

SALESIAN COLLEGE,
BATTERSEA,
LONDON, S.W.11

August, 1944

My dear Confrères,

Once again, within the course of a few weeks, God has visited this Province and called to Himself the soul of

EDWARD GOY, PRIEST

Aged 73

Except for the first eighteen months, Father Goy spent all his Salesian life in England or Ireland, coming to this country immediately after his ordination. He was born in Italy, at Borgarello, Pavia, on February 12th, 1871, his father being Francis Goy and his mother Ernesta, née Carena. In early life, Edward Goy was brought up according to the substantial prosperity of his family; but while he was still a youth, misfortune fell upon them and he was compelled to give what assistance he could by going out to work.

Although with all his gifts Edward Goy might have gone far in the world, God had other designs for him, and the young man was not slow to respond to the call of grace. His application to join the clergy of his own diocese was accepted and he entered the seminary, completing his theological course and receiving the various sacred orders up to and including the Diaconate. But at that time he came to realise quite clearly that his true vocation lay with the religious life rather than with the secular clergy, and although the taking of the step must have cost him a great deal, not least of his trials being the disappointment of his Bishop at losing so promising a cleric, he left the seminary and asked to be accepted by the Salesian Society.

He entered the Novitiate House at Valsalice on Feb. 20th, 1896, a few days after his twenty-fifth birthday. His Novice Master was Don Piscetta, later to become the famous Professor of Moral Theology, and Father Goy received a powerful impression from the saintly master of the spiritual life. In after years he would speak of his Novice Master in glowing terms and seems to have learned surprisingly much about the spirit and system of the Society during the single year of his Novitiate.

He was professed at the end of the Novitiate, making his Perpetual Profession only seven months afterwards, on September 29th, 1897. As he was already a deacon, and had completed his theological studies, he was ordained priest at Turin by Mgr. Berlagna on October 17th, 1897. An eyewitness of this priestly ordination remembers vividly the great reception Father Goy received from the Professors, Staff and students of Philosophy and there and then formed a very high idea of the young man.

It is interesting to notice that Father Goy had received the clerical habit at the hands of Mgr. Maffi, who was one of the professors of the seminary at Pavia, where he had studied. Father Goy always spoke of his professor in the very highest terms and he at least was not surprised when Mgr. Maffi received the Cardinal's Hat. It was from Mgr. Maffi that he learned at the seminary a great deal about subjects which were not on the curriculum: such as a good working knowledge of physics and astronomy, the use of metals, practical chemistry and a great deal of animal and plant lore. These were lessons well learnt and Father Goy made great use of this wide knowledge throughout his life.

This practical knowledge proved most valuable when the young priest received his first assignment. Not many days after his ordination, in the same month of October, 1897, he was sent by Father Ruia to help in the work of the pioneer Community at Battersea. Thus began a priestly life entirely devoted to the Anglo-Irish Province, and well did he serve in his new sphere of activity. The House at Battersea was still very much in the pioneer stages, although under the genius of Father C. B. Macey, the work had already made remarkable progress. There was still an immense amount to do; the House was very poor and ill-equipped. Father Goy soon proved himself invaluable. He was always an indefatigable worker, with a keen eye for things that needed doing. He would tackle anything: nothing daunted him in the line of practical mechanics, electricity, plumbing, and the like. All that he had learnt in the past, he used now with great good will and zeal. He was never idle; if he was held up in his indoor work, he would turn to the garden. Father Goy became a really skilled gardener, and even in the last years of his life, obtained magnificent results from his skill and his knowledge, written and unwritten, of the ways of the garden.

But it would be a great mistake to imagine from all this that Father Goy was capable only of practical work. He was gifted with a splendid memory and a fine understanding, with a taste for intellectual pursuits of a varied nature. He was soon revealed as a very well instructed and well-read theologian, and came to be regarded as a real authority on this most important and highest of all sciences. For several years at Battersea he was Professor of both Moral and Dogmatic Theology, and the excellence of his teaching is still spoken of with gratitude and appreciation by those who were his pupils.

During this period at Battersea, he also fulfilled the important office of Provincial Secretary with efficiency and discretion.

But even in the early years of his priesthood Father Goy began the apostolate by which he was best known and appreciated, that of the Confessional. Numberless penitents, both adults and boys, both religious and seculars, can testify to the wonderful and wise direction they received from him in his work in the Confessional, where his own deep piety, his love for the Holy Mass, his devotion to the Infant Jesus, — all impressed themselves on his penitents and imbued them, too, with that love of Jesus Christ which filled his own heart.

His spiritual way of life was that of the Little Flower, St. Therese of the Child Jesus. It was illuminating to hear this apparently stolid, matter-of-fact priest, particularly in his older days, speaking of the very simple things of the soul. A practical man and a student, who could discourse with equal facility on the more abstruse questions of Theology, science, and the theory of horticulture as well as its practice; and yet the whole burden of his confessional advice, and of his sermons and talks, was summed up in his constant exhortation: "Be chummy with the Little One!" This homely phrase revealed the innate simplicity of his own soul. "Who cannot love a child?" he would say; "Who can be afraid of a child? Love the Little One and go hand in hand with Him before His Father, and you will have nothing to fear."

