

BLESSING CEREMONIES OF 1879 RECALLED

The Redemptorist Church Bells

The Redemptorist Church tower, and the magnificent peal of bells which it houses, were the gift of a Limerick merchant, Alderman John Quin, to the community in the late 1870s. And ever since that time the chimes have called successive generations of Limerick people to prayer and have become indeed identified with the history of our city.

It will be of interest to many of our readers to recall the ceremony of the blessing of the bells on Tuesday, March 25, 1879. The account we give is condensed from the files of the Limerick Chronicle for that day:

The ponderous peal of bells were cast at the firm of Messrs. Murphy, Dublin, and guided by the opinion of those skilled in those things we are warranted in stating that they reflect much credit on that Irish firm, being in tone and quality and material, and in all that is essential for producing perfect harmony and sound—a sound that will reach far and near—second to none of the kind, at least in the South of Ireland.

The bells arrived in Limerick about a fortnight ago (March, 1879) and were placed in the Redemptorist Church where they were suspended in timber arches, being just sufficiently

raised from the ground to enable their being chimed.

Today (March 25, 1879) the arches were richly and tastefully decorated with evergreens, wreaths and handsome bannerettes. The church itself wore a festive aspect. The pillars were encircled in folds of red cloth and had many appropriate ornamentations. From the tower was suspended a large Papal banner.

It was announced that the ceremonies would commence at half-past ten o'clock, but long before that hour large numbers

after the reciting of psalms, were anointed with holy oil.

The choir sang several hymns during the ceremony, which was of a very pleasing and impressive character.

The bells, with their weight of metal, were christened as follows: Our Lady Immaculate, 26 cwt.; St. Joseph, 20 cwt.; St. Michael, 15 cwt.; St. John The Baptist, 12 cwt.; St. Peter and Paul, 10 cwt.; St. Patrick, 8 cwt.; St. Bridget, 5 cwt.

At 11 o'clock, High Mass—*coram episcopo*—commenced.

quent sermon remarked that next to the ceremony of ordaining a priest and consecrating a church came the ceremony of consecrating the Christian bell. The ceremony they had witnessed that morning was a very unusual one and it was now nearly two centuries since a like ceremony was witnessed in Limerick.

He spoke of the great munificence of the citizen who had purchased the bells the sound of which would be gratefully heard for years to come not only by the citizens of Limerick but those who had lived miles outside it. Should the people of Limerick cease their gratitude to such a citizen? Not as long as the varied tones of those bells were heard in Limerick so long would they call forth the warm gratitude of the people to a gentleman whose munificence had provided them with means of consolation such as the Christian bell was capable of giving.

It was not a gift which could easily be forgotten by the people of Limerick. Their tolling would ever draw forth from the people sincere gratitude to the noble citizen who gave them and a prayer that divine blessing might rest and continue with his family.

The rev. preacher then spoke at some length on the nature and effect of the tone of the Christian bell. The ceremony they had witnessed was a significant one. The returning joys and sorrows of a Christian people would find expression in the various chimes of the bells. It would greet the newly baptised babe with notes of joy and the newly married couple with its liveliest chime and also the sad news of death would be followed by its appropriate tone.

After the ceremonies had concluded the band of the Industrial School played some appropriate airs and as Alderman Quin and family were escorted out of the church by the Redemptorist Fathers they were loudly cheered by the assembled crowds.

Tower

The Chronicle report of the ceremony of the blessing of the bells in 1879 concludes with a description of the new tower:

It is situate in the N.E. angle of the church in line with the facade but standing detached by some twenty feet and connected by means of a suitable cloister.

