

closed the ceremonies of the memorable three days. Let us hope and pray that from this Triduo may in after years be dated the revival of the Benedictine Order in a land once so peopled with sons of St. Benedict.

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THE REV. DOM. OSWALD DAVIS, O.S.B.

IN MEMORIAM.

POOR dear Father Oswald is dead. May his soul rest in peace ! How many times has not this exclamation been uttered since that morning of September 25th, when the community of St. Gregory's first expressed it, and sent round the melancholy, but not unexpected, news to hundreds of loving and anxious friends ! Seldom has such deep and sincere sorrow been felt at the loss of a member of a religious community ; for, although the death of one amongst those who are linked together by the ties which bind such brethren, is always an occasion of sorrow to those left behind, yet in the case of some there is caused a void which no substitution can fill ; and such has been the case with the death of the good and well-loved Father Oswald Davis. Who will ever at Downside look upon his like again ? Long will the community of St. Gregory's remember his acts of kind considerateness to each one of them : his good-natured, honest, outspoken denunciations of any acts of pride or conceit which came to his knowledge : his hatred of dissimulation or underhand dealing : his firm demeanour when there was any question of disobedience or insubordination : his determination to maintain discipline in every department for which he was answerable, and his success in maintaining it in days when it was threatened by an element which had a passing existence, towards the commencement of his prefectship. The life of a college is like the life of an individual : it has its critical periods, and it is by watchful, discreet, firm though kind management, that the trials of such periods are surmounted, that dangers are removed, and the constitution strengthened and made proof against the recurrence of such dangers. If Downside is now, as, thank God ! it is, in possession of a traditional discipline, which makes college life there so effective and so happy, those who rule its destinies are always glad to acknowledge how much they owe Father Oswald for the fruit which they are now

gathering as the result of his labours. Those who have succeeded him in the office of prefect have been glad, as long as the opportunity lasted, to ask his counsel in cases which have required tact and careful treatment; and they will long be accustomed to hear from those who knew him, and had been trained under his system, what were his principles, and how he would have acted in possible emergencies. Although Father Oswald held several important offices during the thirty-three years that he lived at Downside, it is especially as prefect that he established a character for which he is held in affectionate and grateful memory by so many who were formed under his training, and who, either in the Church or in the world, are ever glad to acknowledge the debt which they owe to their former good and watchful prefect.

The biography of Father Oswald may be despatched in a few lines. He was born at Usk on the 5th of January, 1819, receiving in baptism the names of Edwin Frederick. He almost exclusively lived and laboured at Downside, and there he also died. From the time that he entered as a student, in the year 1836, till the time of his death, with the exception of about ten years spent on the mission, all his days were passed in college or community life. Even in vacation time he was seldom away; and the period which he might have well spent in a richly-deserved recreation was mostly devoted to preparing what would be required for the next college term, or in quiet rambles about the fields and the farm, which for his quiet, unpretending character always had a peculiar attraction. He spent the first few years of his scholastic life in our Benedictine College of St. Edmund at Douai, and came to Downside at the age of seventeen, in the year 1836. St. Gregory's seemed to have a claim upon him; for two of his brothers were professed members of that community, namely, Father Francis Davis, now at Coughton, Cathedral Prior of Worcester, and the amiable, saintly Dr. Charles Davis, afterwards Bishop of Maitland, and coadjutor to the venerable Dr. Polding, Archbishop of Sydney, but who was prematurely cut off, dying at Sydney in the year 1854, before attaining the age of forty. *Placens Deo factus est dilectus, et consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.* After two years' college-life, Br. Oswald Davis was clothed as a novice by the then prior, Dr. Brown, afterwards the truly apostolical first Bishop of Newport and Menevia, lately gone to his rest, full of labours and of merits. The present Abbot of St. Alban's, Dr. Norbert Sweeney, was his fellow-novice. They, and two others who were not professed,

were clothed at Downside on the 11th of June, 1838. Br. Oswald was solemnly professed on the 10th of October, 1839, having at his own request continued in the novitiate three months beyond the usual period.

