Story and Pastors of St. Philomena's First of Nebraska's Cathedrals

IURCH edifice is second only to A the home in the attachments it inspires in its members. It shares with the home many tender associations of the family, empering the joys, consoling the troubled, and brightening the shadows of life's journey. It grips the heart of childhood with the sacraments of communion and confirmation, bestows its blessing on the union of hearts and lightens the burden of sorrow when affliction comes. These attachments and associations multiply with the years and deepen in their tenderness. So when the remorseless hand of time is laid upon the edifice, when unfeeling commerce diminishes its usefulness and demands surrender, it is natural that membys of the congregation should view the keen regret.

The sale of the property of St. Philo-mena's Roman Cathelic cathedral and the coming demolition of that favorite house of worship severs the relations and associations of nearly forty years and is deeply alt by the older families of the parish. In few short weeks the cathedral doors will be closed forever. As at present planned the farewell service will be held on the second Sunday in October and thereafter the congregation will be assigned to other churches. The parish name will cease at the same time, possibly to be revived without the "cathedral" dignity in the projected church and parish in the traintown district. The new cathedral of St. Cecilia, Fortieth and Burt streets, when completed will bear the honors which the old parish lays down.

First of Its Class.

St. Philomena's was the first cathedral or bishop's church erected by the Catholion of Nebraska. At the time of its dedication in 1868 it was considered the finest church in the state. For a dozen years ft was the only parish church in Omaha, and its chiming bells called worshipers from all parts of the city. As the city grew new parishes were created and new churches built, each taking a new slice of territory out of the parent parish until at last the cathedral parish was confined almost entirely to the business district, bounded by the river on the east, William street on the south, Twentleth street on the west and Cass street on the north. The recent rapil expansion of business and industries in this territory markedly dereased the congregation. Family after family was crowded out of the parish, leaving but a remnant of a congregation of 600 families seven years ago. Its fate was manifest long before the decree issued.

The history of this sacred edifice is invested with deep religious interest and hallowed associations. From 1357 to 1868 ploneer Catholic families worshiped in a little brick building on Eighth and Howard streets, on a site long ago absorbed by railroad yards. It was overcrowded years before the material condition of the members warranted a larger church. When the civil war closed and men turned earnestly to peaceful pursuits religious life in Omalia took on new energy, and the need of a larger building became urgent. Besides the actual needs of Catholics there was the deaire to provide a church building worthy of bearing the dignity of a cathedral. Rt.



RT. REV. JAMES O'GORMAN, First Bishop of Nebraska and Builder of the Cathedral

ings now on them was at least \$82,000. As evidence of the high hopes of Omaha's future entertained at that time an extract from a letter written by the pastor, Rev John Curtis, is instructive. Under date of May 6, 1868, he writes: "Omaha, they say, is going to be a very large city. Its inhabitants have doubled every year in number. We opened our cathedral a few weeks since only and even now it is as much crowded as the little old church."

Roll of Pastors.

The roster of pastors of the cathedral is as follows: Rev. John Curtis, February, 1863, to July, 1873; Rev. William Byrne, to Rev. James M. O'Gorman, the first bishop December, 1876; Rev. J. J. Jeannette, to of the vicariate of Nebraska, had labored December, 1877; Rev. P. O'Brien, to May, among the people since May, 1859, and was 1878; Rev. D. I. McDermott, to October, yet without accommodations due the office. 1879; Rev. William Kelly, to September, The bishop had the cathedral project in 1880; Rev. J. E. English, to June, 1881; Rev. mind even before the congregation actively M. Riordan, to August, 1882; Rev. Thomas entered on the work. The two lots on O'Connor, to December, 1885; Rev. P. F. which the cathedral and residence stand McCarthy, to June, 1893; Rev. S. F. Carroll, we purchased in May, 1885. The locality to January, 1897; Rev. M. J. Barrett, to considered very desirable. The two October, 1897; Rev. H. J. McDevitt, to Oclots on the south, on which the school tober, 1896, and Rev. P. A. McGovern, the building stands, were purchased from O. present pastor. The latter has the distinc-D. Richardson in August, 1861. On these tion of being born in the parish, ordained



REV. WILLIAM KELLY, Collector of Cathedral Building Fund.



