

Salesian College,
Farnborough,
Hants.

May 1957.

Dear Confreres,

It is with real regret and a very keen sense of loss that I have to inform you of the death of

FATHER EDWARD STANLEY CLIFT. SDB.

who, for the past thirteen years or more has been the bursar of this house. Fr. Edward was born at Penge, Surrey on the 9th July 1890. His parents were Samuel and Sara Clift. The family were not Catholic and the gift of faith came to Edward when, as a young man working in London, he came somehow into contact with the Salesians at Battersea. It was in the church of the Sacred Heart that he was received into the Church by Fr. Eugene Rabagliati. Later, in or about the year 1915, he was confirmed by Bishop Butt at Westminster Cathedral. Once he had embraced the faith, he made it a real part of himself, as those who knew him in his early manhood at Battersea can testify. He became a strong prop of the parochial life, a great lover of the liturgy and an enthusiastic member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The first World War saw him called to active service on the field of battle and during those trying years he remained true to the faith of his adoption and loyal in his contact with his spiritual guides at Battersea. The "Giver of all good gifts" rewarded him with the grace of a priestly vocation, but by the time he was able to settle his business affairs and follow the call, he had gone well past his early manhood. It was not, indeed, until he was in his thirty-third year that he was able to commence, as an aspirant at our house at Chertsey, the study of Latin. What sacrifices it must have demanded of him!

A year later, in 1924, he proceeded to the novitiate, which was then at Cowley, Oxford. He pronounced his first vows there on the feast of the Holy Name of Mary 1925, and, after a year's philosophy, went to Chertsey, where he was a teacher and assistant from 1926-31. It was in those early years at Chertsey that the future priest left, in addition to the memory of zealous work, the marks of a gift which he was later often to put to the service of God and the Society in this province. His was the mind of an artist and his talent for painting and decorative work of all kinds was most marked. The College chapel at Chertsey, which in those days also served as parish church, profited from the embellishment his brush gave it. When in 1930, the beautiful new parish church of St. Anne was opened, the words of the "Ave Verum" tastefully painted by Bro. Edward Clift, were to be seen, as indeed they still are, decorating its inner walls. Those same artistic gifts were later used in varying forms at Chertsey again and at Shrigley in the erection of garden calvaries at Blaisdon, Farnborough and elsewhere.

After a short spell at Battersea as Art master, he went, in 1932, to Shrigley, where he did his theological studies and was ordained priest by the late Bishop Moriarty of Shrewsbury on the feast of St. Aloysius 1936. His artistic gifts and his sense of preciseness and detail clearly marked out the new priest for the office of Bursar and, it was in this capacity that he was destined to serve God for the rest of his life. Hence, we find him filling this office successively at Shrigley, from 1936-7, Chertsey 1937-41, Blaisdon, 1941-43 and finally, Farnborough, 1943-56.

Fr. Clift was always intensely devoted to the boys. He was thoroughly devoted to his work and found all his interests there. Idleness did not come easily to him so it was a penance indeed when his long sickness of the past two years forced him at times to stay for long periods in bed or in his room. Whenever he could, he had himself helped downstairs to be near the hub of things. Eventually he had to be moved to the Esperance Nursing Home at Eastbourne. That he was unable during long months of his sickness to celebrate Holy Mass and to be with the Community was a real cross to him, but he bore it with a courage that was characteristic of him.

This house of Farnborough in particular and this Province owe much to Fr. Clift, and it is in the spirit of a debt due to one who was so self-sacrificing and generous in his own life, that we commend his soul to your prayers.

He died, comforted by the rites of Holy Church, and shortly after having been visited and blessed by Father Fredrigotti, the Prefect General, our provincial, and his predecessor, Fr. Couche. He died on the feast of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady, the anniversary of his religious clothing, 21st November 1956.

May he rest in peace.