

May 1688 at St. James', where the Benedictines were then established, being at the time only 36 years of age. In this same year, on the breaking out of the Revolution, which resulted in the expulsion of king James II. from his throne, Bishop Ellis was seized and imprisoned. He was soon set at liberty, but was obliged to leave England. He remained for some time with his exiled monarch at St. Germain's and afterwards went to Rome. He obtained leave to resign his appointment in England, and was appointed to the see of Segni in Italy. In this diocese he laboured with great zeal, both with regard to synodical work, and in his seminary to which he was especially devoted. He died Nov. 16th, 1726, at the age of 74. Bishop Ellis was an eminent preacher, and there are now extant, and are to be seen in the Downside library, some six or seven sermons, which he preached, some at Windsor and some in London, not long before his consecration.

Bishop Ellis is the first bishop that St. Gregory's has afforded to the church. We shall see, as we move on in our history, that it has pleased Almighty God to choose from this monastery many others to discharge the pontifical office in the church. To some of these, the Venerable Archbishop Polding of Sydney, Bishop Morris of the Mauritius, and Bishop Brown of Newport and Menevia, the Downside Review has already called attention. Others will be noticed in due course.

THE GREGORIAN MARTYRS.

No. III.

FATHER PHILIP POWEL.

"I WAS born in Brecknockshire, was educated at the school at Abergavenny, and at sixteen years of age was sent by my parents to London, to apply myself to the law, where I remained betwixt three and four years; then I went to Doway, to the Monastery of St. Gregory, of the Order of St. Benedict, and amongst them I received the habit of St. Benedict, when I was about twenty years of age. There I studied and when I was at the age of twenty-four I took holy orders, and was made a Roman Catholic priest; and at the age of twenty-eight I was sent into my country by my

superiors to convert and assist poor erring souls, where I have remained about twenty years in Cornwall, Devon, and Somersetshire, saying mass, hearing confessions, administering the sacraments and using all sorts of functions of a priest."

In these words Fr. Philip Powel himself, at his trial, briefly told the history of his life. His father Roger Powel and his mother Catherine Morgan in their quiet Welsh home at Tralon, had firmly grounded their child in the principles of faith, so that his school life at Abergavenny only strengthened the lessons of his childhood, and his innocence remained intact amid the dangers and allurements of London during his legal studies under Fr. Augustine Baker. During a chance journey to Flanders, Providence guided his steps to Douai, where, captivated by the monastic life at St. Gregory's, he heard in his heart the call from God, and yielding to the desire that filled his soul, he resolved to relinquish a promising career and to petition for the habit of St. Benedict. After the usual novitiate, he made his solemn profession on August 20th, 1620, and a few years later was ordained priest.

In 1626 he left St. Gregory's for the English mission, living for sixteen months with his former master in the law, Fr. Augustine Baker, who, in the interval of his absence, had also become a Benedictine monk. When he had thoroughly completed his training for apostolic labours, he was sent into Devonshire, where he resided in the house of a catholic family of the name of Ridsen. His ministrations were crowned with success, and his sweetness of character made him much beloved. He won the esteem and affection of the family, and the marriage of Mr. Ridsen's daughter caused a friendly contest between father and child for the services of Fr. Philip, and the father thinking that he could not bestow a more precious dowry on his daughter, formally agreed that Fr. Philip should accompany the newly-married couple to their seat in Somersetshire. There he laboured for twenty years, endearing himself to all by his zeal, piety, and charity.

The great civil war brought disaster and ruin to catholics, and compelled his patron to break up his home; thereupon Fr. Philip retired to Devonshire, where for three or four months he zealously laboured in the parishes of Yearcombe and Parcombe. The parliamentary troops entered the county and unmercifully harassed the royalists and catholics alike, seized their lands, and compelled them to seek safety in the royal army under Goring, where for six months Fr. Philip ministered to his flock and to the

catholic soldiers. The fortune of war declared against the king and Goring's army was disbanded. Fr. Philip, finding himself without home or mission, turned his thoughts to his native county, the home of his youth, and directed his steps to the coast of Cornwall, where he was taken on board a small vessel bound for Wales. No sooner had he set sail than the parliamentary cruisers under Captain Crowder, the vice-admiral, gave chase to the vessel, captured it, and made prisoners of the royalists on board. Two of the admiral's sailors recognising Fr. Philip accused him of being a priest, asserting that they had seen him in Parcombe and Yearcombe, where he had seduced many from the protestant churches. The holy man, uncertain what answer to give, evaded the question, and sought an opportunity for retirement in order to pray earnestly to God for light: he asked the intercession of our Blessed Lady, his Angel Guardian, and his glorious father St. Benedict, and suddenly felt himself urged to acknowledge his priestly character. The same morning, February 22nd, 1646, Captain Crowder again questioned him on the subject, and he at once cheerfully owned that he was a priest, whereupon he was ordered below deck as a prisoner, stripped of his clothes to his shirt, and clothed in "beggarly rags." In this condition, subject to injuries and insults, without murmur or complaint, he remained till May 11th, when he was ordered to London by the Earl of Warwick, and cast into St. Catherine's gaol, Southwark.

