

*One of the century's most influential liturgists was an artist, calligrapher, composer, adventurer - and a devoted parish priest.*

*Author Michael Davies will publish a new book in the Autumn of 1999, that will contain a biography and comprehensive selection of Fr. Fortescue's writing on the history and beauty of the Traditional Mass.*

## **Adrian Fortescue: Priest and Scholar**

by MICHAEL DAVIES



Adrian Fortescue was born on January 14, 1874. His father, Edward Hawks Knottesford Fortescue, was the head of a Midland county family of ancient lineage and high position. His estates were in Warwickshire, including Alvestone Manor, Stratford-on-Avon.

The House of Fortescue is said to date from the Battle of Hastings (1066), where Richard le Fort saved the life of William the Conqueror by the shelter of his shield, thereafter to be known as Fort-Escu ("strong shield"). His descendants have taken for their motto, Forte scutem salus ducum - "A strong shield is the safety of leaders."

In 1891 Adrian entered the Scots' College in Rome where, due to his exceptional musical talent, he was soon appointed organist. He was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in 1892, and his Ph.D in 1894, when he entered the Theological Faculty at Innsbruck University. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 27, 1898 by Simon, Prince Bishop of Brixen.

Between 1899 and 1905 he passed doctoral examinations in Moral Theology, Dogma, Church History, Canon Law, Arabic, and Biblical Science - passing the examination in Semitic languages with great distinction, a rare achievement. On June 10, 1905 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity, making him the very rare recipient of a triple doctorate.

The level of his scholarship was so exceptional that he was awarded a prize presented to him personally by the Emperor Franz Joseph. It is hardly surprising that his friends and parishioners tended to refer to him as "the Doctor" - as, in deference to those still alive who remember him as such. I will too on occasion in this article.

## True Genius

The Doctor was a man of such high attainment that he may rightly be styled a genius. He knew much, knew it well, and loved knowledge wholeheartedly. He could not only converse but lecture in eleven languages.

He had an exceptionally broad range of interests. He loved the study of

the East- its languages, customs and religions- and knew the origin and history of the Eastern Churches, both Uniate and Orthodox, as few priests of the Roman Rite have ever done, as is made clear in his books on the subject. He devoted many years to the study of Church history, of which he was an inspiring master.

Hearing Fr. Fortescue lecture was an experience that could never be forgotten. His presentation of facts was amazing in its discipline and power, and his delivery was equally disciplined. He spoke without emotion, without rhetoric, and with practically no gestures, but could hold his audience spellbound. He was an authority on the classics, and his erudition was admired by non-Catholics who flocked to his lectures on such authors as Plato and Virgil. He also possessed a specialized knowledge of Dante and Boethius.

Fr Fortescue was also an artist of considerable talent, which he used in a range of subjects from a masterly study of Chartres Cathedral to exquisitely beautiful book plates designed for his friends. His watercolors would merit a place in any art gallery. The Doctor was also a recognized authority on heraldry, and his own designs were widely admired.

He was possibly the outstanding calligrapher of his era, one of the greatest of this century; and he influenced the Catholic--led renaissance in the art of printing. His calligraphy reached its pinnacle in an exquisitely written and illuminated collection of the music used in his church, which he compiled for the use of the organist.

He was an outstanding musician, and was not only a devoted student of hymnody, meter and the ancient Latin hymns of the Church, but a

composer of considerable talent, a talent which was not confined to religious works but extended even to humorous compositions.

A memorial exhibition of Adrian Fortescue's work was organized in the Letchworth Public Library in 1923. and simply to read the catalogue puts one in awe of the man. There are sections listing his books and pamphlets, notes for his lectures, music, writing and illuminations, bookplates, heraldic and other designs, vestments that he designed, drawings, watercolor and pencil sketch books, and letters in many

languages. There were, in fact, so many exhibits that they could not all be shown at the same time and needed to be changed frequently.

## **The Priest**

After a number of temporary positions, interrupted by his doctoral examinations, Fr. Fortescue was eventually appointed Missionary Rector of Letchworth in Hertfordshire in November 1907. This was a unique parish for a unique priest, but one less suited to his talents and his temperament could hardly be imagined.

