

## The Late Very Rev. Father John O'Mahony.

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PANEGYRIC BY REV. FATHER  
HARTNETT, S.J.

### A BRILLIANT ORATION.

My Lord, Very Reverend, and Reverend Fathers, and Dear Friends—The community was profoundly stirred and deeply grieved by the death of Father O'Mahony. We are gathered here to-day to pray for the repose of the soul of one who had been a great servant of God, and a great labourer in His Vineyard. For me it is an honour and a great privilege, although a sad one, to have this opportunity of joining you in paying a tribute of honour to the memory of Father O'Mahony. Anything that I might say would fall entirely short of what is due to his memory. But it does not matter. It little matters that we mortals here cannot do justice to his merits; as we all feel sure that the panegyric of his holy life has been pronounced above by the Divine Master, in those words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Because thou hast been faithful over a few things I shall place thee over many. Enter into the joy of thy Lord." We all feel assured that Father O'Mahony has heard those words from the lips of the Divine Master.

A month ago a great sorrow fell on the whole community and rested like a heavy cloud over Port Pirie. On no one did the blow fall so heavily as it did on his Lordship, who was far away at the time on visitation of the western portion of the Diocese. The telegram that brought him the sad message was a great shock, which was intensified by the knowledge that it was absolutely impossible for him to reach Port Pirie in time for the funeral. There was no means of doing so. All he could say was "God's will be done."

I would like to ask you all—especi-

I would like to ask you all—especially the members of Father O'Mahony's family—to remember that the black cloud has a silver lining. Fix your gaze therefore on the silver lining rather than on the cloud. Think not so much of your loss as his gain. Think more of his joy now than your sorrow.

In the merciful designs of God his long illness seems to have been his purgatory, a final preparation for Heaven. During those long months his only regret was that he was unable to be amongst his people, working for them and helping them. He grieved that he could no longer stand at this altar and offer up the Holy Sacrifice for you. His strength had gone. He could only say with S. Paul, "The hour of dissolution is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have kept the faith, my course is finished. . . ."

Holy Communion is brought to him. Picture that pathetic scene. Christ our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist enters the room and He speaks to His faithful servant. "Noli timere"—do not fear—it is I. "You know Me well. We have often spoken together, heart to heart. Do not fear. I have been with you through life, a life that was spent in My service. You have been always good to the poor, and to the afflicted, your sympathy has always gone out to the school children. What you have done for the least of My brethren, I take as done unto Myself. Do not fear. Any debts to God that you may have incurred I shall pay, for I am infinitely rich. Be of good heart."

The end comes. And then! Those beautiful words of the Divine Master again, (now the Judge of the living and the dead), "Well done! thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I shall place thee over many; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

### A Christ-like Life. A Broad Outlook on the World.

What is it that made the life of Father O'Mahony so Christ-like, and his character so lovable? Simply this. He always looked at things from God's point of view! Hence in his dealings with God and in his dealings with men he was always straightforward. He never swerved aside from the straight path that leads to God.

the straight path that leads to God. Realising to the full extent the meaning of the opening words of the prayer taught us by Christ: "Our Father," he treated his fellow men regardless of class or creed, as brothers. He was broad-minded and tolerant, sympathetic to all, and one of the most kind-hearted men that walked this earth. He has gone, but his spirit survives him.

He life was a striking contrast to the spirit of this world. Were his influence sufficiently multiplied it would mean the restoration of the grand old Catholic bond between employer and employed, a bond which has been too long superseded by the "cash nexus." The representatives of capital and labour have wandered apart into hostile camps. An un-Catholic economy theory has split society into two. The cleavage has been accentuated by a vicious propaganda—largely to an un-Christian Press. The conflict is regarded as a trial of strength. The idea of the Christian brotherhood of man has almost vanished. Had we a Press with Christian principles there would be a better chance of building up the national character. The employer's eyes would perhaps be opened, and he would become conscious of duties towards his employes of which he never suspected the exist-

ence. He would realise that he is not a working machine, but co-operating with a son of God. The revelation might come with a shock, but it would lead to practical results. The moral obligations of the employer are not confined to the payment of a fair wage.

On the other hand, employes realising the dignity of labour, would not allow society to be torn apart by class hatred. There are found among them a good number of men with surprising abilities and generous dispositions—men who believe in the vigour and health of the people, men of quiet influence and high ideal, but whose voice is too often drowned by the mere agitator. How much better and happier this world would be if the Press, employers and employed, saw things from the point of view of the late Father O'Mahony.

#### Another Contrast.

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His calm, dignified spirit was another contrast. Think of the "bottled-lightning" type of mind to be found in the professional classes, including leaders of commerce and industry, who lead an over-excited, over-tense mental life, with the result that the "sultry, threatening, exhausting, thunderous inner atmosphere" never quite clears away.

