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BATTERSEA,  
LONDON, S.W.11.

*February 1st, 1941.*

My dear Confrères,

The Anglo-Irish Province of our Pious Society has suffered a severe loss by the sudden death on November 28th, 1940, of

## FATHER ANDREW BOYLE

Aged 47 years.

Father Boyle was born at Lanark on April 23rd, 1893. He was the only child of his father's second marriage, and his mother died when he was quite young. His early schooling was that solid religious formation of character, implanted into him by his pious mother, which was fostered and developed by the Sisters of Charity in the elementary school in Lanark. He never forgot these good nuns and it was a great joy to him to find them near to help and assist him when he was first appointed Military Chaplain at Troon. His former teacher writes: "He was an excellent boy, a real boy, and very popular with his schoolmates." He outshone everyone by his retentive memory especially for religious knowledge, and although somewhat reserved he was never afraid even as a little one to unmask the hypocrite and to stand up for truth. One day in the Lanark market place a preacher was holding forth about faith alone being necessary for salvation. Young Andrew and a group of boys were listening. "What about that text from Scripture," said Andrew, and at that early age he quoted the words: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." The other boys ran back to the school to tell the Sister that Andrew had silenced the preacher; the town soon knew about it, but he himself never mentioned the incident.

As he grew up the desire for the priesthood increased, and although he had left school, he kept the secret to himself, for he could see no prospects of ever attaining the desired end. Still he continued to trust in God's goodness and he was ever grateful to all those who helped him to realize his ambition. He entered Battersea in December 1913, and the Rector said to him: "You have come to stay." Father Macey was right. In the very flourishing aspirants' class of those days he showed exceptional promise, impressing both his teachers and his fellow students by his earnestness, ability and application. He was a born actor, and some may still remember the roars of laughter that greeted his appearance in one of the old time Battersea comedies.

But those peaceful days were destined not to endure for long. With war raging in Europe and the consequent dissolution of the Aspirants' Class, Andrew Boyle volunteered for active service and joined the regiment of the Royal Scots with three of his fellow students. His life at the front caused him much suffering, and it was not long before he was invalided to hospital afflicted with trench fever. On rejoining his regiment he fought in several engagements as a Lewis gunner, and at last in the great German offensive of March 21st, 1918, was taken prisoner whilst covering the retreat in a desperately fierce rear-guard action. He was badly treated by his captives. Food was scarce, and it was here that the terrible malady began, which in the end was to carry him off so suddenly. He displayed great fortitude in bearing insults and hardships; moreover, he had organized a well conceived plan of escape when the cessation of hostilities by the armistice of November 11th, 1918, rendered this unnecessary.

On his return to Battersea he was sent to Burwash to make his novitiate, and then for six months to Cowley where he finished his philosophy. Later on as a teacher and assistant at Battersea he had his first serious attack of illness, and so the Superiors decided to send him to Cape Town, where the South African climate would give him renewed strength and energy. A last minute decision, however, sent him to Turin instead, and it was here that for four years he edited the *Salesian Bulletin*, and helped with the English correspondence. The Superiors were quick to recognise his abilities, and during these four years he attended the lectures at the Theological Studentate of La Crocetta, taking the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1926. Ordained priest that same year he returned to England, and was appointed Latin Master at Bolton at a critical time for the school when it was seeking recognition by the Board of Education. It was at Thornleigh that for the next ten years his sterling qualities were given full scope. That he was a diligent, painstaking and competent teacher was obvious to all who knew him; that he was also a successful one the highly satisfactory results of public examinations bore testimony year after year. Besides being Latin professor at the college he taught the clerical students dogmatic and moral theology. A clear minded, deep thinker, he was very thorough and convincing in the exhaustive analysis, which he used to make every month of the *casus conscientiae*, and his help in solving cases of moral theology was frequently sought by other priests.

Over the boys he exercised a great influence for good. They admired him for his manly character, and he took a personal interest in them even after they had left school, so that it was no wonder that the past-pupils on visiting the college almost invariably made straight for his room, where he willingly gave up his time to entertain them and make them feel welcome.