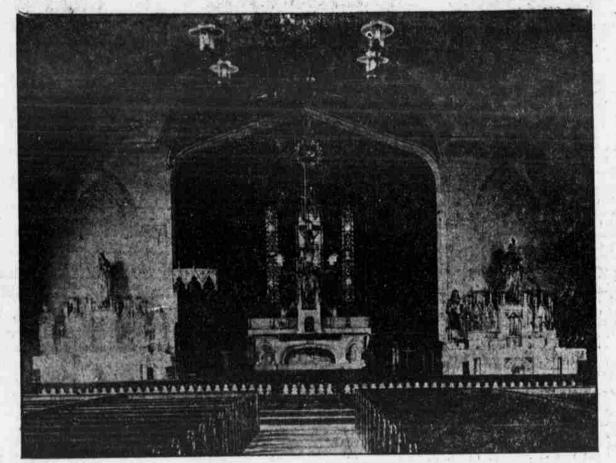
REV. P. A. M'GOVERN, in Charge of Cathedral Parish.



REV. JOHN CURTIS, ' First Pastor of the Cathedral.



REV. JAMES W. STINSON,





REV. P. A. MCARTHY, stor of Cathedral, 1885-1882.



lots was built the Richardson homestead, in the cathedral and of serving as pastor a large square two-story brick building longer than any one on the list, his term veneered with cement plaster. This was being nearly nine years. His associate, the bishop's residence and remained the Rev. James W. Stenson, has completed nine parochial residence until 1888. Evidently years of service in the parish.

Next to Father McGovern in length of the nearness of the site to this residence largely governed the selection. Round -- pastorate comes Father McCarthy with a about were the leading hotels, the homes record of nearly eight years and six years of the well-to-do and of the working as assistant, a total of nearly fourteen classes. years of labor in the parish.

Building the Cathedral.

Father Curtis was the the first of the pastors to enter the higher life. His re-The first active steps toward building the mains rest beside those of Bishops O'Gor-

Some Notable Events.

The old cathedral has been the scene of

this region, whose vicariate extended from

died in the afternoon of July 4, 1874, and

the division of the vicariate. The sees of

sathedral were taken in 1866. In the fall of man and O'Connor in the crypt of the cathat year Bishop O'Gorman commissioned thedral. Fathers Byrne, O'Brien, Riordan William Kelly financial missionary for and O'Connor have also joined the mathe building fund. Generous conrtibutions jority. Father Kelly retired from active were secured by him in eastern cities, and duty years ago and enjoys at the patrithese, with the donations of the congrega- archal age of four score and seven the hostion, swelled the fund sufficiently to warrant pitality and veneration of a congregation construction. The cornerstone was laid he served so well. Father McDermott is June 2, 1867. The Herald of the following pastor of the historic St. Mary's church, day said: "A large concourse of people wit- Philadelphia. Father McDevitt is stationed nessed the interesting coremony. There in Portland, Ore. Father McCarthy is anwere persons present from every Christian chored at Jackson, Neb. At Hubbard, sect in the city, and many from Council nearby, is Father English. Father Carroll Bluffs, Bellevue, Florence and all the sur- is stationed at North Platte, Father Jeanrounding precincts, 2,500 in all. The after- nette at St. Joseph's hospital and Father noon was clear, warm and brilliant as if Barrett at Florence.

God and nature contributed liberally to render more gorgeous the ceremonies of the day. The mud had dried up." The ceremony was conducted by Bishop O'Gorman, many events which rise spire-like above the assisted by Revs. Egan and Brazell, the routine of its activities. There was witlatter delivering the address on the occanessed the burial of two bishops and the sion. In the cornerstone were placed coins installation of two successors. Rt. Rev. of the year, copies of newspapers of the James M. O'Gorman, the pioneer bishop of

day, relics, missal, etc. The building was completed in the spring the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains, of 1868 and was dedicated on Passion Sunday, March 29, of that year. The records was buried there. His successor, Rt. Rev. of the church are ellent regarding this im- James O'Connor, was installed September posing ceremony, and newspaper reporters 1876. During his administration the develof that period must have had an off day, opment of the western country required so little attention did they give it. Only the Republican mentions the event. In the Omaha, Lincoln, Cheyenne and Helena were issue of March 31, 1868, is this brief para- created, and at the close of his life, May grapht

"The solemn ceremonies of blessing and opening the Catholic cathedral last Sunday was attended by a large concourse of peo- June 4, 1890. Rt. Rev. Richard Scannell, ple. The impressiveness of the occasion the present bishop, was installed in the affected all attendants and the sermon of cathedral April 12, 1891. the bishop was especially appropriate. The Catholics have now much the finest church edifice in Nebraska."

