

The late Rev. Father AUSTIN ANDERSON, S.D.B.

The sad news of the sudden death of Rev. Father AUSTIN ANDERSON, S.D.B., Editor for the past decade or more of the English SALESIAN BULLETIN, reached us only just as the last number was going to press. It was, therefore, not possible to give more than the briefest notice in the obituary list of that issue. Now we can pay a fuller tribute to his memory.

Augustine, or as he preferred to be called, Austin Anderson, was a full-blooded Merseysider, born in Liverpool in November 1898, and he retained a very deep affection for his native city to the end. He was, however, actually residing in Bournemouth when he came to the Salesians at Battersea in 1925 as a late vocation, having before that spent some years on Press work in South Africa. He entered the novitiate, which was then stationed at Cowley-Oxford, in the same year, and was the veteran among the novices of that time. The 'going' must have been hard at times for him, but he showed himself humble as the youngest, and brought all his characteristic cheerfulness and determination to the fray and gave an example which was a source of edification to all. When volunteers for the Missions were called for, he, with his zealous apostolic spirit burning within him, came to the fore, and so, immediately after his temporary profession, he left for Turin (Italy) to receive the missionary blessing and, from there, set off, in December 1926, for the far-off land of India. There, at Khrishnagar, in 1929, he made his perpetual profession. He did his philosophical and theological studies at Shillong, in Assam, and was ordained priest there in 1932.

His life in India, where personnel was desperately scarce, was, from the start, a very full one, and he had to combine his studies with teaching and other work. When one looks at the details of the works assigned to him in those days, one realises better the colossal burden which the missionaries are called upon to bear and, at the same time, is able to appreciate the more readily how profound must have been the confidence which the Bishops and other ecclesiastical Superiors must already have had in one who was in reality a neophyte still.

Besides his teaching work in the studentate and orphanage in Shillong, he was also Manager of the technical school and, in addition, carried out duties as Secretary to the Prefect Apostolic. He was transferred to Calcutta in 1931 and remained there as Manager of the Catholic Orphanage Press until 1936. From then till 1940 he was at Madras, acting as Principal at two High Schools and functioning as Administrator of the Cathedral and Secretary to the Archbishop, His Grace Mgr. Mathias, S.D.B., who held him in great affection for the rest of his life and corresponded regularly with him. On receiving the news of Father Anderson's death, he at once sent a message of deep regret to the Rector at Beckford, where Father Anderson was stationed, and offered Holy Mass for the repose of his soul.

From 1939-40, Father Anderson, whose health had not surprisingly begun to show the effects of his excessive labours, spent a year in England on sick leave. Back then he went to Madras as parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Perambur, Editor of the *New Leader*, and, once again, Secretary to the

Archbishop. He served, too, as an Army Chaplain until demobilisation in England in 1946.

A brief period at Thornleigh College, Bolton, followed, and then, in 1947, he was appointed Manager of the Salesian Press, Battersea, and Editor of the SALESIAN BULLETIN. He moved to Beckford (Glos.) in 1950, and there, whilst continuing his duties as Editor and as Organiser for the Missions, he acted as Confessor at the Salesian House. It was he, too, who, during a space of some two years whilst the future of Beckford was being decided upon, remained in that large house in charge and almost alone, a task which, to a man in his then state of health, must have meant constant hardship and sacrifice. As a man who loved company, he would, too, find the isolation peculiarly irksome.

He had, for a number of years, suffered almost constant pain, and every movement was a trial for him. Yet, joking about his ailments, he kept going, never sure when the call to eternity might come. Even during these years he was still happy to travel whenever he could to give retreats and conferences, to continue, in short, what had been a marked feature of his whole priestly life. He had, both in India and in England, preached hundreds of retreats, and his fund of stories for such occasions was never-ending.

A year ago, whilst making a retreat himself at Bolton, he fell dangerously ill. So bad was he, in fact, that the doctor did not think he would survive the journey to the hospital in the ambulance. But survive he did, and, after a long period of anxiety, he was able to convalesce and then to go back to Beckford and take up his duties with all the old vigour. He had one great unfulfilled desire. It was to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes. Time after time illness prevented him. At long last, in July this year, he was able, as part of his Silver Jubilee celebration, to make the journey with the Archbishop and people of his own native diocese. Those who saw him at Lourdes, ever cheerful in spite of pain, marvelled at him, and have told of their edification and admiration. Archbishop Heenan, often visited him. He returned to England with seemingly a new lease of life and with a new confidence in his ability to tackle anything.

It was in this spirit that he set off from Beckford on the morning of Saturday, August 30th, to go on 'supply' to his old friend, Canon Moffat, of St. Marie's, Southport. It was in his presbytery later in the day that the fatal collapse occurred and there Father Anderson gave up his soul to God. Both the good Canon and himself were former pupils, with Archbishop Heenan, of the old St. John's School at Liverpool, which has given over forty priests to the Church.

The body was transferred to Beckford, and there a Solemn Dirge was sung on the evening of Tuesday, September 2nd. The next morning, in the presence of his brother and sister and other near relatives, to all of whom our sincere sympathy is extended in their loss, Solemn Requiem Mass was sung. The celebrant was the Very Rev. Father T. Swanzey, S.D.B., Rector of Beckford. Many Salesians from all over the Province, as well as priests from the surrounding area, attended. The music of the Mass was admirably rendered by the students of philosophy under Father Fox, S.D.B., and the panegyric was movingly delivered by Very Rev. Father Provincial, S.D.B., a fellow-novice of the deceased priest, and he, too, officiated at the burial in the little cemetery in the Studentate grounds.

R. I. P.