

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL,  
NEW YORK.

St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth avenue was dedicated on Sunday, May 30, 1879, but the great Gothic structure has not yet been formally consecrated according to the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. The reason is the usual one. It is still burdened with debt. According to the law of the church until all liens are paid off it cannot be consecrated. After it is thus formally set aside for divine worship the property can never be alienated. Lest the leading church of the faith in New York should seem to hang back in the march of progress the authorities have determined that an effort shall be made to wipe out the debt.

With its rich congregation and the prestige of being the residence of the Metropolitan this might be considered an easy task, but they are to go at it by degrees. The idea now is to have the consecration take place coincidentally with the celebration of the silver jubilee of the building in 1904. The subject has been discussed in the diocesan council and the preliminary steps looking to the successful attainment of this plan have been taken.

The debt now remaining on the property is less than \$250,000, the valuation is more than ten times this sum—and the programme by which it will be wiped out easily and without imposing too hard an immediate burden on the people, is in process of incubation.

The corner stone of the cathedral was laid by Archbishop Hughes on Sunday, April 15, 1858, in presence of one of the largest assemblies gathered together in this city up to that time. The building was first opened to the general public, at a great fair that was held within its walls during the months of October and November, 1878. The dedication or ecclesiastical opening, was on May 25, 1879.

The history of the progressive sales of the Cathedral site gives an interesting view of the relative values of property at various ages of the city's growth. It was owned originally by the city of New York. The city conveyed the property on May 1, 1799, to Robert Sylburn for \$1,012.50 and an annual quit rent of four bushels of wheat. The Cathedral occupies only one-half the square thus conveyed to Sylburn, Madison avenue dividing it in half.

The original plot was bounded by Fourth and Fifth avenues, Fifth and Fifty-first streets. Sylburn sold this property on Feb. 20, 1810, to Travers Thompson, and the latter with Thomas Cadle conveyed it in March, 1810, to Andrew Morris and Cornelius Heeney. Heeney was a partner in the fur business of the original John Jacob Astor. He was identified with much of the early progress of the Catholic Church here and in Brooklyn, to which he devoted a large portion of his fortune. He died a bachelor and left his estate for the benefit of the orphans of Brooklyn. It consists of several acres of Heights property, the income of which is distributed yearly by the Brooklyn Benevolent Society in the manner his will provided.

Morris & Heeney sold the property to Dennis Doyle, on May 21, 1821, subject to a mortgage they had given to the Eagle Fire Insurance Company. In September, 1828, this mortgage was foreclosed and at the Sheriff's sale Francis Cooper bought the property for \$5,500. On Jan. 20, 1829, he sold it to the trustees of St. Peter's and St. Patrick's churches for the same amount with interest to date. They wanted it for a cemetery. The agitation against this use of the property had the desired effect and the project was abandoned because it was so far away and the roads leading to it were so bad.

St. Peter's and St. Patrick's are the only Catholic Churches in the city incorporated like those of the Protestant denominations under the old State law with boards of trustees elected by the pew-holders. All other Catholic churches are incorporated under a system that makes the board consist of five trustees—the Bishop, the Vicar-General, the pastor and two laymen appointed by the bishop. In the early years of the last century there was much trouble with the lay trustees system in vogue here and elsewhere. These laymen, usually unlettered in both the spirit and the text of the strict exactions of canon law which the Catholic Church is governed, usurped the prerogatives of the pastors and occasioned nearly two generations of trouble. One of the worst of these was in St. Peter's parish, where the lay administration piled up a mountain of debt by mismanagement and wilful financing and then had to make an assignment as a corporate body.

They received deposits of money on which unsecured and unwise rates of interest were paid, of course, out of the principal. The assignees were the Rev. Dr. John Power, then vicar-general, and the Rev. Dr. Charles Constantine Pise. The former dying, the latter sold the assets to the Rev. J. R. Bayley, afterward Archbishop of Baltimore, and James B. Nicholson in October, 1851. In the following year a partition suit was brought to determine the value of the half interest of the St. Peter's corporation in the Fifth Avenue property and this half was sold to the trustees of St. Patrick's for \$30,000. The quit rent of four bushels of wheat was commuted for \$83.32.

From these facts of the legal record of the transfers of the property it can be seen how utterly unfounded is the oft-repeated and generally believed fable that the city of New York gave away the site of the Cathedral to the Church authorities for a nominal consideration. Bishop Hughes, who reserved the land for his cathedral saw in imagination what he beheld in reality. The busy city grew up round the spot then thought out in the country.

