

THE LATE REV. J. F. RYAN.

Anniversary Mass at St. Michael's Cathedral
—An Interesting Sketch of the
Young Priest's Life.

On Tuesday, the 17th instant, a solemn anniversary High Mass of Requiem was celebrated at St. Michael's Cathedral for the repose of the soul of the late Rev. James Francis Ryan of Newfoundland, whose death in the springtime of a most promising priestly life was announced in these columns just twelve months ago. The Rev. Father Frank Ryan of St. Michael's Cathedral, uncle of the deceased, was celebrant of the Mass, assisted by the Rev. John Kolly as deacon, and Mr. McGrand as sub-deacon. The Very Rev. Vicar General McCann assisted in the Sanctuary.

The beautiful church was heavily draped in mourning, and the large catafalque erected in the Sanctuary, with the purple stole folded on its cover, was a silent sermon on the saintly young Priest's life and labors. A select choir, under the leadership of the Rev. F. F. Rohleder, chanted the Requiem service in solo and chorus with impressive effect, and a large congregation assisted at the Mass with reverent and prayerful devotion.

The deceased young Priest was much loved and regretted by all who knew him; and as he made many friends in Canada during a few months' visit, the following sympathetic and graceful sketch of his life by one of his clerical companions may interest many of our readers, and will certainly edify all. The brief biography was written for the *Evening Telegram*, St. Johns, N. F., by the Rev. Felix D. McCarthy, the zealous and eloquent Pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Carbonear, N. F. We omit a few facts of merely family and local interest, and give the edifying incidents of a saintly young life that will interest all:

FATHER MCCARTHY'S TRIBUTE.

Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa: "Being made perfect in a short space he fulfilled a long time." These words of the inspired penman meet with their happiest application in the young Levite who is the subject of this sketch. The Rev. James Francis Ryan was born on the 28th August, 1866, and died on the 17th April, 1898.

The good works of our beloved dead one, so many of which crowd into the spectrum of a single glance at his brief career, were referrible rather to the "religiously active forces of the soul." They were not of the world worldly, and to our seeming, the author belonged not to any class with more befittingness than that of

"The bravely dumb who do their deed,
And scorn to blot it with a name."

It was the privileged few who knew him intimately, and they alone, that could truly perceive and thoroughly appreciate how well filled up was that short life of his and how beautifully studded it was from beginning to close with the jewellery of good and holy works. The fulness or wealth of good that made of his brief existence the "venerable age" was not a thing of chance merely, but a result. 'Tis said, and the saying is full of import, that the one great secret of life and development is not to plan and devise, but to fall in with the forces at work—to do every moment's duty aright. That secret our lamented friend had early learnt and put into practice. Therefore, it was, that his brief span had in it fulness and richness of goodness and worth that outproportioned its circle and outstretched its time.

Of his call to holy priesthood young Ryan became aware at an early age. Even then was made in real earnestness and with effect the application of the secret he had solved. The call took the shape of a burning desire. It was of its kind a special vocation; and when God addresses any soul with a peculiar message of love—

when, in that still, small voice, soft as the breath of a seraph's wing, but unmistakably audible to the inner ear. He whispers, "My son, give Me thy heart"—then the hesitancy or wavering that is pardonable, that is excusable, that is, perchance, scarcely blameable in others, becomes in this soul a sort of faithlessness to his heavenly lover. *A jealous lover is our God, and His love a consuming fire.* A voice, moreover, that transcends reason, addressing the soul in its very citadel, where the pure intelligence apprehends what the reasoning faculty may fail to grasp, is able to silence in honest minds all captious and plausible ratiocination. It was so with our friend. In the desire that had been kindled within him he recognized, by an intuition swift as the lightning's flash, the whispering invitation of divine love. Of it he inquired not the why or wherefore. Concerning it he planned not or devised. The solicitation it addressed to him he might, it is true, have rejected without positive sin. But the secret he had learnt and of which custom had already conciliated to the usage was now again at work. To the call of God he accordingly gave a ready hearing—*audiam quid loquatur ad me Dominus Deus.* In it he eagerly acquiesced, and the believing utterance of "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," became the signal for the influx of the strengthening graces which he needed for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