Letchworth was the world's first Garden City. Work had begun on its construction in 1904, and a large number of unemployed men were drafted from London to lay sewers and build roads and other service utilities. As there was no housing available the Corporation erected a number of wooden buildings called "the sheds" to house the workers. In 1907 Bernard Newdigate moved his Arden Press to Letchworth, bringing with him a number of Catholic employees.

It is probable that it was their presence that made the establishment of a Catholic mission necessary. Fr. Fortescue's first task was to arrange for the construction of a temporary church, and while this was being done he offered Mass in one of the original sheds located near the railway line. Fr. Fortescue celebrated his first public Mass in that hut on November 29, 1907.

By May 1908, Fr. Fortescue had obtained a site for a new church in Pixmore Way. It was a temporary church which he built largely with his own money, and he also provided many of the furnishings. The church was dedicated to St. Hugh of Lincoln. He always insisted upon its being referred to as "St Hugh," and it made him very angry to hear his church referred to as "St. Hugh's". He blessed the first stone on June 21, 1908 and celebrated Mass in the new building for the first time on August 31. It was blessed by the Bishop of Amycla on September 6, but could not be consecrated as it was only a temporary structure.

A new church was built in the 1960s, but Fr. Fortescue's little church has been preserved as the parish hall, and it is considered to be one of Letchworth's buildings of greatest historic interest. The Doctor grew to be very proud of his beautiful little church, much of which he had designed and paid for personally "It is the only church worth looking at west of Constantinople," he would claim vehemently.

The outstanding feature of St. Hugh was the beautiful baldachin erected in April 1911, which can still be seen in the little church. Fr Fortescue's parish was too small to be self-supporting, and he provided much of the income which kept it in being

with what he earned from his writing, his lectures, and the sale of his art and calligraphy, and with donations from his friends.

It is hard to imagine a scholar who produced a small fraction of Fr. Fortescue's literary output, not to mention his public lectures, teaching commitments and other activities, being able to cope with, the duties of a parish priest in a conscientious manner but, in fact, very few parish priests call ever have carried out their duties more conscientiously than Adrian Fortescue.

Although his personal inclination was for the life of a scholar, his high sense of duty would never allow him to put his scholarly pursuits before the care of the souls entrusted to him. His visits to the poor and sick were paid with the most scrupulous regularity no matter how busy he might be. He would give the last penny in his pocket to help a needy parishioner, and frequently found himself in financial difficulties as a result of his generosity. He was never known to refuse to see a caller, however inconvenient it might be for him to interrupt his work

In his study there were four desks, and he would flit from one to another as the mood took him writing a separate book on each. The desks were breast high, as he preferred to write standing, and even to read standing. Although much of the routine parish work was far from congenial to a scholar of his temperament, it was always done thoroughly. Everything that a parish priest could do, and many things that most could never have conceived or accomplished, were done devotedly throughout his fifteen years at St. Hugh.

In a letter written to a friend in Letchworth in August 1909, the Doctor made clear how uncongenial he found parish work, and how desperately he wished that his superiors would recognize his scholarly aptitude and make it possible for him to pursue his studies in the interests of the Church, as would have been the case had he not been a secular priest, but a member of a religious order:

I am not really much good at parish work. There are lots of men really keen about it and good at it, who get a real personal interest in their people and children and school. I can't help the fact that I'm not really made that way (though I suppose I could force myself to do my duty if I had to). In my heart I am not really a bit keen about poor people and working up a thriving parish, and young men's clubs, and schools. Of course I wish I were. Really whenever I have to do those things, in my heart I have wanted to get it all over, so as to go back to my books. On the other hand, I can do writing work and am good at it. That is rarer in England (among our people, I mean) and there is some want of it. I am sure that there is room for a few student-priests among us - there will never be more than very few.