Careful investigation shows one mistake in this scant account. Rev. John Curtis, whom fell the honor of first pastor of the cathedral, delivered the dedicatory sermon, speaking on "The Infallibility of the with richly robed priests. Eishop Scannell Church." Bishop O'Gorman conducted the occupied the throne. The honor of celededicatory ceremony and was celebrant of the pontifical high mass which followed. His assistants were Rev. Keenan, deacon; Rev. I. Dexacher, subdeacon, and Rev. John and Father English subdeacon. Within the Curtis, master of ceremonies. Among the chancel rail were Fathers Smith and Rennialtar boys on the occasion were Frank Burkley, John and Patrick H. Swift, Will Moran and Patrick Clifford.

Benefactors and Cost.

The principal benefactor of the church was Mr. Edward Creighton. As a tribute to his liberality a marble tablet was placed in the east wall of the sacristy. The marble altar, costing \$5,000, was donated by Mrs. Edward Creighton. It was completed and put in place in the fall of 1868. The ladies of the congregation donated the large organ, costing \$4,000.

The original cost of the cathedral build- McDermott. Father McDermott was ining and its equipment is not definitely duced by the bishop to come to the diocese It is estimated at \$50,000. school building, erected in 1888-4, cost \$21,000, ability, an "eloquent orator, forceful, ag- John Tobias of Philadelphia, 23 years old, The marchial residence was erected in 1888 gressive, intolerant of shams, very soon burned his neck and chin severely. Inciat a cost of \$7,000. Two thousand dollars he had the congregation sitting up, wide dentally he lost a necktie and a shirt The speaker, a druggist, went on earnestly: were paid to O. D. Richardson for lots awake and taking notice. As Father Mc- through fire. He extracted the tooth, howseven and eight, and \$2,000 to William A. Carthy describes that period, "there was ever.

ALTAR OF ST. PHILOMENA'S, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL IN THE WEST.

the condemned "Mollie Maguires," an or- Patrick's day service. It is a tradition of paused. The congregation turned to view ganization held responsible for many crimes the cathedral that he gave the congregation the solemn scene. "Talked to death," sugcommitted in the coal mines around Scran- annually successive chapters of Irish his- gested an unfeeling spectator. "A beneton. Knowing every phase of that tragedy, tory. How many years this occupied is diction for the living," murmured another. the motives of the actors, the plots and not known. It is recalled, however, that counterplots, he brought to his new field on one 17th of March he treated his conof labor an intense dislike of secret socie- gregation to a revised version of his favorties, particularly Irish societies. He was ite theme. He imported an orator for the procurers of the act of union hanging in not slong in telling the congregation his occasion, a priest of vast mental resources, opinions. He told the members of the so- eloquent and exhaustive, one capable of cieties they must get out of the societies or sounding every note in the keyboard of. out of the church. He made the church too Irish sentiment. Mass began at 9 a. m. It hot for some of them. On one particular was expected the service would be con-Sunds morning, while discussing his fa- cluded in about an hour, giving the orator vorite subject, he referred in scathing about forty minutes to perform his task. terms to the financial difficulties of Arch- Therefore, a funeral was scheduled for 19 bishop Purcell of Cincinnati. Bishop O'Con- a. m. The cathedral was crowded. Father nor instantly interposed and ordered Father McCarthy snuggled into a comfortable McDermott to cease speaking. He obeyed, chair and the distinguished orator got into The mass was finished and the congrega- action. The first half hour was devoted to tion dismissed without another word, the annals of the four masters. Oliver Bishop O'Connor departed for the east on Cromwell was taken in hand in the second the afternoon of that day, and that even- half hour and was receiving a florce laming Father McDermott finished to his own basting when the funeral party arrived. satisfaction the sermen abruptly ended in The pallbearers and some of the mourners

manuscript.

those familiar with the incident. Bishop

Irish Oration Cut Down.

27, 1890, the see of Omaha was numerically stronger than the vicariate in 1876. His re-

mains were placed in the cathedral crypt A notable, joyous scens witnessed in this

hallowed shrine was the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary March 20, 1893. The old building never looked brighter

than on that day, with its lavish floral decorations, illuminations, a throng limited to its capacity and the chancel filled brating the anniversary high mass fell to Father Kelly, the first priest ordained in Nebraska. Father Jeannette was deacon han of Council Bluffs, Father O' Brien of Duniap, Is., and Fathers Conway, Mori-

arty and Colenari of Omaha. Father McCarthy, paster, delivered an appropriate address, historical and reminiscent, eloquent in its simplicity and its heart-touching tributes to the benefactors trough on the sidewalk. His companion of the cathedral.

