

The diocese of Vincennes has recently suffered a severe loss in the death of the Very Rev. John Corbe. In him, one of the last survivors of the zealous and devoted band of priests who left France and accompanied Bishop Brute, 37 years ago, to assist him in planting the faith in Indiana, then a little more than a wilderness but sparsely settled, has disappeared forever. None knew the sainted bishop more intimately—and how many times has the writer of this notice, and many more with him, hung on his lips whilst he recounted to us in an intensely interesting and scarcely imitable manner, the many anecdotes connected with the long voyage on the sea, the long ride and stoppages from New York to Vincennes, the first day's rest in the village, the distribution of the missionary field to each one, then the parting of one after another, from Evansville to Chicago, on horseback, with the saddle bags containing the chalice, vestments and altar stone, and a scanty purse of from 40 to 50 dollars to begin with. We were young then, and every word that he spoke, breathing of holy respect for the saintly chief of the band, and unconsciously revealing the spirit of sacrifice which pervaded all, will remain until we also die, engraved on our minds.

Father Corbe was already a priest when he arrived in Indiana. Born in the neighborhood of Vitre, a town of the diocese of Rennes in Brittany, he had for a few years after his ordination fulfilled the functions of Preceptor in the family of the De Langles, one of the oldest and noblest families of that Catholic province, when he met Bishop Brute looking around for devoted men to share his labors with him.

The very sight of the holy man made him determine at once to follow him. Gentle, courteous, keen of mind, well read and exemplary in his manners, Bishop Brute did not wish to send him to too great a distance from himself, and, accordingly stationed him in the hamlet of St. Francisville, ten miles below Vincennes, on the other side of the river Wabash, which separates Indiana from Illinois. His flock consisted of a small number of Creole families—living some both in and around the hamlet, and some about 25 miles further below the river near Coffee Island. They were extremely poor, and far from affording to him the support which congregations usually give to their pastor, rather thought it only right to look to him for assistance in their own needs. They had kept the faith, but feeble by nature, and having had at rare intervals the opportunity of seeing a priest until then, their life and manners were the very reverse of the teachings of the faith. All the efforts of Father Corbe were at first directed to induce them to put up a small frame church. With the assistance of a little sum of money furnished by Bishop Brute, and the labor of the most willing—he succeeded—and built himself besides a small wooden house.

This was a great effort on the part of his parishioners. To expect more for the present from poor farmers who, cultivating but a few patches of corn, had barely enough to live themselves, would have been useless. Having brought along from France a good stock of clothing, and seeing around him any quantity of game, he looked to his rifle for a supply of bodily food, which he brought home and prepared with his own hands. Father Corbe in his early days was a good marksman and shot his deer. Nevertheless from one cause or another he was now and then reduced to straits. And many times have we heard him say that he would then step in, as it were by accident at the house of some neighbor, at the dinner hour, to get himself invited to their table and steal a meal.

Once, and whilst he was in the very midst of his hard life, accompanying Father Martin, the present bishop of Natchitoches, we paid him a visit. It was in the midst of the cold winter of 1839-40. We ourselves had shortly before arrived from the old country, and on his cheerful and pressing invitation had resolved to see him at home as soon as possible. It was on a bitter cold day. We had for several good reasons made the journey on foot; and having succeeded in crossing the deep swollen stream on a clumsy, rickety ferry-boat pushed through cakes of floating ice by means of a long pole, we ascended the bluff on which the town is situated, and rather surprised him by entering his cabin late in the evening freezing with cold and hunger. Had it not been for the hearty welcome he gave us we might have been tempted to repent having ventured on coming to see him at such a time and in such an hour. His cabin consisted of two rooms planted on four stumps which allowed a free circulation of air through the loose unjointed boards on the flooring. He managed to find a piece of bacon which he fried, set before us a cake of corn bread and called us to supper. Fatigue helping, we eat with appetite and almost relished this scanty meal. But the worst was before us. How were we to spend the night in such a house? There was only one bed with one mattress, and covered hardly sufficient for one person. And this bed, with a table, some shelves which received his books, a few rough chairs, and the few indispensable kitchen utensils, were the only furniture of the house. After talking of Bishop Brute, who had been dead only for a few months past, until late, the mattress was brought from the bed, placed close to the hearth on which burnt a few embers stuck together, and the three laid down on the hard, narrow couch, in their own clothes, helping themselves with the scanty covering as best they could, in tender charity obliging the young student to occupy the place closest to the fire. It is useless to say that none slept. In the morning, notwithstanding their desire, both priests had to abandon the thought of saying Mass, on account of the cold. We wished, however, to have a full experience of our visit, and insisted in trying our hands at the chase. The thick forest was hardly forty rods distant. But unaccustomed as were the new comers to the required caution, our hunt was entirely unsuccessful. After a long tramp through woods and prairies, during which we only started one deer, who went with tail erect like a white flag, skipping the ground far ahead of us until he disappeared, we returned home to partake of the remains of the meal of the preceding day and what little we had been able to bring along from Vincennes in our haversacks.