Our friend was born in the old town of Trinity, N.F., on the date referred to above. There, amid a delightfully picturesque environment, he passed the period of childhood, unconsciously absorbing, the while, the poetry and romance whose atmosphere was all around. A mind so young, so susceptible and imaginative as his could not fail to receive fully the impact of the impressions of its surroundings. And it is only in accord with the scenic theory of ethics to trace, in some measure at least, to the scenes that encompassed his early life, the fervour of sentiment, the poetry and exquisiteness of diction that, in after years, characterised his writings and public utterances. Such environs are usually the nurseries of great men, sturdy, energetic and upright, honest, prudent and virtuous; and of these qualities, some in a greater, some in a less degree, our friend was the happy possessor. But in conjunction with the influence of natural scenery there was another factor, and a stronger one, that gave shape and moulding to his character. 'Twas the education of a thoroughly christian home. At that home of his and its family circle let us, kind reader, take *en passant* a brief glance. Within, it was a calm, an oasis in the desert, a little paradise where reigned supreme the quiet and tranquility that come not of this world. A prevailing atmosphere of religion was there, and there, too, were united the altar and the hearth. A home it, therefore, was in the Catholic and best sense of the term, a home of love and innocence, of peace and harmony, reflecting, in its all and all, the harmonious beauty of the family at Nazareth. In that island home was a proper blending of the duties of household and those of religion. There received their due attention the saying in common of the morning and the evening prayers, the recitation of the rosary, the teaching of the Christian doctrine, and the singing of the hymnals simple airs. This was the choral music of humanity, set there to wild accompaniment of storm-wind and thunder-loud bass of the furious wave.

The home life of young Ryan was most congenial to his disposition and feelings and told fully in his susceptible nature. The instructions he there received took deep root in his heart and were wrought into the inmost fibre of his being. The good example

that there came daily under notice appealed to him strongly for imitation. Amid such happy formative influences his piety became more and more pronounced. The desire for holy priesthood that had taken indefectible possession of his young heart grew there with his growth and strengthened with his strength. The visitations of grace seconded his pious wish, and thus fertilized by the dews of heaven the seed of his holy desire grew up and ripened to a firm and unshaken resolution.

Having successfully brought to a close the elementary portion of his studies, our friend in 1878 entered the College of St. Bonaventure, St. John's. His school days at Carbonear had been a bounteous promise of future harvests of knowledge and at Bonaventure's he soon commenced to reap in plentifulness golden fruitage of success. With a fondness and thirst for learning equalled only by his patient, persevering disposition, he applied himself to the different branches of the College curriculum, and delighted his professors by the rapidity of his progress and the vigour and originality of his restless intellect. In the spring of 1882 the Right Rev. Dr. Macdonald, of Harbor Grace, visited the College for the purpose of being present at the commencement of exercises. The young boy who on that occasion carried off the prize of excellence and won other high honors, attracted particularly the attention of His Lordship. That boy was John Francis Ryan. In him the Bishop readily recognized the material of an excellent and remarkable priest, and forthwith adopting him an alumnus for his diocese, sent him to Rome to receive, in the College of Propaganda, his ecclesiastical training. In the autumn of 1882, he accordingly proceeded to the Eternal City and commenced his seminary life in the famous Propaganda. The subjects of philosophy and theology that there engaged his attention, proved to him a literary Ophir of inestimable value and exhaustless interest. Assiduous in study, of a quick and perceptive understanding, highly intelligent, and exhibiting a genius of no ordinary calibre, he soon stood high in the estimation of his teachers and became of the members of his class the recognized head and *facile princeps*. Those who ranked next to him were—*Proximi huic, longo sed proximi intervallo*, and if they did not, when compared with him, submit to the dark shadow of eclipse, they entered, at least, the skirts of its penumbra. His brilliant success in the class hall won for him many honours. Of their number the writer now recalls a very high one, the first prize in the prize in the Sacred Scripture, namely, that was awarded him in 1880, on the occasion of the completion of his seminary course. With his progress in study kept pace his advance in virtue. Love of God and of the places wherein his glory dwelleth, became in him more and more ardent, and he desired, even as his Divine Master, that the day might come when he could deliver himself up a willing victim for the salvation of souls. The years of his detention at College passed by with all the limping impotence of march that they even seem to have in the eyes of expectancy. At length arrived the happy hour when, duly qualified by study and the sacrament of order, he knelt a priest at the feet of His Eminence Cardinal Simioni, and was fully authorised to enter upon the work of the most holy ministry.

