

## ST. PATRICK'S, PALMERSTON NORTH

## THE ASCENT OF THE CHURCH SPIRE (Part I)

(From our own correspondent.)

The spire was completed on October 15; would you like to climb right to the top before the scaffolding is removed? Come along then and we'll have a great old time. Well here we are at the door, but it's locked. "Coo-ee Mr. Hickey," you know who he is don't you? foreman of works on week days and "guide" on Sundays; and a "jolly good fellow" all the time. Here comes Mr. Hickey and he anticipates our request: "Want to go up?" The door is unlocked and off we go up the concrete steps to the choir. "Do you wish to ascend on the inside or the out?" asks the guide. "The inside is safe but decidedly "tame"; and the outside—well you can't go up if you're the "giddy" sort."

"The outside Mr. Guide, we're not at all "giddy"; and the more "thrills" the better" is the decision of all. A ladder in the choir takes us out through the windows on to the scaffolding; now be careful and don't break your neck; Mr. Hickey doesn't carry "spare parts" in his pockets. There's Father Doolaghty down on the footpath; and it's worried he's looking." Cheer up Father! we'll be alright." Rather breathless with the unusual exertion we reach the top of the first ladder; we are now at the base of the niche which will soon be occupied by a life-sized statue of Saint Patrick. Ladder no 2 ends at the top of the niche and the finish of the tower; the spire begins here; and as we go up the next ladder we pass what is already christened the "bell-room." Up, up we climb; the bell-room is beneath us now. Another ladder—the last long one, brings us a series of "thrills" for it wobbles and bends at every step. About three parts up this ladder we come to the end of the spire proper; it breaks up now into what we'll call three "spirettes" (hear Mr. Hickey's voice

"smiling" at our crude description of architecture). They are made of solid concrete and the centre one is much higher than the two outer ones. Finishing the wobbly ladder we come to a nice little short one; putting it beneath us we arrive at the top of the crosses on the outer "spirettes." Another short ladder brings us to our journey's end—the summit of the centre cross; it is 175 feet from the foundation and 160 feet from the footpath level. The cross itself is 8 feet high and has a span of over 5 feet. Well, how do you feel? as though you were standing on the crest of Mount Everest? or perhaps Caesar's words suit the occasion: *Veni, vidi, vici!* But honestly don't you think the spire looks much higher than it really is? one would enjoy a climb three times as high. It is not a good day for a view but we can see every part of the borough; how small and quaint everything looks! The sight of these three crosses towering so high above the town must bring a thrill of pleasure to every Catholic heart. All good things come to an end and we must start on the downward journey; it only takes a few minutes and here we are at the church door again. All is over; and there's Father Doolaghty still standing by the fence. "We didn't get anywhere near to heaven, Father." "Well it's a mighty long time you were coming back; and I've been waiting all this time in case you fell off the ladder and I'd be "needed." "Faithful priest! a martyr to duty! we didn't need you this time, but thanks, all the same." Let's move a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. M. Hickey for acting as "guide"! and off we trot to our homes. The climb was worth the trouble wasn't it? How nice it will be when the centuries have slipped by and this church is falling into decay; and "when some traveller from Mars stands on the broken arch of Fitzherbert Bridge and sketches the ruins of Saint Patrick's "to tell how" once upon a time" we ascended the spire of that historic building. But we'll be pretty "historic" ourselves by that time.



PANORAMIC VIEW OF PALMERSTON NORTH FROM THE STEEPLE OF THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK.

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