This wish was not granted by his superiors, and he was compelled to live out his short life as a parish priest. Knowing how uncongenial he found the task must increase our admiration for the dedication with which he fulfilled it; and despite the sentiments expressed in the letter that has just been quoted, there can be no doubt that he had grown to love his parish and his people before his untimely death in 1923, at the age of 49, as his insistence upon being buried among them makes clear.

Fr. Fortescue's Mass was something to remember. It was slow: every word that was intended to be audible was perfect. All that was about the altar was exquisitely tended. He spent hours with his servers before great feasts, practising every detail of the ceremonies. The offices for Holy Week, for which he had a deep devotion, were carried out with every possible ceremony.

The music at St. Hugh was of a uniquely high standard. To be a member of its choir was to receive a thorough musical education from the Doctor and his devoted choirmaster, Wilfrid Willson. Mr. Willson, a devout Anglican and an experienced musician, had come to work in Letchworth in 1908 and lodged with a Catholic lady who told him that her parish priest needed a voluntary organist to play the harmonium. He called on Fr. Fortescue, offered his help, but made it clear that he would never become a Catholic. Within a year he was received into the Church!

Willson was eventually appointed choirmaster as well as organist. He went with the Doctor to select the positive organ for the temporary church, which was later moved to the permanent church; and he designed the ingenious swell box for the organ. The two men became close friends, and after choir practice each Friday they would spend the evening together in Fr Fortescue's study, smoking cigars, drinking coffee, and discussing everything under the sun.

Their aim was to achieve musical perfection, and they must have come as near to achieving this as any parish choir has ever done. The entire congregation was able to sing the ordinary of the Mass in plainchant, in accordance with the wishes of St. Pius X.

In 1913 Fr. Fortescue compiled for his people a book of Latin hymns with his own English prose translations. In the preface he wrote: I have gathered together all the hymns and chants which we usually sing with a double purpose. First, that anyone who knows the tune may join the singers; secondly, that those who do not sing may be able to follow, to know what is being sung. Every text has an English translation on the opposite page. If anyone does not understand Latin, he can use the translation as his own prayer, and so join in intention with those who sing....There is not, and there is never likely to be, any religious poetry in the world worthy to be compared with the hymns of the Latin office....our old Latin hymns are immeasurably more

beautiful than any others ever composed. Other religious bodies take all their best hymns from us. It would be a disgrace if we Catholics were the only people who did not appreciate what is our property. And, from every point of view, we of the old Church cannot do better than sing to God as our fathers sang to Him during all the long ages behind us. Nor shall we find a better expression of Catholic piety than these words, hallowed by centuries of Catholic use, fragrant with the memory of the saints who wrote them in that golden age when practically all Christendom was Catholic.

Fr Fortescue catechized his parishioners with extraordinary zeal. There can have been no parish in Europe where the faithful were better instructed in their religion, their liturgy, the lives of the saints, and all that concerns the worship of God.

He took endless pains to ensure that every person in his parish understood his religion and appreciated the liturgy. He gave up two precious hours every Saturday evening to writing in his exquisite hand the parish notice sheet for the week. On great feasts these sheets would be enriched with illuminations. Nothing was too good for the church that he loved.

## **The Man**

Although he was capable of warm and enduring friendships, Adrian Fortescue was by nature a shy and sensitive man. He would never show the depth of his religious feeling. This was a matter between himself and his God -- a domain where none might ever ply.

One might hear his splendid enthusiasm for the liturgy, for the wonders of Holy Week, for certain prayers at Mass, for church music, for the early martyrs, for St. Augustine. for a thousand things that affect the Catholic Church and her history. But never the deeper things of his spirit: he could not bring himself to make explicit in public his fiery enthusiasm for the cause of Christ, and his reverent awe for the things of God. But this could not be hidden from those who were present when he offered Mass, or who even saw him genuflect.

Fr. Fortescue's reluctance to express anything that smacked of emotion was reflected in his sermons, which were always short, carefully prepared, and packed with instruction. His Lenten sermons on the Passion attracted a number of non-Catholics. Then, and almost only then, did he lay aside his reticence and speak words which drew tears and made converts. He made a good many converts at Letchworth, and took endless pains over their instruction. He did not strive for eloquence in his preaching. He was too honest intellectually, and too scrupulous, lest by any words of his he should call forth emotion which might hinder the free use of the reason.