It has not been announced who is to have charge of the raising of the fund to extinguish the Cathedral

debt. Bishop Farley had special success in this direction in clearing away the burden of the Dunwoodie Seminary as the testimonial for Archbishop Corrigan's jubilee. His trip to Europe and the Holy Land, which he will begin next month, may be in preparation for a second effort. The political Solon who declared that "a national debt is a national blessing" has a large ecclesiastical following in the application of the principle thus enunciated. — New York Sun.

## AN AWFUL CHASTISEMENT.

A few years ago the parish of Somerstown, England, was under the care of an aged, but excellent priest; a man who devoted himself to his flock, and watched over each individual of it as far as was in his power. Many were the weary hours he passed with those whose ears seemed deaf to his exhortations, and many the prayers he said for such as never prayed for themselves.

There was one person in particular who caused him much anxiety. This was a young girl who had formed an attachment for, and was intending to enter into marriage with, a young man of vicious character and dissolute habits. The priest being acquainted with these facts, and knowing that such an alliance would only entail upon the girl a life of utter misery, did all in his power to prevent it. At length, yielding to her pastor's entreaties, the girl peremptorily discarded her unworthy suitor.

The man was furious, and his wrath concentrated itself upon the head of the priest, whom he shrewdly suspected of being the occasion of his disappointment. He set himself to work to devise a method of revenge, and proved the justice of his intended victim's course by determining upon a horrible sacrilege and murder. He resolved to feign severe illness in an out of the way place, remote from his own dwelling, and send for the priest and shoot him through the heart when he approached his bedside, calculating on escaping from the locality before the crime could be detected.

Having found a companion as bad as himself, he told him of his plan, and desired him to go to the priest and beg him to come at once to a dying man; he, in the meantime, would go to bed in the house designated, as the priest when the priest arrived he might have no suspicion of any deception. So, at the time fixed upon, the friend started for the presbytery.

It was a dark night, and there was a violent storm of wind and rain. The old priest had just finished saying his office, and was preparing to go to bed when he heard a loud knock at the door.

It was somewhat unusual for any one to call so late, especially in such weather, and the old man opened the door and looked out, and tried to listen to the stranger's reply to the inquiry of the housekeeper as to what was his business; but the wind blew so hard and the rain made such a noise against the windows, that he could not catch the words. In a few minutes the housekeeper came up stairs.

"A sick call, Father," answered the messenger.

"It is too late to-night," answered the priest, "tell them I will go to-morrow morning."

"But, father, the messenger says

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the man who sent him in very ill, and he hopes you will go at once." "I will speak to him myself," said the priest, and going down stairs, he asked whether the case was a very urgent one, saying he would call early the following day; but the man insisted that it was most pressing; that his friend was indeed dangerously ill.

"It is past eleven o'clock," returned the old man, "and I am weak and infirm."

"I was desired to beg of you to come immediately," replied the stranger, "my poor friend needs your ministry at this moment."

"I will be with him by six o'clock to-morrow morning," said the priest again.

"For the love of God, I entreat you to come to-night," exclaimed the man.

"Well, I cannot refuse when you ask me for the love of God," said the devoted priest, turning aside, and preparing to follow his conductor.

In a few moments the two set out through the inky darkness. The rain poured down in torrents; a sharp wind beat against the old man's face, and he shivered with cold and fatigue; yet still he walked patiently onward, regardless of the storm, for had he not been asked to do it for the love of his divine Master?

After they had proceeded silently on their way for some time, the guide turned down a narrow street, and stopped before an isolated and dingy looking building. He used no ceremony about entering, but pushing the door open motioned the priest to follow him up a rickety stair-case. On the landing he closed the door, and pointed to a closed door, and said:

"That is the sick man's room—will you be pleased to walk right in, Father? He is expecting you."

The unsuspicious priest passed in as directed, the guide remaining himself outside. The apartment was dimly lighted, but in one corner the priest could distinguish a bed, with the form of a man stretched upon it, and nearly covered entirely from view by the bedclothes.

The man made no movement as the priest approached, and bent over him with inquiries respecting his condition. Somewhat alarmed, the priest drew aside the bedclothes and fastened to his heart that the face beneath was icy cold and the eyes fixed and glassy. He felt for the pulse hastily, and as his fingers touched the wrist, they came in contact also with the pistol tightly clenched in the dead man's grasp.

That the weapon had been designed as the instrument of his own destruction, the good priest never for an instant imagined; going to the door, he called for the man who had guided him hither, and who quickly advanced at his bidding. Pointing to the lifeless form on the bed, the agitated priest demanded an explanation.

For some moments the accomplice gazed at the remains of his wretched associate in speechless amazement; then suddenly sinking upon his knees before the intended victim he form on the bed, the guilty man had been suddenly called from life, that he might not execute his design upon God's holy minister.