This little anecdote will serve to illustrate the spirit of sacrifice which sustained the men whom Bishop Brute had recruited to help found his diocese, and, in this particular case, Father Corbe.

Nor did the venerable Bishop neglect any means in his power to keep up their courage. We have seen that he held Father Corbe in particular esteem. In fact he made him his spiritual adviser and as he was his (F. C.'s) own already, for the purpose of mutual confession they entered into a holy bargain and arrangement. One had his stated time to come to Vincennes, and the other his own to go to Francisville. Whenever it was Bishop Brute's time to visit Francisville, he never failed to take along in his saddle bag a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine for Mass. A bottle of wine was a treasure, and the priest calculated closely how often he would be enabled with it to celebrate Mass. When it was Father Corbe's turn to come to Vincennes, the Bishop, if he had the leisure, would accompany him part, and sometimes the whole way back.

With pure conscience and light hearts they little thought of hardships on those to their delightful journeys.

While the more timid priests listened, the Bishop had something pleasant to say. We heard Father Corbe relate once the incidents of one of these journeys which will interest you and many of your readers especially. The Bishop was, he says, a very careless rider. He never paid any attention to his horse, and it was a wonder he did not fall often. Nevertheless, in some way or other, he managed generally to keep in his saddle. As they were noising a part of the road, thickly shaded by trees on both sides, he began to amuse him by giving him a specimen of the music sung in some of the eastern churches, which he ridiculed greatly. The inevitable "amen" of the end came.

Many one or two dozen of these amens in every possible inflection of voice, preserving all the time a mimic gravity. Then, stopping all of a sudden to observe the effect produced on his companion by such a queer string of "amens"—"Why, do you think that is all? I only sang one half. Let me finish." And he went on finishing, when lo! his horse, whom the wonderful music seemed to excite, started on a sudden and carried him under the overhanging branches. He was decapitated, that is to say, he lost his hat, not his head, for, Father Corbe laughed heartily, notwithstanding a momentary apprehension of greater harm. Ah, you see there is always some danger in being perched high; *ignis ac ablati hamitubiter*, is a word of scripture applicable to even rash horsemen," remarked Father Corbe. "I have now to come down and pick up my hat. The hat hardly deserves picking up. After a while, both having laughed enough, they took out their rosaries and began the beads.

Sometimes the good Bishop would prolong his visits, and spend some days in Francisville. He shared in the poor fare, and in part at least the mode of life of the missionary. If he was prevented from seeing him for some time, he would invariably write. Sometimes also, with his permission, which he obtained when he thought he could absent himself.

Father Corbe would remain in Vincennes nearly all the week. Vincennes was the headquarters, where, besides the Bishop, he could almost always see several of his brother priests. Among those whom he met ofttest, was Father St. Palais, distant only twenty-seven miles, who told him on one occasion how mortified he had been, and how keenly he had felt that Bishop Brute on a visit had *discommodated* him to keep his own bed, which he had behind the altar in the sacristy; whilst himself spent the night stretched on the bare boards, which formed the steps of the altar, with the misal for a pillow, evidently sleeping little and praying more.

A greater mortification was reserved to Father Corbe. In one of his prolonged visits the Bishop said to him a few sharp words. This was very unusual. Towards evening he espied the young priest walking to and fro along side of the church, and thinking he was offended, he came upon him suddenly, and falling on his knees, begged his pardon. Taken by surprise altogether, Father Corbe for a moment, stood motionless, anger battling with respect in seeing the saint in such a position, on his knees! when, at last bursting into tears, he immediately begged his Bishop to stand up and spare him the humiliation. J. M.

ST. MARY'S OF THE WOODS.

Thirty-First Annual Commencement.

A large number of visitors from this city, and from abroad, attended the closing exercises of St. Mary's Academic Institute, yesterday. The exercises were of a very creditable nature, throughout, showing careful preparation on the part of both teachers and scholars.

The programme, as published in the Express, yesterday, was closely followed. The vocal and instrumental music was better than is usually furnished upon such occasions.

"Oh, How Sweet the Hunter's Song," a duett, by Misses Hattie Gunn and Nora Ryan, was sweetly rendered, and the "Little Buzzer Girl," by Miss Dora Falley, accompaniment by Miss Emma Bell, was produced in a very touching manner.