Adrian Fortescue was a stoutly built, full-blooded man, of great physical strength and of true manly virtue in the classical sense. This stood him in good stead during his journeys to the wild and remote places that he loved so much. Once at least he fought for his life. On one occasion he was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with some fanatical Albanian soldiers at Hebron, and he and his companions had to fight their way with bludgeons to their horses and gallop away, in Adrian's case with a broken collarbone. On a second occasion the caravan with which he was travelling in Asia Minor, disguised as an Arab, was attacked by brigands, and in self-defense he killed an assailant with a pistol shot. He mentioned this incident in a letter to his close friend Father Harold Burton in 1907:

I have just come back from a year spent in Syria, Mesopotamia. Asia Minor & Greece. I saw many and wonderful things. I rode long days across the great Syrian desert, alone among Arabs. I stood among the ruins of strange dead Greek cities in Asia Minor & slept on the bare earth under broken white columns where Diana of the Ephesians had once reigned as a mighty god. And I saw forests & climbed mountains and crept through deep passes in the heart of Asia Minor. I went a pilgriming to the holy places too, said Mass at the holy sepulchre, spent the night of Maundy Thursday on the Mount of Olives & saw the Easter sun rise above the golden walls of Herod's temple. Then there were Damascus, the slow brown waters of the Euphrates, the orchards of Galilee, Cyprus (a heavenly island), the tawny pillars of the Athenian Acropolis, the fat plains & strange Byzantine monasteries of Thessaly; and- far most glorious of all - the line of domes and minarets, radiant, white & fretted like carved ivory against a hot grey-blue sky, that crown imperially Constantine's New Rome by the Bosphorus. So you see I have had a purple time. I have learned to talk Syrian Arabic quite well & some Turkish. Greek I could talk already; & now I work at Persian like a horse, greatly hoping to go out again in a year or two & next time to reach Teheran & Shiraz. Also I made a heap of drawings and learned much about Mohammedan ideas. But I suffered a great hunger & thirst & heat, was under fire from robbers & Bedawin several times; once I saved my life by flight leaving all my baggage to the spoiler, once I shot a man dead (a horrid memory): I had my shoulder smashed to bits in a fight at Hebron & lay six weeks sorely sick in the French hospital at Jerusalem, & I nearly died of malarial fever at Aleppo. Such is the outline. To hear more you must come to see me, as I very much hope you will. Now I shall not go back to Maldon, but I am to start a new mission at Letchworth in Hertfordshire - where this new Garden City place is. I am very pleased with the idea indeed.

Fr. Fortescue had a highly developed sense of humor, and at times he liked to play the enfant terrible and shock his friends. "What is the difference between X (a member of his congregation) and Balaam's Ass? Answer: There is no difference." When reproached for comparing his parishioner to the ass he agreed that he had been uncharitable - to the donkey. He took a particular delight in denigrating the Vatican in the most outrageous terms. When he learned that Stanley Morison had arranged to visit Rome he wrote to him with the following advice:

Do not speak to any officials of the Curia, nor have any dealings with any of them. They are the lowest class of men that survives. If you go near them they will probably pick your pockets or try to sell you an indulgence. Remember me to the present Ordinary, if you see him. I am told he is a decent man. It was Leo XIII in my time.

There was an occasion when Cardinal Bourne decided to require all the priests serving in his diocese who had been ordained abroad to submit to an examination. No exception was made for the most learned priest in the diocese, Adrian Fortescue with his triple doctorate. All the candidates duly finished their papers and departed, with the exception of Fr. Fortescue, who continued to write and write.

The canon who was superintending the examination began to feel hungry, but, to his dismay, his remaining candidate produced a packet of sandwiches which he proceeded to eat with great relish while continuing to write. Finally, the hungry Canon could bear it no longer. He approached the candidate and inquired if he were nearly finished. With an amazed expression, Fr. Fortescue answered that he had not, as he was answering the question:

"State what you know about the Arian heresy."