Eccce, sacerdos factus es et ad celebrandum consecratus. vide munc, ut fideliter et devote in suo tempore Deo, sacrificium offeras, et te ipsum irreprehensibilem exhibeas.

The life of a priest spent in the unostentatious performance of the duties of his sacred office is, generally speaking, diversified with but a few incidents capable of attracting the notice of the

busy world. And such was the missionary life of Father Ryan. To the above injunction of the Blessed Kemptis, the brief term of his priesthood was, however, a noble response. He was ever faithful to the solemn engagements of ordination, whereby the newly ordained priest is pledged "to believe what he reads, to teach what he believes, and to practice what he teaches;" and though he aimed not at the doing of the extraordinary works that ring out their value on the counters of this world, he yet performed his ordinary duties extraordinarily well. We deem unnecessary a detailed reference to his sacerdotal life. It has passed before the bar of public opinion, and the award is uniform that a more pious, a more zealous, a more faithful priest than the Rev. James Francis Ryan did not exist. We will, then, but partially draw the veil that concealed his hidden life and take only a brief glance at his interior spirit. Self denial and austerity, rigid inflexibility in the discharge of duty, fervor in prayer and daily meditation, these were, we find, the distinguishing traits in his saintly character, the habits that brought to flowering and fruitage in his soul the great cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

Father Ryan had a singular union of gifts. He was an orator and a writer, and, therefore, a brilliant exception to the generality of scholars. For, as a rule, the glory of the orator is one thing, and that of the writer quite another. Judged as a writer, he had command of a vigorous, nervous, flexible style, and as a preacher he neared perfection. His sermons were composed of "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." His rhetoric had a robust sincerity that convinced as well as thrilled, and whether he discoursed on the most sublime mysteries, or gave the most simple instructions, he was equally at home.

"The work men do is not their test alone,
The love they win is far the better chart."

In social intercourse Father Ryan was a unique type of grace and refinement. His was a peculiar fascination, an indefinable charm that made him, to use the consecrated formula, the friend and favourite of every one. He had in his favor many social advantages—a handsome person, great manliness of character, irresistible manners, and a ready address. So he won upon all who came in contact with him, and won most upon those who had the happiness of associating with him in companionable ease and familiarity. Combine with these gifts his untiring industry, and you see him in his "habit as he lived." His industry, we grieve to say, brought about his early death. All desired to see him more careful of his health, more sparing of his strength, but he still worked on, and, as but too often happens, the result was ill-health and a weakened constitution. Complications of a serious nature set in and on the morning of the 17th April, of the present year, the end came, and God called him to Himself. His death was a severe blow to his friends and a most painful disappointment to the diocese of Harbor Grace.

Our task is finished. Written at brief intervals and *currente calamo* this sketch is necessarily a poor one, and the writer is fully conscious of having touched only here and there a point in the radii and circumference embraced in the subject. Ere ring out the last hours of the old year he hastens, withal, to lay it, as a very small tribute of affection and respect, on the grave of his well beloved and deeply lamented friend.

(REV.) FELIX D. MCCARTHY,
Carbonear, Feast of St. Stephen, '98.

It is only of late years that rheumatism has been treated as a blood disease. But that this is a correct theory is proved by the extraordinary success attending the use of Ayer's Sarsaparilla, in this painful and very prevalent malady. It seldom fails of radical cure.