On the Wednesday after his arrival he was brought up for examination, and as he acknowledged that he was a priest, he was committed by Judge Roules to the King's Bench prison with directions to be civilly treated. On the Saturday following he was again taken to the court to be questioned concerning his whole life, at which time he made the statement given at the commencement of this sketch, and having signed it he was recommitted to the King's Bench. In prison the rude accommodation, rough fare, and harsh usage affected his health. In the same room were five other prisoners some of whom were sick; he slept on a mat without pillow or sheet, sharing even this primitive bed with another catholic. He was, however, allowed to see his friends, and thus secured visits from another Benedictine, Fr. Robert Anderton, who was able to administer to him the consolation of the sacraments. May 30th was the day fixed for the trial on his own confession, and on Friday the 29th he was removed to the common gaol, where in his weak condition the additional privations and the wretched state of his cell, brought on a severe attack of pleurisy.

It was not until Tuesday, June 9th, that he had recovered sufficient strength to enable him to be carried to Westminster Hall, where his pale face and emaciated form, as he sat in his chair at the King's Bench, bar could not but excite pity. The indictment, framed from his own confession, was read and the clerk of the court asked him to plead :

“ Art thou guilty or not guilty ?”

“ That I am a priest,” replied the holy man with meekness and courage, “ I freely did confess, and now acknowledge again ; but guilty of any treason or crime against the State I am not.”

“ Mr. Morgan,” (this was his mother's name and one that he assumed) said the judge, “ you are to answer directly to the demand, are you guilty or not guilty ?”

“ I have acknowledged myself a priest and a monk, but I am not guilty.”

The judge demanded whether he would be tried by God or by his country.

“ If I must needs be tried ” he answered, “ I will permit myself to be tried by the country.”

After which he was carried back to prison.

On the Friday following he was again carried in his chair to the King's Bench bar, and the indictment was again read in presence of a jury.

“ Mr. Morgan,” the judge asked, “ What can you say for yourself ?”

“ The proceeding against me,” he modestly replied, “ ought to be deferred ; for first, I doubt whether you, my lord, have any just power derived from his Majesty to try me or no ; secondly, his Majesty's flag flying in a civil war, all trials of life and death cease.” He was not allowed to continue, but two officers carried him to one side of the court while the jury considered their verdict. They soon came to a conclusion and he was again carried to the bar to hear the result, which, as a matter of course, was a verdict of “ guilty,” whereupon he was conducted back to prison.

On Tuesday, June 16th, he was once more called to the bar to receive sentence, and had so far regained his strength that he could dispense with the chair. He asked permission to speak and pleaded that Henry VIII. had made a statute enacting that all statutes could be qualified ; that Elizabeth's fears of the Queen of Scots and the Spaniards had been the cause of her statutes against priests, conceiving at the time that priests in England had communication with both, but that now the case was changed ;

that, moreover, the king's person was absent and that no plot could be executed by him upon it ; so that both the person and the cause being taken away, this latter statute ought to receive the benefit of mitigation ; moreover, that according to the letter of Elizabeth's statute he was not guilty, not being taken in England, but on the seas. These points gave rise to much discussion among the lawyers present, but as the result was a foregone conclusion it proved of no avail, and the usual sentence, that the prisoner should be drawn, hanged, and quartered, was pronounced by Judge Bacon. The holy man, with a smiling face and cheerful voice, lifting his eyes and hands to heaven said, "Deo Gratias, thanks be to God ; I have not here room, by reason of the throng, to give God thanks on my knees, but I most humbly thank Him in my heart." Raising his voice he made an offering of himself to his Saviour Jesus Christ, praying that the shedding of his innocent blood might not increase God's wrath upon this kingdom, but rather be a means to appease it. He prayed for the king, queen, and their posterity, for the judge, jury, and all who were in any way guilty of his death.

"You do us wrong:" said the judge, "You have received judgment, and cannot plead your innocent blood."

"My lord, I have said, I will not offend."

The judge bid him choose the day on which he would die.

"My lord, consider, it is not an easy matter or a thing soon compassed to be provided to die well. We have all of us much to answer for, and myself have not the least share ; therefore, my lord, consider what time your lordship would allot to yourself, and appoint that to me."

After a second and a third offer he finally replied :

"I will by no means be an allotter of my own death, or be in any way guilty of it, but will leave it to your lordship's direction."

