

## DEATH OF FATHER TOM BURKE.

*(Dublin Freeman, July 7.)*

THE Very Rev. Father Thomas N. Burke, O. P., died at Tallaght on Monday morning at three o'clock. No language can express the deep and bitter grief which will flow from every Irish heart at the bare announcement. A disease of long duration and terrible pain has at length carried away its victim, and a life which for four years past has been a prolonged torture, has, for the sufferer, happily terminated in death. Happily, for the deceased, yes; but for the Church in which he was revered, for the Order to whose lustre he had lent a new brightness, for every charity which required a heart to sympathise with it and a voice to plead its cause, unhappily, a thousandfold unhappily. To the tens of thousands of his portraits which an attached people had hung up in their homes myriads of eyes will turn tearfully to-day, and the orisons of afflicted love will fervently plead to Heaven for his eternal reward. Most people are aware that the "great Dominican," as Father Burke had come to be called, was born in the City of the Tribes. He often made mention of the fact, chiefly to refer to his doting affectionate peasant mother to whom he was passionately attached. It was on the 10th of September, 1830, he was born, so that the deceased had but reached his 53rd year. Comparatively brief as it was, there are few lives can show a more fruitful record or one more unselfishly and unstintingly devoted to the highest and noblest of all causes. It is full of earnest and constant work, too prolific of great and enduring results to be treated in a brief obituary notice like the present in any but a scant and wholly imperfect manner. All that we can hope to do now is to note consecutively the mere outlines of his years. Young Burke, who developed a lively precocity when a mere child, was sent at an early age to a local school conducted by Dr. O'Toole. Here he showed himself an apt and retentive student, scrupulously attentive to all his duties, but with a wealth of irrepressible and even boisterous mirth that made the wisacres shake their sapient heads and mumble that the contemplated vocation of the youth was not what nature had intended him for. Those who were fitted to judge, and who knew the extraordinary capabilities and gifts of the boy, looked forward with delightful anticipation to the career he had before him, and to the ornament which the Church was about to receive.

When 17 years of age—that is in the great famine year—he had advanced so far as to be able to proceed to Rome as a postulant for the Order of Preachers, and on the 5th of January, 1849, he made his solemn profession at the Convent of Perugia. For three years he diligently pursued his theological and philosophical studies at the College of Minerva in Rome, when he was sent by the General of the Order to Woodchester, in England; to organise the novitiate for the English province. His ordination took place at Clifton a year after on the Holy Saturday of 1853, the Most Rev. Dr. Burgess then Bishop of that See, officiating. Father Burke, whose rhetorical ability had already attracted some attention, continued at Woodchester until 1855, when he was summoned to Tallaght to superintend the novitiate that had been opened there that year. He laboured with a zeal and devotion which had become characteristic of the young Irish Dominican; and not less by reason of the lofty intellect which commanded admiration than by the softness and sweetness of his nature which won it, he enjoyed the respect and affection of all with whom he came in contact. He left Tallaght in 1867 for Rome, where he had been appointed Prior of the Monastery of St. Clement's and remaining there for two years returned to Dublin to be attached to the Church of St. Saviour, Dominick street. Full scope was here afforded him for the use of that rich and fluent eloquence of which he was a master, and which though not yet matured to its subsequent perfection, soon became spoken of in the city. If we mistake not, it was at Sandymount that the orator first drew to himself the general notice of the Irish public—he had already in Rome and in England established a local fame. The occasion was the unveiling of a stained-glass window in the Catholic church at Sandymount. Father Burke preached the sermon, and the force of his eloquence, the richness of his imagery, the charming freshness of his allusions in which he illustrated the close relation of art to the genius of the Catholic faith, dazzled while it amazed the congregation. The substance of the sermon was given to the country in an unusually extended report in these columns: it at once created a marked effect, and soon Father Burke's sermons became the favoured reading of the people.

In 1872, when his reputation was great and far-reaching, he was sent as Visitor-General to the Dominicans of the United States. By this visit he acquired a world-wide celebrity. His fame as a preacher had preceded him, and his transatlantic countrymen evinced a very anxious desire to hear him. He was speedily in the pulpit and on the platform, and after his first couple of addresses all America rang with his praises. The largest halls in the chief cities of the States afforded accommodation only to a small section of the hundreds of thousands that crowded to listen to him. No Irish priest, with perhaps the single exception of Father Mathew, was ever before or since brought face to face with such teeming multitudes. One thing only was wanting to complete the marvellous enthusiasm of this tour, and Mr. James Anthony Froude, the most brilliant and most inaccurate historian of this or any other age, supplied it. That gentleman was handling the facts of Irish history for the benefit of intelligent Americans in a manner which no one except the author of "The English in Ireland" would have the courage to present. They attracted some interest in America, which did not escape Father Burke; and recognising the injury that they were calculated to effect upon the history of his country and his countrymen, he boldly undertook their defence without a moment's preparation. How admirably he succeeded is permanently recorded in his popular "Refutation of Froude." These American addresses were reproduced in the newspapers at home, and they were read by the nation at large with a keen and intense interest. They showed that Father Burke was as earnest a Nationalist as he was a sound and

fervent son of the Church—a combination which is invariably found and some of them breathed in a remarkable manner the depths of a true and ardent Celtic soul. A passage from one of them, on "The Future of the Irish Race at Home and Abroad," may be quoted here for its earnest and, as it now reads, pathetic patriotism. The address was delivered in the Music Hall, Boston, on September 29th, 1872, for the benefit of the Convent Schools, Cambridgeport. Having spoken of the possible influence of the Irish race in America, he concluded a powerful oration as follows:—

