.

were limited; but the priests lived meagrely, and economically and with the offerings he received, he undertook to build a church. It still exists—enlarged and embellished by his successors. [This church was supplanted by the present stately edifice.—Ed. N.Z. T.]

After his arrival, Father Chataigner, desired to establish schools for girls and boys, and to confide the girls to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. They opened negotiations, to this effect, with the Provincial House in America and the project was sanctioned by the Superior-General at Paris.

The Sisters arrived in the month of January, 1881, and at their own expense immediately commenced to construct a magnificent building in order to serve as a boarding school and residence.

The district in its present state shows sufficiently the zeal of the priests and the Catholics. It possesses a beautiful church, cap-

tion of Banks Peninsula and Christchurch.

The priest settled at Shand's Track, afterwards called New Headford, 2½ miles from Lincoln and 12 miles from Christchurch. It was a district in the less fertile plains, with some houses scattered here and there.

A Catholic gave five acres of land to the priest who built first a house and then a presbytery. He also opened a school. The priest divided his time among the principal centres of his mission. His apostolic journeys were almost continual and not without dangers, above all when he had to cross the Ashley or Waimakariri. One day when he was returning from Rangiora in a trap, he noticed while crossing the first branch of the Waimakariri that the water was very high. Without thinking he continued his journey towards the second branch where there was a bridge. Having crossed the bridge he saw in front of him a lake forming a causeway

which blocked the path. To go back was impossible, he loosened the reins and trusted to Providence. The least deviation would have been fatal, but the horse followed the causeway without faltering. Some of the Catholics working on the railway line and who knew the priest stopped to watch anxiously the progress of his hazardous course, and when he arrived safe and sound on the river bank, they gathered round him with loud applause.

The church at Shand's Track was now insufficient for the needs of the people so another was constructed under the title of "The Church of Reparation." It was a pretty church, 60 feet by 30 feet, not counting a spacious sanctuary and a large sacristy. Its spire rose to a height of 35 feet above the roof. In the interior a dado reached all around; there were 12 double painted windows on each side and a triple window, 20 feet high, in the sanctuary.

Waimate

Waimate is a dismemberment of Timaru. Before 1869 some Catholics scattered here and there as servants at the stations or as wood cutters in the forest, were visited by the priests from Christchurch. From 1869 to 1875 they were visited by Father Chataigner, who bought some ground in the growing town in order to build a church there.

After this Father Goutenoire was placed in sole charge of Waimate. During his time the work of the railway and the cultivation of the wood had attracted a great number of workers to Waimate; among them many Catholics. Father Goutenoire took advantage of the circumstances to found a permanent mission then. In 1875 he commenced the construction of a church which was blessed in October, 1876, by Archbishop Redwood.

Temuka

Temuka is a filiation of Timaru. It was separated in 1876 and entrusted to the administration of Father Fauvel, who was born in November, 1833, at Hauteville-la-Sui-chade, the Fatherland of the famous Tancrede of the Crusades.

When he arrived the Catholics were not very numerous in the town; the majority being for the main part independent farmers in the country. When he had discovered the dispositions of the Catholics, Father Fauvel informed them of his intention of building a stone church and asked for their assistance. All agreed willingly and the foundation stone was laid on December 16, 1879, by Archbishop Redwood in the presence of a great gathering of people. Father Fauvel drew the plan of his church and urged the men to hurry with the work. When the steeple was finished he blessed the cross and placed it on the top of the steeple.

Rangiora

This district is a filiation of Shand's Track from which it was separated in 1877 and was entrusted to Father Binsfeld. This priest, originally from America, was at once sent as vicar to Nelson. In 1875 he accepted the difficult mission of visiting German and Polish colonists who had settled at Jackson's

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