

THE DEAD PASSIONIST.

THE following beautiful notice of the life and death of Father Paul was originally published in the 'Nation.' We now publish it, with the conviction that it will both interest and edify those who read it:—

"Ten years ago, the Honorable Captain Charles Reginald Pakenham was one of the most brilliant and promising officers in the Guards. Amid that gay glittering London world, with all its splendours, and dissipations, and temptations, he had kept the 'whiteness of his soul,' and was beloved with a certain gentle awe by all who knew him, for the rare angelic amiability and purity of his nature. His uncle, the Duke of Wellington, even evinced a degree of affection for him, which he was slow to show to his other relatives—for the old Marshal had his instinct of the true and staunch heroic metal that was in him. When the Queen came over to Ireland in 1840—'all clinquant, all in gold,' in the splendid scarlet of the Household Troops, and the rich aiguillettes of the royal staff, he came in her train, as one of her Majesty's Aides-de-camp—and all the house of Longford, from the Earl to the Dean, welcomed their kinsman to his native city—welcomed the Honorable Captain Charles Pakenham, of her Majesty's Coldstream Guards—since known in this world and the next, as the Very Rev. Father Paul Mary of St. Michael, the Passionist, who was this week buried before the Altar of his Order, at Mount Argus. As he lay there, the most impressive image of the holiness of death that human eyes could behold—his face full of happy radiance long after life had ceased—his limbs decently and gracefully composed, as though angels had laid him at rest—lying there with the crucifix clasped in his hands, in the long black robe of his Order—its stern spirit of mortification, even in death displayed in the rough plank bier, the bare feet, and the pillow of bricks—the most irreverent must have felt as in the presence of one already beatified. Visible there were the fine fingers, and arched instep, the delicate transparent skin, and chiselled features of his high patrician blood—there, the stamp of his old soldierly life, almost effaced in a more rigid and militant discipline—whose many marks might be traced in that lithe mortified figure, and the brave, clear calm of his face; but over all a halo which was not of this earth, and which filled the grim austerity of the grave with grace, and lifted death into the light of the life beyond—the slow fading of a glorified soul, as of some grand sunset which, long after it has gone below the horizon, still leaves its glow on the earth and in the air.

None who saw Father Paul will ever forget that most touching spectacle which preached a more inspiring and more eloquent sermon than the Holy Spirit within him had ever uttered, or than men may read even in the marvellous moral of his life. His, perhaps, was the most miraculous of all the English conversions to the Church. Hardly could the supernatural eye of Blessed Paul of the Cross, himself, whose heart implored so fervidly, and foresaw so clearly the conversion of England—through the dew of prophetic ecstasy have prefigured the singular fact, that both in England and Ireland his humble Retreats should be, as it were, inaugurated by two such extraordinary conversions—out of that race of nobles who have been for three centuries the most powerful enemies of the Church in the world—as Father Ignatius Spencer, and Father Paul Pakenham. Upon Father Paul, grace seems to have fallen like the flash which smote the Apostle of Damascus, and, in the yet unabated glow of his first fervor he gave up the ghost. When Doctor Newman, Father Faber, Provost Manning, and the long series of clerical and lay converts, who were influenced by their teaching, entered the Church, it was by slow degrees, after long delays, with tendencies which gradually developed, and with pre-dispositions manifestly determined. Their conversion had been prayed for in the Catholic, and predicted, as a certain catastrophe in the Protestant Church. Dr. Pusey as it was said, had constituted himself the sign post from Oxford to Rome, and many looked down the road and saw there shining beyond sandy tract and darksome marsh the fair turrets of the City of God. In the wonderful and happy ways of Providence it was ordered that many of the most remarkable of them, clerics and laymen, should either enter the Church, or receive the earlier and moulding graces of the Catholic character from one of Blessed Paul's Barefooted Clerks of the Most Holy Cross and Passion. The holy Father Dominic of that Order, received in one day, Dr. Newman, Father Dalgairns, and the whole community of Littlemore into the Church. And the influence which the great Passionist had upon the two most conspicuous lay champions of the Church of England, Frederick Lucas and Ambrose Lisle Philips—men otherwise so totally different in character and in the order of their works—God only knows. Charles Pakenham, it is said, was converted by reading a volume of the writer, whom above all others, Protestants abhor with a horror far beyond that which is lavished in such happy ignorance on poor old Peter Dens—the little volume called "The Spirit of St. Alphonsus Liguori." And reading therein in his Hounslow quarters, he is said to have got some glimpses of a higher truth than had yet dawned upon his soul, but coming through such apparent incongruities and superstitious vulgarities, as an enlightened young officer in her Majesty's Coldstream Guards could hardly be expected to comprehend. He determined, however, to trace this gleam divine, though it did apparently shine like the spark that led Sinbad out of the cave through dead men's bones to the clear day. A Puseyite Minister, whom he asked for lights, could not penetrate the mythic meaning of these passages—thought, perhaps, they were part of the non-essential mummeries of Popery, without which the religion would be on the whole rather respectable and graceful. Charles Pakenham went straightway to Cardinal Wiseman, determined to search out the truth and the whole truth, manifest or mystery as it might be. The end was a fitting reward for such absolute simplicity and purity of intention. He became a Roman Catholic almost immediately; and soon after (this was in the year 1851) being near the Passionist Retreat in

