

FATHER THOMAS EDMUND PAYNE. SDB.

Fr. Thomas Payne, one of the gentlest, kindest and best-loved Salesians of the Province, passed away at Cowley on the 18th May 1960, after a trying and painful illness of some six months duration. He was, it will be recalled, the uncle of Fr. Frank Rodgers, SDB, who died last Christmas Eve.

Fr. Payne had, after his operation last winter, gone to Manchester for a period of recuperation in his sister's house. He did not settle easily to an idle life and, at his own wish, he returned to Cowley, where he was bursar, on the eve of the feast of Don Bosco. He hoped that a regular life of work and prayer, as far as it was possible for him, would be beneficial to him, and, with great cheerfulness and pluck, carried on with the daily round, to the edification of all who saw him. About the middle of April, he began to keep to his room and he gradually grew feebler, though he was ever ready to greet visitors with a smile. It was edifying to see his resignation to the holy will of God. As the end drew near, his brethren voluntarily did night-duty watching with him. He died peacefully in his sleep, fortified by the rites of Holy Church and with the prayers of his brethren to accompany him.

Fr. Thomas was born at Lower Broughton, Manchester, on the 3rd February 1902, and did his early studies at Salford Technical College and at St. Joseph's College, Freshfield, Liverpool. He entered the Salesian Novitiate at Cowley, Oxford in 1921 and was perpetually professed at Battersea in 1925. There too, he did his philosophical and theological studies before going to the Crocetta in Turin in 1928. He was ordained in Turin on the 6th July 1930. After ordination, he went as headmaster to Shrigley and in 1937 he was made Rector at Chertsey. He held this post from 1937-40, from 1944-50 and again from 1952-58. From 1940-44 he was Rector at Blaisdon and from 1950-51 at Cowley. He returned to Cowley as bursar in 1958 and held this office until his death. He was a talented musician, a man of great personal courtesy and charm, and was held in deep affection by all. For some years prior to his death he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Truth Society, whose chairman, Rt. Rev. Mgr. C. Collingwood, was present at his funeral at Chertsey.

Fr. Provincial officiated at the interment at Chertsey on May 20th, in the presence of the deceased priest's sister and other relatives, of many Salesians and Salesian Sisters and numerous pupils, past pupils and friends from Chertsey and elsewhere. A very special mention – and prayer too – for Fr. Payne's heroic and wonderful sister, Mrs Rodgers. A widow already, she has had a terrible cross to bear. On Christmas eve last, one of her sons, our own Fr. Frank Rodgers, died. Then came the death of her brother, Fr. Payne, and since then she has lost another son, a married man with two children. Her fortitude is amazing, let us not forget her and all her loved ones, living and dead in our prayers. May Our Lady, Help of Christians and St. John Bosco take Fr. Payne, Fr. Rodgers and Mrs Rodgers under their special care.