A Different Scene.

A scene of thrilling interest, surprising because unexpected, one wholly different future. Wet and crestfallen, the masher treatment. from any witnessed in the cathedral, occurred during the pastorate of Rev. D. L.

The from Scranton, Pa. A man of uncommon match in the extraction of an aching molar,

McDermett acted as spiritual adviser of failed to give the proper keynote to a St. the head of the procession. The orator Whether intentional or not the interruption brought a sudden close to a two hours' flow of Irish oratory, leaving the basa the sir. Eminent in Music. The choir of St. Philomena's has always occupied the front rank as a musical or-

est and finest in the west, and few outrank it today in sweetness and purity of tone. This fact and the superior accoustics of the building brought out the best qualities of vocalization, and often commanded the assistance of professional singers. The organists were Mrs. Celia Burkhart, Messrs. Schaller, Decker, Hoffman, Miss Fannie Arnold and Miss Margatet Swift, the morning." Thereafter, it is said by pressed into the aisles. Father McCarthy, the latter holding the position for the was observed to shift his position. But past fifteen years. O'Connor required Father McDermott to the orator noted neither time nor incident.

write his sermons and deliver them from The third half hour found him slashing the FR. M'CARTHY'S REMINISCENSES penal laws, and the fourth half hour, re-

served for the Victorian period, might have Some Activities and Incidents of Speextended into the fifth, if something didn't cial Note.

ganization. Though wholly a volunteer

organization, it has commanded some of

the best vocal takent in the city. For many

years the organ was regarded as the larg-

During the administration of Father Mc- happen. The funeral party solemnly In response to a request for his recol-Carthy that loyal son of New Jersey never marched up the alsie, with the casket at lections of nearly fourteen years service in

Some Quaint Features of Everyday Life

Covering the fire with his hands the flame

- and

Work and Heatth.

Girls Duck a Masher. mak the corner of Girard avenue from then on throughout the day gave lit- is the custom for the mother to put it to two well dressed girls picked up tion evolved an original plan. one of two young men who had

trough. The girls, Mary Foley and Margaret Donavan, both 18 years old, were out for a Sunday evening's stroll, and when they were near Frankford avenue and Berks

street two dapper young fellows, in light suits, flashy ties, white vests and tan shoes, began to ogle them. The girls tired of running away from and trying to dodge their pursuers. At Second street they seized the sudden jerk landed the lighted match Copper mines bar out typhoid." one of the mashers and threw him into a on Tobias' necktic and shirt front. In a quickly took to his heels.

A policeman helped the water-soaked masher out of the trough and told him to was soon extinguished and Tobias went to go home and let girls on the street alone in St. Luke's hospital, around the corner, for

disappeared. New Way to Pull a Tooth. In the attempt to employ a door and a

investment for the four lots and the build- short time before, in his home city, Father hours of the morning with a jumping pain whooping cough. In the sheep country, on Sunday, .

the jam."

his chin and breast.

and Second street. Philadelphia. tie or no relief. Ingenuity born of despera- play among the sheep, and the next day it is well. The men and women who Procuring a plece of stout cord, Tobias work among lavender, gathering or distillcen following them for several tied one end around the aching member. ing it, never have neuralgia or nervous squares and threw him into a watering The other he tied to the knob of the back headache. Lavender, moreover, is as good door. Standing off until the string was as a sea voyage for giving tone to the

taut, he reached into his pocket, took from system. Run-down persons often work his match safe a match and struck it on for nothing among lavender plants in order to build themselves up. Salt miners can Then he suddenly applied it beneath his wear summer clothes in blizzard weather chin. The idea, of course, was to excite without fear of catching cold, for colds the motor nerves to a sudden jerk from are unknown among salt workers. Brewdanger. This succeeded and the tooth, eries and tanneries and printing ink facblood red at one end, swung back and tories bar out consumption. Turpentine forth with the motion of the door. But works and rope works bar out rheumatism.

Horse a Tobacco Chewer. moment they were aflame and scorching

Harry Ewan of Clayton, N. J., has a fine black horse, but it is addicted to bad habits. It is an inveterate tobacco chewer, and it is almost impossible to drive it past a hotel without treating it to a glass of beer or whisky.

The horse seemes to prefer the beer, "Oil workers are never baid. Visit ol' takes it from the pail without spilling regions; examine the workmen's hair; it a drop and licks out the pail. Mr. Ewan is soft and thick and glossy. For pecan't imagine where the horse learned troleum cures incipient baldness, and if its bad habits and says it is often very your hair is thinning, rub some in. Never embarrassing, especially when he has women in his carriage.