Fr. Fortescue had no patience for verbosity or unnecessarily abstruse language, as he made clear in his uniquely witty manner in the Preface to the best known of all his books. *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (which he wrote not as a labor of love but in order to obtain £300 for urgently needed work on his church).

Until the publication of the Fortescue book, the Catholic clergy in England had relied upon a translation by the Reverend J.D. Dale of an Italian book written in 1839 by the Reverend G. Baldesehi, Master of Ceremonies in St Peter's Basilica.

'Unwillingly' wrote Fortescue, one speaks ill of a work which has for so many years been the chief guide to Catholic ceremonies in England" He then proceeded, in the best Forteseue manner, to speak ill of it with great gusto:

It is said that the test of a good translation is that it should read like an original work. According to this ideal Dale comes off very badly indeed. He has such a mania for using Italian words that a great part of his book is not really English at all and can hardly be understood till one has translated it back into Italian. Not only does he use an Italian name on every possible occasion; when the words are English he translates with ruthless exactness all the gorgeous phrases of Italian grand style. For instance in Dale you do not bow to the celebrant, you "proceed to make the customary salutation"; you do not stand, you "retain a standing posture." Everyone "observes" to do everything: you observe not to kneel, you observe to retain a kneeling posture. The MC. does not tell a man to do a thing, he apprizes him that it should be performed. The celebrant "terminates" the creed; he genuflects in conjunction with the sacred ministers - then he observes to assume a standing posture in conjunction with them. The MC. goes about apprizing and comporting himself till he observes to perform the customary salutation. The subdeacon imparts the Pax in the same manner as it was communicated to him. Everyone exhibits a grave deportment; Imagine anyone talking like this. Imagine anyone saying that you ought to exhibit a deportment. Of course, we have to "ascend" every time the blessing is always "benediction:" harmful becomes 'deleterious' and so on. Frankly I do not think I have ever read a book written in so atrocious a style. The only thing in its favour is that it is extremely funny. However, since the book is meant to be serious it is a pity that someone did not apprise Dale to proceed to observe the customary use of language, in conjunction with people who write English.

There was an occasion when Fr. Fortescue was being shown one of the early automobiles. Gingerly he pressed the klaxon horn and jumped back at its raucous noise. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed "It sounds like the canons of St. Peter's singing Terce."

If his opinion of the musical standards prevailing in the Basilica of St. Peter was not very high he could be equally scathing about his own choir who adored him and who received his comments in the Spirit in which they were delivered. While on holiday in Sicily in 1913 he sent a postcard to his choirmaster - saying that it had occurred to him to wonder what Mr. Willson was doing because he had taken part in a Byzantine liturgy and had thought of him "in the midst of their strange wailings'

In a similar vein he remarked that he was most intrigued with a line that he had discovered in a seventeenth century Protestant hymn: "The beastly creatures sing His praise." "I think," he explained 'that the gentleman really means the quadrupeds (though few of them really sing; John does). But is it not a heavenly line? It ought to be written up as a motto in the choir. Every time I hear you all at Compline I shall think of it."

The John referred to was the Doctors cat. He was very fond 'of cats and one was almost invariably curled up in a comfortable place in his study. When he knew that death was certain, his last words to a lady in his parish were: "If the worst comes to the worst you will look after John."

### **His Last Days**

Suddenly in the midst of life, this amazing scholar was called away with most of his work unfinished. On December 20 1922 Dr. Fiddian, his general practitioner diagnosed cancer in him and sent him to a London specialist. The Doctor heard the "sentence of death" as he expressed it himself passed upon him the next day by Sir Charles Gordon Watson in Harley Street. In a letter to the President of St. Edmund's College. where he was Professor of Church History Fr. Fortescue wrote:

I have had what at first was a very great shock. After a good deal of trouble and some pain I have been to see a specialist in London, Sir Charles (who turns out to be a Catholic). It appears that [have cancer apparently in a rather bad and advanced state. Ian, going to the hospital in Dollis Hill, probably on Jan. 3. There will be an operation. If it succeeds they hope to prolong life for a bit; but they will leave me a horribly maimed and patched-up body. There seems little hope of a radical cure. Sir Charles warned me that in any case, [can only hope for a very short bit of life now. Indeed the idea of what they are going to do to me revolts me more than death so that I do not now feel that I much want to survive.