The judge promised that he should have timely notice, and he was sent back to prison. His life in prison showed that he was ripe for martyrdom. His end was near, his death was destined to be one of ignominy, perhaps torture, yet he was joyous, pleasant, and affable to all ; sorrow, care, or fear never dimmed the brightness of his countenance, and his whole frame seemed borne up with the buoyant hope of coming joy. The low earthen ward containing his cell was made almost cheerful and bright by his presence ; the duty of sweeping the ward was assigned to him, and when one touched by his saintliness offered to undertake the task, he declined the courtesy, thanking God that He had honoured

him by the employment. His cheerfulness deserted him but once only, when he overheard that there was a question of his pardon; with anxious eye and dejected air he sought to ascertain the truth of the remark, and finding it without foundation he regained his pleasant look and thankful expression. His sweet winning manner, and edifying life attracted the esteem and reverence of his fellow-prisoners, and by his example and zeal he converted no less than six protestant gentlemen who were imprisoned for debt. One of them, Mr. Richarbie, had a vicious habit of swearing, and after he was received into the church Fr. Philip hearing him swear whilst drinking with his companions, called him aside, paid his reckoning, and so severely reprimanded him that the man was never afterwards known to utter an oath. Twenty-nine gentlemen, all protestants, were so struck with his life that they drew up a certificate of his innocent and virtuous behaviour, and affixed to it their names.

His obedient and willing ways gained the hearts of his gaolers, who allowed him as much liberty as their office would justify, and thus many were able to see him to seek his counsel, or ask his prayers. He received constant visits from his confessor to whom he opened the secrets of his soul, and who has left a testimony of his sanctity and union with God. The nearer the day of his death approached the more cheerful and joyous he grew; from his daily intercourse with God in prayer he rose up more eager for the hour of triumph. On the evening of Sunday, June 28th, an officer from the judges came to signify to him that the following Tuesday was appointed for his death, and distressed at being the bearer of such sad tidings he commenced with an apology, at which the holy man guessing the object of the visit, joyfully exclaimed "Welcome, whatever comes, God's name be praised!" The officer was so overcome by this manner of receiving a death warrant that he could not read the paper, when Fr. Philip looking over his shoulder prompted him in the reading, and then after cordially expressing his thanks, called for a glass of wine and drank to him saying, "Oh what am I that God thus honours me, and will have me die for His sake." When the officer retired he threw himself on his knees and poured forth to God the gratitude of his heart for this grace of martyrdom.

The next night, his last on earth, was spent with his confessor, only two hours being given to sleep, and in the morning having made his confession he said mass with tears trickling down his cheeks. Fortified thus he went forth at the appointed time and

cheerfully laid himself on the hurdle, on which he was drawn from the King's Bench prison, over London Bridge, through the city to Tyburne. Released from the hurdle, he knelt down under the gallows to pray in silence, after which he arose and stepped into the cart and in a loud voice addressed the people.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. We are made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men. All you that are come to behold me, may think you are come to a sad spectacle, but to me it not so. It is the happiest day, the greatest joy that ever befel me; so that I may say with the prophet, *hæc dies quam fecit Dominus exultemus et lætemur in ea.* This is the day which God hath made; a day wherein I may truly rejoice in my soul, for I am brought hither, a condemned man, to execution; for no other cause or reason alleged against me than that I am a Roman Catholic priest, and a monk of the order of St. Benedict. And this I freely confessed myself. This confession and cause only brought me to execution. I give God thanks that He has honoured me with the dignity of a priest, and I glory that I am a monk of this holy order, which first converted this kingdom from being heathens and infidels to Christianity and the knowledge of God; St. Augustine being their leader, sent by St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, with forty other monks."

The Sheriff here bid him to cease, and tell no more of his old stories and tales, and ordered the hangman to do his duty, who thereupon fixed the rope to the gallows, and adjusted it to the martyr's neck. He spoke again but merely to express how freely he forgave all who were accessory to his death, to pray for the king, queen, prince, and royal children, for a happy peace for the realm and a true knowledge of God, and to ask all Catholics to pray for him. As far as the rope would allow he knelt on the side of the cart, praying in silence, and lifting up his eyes to heaven gave the appointed signal to his confessor, in the crowd, who gave him the last absolution. He gave some money to the hangman, and pulling his cap over his eyes his lips moved in prayer, awaiting the withdrawal of the cart. The executioner struck with horror at concurring in the death of so holy and innocent a man, absconded, and, after a fruitless search of a quarter of an hour, another was obtained. The cart was drawn away, and in the act of prayer the meek gentle spirit of Fr. Philip Powel passed to his martyr's crown. His dead body was cut down, embowelled and quartered, but at the instance of the Common Council of London the head and quarters were not exposed but were buried in the old churchyard in Moorfields.