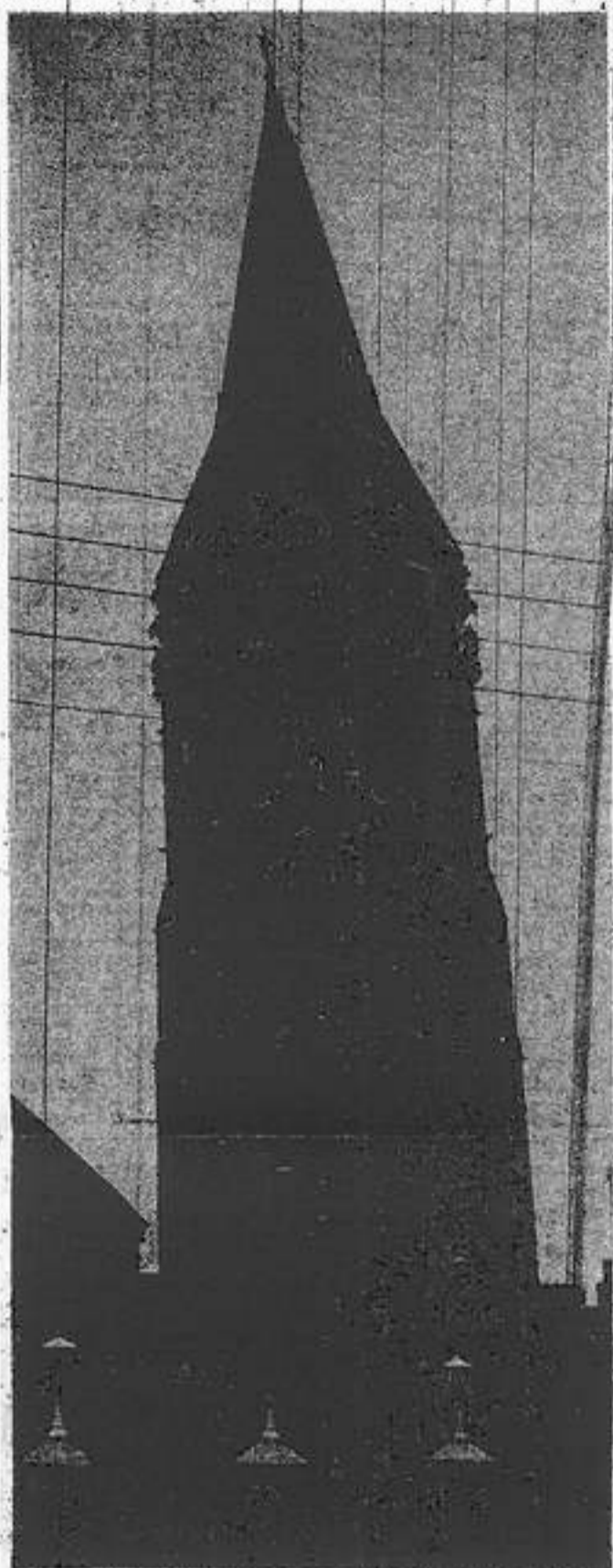
The style of architecture it is needless to say is similar to that of the church—viz. early English—and not only in the imposing mass of the structure but in every detail evidences the master hand of the architect.

The tower is about thirty feet square at the base and is divided into four main stories in the upper of which the bells will be hung.

The sweet sound of the bells will be permitted to float out through suitable large and ornate towers on the four sides. Over this the spire tapers away to a perfect point on which is fixed a floriated and gilded cross. The summit is fully two hundred feet over the ground below.

The entire sum expended on the tower and bells is £8,000. The bells alone cost £1,200.

It may be observed that the perfect arrangements observable throughout today's ceremonies are mainly owing to the untiring exertion of the Rev. Fr. Berghman. We should not omit to state that during the ceremonies the bells were occasionally chimed.



The Redemptorist Church tower, which reaches 200 feet into the sky, was the gift of Alderman John Quin, who also presented the magnificent peal of bells. The ceremony of the blessing of the bells was performed in April, 1879, and is recalled in the article on this page.

of persons were in the church, and in a short time its very ample limits were completely exhausted. Yet owing to the admirable arrangements which had been effected as little inconvenience as possible from overcrowding was experienced.

Procession

Precisely at half-past ten o'clock a procession emerged from the sacristy into the church in the following order: The Right Worshipful the Mayor (Mr. M. O'Gorman), attired in his official robes. He was followed by four mace bearers, after whom came the Roman Catholic members of the Corporation, who were dressed in official costume. They were as follows: Alderman Patrick Hogan, John J. Cleary, J.P.; Town Councillors: Stephen Hastings, J.P., ex-Mayor; James Nash, Laurence Kelly, John Hayes, Maurice Lenihan, J.P.; Jerome Counihan, Patrick Riordan, William Delaney, J. J. Brown, Martin Maguire, J. F. Walker, Stephen O'Flanagan, Daniel O'Connor, John Cronin, Dr. T. G. O'Sullivan, Eugene Cooney, J. F. Moloney, Thomas McMahon Cregan.

Then came thirty boys attired in black and white; next the Redemptorist Fathers as follows: O'Donnell, McLaughlin, Sampson, Frohn, McGovern, O'Neill, Peter, Doherty, Barry, Livius, Berghman and finally his Lordship the Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Butler.

The City High Sheriff, Mr. Charles McDonnell, T.C., occupied a seat in the body of the church.

Amongst the general public were: Lady Emily, the Hon. Miss Monsell, Mr. James Grene Barry, J.P.; Miss Barry, Major Howley, D.L.; the Misses Howley, the Misses White, Alderman John Quin and family.

Blessing

The ceremony of the blessing of the bells was first preceded with. His Lordship officiated. The Rev. Fr. Peter Hübnergrief was deacon, and the Rev. Fr. Frohn sub-deacon. Several psalms were recited after which the blessing of the salt and water took place. The bells were then washed with holy water, and

The Rev. Rector O'Donnell was celebrant; Rev. Fr. Frohn, deacon; Rev. Fr. Minister, sub-deacon; Rev. Fr. Sampson, arch priest; Rev. Fr. Livius and Rev. Fr. McLoughlin, assistant priests; Rev. Fr. O'Neill first master of ceremonies; Rev. Fr. Barry second master of ceremonies.

A very efficient choir was ably conducted by Mons. De Prins.

Preacher

The Rev. J. Bourke after the First Gospel, ascended the pulpit and in the course of an elo-

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