"Overture to La Dame Blanche," by Misses Fannie Bell, Emma Poulet, Julia Druley and Emma Eschmann, was well played.

The drama, "Knowledge and Virtue United," was then produced. The young ladies taking part in this acquitted themselves admirably. This drama was interspersed with many musical selections.

The "Bonnie Dundee Quadrille," by Misses Fannie Bell, Dora Falley, Julia Druley, Zoe Armstrong, Fannie Sheern and Carrie Gramling, was executed in a skillful manner.

The "Song of the Sea Shell" was sung by Miss Hattie Gunn, who is the possessor of a sweet voice.

"The Prescription," a comic duett, in costume, by Misses Rachel Shaw and Emma Poulet, brought down the house with roars of laughter.

"La Chappelle de Guillaume, Tell" was sung with spirit and animation by ten young ladies of the French class.

The "Overture to Tancredi," by Misses Katie Davis, Emma Poulet, Nora Ryan, Augusta Buhlen and Craigie Gunn, was one of the best instrumental productions of the day.

"The Beauties of Norma," a duett by Misses Craigie Gunn and Kate Davis, was creditably rendered.

"Santa Lucia," an Italian solo by Miss Clotilde Pilard, the best songstress of St. Mary's, was received with enthusiastic applause.

"Come, Fairies, Trip It," a chorus by twelve young ladies, was well received. Their voices blended together harmoniously.

"The Mocking Bird," a quartette by Misses Craigie Gunn, Emma Bell, Clotilde Pilard and Nora Ryan, was sweetly rendered.

"Treibe-Schneeflein," a duett by Misses Mary Bauer and Nora Ryan, was a sweet production.

"Oh, How I Love My Mountain Home!" a chorus sung by fourteen young ladies, was well executed.

Miss Clotilde Pilard again sang sweetly, this time, "Maringla," an Italian solo.

Miss Hattie Gunn sang a comic solo, "Mistress Mack," which was enthusiastically applauded. She was called back to sing it over again.

"Concordantia," a quartette by Misses Craigie Gunn, Clotilde Pilard, Emma Bell and Nora Ryan, was skillfully rendered.

The distribution of prizes occupied half an hour. Prizes for excellence of behavior were awarded to Misses E. Chanoweth, Anna McSheffrey, Carrie Gramling, Alice Van Valkenburgh, and Lettie Moore; the crown was given to Miss McSheffrey.

Graduating diplomas were then conferred upon Miss Emma Bell, Miss Clotilde Pilard, Miss Anna Jordan, Miss Julia Hickox, Miss Alice Baugh and Miss Craigie Gunn.

The exercise closed with a grand chorus, "Miss Craigie Gunn furnishing the accompaniment." This young lady is a musical performer of great promise.

Thus ended a very interesting public exhibition. It is pleasant to see an institution, so venerable and excellent as St. Mary's, still prospering.

The exhibition of fancy articles and painting, the work of students during the year, deserve more extended notice than space allows. In a room devoted to fine sewing and other fancy work were some beautiful specimens made by Misses Nora Ryan, Julia Waldron, Mary Bauer, Emma Bell, Craigie Dunn, Fannie Whitlock, Alice Baugh, Belle Johnson and many others.

In rooms devoted to the fine arts were many beautiful paintings. "The Storm" and "The Emigrant," by Miss Belle Johnson, of this city, are really fine pictures. A portrait of a Vincennes gentleman, (the late George E. Greene, of the Vincennes Sun,) by Miss Clotilde Pilard, is well executed. A Madonna from St. Luke, by the same lady, is a meritorious production. "St. Udoxia," by Miss Craigie Dunn, a young lady who seems to possess unusual genius, is a fine painting. Miss Lizzie Porter, of Rome, has two excellent pictures, one the "Beggars Boy," and the other a portrait. A really creditable painting is "Returning from the Field," by Miss Julia Hickox, of this city. The "Infant Savior," by Miss Craigie Dunn, is a lovely painting. There are many other meritorious pieces in this room.

The building at St. Mary's is large, spacious and thoroughly ventilated. The grounds look beautiful at this season.

Terre Haute Express.

Valuable Property for Sale.

For Sale, a two-story frame dwelling-house, five rooms, portico, porch, cellar, well, yard, etc., located in the centre of the city, hence most suitable for any business man, doctor, lawyer, etc. Title good. Price, \$2,500, one-half cash, the balance in two and two years, with interest and mortgage. Apply to Adam Gimbel & Son, Vincennes. my31bptf