

J. M. J.



Salesian College,
Battersea, London. S.W.11
November 20th, 1943

My dear Confrères,

God has again visited this Province and has sent His Angel to take from our midst the soul of

JOHN JOSEPH MALLON, Priest

Aged 64

John Joseph Mallon was born at Clonoe, in the County of Tyrone, Ireland, on February 4th, 1879. His father, Patrick Mallon, and his mother, Elizabeth; née Connolly, were both teachers in the National Schools and persons of sound piety and practical ability. They were responsible for his early education, both in the National School and at home in private studies. The studious trait in John Mallon's character did not, however, manifest itself to any marked degree in his early life, and he followed the footsteps of his earlier forbears in taking up farming and in a wide interest in the national games and sports.

It was not until his thirtieth year that the deep, solid piety so zealously inculcated by his parents showed itself in a manifest vocation to serve God in the religious life. His opportunities first led him to the Congregation of the Alexian Brothers, and after a successful period of training, he was about to make his Final Profession in this Congregation, when his confessor advised him to follow what appeared to be a clear call to the priesthood. It is worthy of remark that this advice, given as it was on the very eve of Final Profession, speaks well indeed for the independence and clarity of mind of confessor and penitent alike, and a fruitful priesthood of twenty years gives proof of a very sound judgment of the ways both of nature and of grace.

On his application being favourably received by the Very Rev. C. B. Macey, S.C., the Provincial at that time, John entered the House of Battersea as an Aspirant in the November of 1909. In the following September, he entered the Novitiate House at Burwash. He made his first Profession, after a certain lapse of time, at Battersea in 1914, taking his final and perpetual vows six years later at Burwash. After his Novitiate, he fulfilled the duties of Infirmarian at Battersea, discharging this office in a manner both practical and scientific and always efficient and devoted to his patients. It was during this period of training that he first manifested that happy union of bodily and mental activity which remained a characteristic of his to the end. In spite of his age (very advanced for one commencing the long and arduous studies for the priesthood), he soon manifested an unusual keenness for both Philosophical and Theological studies, and an impressive list of high marks in the latter science bears witness still to his earnestness and success.

The happy day of priestly ordination came at Southwark, on February 24th, 1923, from the hands of Archbishop (then Bishop) Amigo, who was in later years to regard Father Mallon as a personal friend.

After Ordination, the Superiors, mindful of his early experience on the land, sent Father Mallon to act as Farm Steward at the Agricultural Colleges of Pallaskenry and Warrenstown, in his native land of Ireland. He left his mark on both these Houses in many shrewd adjustments and improvements, possessing as he did all his countrymen's love and wide knowledge of the land and its working.

It would have seemed that in this practical and administrative activity, Father Mallon had been given a life's work eminently suited to his age and experience and to his early training and surroundings. But there arose a need for someone to fill the professorial chair of Theology at Battersea, and Father Mallon was called from the broad acres to travel with his class of students through the far more subtle and controversial fields of Dogmatic and Moral Theology. The young priests who passed through his hands in the seven years which followed will testify that their training was a good one. Their time was limited and there was little opportunity for research work. But Father Mallon was not content merely to propound a thesis and to let him take it who could. He adapted himself to the students' opportunities and capabilities; he had the true teacher's art of wading through the mass of what was merely useful, to find and to present in a clear and concise form that which it was essential to know. It was one of his dictums that every thesis, with proper system and method, could be presented on a single sheet of paper in an adequate form, and he was tireless in working out methods and schemes to make it easier for his busy young students to memorise the arguments and principles he put before them.

In addition to teaching Theology, Father Mallon continued his old work as Infirmarian with all the efficiency and devotion of the past. During this time, too, his gifts of human sympathy and understanding began to draw to him a large circle of those who sought his help and advice. His guidance was freely asked and freely given, especially to the many young people of his own country who came to London in search of work and opportunity. His spiritual gifts of understanding were widely exercised, both in the Confessional for the Community and boys of the College and in his private contacts with an ever-increasing number of priests, religious and lay-folk who saw in him an ever-reliable guide of souls. His gift for friendship brought him into contact with the Prime Minister of Eire, Mr. de Valera, who always thought highly of him. When, in 1940, Father Mallon returned to Ireland broken in health, Mr. de Valera was among the first to call to see him at Warrenstown, and later he was to spend a considerable time with him during his last illness whilst he was at St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin.

In 1937, Father Mallon was transferred to Thornleigh College, Bolton, as Confessor to the Community and boys. His services in the Confessional were very much appreciated, as were his efforts in his old activities in the Infirmary. This College, already one of the largest in the Province, was growing fast, and some anxiety was beginning to be felt about playing-field space. A large field adjacent to the School was available, but was quite unsuitable for playing purposes. Father

Mallon, in spite of advancing years and ill-health, took upon himself the task of levelling this field, practically single-handed. This was an immense undertaking for one man, but it was characteristic of his energy and determination that he soon persuaded the municipal authorities to dump on the site the surplus earth and stone they had excavated in their building operations. The material thus obtained he would spread by means of a narrow-gauge track equipped with small trucks. Although most of the work he appears to have done himself, he was sometimes helped by casual labour or by what confrères or visitors he could persuade to "give him a morning" in the seemingly endless labour of filling and emptying the little trucks. The manual work did not dull his mental ardour, and often he could come in from the fields with an obliging helper and go straight to his books to clinch a point of argument raised by his philosophical or theological theories. These theories were often original and always interesting, and Father Mallon would produce a formidable array of authorities in support, to the confusion of the unsuspecting visitor who might smilingly have ventured to disagree or doubt.

His health at Bolton continued to deteriorate, and it was for this reason that he was transferred to the Agricultural College at Warrenstown, in Eire, there to continue his valuable and experienced work as Confessor to the Community and boys of that House. Although, however, the change to his native air effected some improvement, which enabled him gallantly to struggle along for three years, there was no radical betterment, and he began to prepare for the end.

In the early months of 1943, Father Mallon entered St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin for special treatment. But all the undoubted skill and devotion lavished upon him there was of no avail, and he returned to his brethren at Warrenstown to die in their midst. He gave up his soul to God on June 18th, 1943, consoled and comforted by all the rites of the Church and by the presence and prayers of his brother Salesians.

Father Mallon was undoubtedly a great priest, a sincere lover of his country and of the Salesian Congregation to which he always accounted it an honour to belong. We hope that God has long since called him to receive the reward of his many labours and his unflagging zeal. But lest we should seem in any way to anticipate the judgments of God, let us not forget him in our prayers and suffrages, generously offering them for the repose of his soul in a measure we hope to receive when we, too, shall be called to give an account of our stewardship. Pray, too, for the needs of this Province and for those of this House of Battersea, in which so many fruitful years were given to God by this priestly soul whom He has now called unto Himself.

Yours very devotedly in C.J.,

F. V. COUCHE, S.C.(Provincial).

Data for the Necrology.—JOHN JOSEPH MALLON, Priest, who died at Warrenstown, Ireland, on, June 18th, 1943, in the 65th year of his life, the 29th of his Religious Profession and the 21st of his priesthood.