

THE SMYTH MEMORIAL CHAPEL

:O:

CATHOLIC CEMETERY, WEST TERRACE

SOME INTERESTING FACTS.

By P. E. RICE,

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The fact that Requiem Mass was again celebrated at the Mortuary Chapel at the Catholic Cemetery, West Terrace, on All Souls' Day caused me to search the early record of the Church in this State to ascertain the history of this building and of the Priest in whose memory it was erected.

The Very Rev. John Smyth, D.D., the second Vicar-General of the Diocese of Adelaide, was one of the most outstanding personalities of the early days of the Church in South Australia. He was born at Kilmore, near Castle Pollard, in the County of Westmeath, Ireland, in 1824, and commenced his studies for the Priesthood at the Diocesan Seminary, Navan, in 1846. When Bishop Murphy, the first Bishop of Adelaide, was in Ireland looking for Priests for his diocese, he invited the Revs. John Smyth and Peter Hughes to come to Adelaide after ordination. Father Smyth was sent to Propaganda College, Rome, to complete his studies and was ordained Priest on June 10, 1852.

His Work in Adelaide.

Father Smyth arrived in Adelaide on April 6, 1853. He was retained in Adelaide by the Bishop, and being energetic and an eloquent preacher he became in a very short time a great favorite with Priests and people. He was for seventeen years connected with and indefatigably labored for the Cathedral, and it was mainly through his efforts that St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral was erected.

He was always in request as a



Very Rev. John Smyth, V.G.

preacher, and delivered most of the occasional sermons of his time. The most important sermons delivered by him were: At the laying of the foundation-stone at the opening of the Cathedral; the opening of St. Laurence's, North Adelaide; the panegyric at the obsequies of Bishop Murphy; and the funeral oration at the death of Sir Dominick Daly, the Catholic Governor of South Australia.

Administrator and Vicar-General.

After the death of Bishop Geoghegan (the second Bishop of Adelaide) in 1864, Father Ryan, V.G., was appointed Administrator, but he was unable to continue in office owing to ill-health, and Father Smyth was appointed Administrator on March 30, 1865. During his administration, pending the appointment of a new Bishop, large and important works were undertaken, including St. Francis Xavier's Hall, churches at Kadina, Kapunda, Pmkerton Plains, and Port Elliot, and extensions were made to others; lands for churches were purchased at Saddleworth, Wallaroo.

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On the arrival of Dr. Geoghegan's successor (Bishop Shiel), the first official act of the new Bishop was to appoint Father Smyth his Vicar-General. During the six years of Dr. Shiel's episcopate, the Vicar-General was virtually the Bishop, for during that time the Bishop made two extended visits to Rome, and the whole burden of the diocese fell on Father Smyth.

Illness and Death.

In his later years the Vicar-General was surrounded by many difficulties, with the result that his health gave way, and although he had been unwell for some months his last illness was very short. Father Smyth died on June 30, 1870, in his 47th year. During the Bishop's visit to Rome in 1869 he obtained from the Holy Father the appointment of Father Smyth as a Doctor of Divinity, but when the news of the honor arrived in Adelaide the recipient was dead. The death of Dr.

Smyth was a public calamity, so universally we he loved and revered by all the citizens, and few Priests enjoyed more than he the confidence of the whole Hierarchy of Australia. Among many tributes paid to him was the following: "He was a gifted man, whose talents were much enhanced by his acquirements; as a preacher his eloquence was of a rare and beautiful kind; as a Priest his memory is enshrined in the heart of every Catholic in South Australia. Father Smyth cannot be forgotten. It is superfluous to add that while his name is held in benediction, let prayers ascend to the Throne of Grace that perpetual light shine upon him." The obsequies took place at the Cathedral, and the people could not refrain from giving audible expression to their sorrow: the funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Tappeiner, S.J., one of the most scholarly men in the colony.

The Memorial.

The suggestion of a memorial soon gained wide support. A committee was

formed, and generous contributions were received, including many from non-Catholics. The first idea of a memorial was to erect an orphanage, but this was abandoned in favor of a Mortuary Chapel over the grave of the Vicar-General.

The foundation-stone of the chapel was laid on December 18, 1870, by Archdeacon Russell, V.G., assisted by the Revs. T. Bongaerts, P. Hughes, P. Corcoran, and C. McCluskey. Mr. E. J. Peake, S.M., chairman of the committee of the Memorial Fund, in presenting the Archdeacon with a trowel, said that it would be a lasting memorial of a good and great Priest. The occasional sermon was delivered by the Rev. C. H. Horan, O.S.F., from the words of Ecclesiasticus, xxxi., 7-8: "Blessed is the man who is found without blemish, who has not gone after gold, and put his trust in money and treasures. Who is he that we may praise him, for he has done wonderful things in his life."

The building was solemnly blessed and opened on October 21, 1871, by His Lordship Dr. Shiel, in the presence of a very large assemblage of spectators. The Bishop was assisted by Fathers Horan, O.S.F., Lowlan, O.S.F., Murphy, Kennedy, Hughes, McClusky, and Nevin. Father Horan, O.S.F., again preached the occasional sermon, from the text: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou has given Me, that they may be one, as we are." (John, xvii., 11.)

Description of Building.

The building is one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture in South Australia. Octagonal in plan, with walls of carved stone, four of which are carried up as gables, and with delightful detail of cut freestone. The carved-stone, winged, grotesque gargoyles at the top of each buttress are a rare feature in Australian architecture. An open-boarded, high-pitched roof, surrounded with an exquisitely designed fleche, acts as a landmark for a great distance. In 1931 the walls were treated to arrest further fretting, and there is no doubt that it is well worthy of preservation. The opinion has been expressed that to erect a

worthy of preservation. The opinion has been expressed that to erect a similar building at the present time would cost some thousands of pounds. The original plans were the work of the late Mr. Edward John Woods, F.R.I. B.A., and the building was erected by Messrs. Peters and Jones at a cost of about £500. The restoration was carried out under the supervision of Mr. H. Jory, F.S.A.I.A., by Messrs. J. Hennessy and Son.

Conclusion.

Mass was said for the first time in the chapel, as far as any records show, on Tuesday, October 1, 1872, by the Very Rev. C. A. Reynolds, Administrator of the Diocese (afterwards Archbishop of Adelaide). There are no records of Mass having been said there again until All Souls' Day, 1931, and it is pleasing to know this year also Mass was offered for the repose of the souls of those buried in the cemetery.

Dr. Smyth is buried on the eastern side of the chapel, and a brass tablet marks his last resting-place: Archdeacon Russell, V.G., is buried on the western side, and there is a marble tablet erected to his memory by the Dominican Nuns, Cabra, on the western wall above the grave; Dr. Lawrence Bonaventure Shiel, the third Bishop of Adelaide, is also buried in the chapel, but there is nothing to mark his tomb. There are also four stained-glass windows erected to the memory of Patrick Leahy sen., Joseph Batholomew Siebert, John and Margaret Pearson, and David and Margaret Adamson.