This was a shock at first. A week ago, as far as I knew, I was in perfect health, except for what [took for a little indigestion. I came out of Sir Charles's house after about a quarter of an hour's examination. I wandered down Harley Street and Wimpole Street in the grey light under drizzling rain, into Oxford Street among crowds of people buying Christmas presents; and all the time I was hearing loud the splash of the ferryman's oars. The first day or two was rather dreadful. I wandered about my room, took up a book and tried to read a page or two, then put it down. I could not settle down to Boethius or to arranging my notes or anything. What does all that matter to me now? So I have been through all the Christmas festivities, the

music at Matins, and midnight Mass, the garland, and little presents and cards arriving, with this in front of me all the time.

Now I am getting hardened to the idea. The very worst, when they have cut me open, will be death quite soon. I am used to the idea now, and it is much less difficult to bear than I would have thought.

I think it silly to make a fuss about so inevitable a thing as death; nor do I want now to work up an emotional crisis. I am spending these last days making my will, arranging things for my successor, sorting papers. I think I have already got over the pang of parting with work half done and the too many interests I had in life. Only let me say this: if I do not come back from Dollis Hill, if Azrael has got me, [like now to remember how very kind and nice you, Vance, Flynn, George Smith and everyone there were to me always...I am going to spend the day before I go into the hospital with the OP at Haverstock Hill (no Molinism for me, thank you. Tell Vance that if my essence loses its existence I am firmly convinced that the existence will go walking about by itself. This, I believe, to be the authentic doctrine of the late Rev. T.

Aquinas. OP). I shall make a general confession and get ready then. I suppose they will bring me Communion before the operation. Then I shall go down into unconsciousness in the hands of God and leave the rest to him, whether it is to be a bit more life with a maimed body, or Azrael at once. If it is to be Azrael, I should like to think that you will all remember me kindly and say Mass for a soul that has no hope but in the mercy of God.

Fr. Fortescue preached a final sermon to his flock on December 31 "Christ our Friend and Comforter." He explained the meaning of the Nativity in profound but simple terms. It picked' from all births one birth for remembrance, and that not alone the birth of a human child, but the special visitation of God to Earth. This was the idea of the Epiphany 'Heaven had visited Earth' and was the fundamental thing and the spiritual note in the Christian religion. Everything in Heaven became incarnate in that birth and life.

The Christian religion, he continued, was not a system of difficult doctrines; all we had to do was love Christ and obey him. We need not be great philosophers, nor worry ourselves with recondite facts; we have our gospels, and our Friend is portrayed in them. Everyone wants a friend, and Christ is the host of friends. One could not even be sure of one's own friends; they forget or go away; but whatever happens Christ will not leave us; He will keep us company even in sorrow and death.

He will not take away all evil from our circumstance, said Fr. Fortescue, or all trials from our path. These are the terms on which we are put into the world, and we do wrong to expect or claim security; no security exists for any mortal thing subject to the laws of nature. Christ's office is to comfort us through all, for He has been through all Himself. Our heaviest burden cannot be heavier than was His, nor our road harder than was His to His sacred feet. He had gone before us into all dark places, and will strengthen us in those we have to go through.

The Doctor concluded his sermon with the words: "That is all I have to say." In view of his impending death this was profoundly true in a sense that, probably, he did not intend.

Despite his awe-inspiring erudition, the faith of this great priest had been basically a simple one, like that of such great saints as the Cure d'Ars or Pius X. It was based not on a set of abstract propositions but on a deep and personal relationship with Christ our Friend and Comforter. All that is necessary to save our souls is to love and obey Him, even when He asks us to follow Him along the path of suffering that His own sacred feet had taken for our salvation.