He was a true Salesian, and with little outward sign he was deeply religious. He loved the Congregation and had a sincere devotion to our founder, St. John Bosco, always carrying a picture and a medal of the saint upon him, and no matter where he might be, or in what company he might find himself, he always showed himself proud to be a Salesian. He felt at home only in a Salesian house, and his confrères, even the youngest member of the community, knew of the many menial services once rendered by this kind religious.

A straightforward, loyal, guileless, God-fearing man, he loved to see justice and truth prevail, and he was ever ready to take the part of the weak. In controversy his arguments were lucid and persuasive, yet he was always open to conviction, and gave attention and close consideration to the views of his opponents. Though, doubtless, often exhausted by his heavy scholastic labours, he would readily and even cheerfully embrace the opportunity of exercising his priestly ministry whenever his Superiors requested him to go on supply in some neighbouring parish for the week-end.

But the least known and perhaps the most admirable of all his good qualities was his patience in suffering. His apparently robust frame was in the grip of more than one chronic affliction; indeed, within the last few years of his life he had to undergo two major operations; yet many a time, though he might have spent a sleepless night of torture, he would somehow contrive to be smiling and uncomplaining, and not allow his sufferings to interfere with his daily duties.

Three years ago he was transferred to the college at Farnborough, and when war broke out he offered his services to his country as Chaplain to the Forces. He felt he could be of much use to the soldiers. He doubted at first whether he should go, for he knew now that the malady which had dogged him for so many years might prove fatal at any moment. He made a novena to St. John Bosco; in fact, he made five novenas, and was on the point of abandoning the idea of entering the Army, when he received his appointment as a chaplain in the Scottish Command. He felt deeply the parting from his confrères, and although he loved his work among the soldiers,—and his zeal and sympathy for them inspired him to do wonders in their behalf,—yet he felt the absence of the community life and the company of his brethren, so that when he returned to Farnborough for convalescence a few months before his death, he was even then doubtful whether or not he should resign his commission. He left Farnborough for Scotland in July last; perhaps he knew that he would never see his confrères again, for he gave various instructions in case, as he said, he should be sent abroad.

On arriving at his station he found his work had been changed. It was now real active service work. He had to travel for miles visiting his men in the various units stationed in the defence areas, hearing confessions, giving his men Holy Communion, or saying Mass in any out-house convenient at the time. The long fast and the exertion was too much for his now enfeebled health. He had just visited an anti-aircraft station, and was on his way to another for the purpose of administering the Sacraments, when feeling ill he called at the house of a neighbouring priest, so that he might rest for a while. It was only too evident, however, that Father Boyle was very ill, and before medical aid could be summoned he had collapsed in the arms of the parish priest, clasping the Blessed Sacrament, which he carried, to his heart. A beautiful and happy death. A true *alter Christus*, he died close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Canon Hayes, of Troon, gives the following appreciation of Father Boyle's work among the troops. "I confess I have never had the privilege of knowing any priest who harmonized so perfectly in his life priestly virtue, culture, urbanity, loyalty, erudition and unobtrusive intellectual capacity. Father Boyle's knowledge of the world and his practical experience of a soldier's life fitted him for his duties as chaplain. He was an unqualified success, and I have no doubt that many of the young men to whom he ministered, who have sacrificed their lives for the preservation of Christianity, owe their salvation to his sympathy for sinners and zeal for souls. He was the most highly respected officer in the camp, a friend of Catholic and Protestant alike. His love for Our Lord urged him to provide a chapel in the camp, with the Blessed Sacrament reserved. For this purpose, he prayed, begged and made personal sacrifices. God blessed his efforts so manifestly, that Auchengate was the only camp in Scotland where the soldiers in training had this unique privilege."

Although his desire that he might die in one of our Houses remained unfulfilled, yet by bringing his mortal remains to Farnborough it was possible to carry out his earnest wish to be buried among Salesians.

In asking you to pray for the repose of the soul of this admirable son of St. John Bosco and zealous priest of God, I recommend to your prayers also the needs of the Province and particularly the intentions of

Your devoted confrère in Christ,

F. V. COUCHE, S.C.,

*Provincial.*

Data for the Necrology: Father ANDREW BOYLE, born at Lanark, Scotland, April 23rd, 1893, died at Stevenston, Ayrshire, November 28th, 1940, in the 48th year of his age, the 15th year of his priesthood, and the 17th year of his religious profession.