

FATHER JUVENAL BONAVIA. S. D. B. February 1904.

Dear Confreres,

The community at Battersea, and indeed the whole of the Congregation have sustained a great loss by the death of this worthy son of Don Bosco. During the fifteen years he spent in England he had been an invalid all along – a prey to that dread complaint, consumption. In spite, however of his ill-health, he was always at his post of duty, faithfully and zealously doing the work entrusted to him by his Superiors; and these duties he did not relinquish until almost at the point of death. Since the beginning of the winter Fr. Bonavia had felt that his illness was taking a turn for the worse, as he found breathing more difficult and weakness increasing. He finally stopped working on January the 20th after having offered Holy Mass, for what proved to be the last time. On the following days he grew gradually weaker and he died peacefully and fortified by the rites of the Church on January the 23rd. He was then only in his 39th year, when others are at the prime of life and when his deep learning and prudence, his piety and humility might have chosen him out to hold important posts in the Congregation to which he had already rendered great service.

Juvenal was born in Genola in Piedmont (Italy) on the 26th October 1865. From his early years he gave evidence of wisdom and piety beyond his age. In his boyhood he was sent to the Oratory at Turin, where, under the eye of Don Bosco himself, he advanced rapidly in knowledge and virtue. In 1881 he received the habit of the society he had learned to love so well, from the hands of its saintly founder, and in the following year he made his religious profession. He was then appointed professor and assistant at the Oratory, and no one ever better fulfilled the duties which this office, so important in the Salesian Society, entails. The boys whom he taught and trained have never forgotten his zeal and charity, and what speaks for itself is, that many of them have followed in his footsteps, and are successfully doing the work of the Congregation which they learned to love from him.

He was ordained in 1888, and was sent over with the little band who came to establish the first Salesian House in England. Since that time he had worked unceasingly for the community and boys as well as among the parishoners of West Battersea. There is no doubt, says one correspondent, that in a great measure, the wonderful success of the Salesian Fathers since they have been in England, is due to his prayers and zeal. He was an ideal priest and regarded his office as the very highest and lived up to it. His was a life of prayer and good works and he lived each day as though it would be his last. None could wish a better testimony. The requiem was sung on Tuesday, January 26th, Fr. Provincial officiating. A crowded church testified to the esteem and love in which the deceased was held. The Superiors of the other Salesian Houses in England were present, and some of the neighbouring clergy. The interment took place on the following day at the quiet little cemetery attached to the Novitiate House at Burwash

R. I. P.