The remorse-stricken accomplice manifested every sign of a sincere repentance, and led the priest safely back to his home, where like a true disciple of the Master, who on the cross begged forgiveness of God spent many long hours of that eventful night praying for the men who would have assassinated him.

For the living that he might be dignified from his career of crime, and for the dead that repenting at the moment of dissolution intercession in his behalf might yet avail him.—Young Catholic Messenger.

A CURIOUS DEVOTION IN INDIA.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an inborn quality of the Catholics of the Malabar Coast of India. Almost all their churches are dedicated to Our Lady and her principal feasts are celebrated with great splendor. One of the greatest is the Nativity. This falls at the close of the agricultural season, when the crops are about to be gathered in.

The hills and valleys are covered with richest green, and flowers of a thousand hues dot the plain. The monsoon torrents are then gentle streams, flowing past fern-covered banks and stealing through beds of golden lotuses.

This day commences the New Year for the Catholic natives, and is heralded with pious exercises and ceremonies, including a public novena. Every morning during the novena the boys of the parish come with plates full of flowers in their hands and paper chaplets on their heads, and, standing around the statue of Mary Immaculate, they sing hymns in the vernacular and scatter flowers at her feet.

On the morning of the feast people come from every direction to be present at the High Mass; and the headman of each village brings along with him a sheaf of corn gathered from his principal field. Many pagan landlords contribute to this feast, that the blessing of the "Holy Lady" may fall upon their fields too; so that the sheaves swell to a goodly size before the church is reached. They are all piled up on a table kept in the open air a few yards from the main door of the church.

At the appointed hour the vicar comes out, dressed in surplice and stole, and goes in procession to some neighboring fields. He enters one of them, blesses the standing corn, and, stooping down, reaps a few blades. These are carried away to the church, to the sound of the inevitable top-tom, and added to those on the table. The whole mass of corn is then blessed and incensed, and taken into the church to be placed at the left side of the altar.

The High Mass is then sung, followed by the "Te Deum" and Benediction. At the close of the service the priest in his vestments advances to the altar rail to distribute the blessed corn to the head of every household.

The master of the house, arriving home with the "novena," proceeds at once to the kitchen and drops a few grains in each of the dishes, especially prepared for the occasion. All the dishes are invariably of vegetables, no meat being allowed. It is a custom on this day for all scattered members of a household to meet at their ancestral home for dinner, if they are within a reasonable distance. One will neither be offered, nor will he accept anything in another house until he has partaken of the family meal with his kinsmen.

At the close of the dinner a pot of coconut milk—pot, the liquid found in the fruit, but a milky juice extracted from the substance and sweetened with molasses—is brought to the table. The oldest member present, irrespective of sex, serves this "ros," which is drunk with good wishes for the opening year. The following day work begins, and the golden corn that waved in the fields soon yields to the sickle of the reaper.—Edna Stanislaus, in the Eve Maria.

TUNNEL TO IRELAND.

The proposal to make a tunnel from Great Britain to Ireland was discussed at the Engineering Congress in Glasgow.

Mr. James Barton, a member of the Council of the Institute of Civil Engineers, made a paper dealing exhaustively with the practical details of the scheme.

The line proposed in the plans begins at Stranraer Railway Station, and passing north enters the tunnel at five miles, and descending one in seventy-five passes under the shore line at the Ebbstone Beacon at nine miles. It passes round a curve of a mile radius at the head of Deafout Dyke at sixteen miles, and reaches the shore line at the Island of Magge County Antrim, at thirty-four miles. Rising one in seventy-five and passing out of the tunnel at thirty-nine and a half miles, it joins the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway at forty-one miles, and runs ten and a half miles along it into the terminus at Belfast. The total length from Stranraer to Belfast is fifty-one and a half miles, of which thirty-four and a half is tunnel, and twenty-five of this under the sea.

The working of the line from Stranraer to Belfast will probably be by electric motors from installations near the main shafts, one at each side of the channel, and it is intended that trains be run at a speed of sixty to seventy miles per hour, so that the time in the tunnel would be a little over half an hour, and the whole distance traversed from Stranraer to Belfast under an hour.

The cost of the tunnel is estimated by the engineers and by a contractor at £10,000,000, exclusive of interest during construction, and this leaves a considerable margin for contingencies. The financial projections near the main shafts, one at each side of the channel, and it is intended that trains be run at a speed of sixty to seventy miles per hour, so that the time in the tunnel would be a little over half an hour, and the whole distance traversed from Stranraer to Belfast under an hour.

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