

Farewell to Father Dignan, Ormond

The farewell social to the Rev. Father Dignan on the evening of February 7 (says a local paper) was undoubtedly one of the most successful functions ever held at Ormond. The hall was crowded with visitors from town and surrounding districts, all intent on doing honor to a priest who was deservedly esteemed and respected by all classes of the community. Mr. Julius A. A. Caesar presided. In a very happy speech, he dwelt on the many good qualities of the guest of the evening, on the great success that attended his labors, and on his spirit of broad-mindedness. He read the following address from the people of the Ormond district:—

'Dear Father Dignan,—It is with feelings of the deepest regret that we have learned that you are about to depart from our midst. The knowledge, however, that you are promoted to a wider field of activity gives a silver lining to the cloud of sorrow which overshadows our district at your loss. We fully recognise and appreciate your self-denying and energetic labors in connection with your sacred calling. During the five years you have presided over the destinies of the Ormond parish, you never once shrank from the duties and hardships incidental to a missionary's life in a new and growing district. The Scriptural story of the mustard seed has found another illustration in the history of this parish since the eventful day when you were appointed its pastor. Under your guidance it has developed into one of the most influential and prosperous parishes of the Auckland diocese. Abstracting altogether from your high exemplary character as a priest, we wish to honor your other qualities of head and heart, for you have won an honored place not only

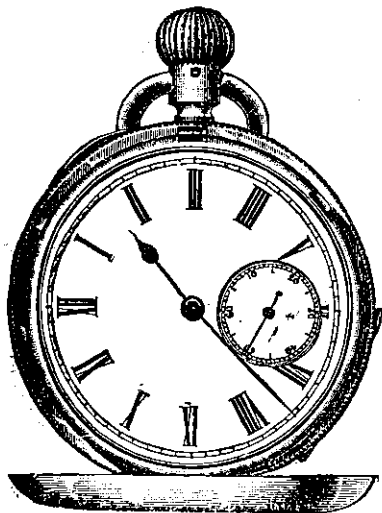
in the affection of the Catholics among whom you have lived and labored, but also with those who, whilst they cannot lay claim to the same close relationship, held you in the highest esteem as a friend. We beg you to accept the accompanying purse of sovereigns as a feeble token of our respect and esteem. We tender you an affectionate farewell and that you may long continue the noble mission of your hallowed sphere is the sincere wish of each and every one of your friends in Ormond and surrounding districts.—(Signed on behalf of the subscribers.)'

The other speakers were Rev. Father Lane, Mr. C. Neenan, and Mr. McLeod.

When the Rev. Father Dignan rose to reply, the large audience cheered so vociferously as to leave no doubt as to the place he held in the affections of the people. He thanked the people for the great manifestations of esteem they had given him that evening, and assured them that any success he had achieved in Ormond during the past five years was due primarily and principally to their own generosity and co-operation, and not to his own efforts. He made a special acknowledgment of the generous assistance he had at all times received at the hands of non-Catholics. He referred at some length to the need of a new brick church at Ormond, and assured his late committee that he would head the list when a start was made.

An excellent concert programme was supplied by Mrs. P. Barry, Misses E. Parker, O'Brien, and M. Neenan, Messrs. Teat, Grieve, and M. Doyle. After the usual vote of thanks to the chairman, the ladies handed round supper.

On the following night Father Dignan's Gisborne friends presented him with a gold watch and chain, suitably inscribed.



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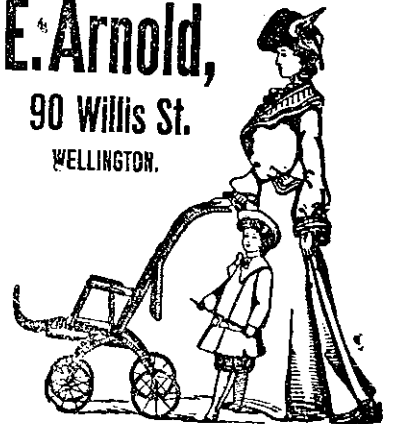
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