

# The Church in New Zealand

THE CHURCH IN TARANAKI: A SKETCH PREPARED FOR THE JUBILEE OF THE PARISH OF HAWERA.

(Continued from last week.)

## SUB-DIVISIONS OF NEW PLYMOUTH.

### OKATO.

Father Cognet, of the Society of Mary, became first pastor in 1894 and remained in charge till February, 1907. In the early 'nineties the Native Catholics at Waitotara and Okato were about equal in number, and Monsignor Power, who was in charge of Patea-Waitotara in 1894, made great efforts to get Father Cognet to make his headquarters in his parish, but Dean McKenna, who had North Taranaki under his charge, outvalled him, and so Father Cognet established himself at Okato. He was a master of literary style in English as well as in French. He contributed a beautiful series of articles extending over two years to a widely-read French journal on missionary and general life in New Zealand. He embellished his articles with much about the flora of the young colony, on which he was a mine of information. This created a wide interest in his native France, so that when the series was concluded, he unexpectedly found a purchaser for the copyright. With the remuneration from this, he built the beautiful presbytery in Okato in 1896, and supplied his church with several sets of vestments, which were richer and more beautiful than any church in the Dominion could boast of. His name will be found later in the Opunake notes of which he was the first pastor. From this place he was transferred in 1909 to Otaki, when he became head of the Native Missions in the archdiocese. Early in 1912 his old complaint—asthma—came back and grew more acute as the year went on. On the third of December his life-long friend, Dean Regnault, brought him to his home at St. Mary of the Angels' in Wellington, where he would have the best medical attendance. Here he charmed the priests, the devoted doctor, and the nurses with that simple faith and piety and admirable patience that had characterised his whole life. When the Dean was wishing him "good-night" on the 23rd, he asked him at what hour on the following morning—Christmas Eve—he wished to receive Holy Communion. He replied, "At seven, perhaps a little earlier, certainly not later." At seven his faithful friend ministered unto him; then there was a little gasp, and Father Cognet's fine soul went to its Maker. The body was taken to Otaki that evening, where the funeral took place on the 27th in presence of a large concourse of people including 32 priests from all parts. A beautiful panegyric, which will long remain in the memory of those who heard it, was preached by Dean Regnault.

Another well-known pastor of Okato and provincial Native Missioner was Father Soulas, of the Society of Mary, who had charge from 1907 till 1921. He was first a secular or diocesan priest in France; but always having a holy zeal to labor amongst the aboriginal races, he joined the Marist



VERY REV. DEAN REGNAULT, S.M

Society which included such a mission in the works of its vocation. In 1879 his superiors sent him to New Zealand to be director of all the Maori Missions in the Diocese of Wellington. His first foundation was at Pakipaki in Hawke's Bay, but later he made his headquarters in Jerusalem on the Wanganui River. Here he worked wonders among the Natives, and his administrative work there is still the admiration of the tourists who steam down the river. He established the convent, whose Sisters are doing such noble work. A branch of this convent is the well-known Home of Compassion in Wellington. He was from his first coming to New Zealand the friend and counsellor of Mother Mary Aubert, and will share in the merits of her work. He was devoted to the Maori, and was greatly grieved a few years ago, when on account of his age and infirmities, his superiors called him to lighter work. He is gratefully remembered by priests and people in the province.

Travelling some twenty years ago on the mail train from Wellington to Taranaki, I fell in with two very superior gentlemen, who were holding a visitation of the Masonic Lodges of the North. They had no love for the Catholic Church; Waldeck-Rousseau was their patron saint. One, however, had one kind memory of two Catholics, and if he could believe in prayers for the dead, he would pray for these two: they had done him a great favor, perhaps saved his life. Pig-hunting on the Wanganui River several years before, he had fallen down a cliff and broken his leg. Some Natives carried him

into Jerusalem, where a Nun set his broken limb, and a priest took him into his two-roomed cottage, gave him his bed, and kept him several weeks. I left the carriage quietly, went along the train, and bringing Mother Aubert and Father Soulas, presented them to my friend as resurrections from the dead. It was a happy and delightful meeting, and for sake of it I forget all the bitter things that had been said by my antagonists.

### STRATFORD.

Father Johnson was appointed first pastor of Stratford in 1900; he remained one year, during which the presbytery was built. Then came Father Treacy in April, 1901. He was known and loved in many parts of the Dominion, for his candor, geniality, and wit. His work consisted in great part of paying off old debts that had been accumulating, and practically the whole cost of the fine presbytery. He made additions to the church, built a fine bell-tower, and put in Stations of the Cross and two beautiful stained-glass windows. He had the gift of making his people enthusiastic, and these readily responded to his every appeal. He had an unique method in the pulpit, driving home the Gospel truths in a manner his hearers were not likely to forget. Owing to growing infirmities, he resigned in 1912, and died in December, 1923. His Requiem Mass at New Plymouth was sung by his old friend, Dean Holley, who hastened up from Blenheim; and his panegyric was preached by Monsignor Power, another of his old friends, in presence of a vast congregation, including many priests from Wellington, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, and the South Island.

In September, 1912, he was succeeded by Father Maples, the present pastor. He had done great work at Petone where he had built in brick what is still one of the finest schools in the archdiocese. He soon showed his zeal for education in Taranaki by adding two fine rooms to the school and by enlarging the already fine convent to double its size. In the temporal affairs of the parish, he is worthy of the most zealous of his predecessors. The golden jubilee of his priesthood was celebrated in November, 1922, and drew a large number of priests and lay visitors to Stratford. The gathering in the Town Hall was the largest ever seen there, and the speeches eulogised his work as pastor and citizen. But it is not Stratford alone that is indebted to Father Maples; he has made every educated person in New Zealand his debtor by the output from his pen. He is a master of Greek and Latin literature, and can turn exquisite verse in and out of these languages. His Latin Odes for the two jubilees of our venerable Archbishop were admired by scholars near and far; and his recent translations from St. Ephraem, the great Eastern hymnist, are a pure delight. His published meditations on the Way of the Cross are soul-piercing. This devotion would not long continue to be a lost one in New Zealand, if this little book were in the hands of all the people. I have seen another set of his meditations, still in manuscript, which contains the best translation I have come across of the "Flecte Ramos." "Stoop thy bough, O Tree Majesty!" I should like to

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