

## Father Neil Crispin, 1875 — 1880

FATHER CRISPIN WAS born in India in 1828, the son of an English General. He was educated at St. Mary's College, Oscott and was ordained priest on December 19th, 1857. He worked as a curate at Chatham, Bermondsey, St. Peter Port in Guernsey, and at Southampton. In 1867 he was appointed Rector of St. Joseph's, Brighton, a Mission which was started the previous year. In 1873 he came to St. Mary Magdalen's to assist Father Oldham, and on the latter's death he became second Rector of the parish.

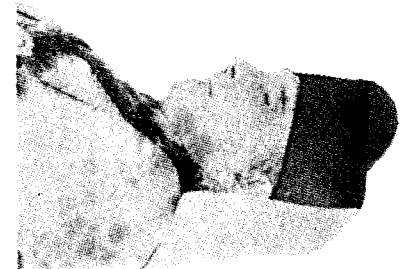
He had always enjoyed excellent health, but five weeks before he died he had a slight accident which confined him to his residence at 7 Montpelier Street. His death was unexpected. He seemed to be getting better, and on his doctor's advice he was permitted to leave his bed and sit in a chair: "but the exertion was too much for him, and he never recovered from a fainting fit which seized him". He died on January 8th, 1880. On January 14th, Bishop Danell sang his Requiem Mass at St. Mary Magdalen's and also officiated at the graveside at the Extra-Mural Cemetery, where he is buried next to Father Oldham.

Father Crispin was greatly loved by his parishioners for his zeal, and his kind and affectionate manner endeared him to all who came in contact with him. A small glimpse of the spiritual good he had accomplished comes to us from an unusual source at the very time he had reached the end of his priestly labours. In early January, 1880, a non-Catholic observer came one Sunday morning to the 8.30 Mass. He found the church full and the devotion of the congregation very obvious. What impressed him most was the very great number who received Holy Communion. "That section of the British public which believes that Catholics never

communicate except at Easter would have had their eyes opened at St. Mary Magdalen's."

### *Three Items of Interest*

1. In Father Crispin's lifetime, Guernsey and Southampton were in the diocese of Southwark. They are now in Portsmouth diocese which was formed in May, 1882.
2. In October, 1879, Father Sylvester Donnelly, Father Crispin's curate, went to found a Mission in Hove. It was known as the Cliftonville Mission, and with its coming into being the area administered from St. Mary Magdalen's shrank considerably. Father Donnelly first lived at 38 Goldstone Villas, and in his house there he had a small chapel, dedicated to the Sacred Heart. This served the needs of his parishioners for two years. His presbytery and the first half of the church of the Sacred Heart, Norton Road, were finished in June, 1881, and on 28th September of the same year the church was opened.



*Father Neil Crispin*

3. Father Crispin was never photographed in his lifetime. The only photograph of him (above) was taken the day following his death.