Father O'Mahony was a bright example of the very opposite. He was always perfectly calm. Happiness, cheerfulness ever radiated from his inmost soul. Wherever he passed he was like a bright sunbeam, especially to those who were downcast. You always felt better for having spent even a few minutes in his company.

#### Unselfishness.

He did not seem to ever think of himself. His first thought was always for others. The poor, the needy, the afflicted know it well.

He was gifted with a tender sympathy for childhood. The children knew it too. His presence amongst them made them happy. I remember how on an occasion when they were gathered in St. Mark's Hall they all brightened up instantly the moment Father O'Mahony appeared on the scene. It is well known how they loved to crowd his confessional, and, as Dr. Prendegast said here a month ago, he led the little children in hundreds to the feet of Christ. He trained them to love the Sacraments and to receive frequently and regularly the Divine Food of their souls.

His interest in them did not cease when they left school. On the contrary it seemed to increase. Last midwinter I had the opportunity of seeing how earnest the young people are with regard to their spiritual welfare. About 100 girls were present for the 6.30 a.m. Mass every morning of their Retreat. They were remarkable for their earnestness and fervour; and also for the beautiful manner in which they sang the hymns during Mass. Their rendering of Boredese's Mass on Friday at the close of the Retreat was splendid. They put their heart into all they did, knowing how pleased Father O'Mahony would be when they did well. It is a credit to them, and to the Sisters who had trained them. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan are

Sisters who had trained them. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan are heart and soul in their work and are doing magnificent work in many parts of Australia.

### His Influence over Boys and Young Men.

And what is to be said of the boys and young men? A great deal could be said. It stands to their credit that when they saw Father O'Mahony's health failing they rallied round the Altar, realising how much it would please him to know they would be always faithful and regular in the reception of the Sacraments, especially during the critical years of their life. He always took a deep interest in the young men and boys, and wielded a great influence among them.

When his strength was going big responsibilities fell on the shoulders of Dr. Prendegast, who immediately took practical steps to further the wishes of Father O'Mahony. His first care was to bring the young men and boys to the Altar rails every month for a general Communion. Their response was grand; and under the safe and sure guidance of their new spiritual director they continued to make great progress. Dr. Prendegast is a wise and far-seeing man. He knew that young people require plenty of innocent amusement and healthy recreation, and so he gave them the necessary opportunities by establishing, on a solid basis, various clubs, e.g., football, cricket, tennis, dramatis, etc.

These young fellows have won the respect of all with whom they have come in contact. They are high-minded, big-hearted fellows—hearted of gold! A few months ago I had the opportunity of admiring their skill on the cricket field.

Their constancy in keeping up the practice of general Communion every month would be a feature in a beautiful living memorial to Father O'Mahony. The immense number of Holy Communions is itself, as Dr. Prendegast pointed out a month ago, a beautiful memorial. In that grand work there is good reason to think that the boys and young men will have a special share.

### Memorial.

Of course you intend—and it is the unanimous wish of the parishioners—

Of course you intend—and it is the unanimous wish of the parishioners—to erect a suitable memorial. And, remembering Fr. O'Mahony's special interest in the children, you have chosen a kindergarten school, so that his memory would remain fresh and green in the minds and hearts of the little ones.

It is the policy now to separate the

very small children from the rest so that more attention can be given to them, and so that they can be made happier and cared for as their tender years require. As Port Pirie has been through hard times so recently the Church authorities would be reluctant to put any further burdens upon you. Fr. O'Mahony has friends everywhere who would not like to miss this opportunity of having some share in the erection of a suitable memorial. Moreover, Australia is the only part of the British Dominions in which justice in the matter of Catholic education is still denied us. In the meantime we are still prepared to make sacrifices in order to ensure the proper education for our Catholic children. Were we to close the Catholic Schools all over Australia it would mean to the Government the expenditure of a sum of money approaching £1,000,000 annually. We do not intend to hand our children to the State schools. Just as it is an essential part of a child's education to be trained to love and revere his mother, so it is absolutely essential that the child be trained to love and revere God; to be taught his obligations to God and be trained to fulfil them. If this be neglected the very essence of education is wanting. Without a Christian education we can only expect disaster sooner or later in that child's course through life. Idle to be bringing on legislation to cure the ills that follow, when the proper means are neglected in the earlier stages of life. Legislative splints will not cure atrophy. They only increase it. Such splints cannot take the place of proper nourishment that was required to build up a strong constitution. Character is to be built up by a Christian education, not by legislative splints.

Knowing all this as we do and recognising the claims of the little children of Port Pirie it is no wonder

children of Port Pirie it is no wonder all are delighted that the memorial is to take the form of a Kindergarten School and that all are determined to help such a grand work.

One last thought. Fr. O'Mahony has now the same interest in you as ever. He is a more powerful advocator than ever, before the throne of God. His prayers in your behalf will not cease, and in answer to his prayers I trust that God's special blessings will fall upon you and follow you every step of your life.