

# The Venerable Archdeacon John Begley, V.G.

OBIIT JUNE 10th, 1941.

The following well-deserved tribute was paid to the memory of our late President, the Venerable Archdeacon John Begley, by our present President, Rev. John Ryan, S.J., at his inaugural address in the City Library on Tuesday, 13th October, 1942.

"I shall say nothing of his fine qualities as a priest, for that would be an impertinence in me, and, in any case, superfluous. The appreciation shown so spontaneously by his flock, and the honours conferred upon him by his ecclesiastical superiors attest, better than words of mine could do, the virtues which won him esteem and veneration. I shall confine myself, therefore, to his work in the field of history. His life-long devotion to the self-imposed task of composing the history of the Limerick diocese, his scholarly determination to spend every penny of his income—never abundant, sometimes no more than meagre—on books and publications, his ascetic disregard of the recreations and comforts—indeed almost of the necessities—of life, his grim perseverance through long years in the library and at the writing-table, his triumph when the last of these three fine volumes was given to the public, his love of Limerick, city and county, his pride in the name of Ireland, his frankness of thought and speech, his integrity that could never brook even the shadow of falsehood—all these bespeak a character which the Society could ill afford to lose. He was old when this Society was re-constituted, yet he served it faithfully and well with his failing powers. Death has taken him from amongst us; but his name is held, and shall continue to be held, by us all in grateful remembrance. *Ar dheis De go raibh a anam!*"

John Begley was born in Monagea in 1863 and was educated for the priesthood at Maynooth College. When ordained, he went for a time to the Scotch Mission and served in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. Returning to the Limerick Diocese, he was respectively Curate in the parishes of Tournafulla, Coolcappa and St. Munchin's. In 1906, when Father Begley was a curate in the latter parish, the first volume of his great work, "The Diocese of Limerick, Ancient and Mediaeval," was published. In 1915 he was made a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter and transferred to Cappagh. After two years he went to Drumcollogher and was parish priest there when the awful Cinema fire occurred with a loss of forty-eight lives. In 1927 he went to Kilmallock, and in the same year his second volume, "The Diocese of Limerick in the 16th and 17th Centuries," appeared. On 27th March, 1932, he was appointed Archdeacon and transferred to the parish of Bruff. His third and final volume, "The Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the Present Time," was published in 1938.

In 1939 the Senate of the National University paid due tribute to his life work and conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Literature.

Archdeacon Begley was a foundation member of the Limerick Field Club, and was editing the journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society when it lapsed in 1919. In 1935 he was unanimously chosen President of our Society and retained that office until his death on 10th June, 1941.