"Oh! how grand it is, as I see it to-day, this future of my race! Eight millions of people in America of Irish birth and eighteen millions of Irish blood! In thirty years there must be fifty millions born in this great country, spreading itself out in all things, rich beyond all other nations in minerals, rivers, harbours. Fifty millions of Irishmen here will overshadow all the nations of the earth. Think of the magnificent element of fifty millions of Irishmen filling the public offices and guiding the destinies of this country and bearing the distinctive marks of Irish character, an ornament and a pride to the land that adopted them by their Catholic temperance and purity. A power in this land will they be assuredly to guide and influence her actions, to draw the sword in the moment of danger, and to strike such blows in the cause of God and truth as have never yet rung on the shield of injustice; a power in Ireland before which the generous heart of America will be sure to bow in homage; a power that will not prevent you from being the best American citizens, while you will not lose the vision of Ireland and of debt you owe her. Then, and not till then, every enemy of Ireland will stand paralysed to injure her, because the great phantom of Ireland in America will cause them to recoil, and force them to respect the dear, old, venerated and beloved island."

On his return from America, Father Burke received a great ovation in the city of his birth, the late "John of Tuam" presiding at a banquet which was given in honour of the preacher. Archbishop MacHale then described him as one of the most extraordinary men of the nineteenth century, and proudly mentioned as a proof of the work he had done in the far West, that the various American charities for which the orator had spoken had obtained in the aggregate the enormous sum of one hundred thousand pounds. He returned to Tallaght to watch over the preparation for the pulpit of the young Dominicans, but for a number of years his entire time was absorbed in preaching charity sermons throughout the United Kingdom. No consecration ceremony, no religious occasion which required a sermon to be preached, no retreat was considered complete without the attendance of Father Burke. So constant a tax upon the mental and physical energies was certain to have but one effect, and soon the powerful physique of the popular Dominican began to fail. About four years ago the first symptoms of a painful and, as the sad sequel has proved fatal, malady manifested themselves. He had to suspend all active work for a considerable time, the result of which was that he rallied slightly. He then occasionally appeared in the pulpit, with the traces of malignant illness upon him, but with all the fire and power of his eloquence unimpaired. Last year he got through a fair amount of work, working always with a will, although he knew the consequence of each effort was some weeks of torture for himself. For a time hopes were entertained that his physicians had mastered the disease, but in the Lent of the present it reappeared with, if possible, increased virulence. Rest and complete change of air were recommended, and, accompanied by the Very Rev. J. T. Towers, Provincial of the Order, Father Burke paid a visit to Rome. He was received with the greatest warmth and cordiality by the authorities of the Church and of his own Order, and had the gratifying privilege of a long private interview with the Holy Father. His Holiness greeted him most affectionately, and addressing him as "one of the Church's greatest preachers," referred with extreme satisfaction to the work the illustrious Irishman had done, and, blessing him prayed that he had yet many years of health and strength to continue his estimable labours. The change had a very beneficial effect, and after some weeks in the Eternal City he returned, by easy stages, with Father Towers. About a fortnight after his arrival in Dublin he proceeded to London to preach at the opening of a new Dominican Church at Haverstock Hill, and also on Friday and Sunday following. His weak condition was not equal to this renewal of work, and he became alarmingly unwell. He was confined to bed for more than a week, and when able to be removed he returned to Dublin about a fortnight ago. He drove to his residence at Tallaght, and taking to his bed never, again left it but once. This once indicates with singular and pathetic force his overflowing sympathy with suffering, his constant willingness to plead for a charitable object and his almost unparalleled, absolutely heroic self-sacrifice. He had consented to preach in aid of the fund for the starving children of Donegal, and the day being fixed for the sermon, last Sunday week, he rose from his bed of agonising pain, and appeared in the pulpit at St. Xavier's Church, Gardiner street. To those who were familiar with the suffering he had just undergone his splendid sermon was simply phenomenal, while to the general body of his congregation it was a characteristically brilliant effort. He returned to Tallaght, and from that time forward he was constantly attended by Drs. Porter, Cruise and Lawlor. The gifted priest lay upon his bed, suffering the intensest agony, with a calm and uncomplaining fortitude that astonished while it deeply affected his brethren. To the last he retained full possession of all his faculties, his mind never for a moment wandering, but constantly intent upon earnest unremitting prayer. When addressing those around him he spoke with as much of the old cheerfulness as his martyr-spirit could force. On Sunday night he endured the most excessive and excruciating pain, which, having continued for many hours, ceased for a few minutes before three o'clock yesterday morning. He still availed of the interval to plead for the intercession of his Blessed Mother, and after a short time, surrounded by the deeply affected members of the community, and with a prayer passing from his lips, the great and good father Tom Burke closed his eyes in death, with the sweet and peaceful repose of a tired child sinking to sleep.

The admirable patience in the midst of physical torture that constantly distinguished Father Burke was, perhaps, the especial