

FATHER HENRY BERNARD PARKER. S. D. B.

On February 22nd at the Salesian College, Farnborough, Fr. Parker died from an attack of bronco-pneumonia. Born in London on January 9th 1889, Henry Parker, together with his two brothers, received his early education at the Salesian College, Battersea, and it was apparently while he was under the care of the Salesians that he was given the grace of a vocation to the priesthood. His early studies at an end, he applied for admission to the Salesians and after his year of novitiate, passed in the Salesian House at Burwash, he was professed. Later as a Salesian cleric he taught at both Battersea and Farnborough.

As a priest Fr. Parker was chosen to fill the responsible role of Headmaster in the Salesian Colleges of Farnborough, Pallaskenry and Bolton. He was the first Salesian to hold that office at Bolton and confreres attribute to his prudent and zealous work much of the success this flourishing school now enjoys.

Whilst at Bolton Fr. Parker was attacked by a grave intestinal malady; the doctor diagnosed a tumour and expert physicians gave their considered opinion that an operation would be unavailing. Fr. Parker was given about forty days to live. With great courage he resigned himself to God's will, but did not lose all hope. A novena to Don Bosco was begun and whilst it was in progress Fr. Parker was brought into touch with a London homoeopath who undertook his case. Within several weeks Fr. Parker was feeling considerably better and at the end of six months was pronounced cured. He returned to Farnborough and in 1930 was again appointed headmaster, retaining that office until the day of his death.

The comparatively large number of Fr. Parker's past-pupils who attended his funeral was in itself a sufficient testimony to his popularity, a popularity due, perhaps more than anything else, to his cheerfulness and to the ready wit that seemed never to desert him. Moreover, to these typically Salesian characteristics were allied a straightforwardness and sincerity which retained for him the affection of his boys even when he was compelled to punish. As headmaster and as teacher, Fr. Parker demanded the best from his pupils both in their work and in their discipline. But it was always his own constancy, his fidelity, his thoroughness, that showed his boys what was expected of them.

Of Fr. Parker, the priest and religious, it is less easy to speak. Ostentation, even the slightest, was absolutely foreign to him. On the other hand if one is to judge from the regularity of his life as a Salesian priest, from his loyalty to his superiors, his detestation of anything that savoured of insincerity, one may safely say that the spirit of sound piety that he displayed as a young cleric matured over the years. His loss is felt profoundly throughout the whole Anglo-Irish province but nowhere more than among the Salesians and boys at Farnborough.

May he rest in peace.