On his way to church, accompanied by "Shepherds enjoy remarkable health The several women, the horse stopped in front odd odor of a sheep seems to drive away of a hotel and it took some time to con-Gwyer for lots one and two. The original something doing all the time." Only a Tobias had been awakened in the early disease. Sheep are especially good for vince him that he could not get a drink



ST. PHILOMENA'S CATHEDRAL AS IT STANDS TODAY.

the cathedral, Rev. P. F. McCarthy of build a new house and put in a steam Jackson, Neb., writes in part:

I caught my first glimpse of St. Philomena's cathedral in September, 1877, as I was whirled past it in a hack, enveloped in a cloud of Omaha dust. After fixing myself up at the old Metropolitan hotel. after my long journey from New York city, I went out to look for the cathedral storm, it lost me as a helmsman. and found my surmise correct that the I thought I might live to see St. Philoedifice I saw on my way to the hostelry mena's church celebrate its golden jubilee, was the building I was in search of. I but I notice the fates have decreed otherfound domiciled in the old Episcopal restdence Bishop James O'Connor, Father associated in my mind with St. Philo-Kelly, Father Jeannette, Father Reynolds mena's. May the masses offered up therein and Father Martin. I was immediately and the prayers of its people inure to the booked to sing the high mags the next salvation of all who were ever connected Sunday, but when Sunday came I was so sick, as a consequence of an attack of ague, that all I 'could do was to hear mass. Father Kelly was the celebrant and FR. M'GOVERN'S FAREWELL NOTE I was the server. My first night in Omaha

was spent in the haunted room in the old house. In the morning one of the priests asked me if I had been annoyed in any way during the night. I had to reply that

I had slept the sleep of the just quite undisturbed.

I came to the cathedral as an assistant in May, 1879. Rev. D. I. McDermott was in his mouth. Various remedies applied when a child takes whooping cough, it the pastor. There was certainly something doing that summer, to use a very familiar but expressive phrase. There was considerable dissatisfaction with the pastor on account of his scathing denunciations of certain Irish societies. When Father McDermott left Omaha in September of that year Father Kelley took charge, and I had a a colleague Father English. During the following year Father English and myself were never so busy praying and saving souls as to be unable to attend the base ball games and other innocent amusostanding with one foot on the summit of precincts to different activities. the cross and the other on the transverse

of spectators. Some criticism was ex-1883 came the dump riot. The militia and the neighborhood of the church reminded

> In 1885 I was appointed to take charge one thought that reconciles one to the passof St. Philomena's. In assuming charge ing of the eld church, namely, that I hope I fell heir to a considerable debt and had to continue in the future with its parishito face the expense of a large amount of ioners the same pleasant relations that street paying. It was necessary also to have characterized the past."

heating plant. We got along smoothly enough until 1893, when something dropped. In fact, the hard times struck us suddenly and your humble servant was caught like a man half-way across a fence. I was up against it, to use a modernism. While the old church fortunately weathered the

wise. Memories sweet, and the reverse, are with this sacred edifice.

Vale, St. Philomena's.

Pathos of the Leave-Taking of Pastor and Flock.

Rev. P. A. McGovern, pastor of the cathedral, was born in the parish, baptized and ordained in the cathedral and natur-

ally feels keenly the conditions which make abandonment necessary. He says:

"The removal of St. Philomena's will be to many of the Catholics of Omaha much as the death of one of the family is to the household. It will leave a vacancy that can never be adequately filled to many of us, who, through baptism, received our spiritual life within its walls; it will be as the loss of a tender mother whose worth can be measured only by the inestimable favors she has bestowed upon us. To others, who have had a devoted love sanctified and perpetuated in the sacrement of matrimony, the spot on which the church now ments. It was during this regime that the tender, even though the necessities of comstands will ever recall memories sweet and steeple climber was photographed while mercial life have dedicated its hallowed

arm. The feat caused a great deal of because the grace of the priesthood, as well as the gift of faith, was conferred pended on the griests for permitting such an exhibition, but the fault finding was worthy pasters who have presided over its destinies during the forty years of its exseveral companies of the regular army ministered to the spiritual wants of its people, and what has impressed me most one of war times. The old church prop- union which is so marked a characteristic about them is the spirit of harmony and erty on Eighth and Howard streets was of their corporate life. Without a single taken by the B. & M. Railroad company, exception this spirit has prevailed, and it but a settlement was made outside of has contributed not a little to the happlness of both pastor and flock. It is this