

THE MONUMENT TO BISHOP BRUTE.

[The following letter has been handed to the Notre Dame *Scholastic* for publication. It sets forth, clearly, the design and motive of the monument which it is proposed to erect to the memory of the great Catholic missionaries, whose names merit an imperishable remembrance, by reason of their meritorious labors for the cause of religion in and around Notre Dame.]

Prof. J. F. Edwards, A. M., LL. B.:

DEAR FRIEND:—As you are, no doubt, aware, the *Scholastic* of last Monday contained the announcement of my resolution to delay no longer the erection of the monument I have been contemplating for many years, to perpetuate the illustrious memories of the four first great missionaries of our State, whose feet trod and sanctified our grounds, and whose uncommon virtues are so well remembered by the few still living who saw them, conversed with them, and will never forget the impression their merits made upon them. To delay, well-nigh half a century, the performance of such a duty has been a continual reproach to my best feelings of honor and justice. My only apology—which, I know, a man of energy would never have considered a justification—has been the continual and mortifying consciousness of my debts, the weight of which has often made me miserable. Even now, I feel I am not free from the same grievance of mind and heart; but years accumulating tell me that such a just act can no longer be deferred. The monument, as announced, shall be erected in front of the college, to the memory of Right Rev. Bishop Bruté, the first bishop appointed in this State, who confirmed here 200 Indians in a log cabin; and Rev. Fathers Badin, de Seille and Petit, my predecessors at Notre Dame.

This precious monument, under the immediate direction of our great artist, Signor L. Gregori, can scarcely fail to meet our expectations, and to prove a special honor to the country, as well as to Christianity. I question if there is another spot in the West of America where four such illustrious men of God have, within twelve years, successively devoted themselves to the salvation of souls and the civilization of the country.

Bishop Bruté came to this New World with a reputation for science surpassed only by his well known sanctity. From the great *École de Médecine* in Paris, where he graduated among the 1,100 students and 120 competitors of his own class, he carried off, with universal applause, the first premium. He renounced the most brilliant future to become a poor missionary in the United States. But to his last days in Vincennes he was consulted, from all parts of Europe, by the first medical men of the age. He had died two years before I came; but I knew him in France, and, under God, I owe him my vocation. I feel perfectly confident that the entire Episcopacy through the land will appreciate our efforts towards honoring one of the first glories of the Church on the Continent.

The next after him is the proto priest, or first priest ordained in the United States. Father Badin, who came from France nearly one hundred years ago, is a household name from Baltimore to the Mississippi. To him we owe the 524 acres on which we opened our mission in 1842. No missionary here ever worked in a wider field.

Father de Seille succeeded him in 1832, and died here five years later, in the log cabin built by his predecessor. His admirable death alone would suffice to immortalize his memory. When parting with his dear Indians at Pokegan, he said they would see him no more, for he had a great journey to undertake. The next day after his arrival at his home he took to his bed, sent a messenger for a priest to Logansport, and another to Chicago. In Logansport the priest had gone on a sick call at a distance; and the one in Chicago was himself quite ill. Seeing no hope from human agency, our dying missionary turned towards his two assisting friends and begged them to carry him to his altar; with a trembling hand he opened the tabernacle, and most humbly and piously communicated himself. After fifteen minutes of thanksgiving on his knees, the two friends begged to carry him back to his bed, where they had scarcely laid him when, turning to them, he said: "God bless you for your great kindness," and expired like a saint. Can we ever allow such a memory to be obliterated?

Father Petit's career was shorter, but, if anything, even more remarkable. He was ordained by Bishop Bruté to replace Father

de Seille. The day following he wrote to his mother in Rennes—where he had been a promising member of the bar—a letter which created all over Europe a sensation such as no letter from foreign missions had, in the memory of any one, ever produced. It opened in these words:

"DEAR MOTHER:—The hand of your Benjamin, which pens you these lines, held this morning, for the first time, the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. To-morrow the same again, and every day to the last; thus from Mass to Mass, up to heaven! Mother dear, did I not often tell you how lucky I was born! Oh, mother! Behold, I am a power that God Himself acknowledges!"

Scarcely two years later, he died a victim of his charity, in the House of the Jesuit Fathers in St. Louis, on his return from the Indians, whom he had accompanied beyond the Mississippi. His precious remains lie here at Notre Dame close to the remains of Father de Seille.

Once more, I say, such memories cannot be permitted to pass into oblivion. For more than two years past a sketch of these four edifying lives is preparing for publication. It will doubtless be read widely with much interest and edification. To such noble souls, so completely devoted to the wants of their age, the country owes no ordinary debt of gratitude. As for us here, we simply love to assign to their example and intercession in heaven the best part of our successes at Notre Dame.

Were it not for my daily-increasing duties and my approaching visit to Europe, I would not, by any means, yield to any one else the honor of presiding at the erection of this befitting monument. But, seeing, with everybody here, your wonderful success in your great undertaking of the Bishop's Memorial Hall, I could entrust to no better hands the new monument in which so many generous hearts will feel interested. May Heaven bless your efforts in carrying out, to the entire satisfaction of all, this crowning work of your grand design!

Your devoted well-wisher,

E. SORIN, C. S. C.

NOTRE DAME, Christmas Eve, 1886.

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[also see *Scholastic*, 20 Dec 1886
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