
JOHN STEVEN MCGROARTY

1862 — 1944

JOHN STEVEN MCGROARTY, Poet Laureate of California and one of the truest friends of the California *Padres* and their Missions, passed to his eternal reward on August 7, 1944. The solemn obsequies were held at St. Vibiana's Cathedral on August 10th, and he was laid to rest beside his wife in Calvary Cemetery; Archbishop Cantwell presided at the Solemn Mass which was sung by Monsignor John McCarthy. Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Hobrecht, O.F.M., Custos of the Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara, was deacon and Fr. Joseph Nuevo, C.M.F., was subdeacon. The Requiem Mass was sung by the Priests' Choir of the Archdiocese. Monsignor Martin C. Keating of Burbank, California, preached the sermon.

Mr. McGroarty came to California and settled in Los Angeles in 1901, having spent most of his previous years in Pennsylvania, where he was born, August 20, 1862. His early life in his native state was devoted to teaching, journalism and politics. He practiced law both in Pennsylvania and Montana. His greatest fame came to John McGroarty during his long years spent in California. Pope Pius XI honored this staunch and fervent Catholic by bestowing upon him the Order of Knighthood in the Order of St. Gregory the Great. The State of California conferred upon him the title of California's Poet Laureate, May 15, 1933. Mr. McGroarty served his adopted state from 1935 to 1939 as a member of the 74th and 75th Congress as representative from the 11th California district. For many years he conducted his weekly column in the *Los Angeles Times* entitled "From the Green Verdugo Hills". But his greatest work was his tribute of love to the *Padres*, "The Mission Play". It was first presented in April, 1912, and after a period of more than 30 years, during which it was repeated 3,200 times, it had been enjoyed by more than two and a half million people. Besides the Mission Play, Mr. McGroarty was the author of the following works: *Poets and Poetry of Wyoming Valley* (1885), *Just California and Other Poems* (1903), *Wander Songs* (1908), *The King's Highway* (1909), *California, Its History and Romance* (1911), *La Golondrina* (a drama of California, 1923), *Osceola* (a drama, 1927), *Babylon* (a drama, 1927).

With his poetic art, Mr. McGroarty dramatized the beauty and the romance of the faith that was missionary Spain and the unequaled charity that was Franciscan California. He loved to salute Fray Junipero Serra and his tireless brethren as "Dreamers of God":

Here are their footprints in the desert sands
That time still treasures from its wreck and loss,
And here is memory of their tireless hands—
The brown-robed wanderers of the Cross.
The sea remembers and the hills still know
The olden trails their sandaled footsteps trod
Who swung Christ's fragrant censers, long ago,
And wrought in beauty as they as they dreamed of God.

John Steven McGroarty was also a dreamer of God. And now his eyes have opened to the Reality.