

## THE COMING OF BISHOP LORAS.

The sermon on the occasion of the investiture of Archbishop J. J. Keane of Dubuque, with the Pallium, at the Cathedral in that city, April 18, 1901, was preached by the Most Reverend JOHN IRELAND, Archbishop of St. Paul, Minn. He began his eloquent discourse with the following account of the arrival of Mathias Loras, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Dubuque:

Remember the days of old, think upon every generation; ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders and they will tell thee.—Deut., 32:7.

It was the 19th day of April, of the year 1839. There was much commotion in the little village of Dubuque; a steamboat was breasting the swiftly flowing waters of the Mississippi river. A steamboat upon the upper Mississippi was always, in those days, an unusual sight, and whenever one did appear crowds flocked towards the landing to give it welcome and receive from it news of the far-off centers of population and civilization. This time, however, the eagerness of the villagers to rush river-ward was such as to denote extraordinary curiosity and expectation; it was the first steamboat of the season from Dubuque's emporium, St. Louis, and—this especially heightened public interest in its coming—the rumor had spread that aboard this steamboat there would be the newly consecrated bishop, Mathias Loras. No wonder that there was commotion in the village. A bishop for Dubuque! This to Catholics meant that hereafter the holy church would ceaselessly watch over their spiritual welfare; to all, whether Catholics, it was an augury that soon in Dubuque extensions would be given to streets and groups of houses, and Iowa's silent prairies would be gladdened by the tread of hosts of incoming immigrants.

And, indeed, as the steamboat was made fast to the shore, quickly from its deck stepped Dubuque's first bishop and two companions, priests who had come with him from distant France, Joseph Gretin and Anthony Pelamorgues. A few moments later the wood-built chapel at the base of the bluff, Dubuque's solitary monument to Catholicity, was filled to overflowing; the bishop with beating heart and tearful eye

blessed the people, blessed the diocese of present and future time; the Catholic church was formally and officially installed in the northwest.

At its inception the diocese embraced the vast region situated between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, from the state of Missouri on the south to British America on the north. In this immense territory there were at the time three chapels dedicated to Catholic worship, a proportionately limited Catholic population, and not one resident priest. What spiritual favors had been heretofore vouchsafed to Catholics had been coming from the hands of the illustrious and devoted Samuel Mazzuchelli, the pastor of the neighboring village of Galena, who, while caring for northern Illinois and western Wisconsin, was not unwilling to extend into Iowa his apostolic labors.

It is the 17th day of April, of the year 1901. As our pioneer fathers sixty-two years ago, so we today witness the induction into his charge of a bishop of Dubuque. How changed from the scene of 1839 is that of 1901!

O spirit of our sainted Loras, present with us, no doubt, this morning, prophet of hope as thou wast for Dubuque, for Iowa, for America, never hadst thou dared picture to thyself, as possible within six decades of years, the scenes of 1901, and all the wondrous things beyond it, which this scene symbolizes!

Where stood the one bishop and his two missionary companions, there stand today throngs of bishops and of priests; among them a very prince\* of the church. In place of the little wood-built chapel, there arises a stately temple; instead of a few pioneers, there are the thousand laymen; and the modest ceremonial of the first episcopal installation makes room for the highest pomp and circumstance that Catholic rite allows. Nor, indeed, is it a mere episcopal installation that we are witnessing; Bishop Loras' see has grown into metro-

---

\*His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore.

politan dignity, and today, over the shoulders of Dubuque's prelate floats the Roman Pallium.

And all that our eyes perceive is but a feeble indication of the happenings of sixty-two years, of which the churches of Iowa, Minnesota and the two Dakotas are today the witnesses. In the portion of Christ's vineyard blessed by Bishop Loras on the 19th day of April, 1839—where before his arrival, there were three humble chapels, some hundreds of Catholics and not one resident priest—there are now eight bishops, two of whom are metropolitans, 970 priests, 976 churches, and a proportionate number of convents, schools, colleges and institutions of charity, with a Catholic population of 678,500. Such are the figures given by the Catholic directory for the year 1901. Surely, wonders have been wrought in the church of northwestern America. Let us therefore offer praise and thanks to the Almighty God; let us believe such wonders were not wrought without a special Providence, the mysterious designs of which it is our duty to discover, so that we may in humility and earnestness work the better in co-operation with the All-wise and All-bountiful will.

---

PROGRESS OF THE PRESS IN IOWA.—The increase of newspapers in this State has been very rapid during the last year. First came *The Burlington Tri-Weekly* and *Weekly Telegraph*—*The Muscatine Tri-Weekly Enquirer*—*The Dubuque Daily Tribune*—then *The Dubuque Tri-Weekly Herald*, and numbers of papers in the southern part of the State. We see now that *The Burlington Hawk-eye* and *Miners' Express* propose establishing tri-weeklies. So rolls the tide of intelligence.—*Bellevue Democrat*, April 30, 1851.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.