Worcestershire, he felt the call to Orders. For the last two days of Lent, prostrate before the altar of that community, which commemorates in every act of its discipline and every word of its preaching the Passion of Christ and Him crucified, the neophyte prayed that his call might be made clear, and his grace sufficing. Father Vincent, the Superior of the House, earnestly endeavoured to dissuade him. He naturally feared lest the awful austerities of the Passion should be intolerable to one so delicately nurtured, and of a frame already fragile—the cutting discipline, the broken sleep, the severe fast, the stern vow of long poverty, and the rough routine of the humblest of all the Church's ministries. Why not the subtle and chivalrous Order of Loyola for a noble and a soldier—or the simple and genial rule of Saint Vincent—or the gentle, liberal air, half ascetic, half poetic, of dear old Saint Phillip's Oratory! But the young soldier had embraced the Church and the Cross with all his soul and all his body. To leave the world and the world's ways at once and altogether—to bury every trace of the old Adam, and arise renewed and regenerate; a noble, a soldier of the Court, a man of fashion—therefore the chosen Priest of the meanest of the vulgar, and the most squalid of the poor; one who had lived a life of inherited opulence, of customary luxury, in an atmosphere closed against privation or pain, and lit with genius, and passion, and wit—therefore hunger, and thirst, and broken rest, and the voluntary lash, and the barefoot, and the shaven crown, and the contempt and obloquy of all the world. He deserved to have, and he had his will. The Passionists at last consented to receive him. On Easter Monday he returned to London, sold his commission, and all his other property—divided the money among asylums for widows, orphans and female penitents—then returned without a penny in his pocket to Broadway, and was received as a novice of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the invocation of St. Michael the Archangel. The old Duke is said to have been the only one of his relations who could comprehend this most singular step. He hoped Charles would go through with the regular discipline, as he had undertaken it, and went to see him in his cell—finding him as every one else did who went thither—not the fiery fanatic you might imagine, but more gentle, and genial, and graceful in all his ways than he used to be in the drawing-rooms of St. James.

"And so he lived, the life of a long, slow agony of all that was mortal in him—'knowing for certain that he must lead a dying life,' as it is said in the 'Imitation of Christ,' whom he imitated in all things, and even unto the end: loving and living among the vulgar and the lowly poor, and mortifying even the natural grace and flow of his rich intellect, that he might speak to them in the plainest and humblest words the great living lesson of God's Cross. He had one external reward only—priceless to one of his perfect humility. Fame utterly shunned him. Until almost immediately before his death the world had not heard of the sacrifices he had made, of the sanctity of his nature, of the great hope in which he was held. Then as death drew nigh, even in the eyes of men, the crown descended, and the glory grew about his head. The last was made first—the novice became the Rector and the Founder—and a certain mild sovereignty and unworldly attraction diffused itself over all who saw him. When death struck him, in a day, like a revelation, his name and his virtues became familiar to the whole city—and of all the thousands and thousands who gazed on the shell of a soul so holy, there was not one who did not seem to feel that a Saint had gone home to the House of God."

ST. BATHAN'S.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

It is with deep regret that I have to chronicle the death of Mr. Edmund Purton, of St. Bathan's, which took place at 5 o'clock on Thursday morning, 23rd September. The late Mr. Edmund Purton was born May, 1838, at Hanley Castle, Worcestershire, England, and at a very early age destined to study for the priesthood. He was first at Sedgely Park School, near Wolverhampton; then for a few years at the English Benedictine College, Douai; and subsequently, and for many years, at St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, Durham: in all of which he took first honors. After the completion of his theological course, he suffered severely for some time from disease of the eyes, which resulted in the total loss of sight of one, and permanent weakness of the other, thus debarring him from attaining the dignity of the priesthood. In 1870 he came to St. Bathan's, Otago, where, until within a few days of his death, he worked as a miner, and was distinguished among his fellow-workmen for his industry and persevering regard for the interests of his employers. The influence he exercised by his example and kindly warnings in the cause of temperance, morality, and religion, together with his genial disposition, will cause his death to be deeply regretted by all who came within the range of his acquaintance. The complaint of which he died was pneumonia. He was only ill a few days, and his death took all by surprise. The deceased was interred on Saturday, the 25th instant, and the funeral was a tended by all in St. Bathan's, and by many from the surrounding districts. On Sunday, Father Walsh, in asking the congregation at St. Bathan's to pray for the repose of Mr. Purton's soul, said: "That he (Mr. Purton) had died nobly and bravely. He had banished from his mind all idea of the world. He had turned his whole thoughts to heaven, and calmly awaited the moment when he would appear before his God. 'As a man lives, so shall he die.' Edmund Purton had lived an exemplary life—at least, as far as he (Father Walsh) knew from what he himself had seen, and from what they all had told him; and having lived an exemplary life, his death was edifying.—R. I. P."

The Catholic Union of Great Britain, of which the Duke of Norfolk is President, has doubled its numbers during the past year. The noble Duke attributes this fact to the attacks made on the Church during the course of the year by Mr. Gladstone.