The basis of this simplicity was certainly his humility. He was a man of strong opinions, which with apostolic frankness, without a shred of human respect, he would express with decision and conviction; but the expression of his opinions was never a parade of his learning. He detested the little tricks and vanities of the world (in any shape or form, intellectual or otherwise) and anything in the nature of pose, or still more, sham, was most abhorrent to him. Very few men have tried to hide their accomplishments as effectually as Father Goy; in fact he seemed almost to forget them himself. Such things as clothes and comforts in his room never concerned him. He never spoke of the days of his youth when his family were enjoying substantial means; but frequently of the later poverty when he himself had had to go out to work. It is an attested fact that he was several times offered some important office in the Society, but always begged to be excused as he preferred to be a subject rather than a superior.

His obedience, too, was that of a child. This does not mean that he would not, if he thought there was occasion, fail to put his practical objections and difficulties before the Superior; but when a decision was given, there was no further question. In the humblest ways, he would obey; as for instance, his exemplary punctuality. Of Father Goy it can truly be said that he practised what he preached; he was simple and humble in spirit.

These particular qualities of mind and heart were admirably suited for the spiritual needs of the Novitiate, and after fifteen years at Battersea, Father Goy was sent to the Novitiate House at Burwash.

Here he carried out his duties of Confessor and teacher with his usual efficiency for the next eight years, when he again returned to Battersea, where he acted as Economer till 1922. Father Goy returned as Confessor to the Novitiate, now transferred to Cowley, but in 1923 he crossed over to Ireland to give of his most valuable experience and personal labour in the new foundation at Warrenstown, Co. Meath. He stayed in this House during the hard, self-sacrificing pioneer days, and his work is well remembered there. Seven years later, the Missionary College at Shrigley first opened its doors. Here there was an immense amount to do, and Father Goy was again one of those chosen as a member of what the military term "the shock brigade", those who are the pioneers in the truest sense of the word.

But the pioneer work was not yet over. Just seven years after he had gone to Shrigley, the Superiors decided to send Father Goy to Beckford Hall, which had been acquired with the object of making a separate Novitiate once more, since the increasing numbers made it no longer possible to share the limited accommodation with the Philosophers at Cowley. Here right from the very start, Father Goy was

a most valued member of the Community, both for his spiritual and his practical qualities. The year after his arrival at Beckford, this holy priest celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his ordination; yet there was no diminution in his ceaseless activity. He very soon took charge of the rich and extensive garden and worked from morning till night.

Here as elsewhere, Father Goy continued his ministry of the Confessional. He would often be asked to go to other Salesian Houses as extraordinary Confessor at the Bona Mors; and he would take his share in preaching the Retreats to the Confrères, to whom he would expound with all his old ardour and eagerness his simple way of spiritual perfection.

Despite his great activity during the latter part of his life, Father Goy did not enjoy good health, and in 1942 he frequently suffered acutely from indigestion and heart-trouble. He seldom complained, however, and was to be found at his post in the Confessional morning after morning, generally being one of the first to be in Chapel. In November 1943 Father Goy had his first serious illness. The doctor diagnosed the trouble as Angina Pectoris and stated that the patient was in danger of collapsing at any time. It was considered wise, therefore, to give the good Father the Last Sacraments, and these he received with great faith and real devotion. But Father Goy was not yet to die, and recovered sufficiently to say Mass privately and to be able to wander occasionally very slowly in the garden, which he loved so much. From this time onwards life was somewhat of a burden to the dear old priest; he slept little, he had scarcely any appetite and was frequently seized with violent pains. He felt very keenly his inability to do any of the many tasks to which he had devoted himself for so many years. However, having survived the winter it was hoped that Father Goy's health might begin to improve as the days got warmer; but on Wednesday, April 19th, 1944, he began to experience very violent pains and gradually grew weaker and weaker. He received the Last Sacraments again on the Saturday morning, and in the afternoon of that same day, the 22nd April, surrounded by many of his Confrères, and a few minutes after the prayers for the dying had been recited, he passed away to receive the reward of the good and faithful servant.

Father Goy was buried on April 27th in the grounds of the Novitiate, being the first to be laid to rest there. During the last few months of his life, the only fear that Father Goy had was that he might soon be forgotten in the prayers of the Confrères. However, those who have lived with this good priest for any length of time will not easily forget him.

I earnestly recommend the soul of Father Goy to your prayers, and would also ask your prayers for the good of this Province, which is certainly the poorer for loss of this good Salesian priest.

Yours very devotedly in C.J.,

F. V. COUCHE, S.C.(Provincial).

Data for Necrology. — EDWARD GOY, Priest, born at Borgarello, Italy, died at Beckford, England, in the 74th year of his life, the 47th of his priesthood and of his religious profession.