

THE WESTERN FIRE BRIGADE'S BANQUET TO CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

A complimentary banquet was given on Wednesday evening by the members of the Ballarat West Fire Brigade to their Captain, Mr Matthew Campbell, in the engine house, Sturt Street, on the occasion of his approaching departure from the colony. Since the brigade was first established he has held the captaincy, and by his zealous endeavors to promote its welfare and render it efficient, won the respect of both the members and the public generally. But not only as connected with the brigade has Mr. Campbell's conduct been appreciated, but as the Mayor of the Borough, and as taking a lead in all matters affecting the welfare of the citizens. The banquet, therefore, was not only a mere recognition of his services as Captain of the Brigade, for it also served as a preliminary to another on perhaps a grander scale, to be given in a few days by a number of the citizens on the occasion of his relinquishing his duties as Mayor of the Borough. A new feature in connection with such entertainments, though a remarkable pleasant one, was observable in a number of ladies being present to do honor to the guest of the evening. Their presence gave an air of good feeling and harmony to the meeting, and made it partake more of the nature of a social gathering than otherwise would have been the case.

The banquet was served by Mr Bellair, in the large hall on the ground floor of the engine house in a style which would have done credit to the most accomplished caterer, and rendered him au fait in the opinion of even an epicure. The room was decorated with a few national flags and other emblems; but perhaps the most conspicuous articles - those which partook both of ornament and use - were the firemen's hats, which covered the walls in long rows and the other paraphernalia of the brigade, hung up all round the building. One very noticeable feature was the absence of music, which, considering there was a band engaged for the ball, seemed almost inexplicable. The tables were arranged one up centre of the hall, and one across each end, that at the top extending from side to side of the building. At this table were seated the principal officers of the brigade, with their ladies. In the centre Mr Clarton, honorary secretary of the brigade, occupied the chair. On his right he was supported by the guest of the evening, Mr Campbell, and his lady, and on the left by Captain Spark, of the Ballarat Fire Brigade. The vice-chair was filled by the Treasurer of the Brigade, Mr McDowall. Among the visitors present we noticed several members of the sister Brigade, members of both Councils, and a number of influential citizens. The company also included Mr Everett, the tragedian, and comprised an all between fifty and sixty persons.

The supper being concluded, the tables were cleared, after which dessert was laid, comprising a variety of seasonable fruit and preserves, and the usual loyal and patriotic toasts were then disposed of.

The chairman then called upon the company present to drink the health of their respected guest Captain Matthew Campbell. (Loud cheers.) In doing so, he stated that Mr Campbell had by his endeavors, on behalf of the Brigade, and otherwise as a public man, rendered himself universally respected. - The Brigade, with him at their head, had always presented the appearance of, and been in fact termed the happy family, and when he was gone from among them they would feel his loss more than they at present imagined. He had been connected with nearly every public work in the borough, and had necessarily to give a considerable portion of his time for the public weal. That, together with the cares of business, had to some extent impaired his health and necessitated his absence from the colony, but the time was not far distant, it was to be hoped, when he would return and resume his labors among them. He (the chairman) had much pleasure in proposing the health

² <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/72513860>

and success both of Captain Campbell and his worthy lady, and he wished them a safe and prosperous voyage and a speedy return to Ballarat.

The toast: was drunk with loud applause, the company rising up and joining *con amore*.

Song-Gum-tree Canoe," Mr J. Allan.

Captain Campbell, on rising to respond, was received with loud and prolonged applause. He stated that he never at any time was so ill-prepared to express his feelings as upon that occasion. To return mere thanks would, be considered, be very inadequately expressing his feelings. It had only been but a short time ago since he received a token of respect from the Brigade, but that at present awarded to him was a more valuable one, as he understood that no sooner was it known that he intended to leave the colony than arrangements were entered into for the banquet. To manage such a body of men as composed the brigade was an easy matter, considering their qualification and social position, and he would always when far away be happy to hear of their welfare. The work they had in hand at times was not easy of accomplishment, and the members had shown by the hazards they had to run in the execution of their duty, that they were actuated by no mean public spirit. Those duties had, he believed been discharged faithfully by both brigades. The roll book showed that such was the case, and he trusted that it would long continue so. He had been proud of being as officer among them, and he would long remember it as one of the most honorable situations he had ever filled, for was it not their duty to do good to the public, assist the distressed, and relieve those in danger? In parting he would most feelingly state that the few years he had been connected with them had been to him a source of great pleasure, for he had always been treated with the utmost civility, and it was not always the case that an officer in the discharge of his duty could secure such consideration. That, however, had been his case with him, and in no one instance that he could recollect had any of his orders been disobeyed. To the ladies, also, at least the wives of the firemen, thanks also were due, for they were occasionally the first to hear the sound of the fire-bell, and to have the accoutrements all at hand to let their husbands issue forth to duty. He would always remember with gratitude the compliment they had that evening paid him. He felt convinced that he had done his utmost to satisfy and please the public at large in all matters he had undertaken, and whenever he reached Scotland it would, he had no doubt, be a source of pleasure to his friends to hear that he had been so well received by his fellow townsmen. He concluded by expressing a hope that during his absence a happy feeling would continue to exist between the Ballarat and Ballarat West Fire Brigades. (Loud cheering.)

The Chairman remarked that he had omitted to state when proposing the toast, that the brigade refused to accept Mr Campbell's resignation, and had determined to keep the office open during his absence, so that he might resume it on his return. (Cheers.)

Mr McDowall in a forcible and humorous speech proposed the toast of the sister Brigade, which was drunk with enthusiasm.

Song-Mr R. Gullen.

Captain Spark, of the Ballarat Fire Brigade, in responding, said that he agreed with Captain Campbell that it was no easy matter to be a fireman. It was, however, a source of pleasure to observe that their services were being recognised in a tangible manner, since the brigades had now become, as their importance demanded, public institutions, after the manner of the fire brigades in London. He concluded by thanking the company for the cordial manner in which they had responded to the toast. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. Graham next proposed the toast of the two borough councils, with a few appropriate remarks upon the many public works which had been executed under their control.

Song, Mr W, Jack.

Mr J. Dodds, Member of the Eastern Borough Council, briefly responded to the toast, and in doing so referred particularly to the great loss the Water Commission would sustain by the absence of Mr. Campbell.

Mr Campbell acknowledged the toast on behalf the Western Council, and also referred to the extensive operations of both Councils in making arrangements for an ample supply of pure water to the inhabitants.

Mr J. Y Leslie proposed the health of the Volunteers of Ballarat.

Sergeant Macadoo responded. He alluded to the new regulations under which the volunteers had enrolled, and the great reinforcement they would make to the soldiers of the line, and concluded by expressing a hope that those stationed in Ballarat would never be behind their comrades in coming forward at the call of duty.

Mr Jack in & humorous and characteristic style proposed the toast of the "The Ladies."

Mr Vance responded.

The toast of the "Press" followed, which was proposed by Mr Caselli, and duly responded to.

The Chairman's health was then drunk, and also that of the visitors, which was responded to by Mr Everett, after which "Auld Lang Syne" was sung. The company then retired to the large room on the second floor of the engine house, where to the strains of an excellent band of music, dancing was kept with yigor till the small hours of morning.