That was all that he had to say, and what is there that he or any other preacher could have added to this simple message? Fr. Fortescue was now about to live in his death what he had preached in his life.

On January 3, 1923 he left Letchworth for Dollis Hill Hospital, where he died of cancer on February 11. The evening before he had come to say goodbye to the Willson family. The children did not know the gravity of his illness, and he appeared to them to be very cheerful. Adrian Willson, a son of the choirmaster named after the Doctor, remembers him going into an adjoining room for a private word with Mrs. Willson, and when they emerged she was brushing tears from her cheeks.

Each in turn held the Doctor's hands and wished him well, then he turned and walked down the garden path into the darkness. When they saw him again he was lying in his coffin.

Before leaving St. Hugh for what he knew would be the last time in his life, to take the train for London, he bade his little church a lone and final farewell, and was seen kissing silently the altar-stone upon which he had so often offered that Holy Sacrifice about which he had written so profoundly. It came as no surprise to his congregation, who prayed for him unceasingly, to learn from those who were with him in his last illness that his mind dwelt constantly, during those weeks of agony, on the sufferings of Our Lord, and that he many times refused morphine in his determination to persevere along the "royal road of pain" - an expression he had used each year at

Letchworth during his Lenten sermons on the Passion. To preach on the "royal road" is one thing; to walk on it is another.

Fr. Fortescue's funeral must have been the most impressive ever accorded to a parish priest in England, and manifested the great respect for him among Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Peter Willson, another son of the choirmaster, was unable to be present as he was suffering chickenpox, but he remembers vividly being allowed to watch from an upstairs window as the funeral procession passed through Letchworth to the cemetery - the cortage stretching for nearly a mile, peopled with many bishops, large numbers of clergy, the choir of Westminster Cathedral, the choir, the clergy and some boys from St. Edmund's College, members of the aristocracy and other dignitaries, members of the Fortescue family and countless local people from Letchworth.

Only a few weeks before, despite the anxiety induced by his impending death, and his preoccupation with leaving his parish in good order for his successor, Fr. Fortescue had not forgotten to send his choirmaster's children presents as a surprise on Christmas morning.

We can learn more about the innermost reality of our faith, which is the Cross, from the life and the death of Adrian Fortescue than we can from his books. His complete candor, his high sense of honor, his generosity and the strictness of his private life made him universally admired by people of all religions in Letchworth.

Despite the wishes of his family that he should be laid to rest with his ancestors, he chose to be buried at Letchworth among his own parishioners, and he asked that his memorial card should bear the picture of the Good Shepherd.

No man is perfect and Adrian Fortescue certainly had his caprices, prejudices and impatience which were not always calculated to endear him to his fellows. A man of quite extraordinary learning, he found it hard to suffer fools gladly and was considered by some to maintain an arrogant assumption of superiority. His acerbic sense of humor was particularly resented by some who were its targets, but if he realized that he had been cruel he would give himself no peace until he had made amends.

He was a scholar whose writing is of superlative and permanent value. He was a teacher of profound learning and of such charm that he commanded the attention and affection of his pupils. He was a parish priest who labored without stint for his flock, and was rewarded with their devotion. He was gifted as a linguist to an exceptional,

almost unique degree. He stood in the very first rank in the fields of calligraphy and heraldic design.

Fr. Fortescue is buried in the Catholic part of the cemetery in Letchworth, surrounded by the graves of his parishioners. It is only appropriate that Wilfred and Clare Willson, his closest friends, are buried next to him. The headstone of his grave is carved with the arms of his family and the words:

HIC IACET  
ADRIANUS A FORTI SCUTO  
PRESBYTER  
WESTMONASTERIENSIS  
BEATEM SPEM EXPECTANS

Around the tomb itself are carved the beautiful words from Psalm 25, which express precisely the motivating force of his entire priestly life:

DOMINE. DILEXI DECOREM  
DOMUS TUAE, ET LOCUM  
HABITATIONIS GLORIAE TUAE.