About two years after his profession he commenced his career in the prefectship, being appointed as assistant-prefect to his brother, Father Charles Davis. Upon the promotion of his brother to the episcopate, early in the year 1848, Father Oswald became head-prefect, and together with his fellow-novice, Father Norbert Sweeney, was ordained priest by the newly-consecrated Bishop Davis on the 18th of March. In this responsible and important office, for which he was so well adapted, and which he made so peculiarly his own, he continued till the month of March, 1857, when Father Norbert Sweeney, then Prior of Downside, transferred him to the procuratorship, in which office he still continued to be most intimately connected with the responsibilities of the College, and was obliged to be in frequent communication with the students. He subsequently filled the offices of sub-prior, and of missionary to the faithful residing in the neighbourhood of the monastery. In the course of the year 1869 he was appointed to the chaplaincy-mission of Hanley, Blackmore Park, near Malvern, the seat of Mr. Vincent Gandolfi Hornyold; and two years later he was moved to the quiet little mission of Bonham, where he once again found himself within easy reach of his old Downside home. The good father, who was always kind and generous to others, scarcely knew how to take care of himself. He devoted himself most zealously to the charge of his little flock, constantly visiting his school and his people, and especially attending with anxious care every case of sickness in his rather widely-scattered though not numerous mission. He was frugal towards himself almost to a fault; and, especially on the Sundays, he so much neglected his meals, attending to everyone else, but forgetting himself, that his constitution, strong as it seemed to be, became undermined, and the infirmities of age hastened too rapidly upon him. He became quite a martyr to a violent and obstinate attack of sciatica, and, consequently upon the sleeplessness thereby occasioned, a partial softening of the brain set in, and he became incapacitated for missionary work. He retired to his well-loved monastery of St. Gregory's, where he was nursed and watched over by his brethren with constant and loving care, with a hope that he might still regain his health. But it was otherwise ordained, and after a year's suffering, borne with patient and

cheerful resignation, he passed quietly away on the 25th of last September. Then it was that the words with which we have commenced our tribute of love to his memory were first heard, and so often repeated: "Poor dear Father Oswald is dead. May his soul rest in peace!" The last months of his life will never be forgotten by his brethren at Downside. To go and keep him company in his sick-room was never a labour, it was a recreation, so cheerful and edifying was his presence and demeanour. To those who had once been his subjects, and were now in offices of superiority, he was as respectful and obedient as the humblest novice. His exactitude in fulfilling each day's spiritual duties was strict to the last. He continued to say Mass as long as he was able to stand, and sometimes overtaxed his strength by his determination not to give up this most valued privilege. A few days before his death he received with great piety the last rites of the Church, his sorrowing brethren kneeling around him. For some hours before his death he was in a state of only semi-consciousness; but early on the morning of his death he earnestly requested that he might be allowed to receive the holy Viaticum once more. It was administered to him, and from that moment he seemed to be quite absorbed in contemplation. It was his last act of consciousness, and whilst some of his brethren were at the altar praying for his happy repose, their prayers were granted, and at about half-past eight o'clock he slept the sleep of the just.

The funeral took place on Tuesday, September 28th, and was attended by several of his former companions and disciples—Abbots Smith and Sweeney and F. Bennet Tidmarsh, his familiars and intimate friends since the days of their boyhood; Canon Wolstan Richards of Swansea, and F. Clement Clarke of Bath (upon whom the mantle of the prefectship rested for many years), who had both been students under him, attended, with several others. On the Monday night, the Office of the Dead was sung to the old traditional striking music so well known and loved at Downside; F. Clement Clarke taking his old place at the organ. On the Tuesday morning, the solemn Requiem Mass was sung by Abbot Sweeney, and a most appropriate and touching sermon was preached by Canon Richards. Nothing could have been more happy for the occasion than the words of the preacher: they came from his heart, and easily found access to the hearts of his audience. *Cor ad cor loquitur*. His text was in itself the panegyric of Father Oswald. *Vir simplex, et rectus, ac timens Deum*. Job i. "Such," he said, "is the character of the

good father who has been taken from us." His simplicity was described as being patriarchal, so unpretending was he, so opposed to all the sensationalism and restless ambition and seekings of the days in which we live. His uprightness and sense of honesty and fairness were proverbial. "Father Oswald is always fair," was the universal testimony of those who had to feel at times the consequence of their own thoughtlessness and his love of discipline. If he was feared by the unruly, he was respected by them, and so gained them over to duty, that they passed on from fear to respect, from respect to confidence, from confidence to love. His fear of God ever evinced itself in his steady adhesion to duty. Duty was his ruling principle. He showed it in his obedience to those above him, in his intercourse with his equals, in his exercise of authority over his subjects. He clung to the very last to the fulfilment of every rule, as far as his strength would permit; and when he saw death approaching, he submitted to it as a duty. He laboured whilst he could labour, because it was his duty, and when he could labour no longer, he died because duty so demanded. The audience of the preacher was full of sympathy with him, and their sympathy was well rewarded.

After Mass an interval was allowed for the arrival of other mourning friends, and then the body was carried forth to the little monastic cemetery. The mournful procession passed through the old College porch, in which he used to love to sit and join in cheerful conversation with his brethren, and give utterance to many of those shrewd, original, observant sayings which will long be quoted as household words at Downside. Slowly to the chant of the *Miserere* they passed along into the garden, where the cemetery is situate, in the midst of trees and shrubs, which had been oftentimes the object of his care and attention. There he now reposes in conventual rest amongst the brethren who lie around; and thither will many, on their visits to Downside, go in quiet pilgrimage, stand by his grave, heave a sigh, and offer up a fervent prayer for the soul of good Father Oswald.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.