

The Church in Canada.

FATHER LOUIS.

SOMETIME PASTOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, TORONTO.

Since writing the sketch of this holy friar's life, which was read before the American Catholic Historical Society last year, and which appeared in part in these columns at the time, I have received from the Provincial of the Capuchin Order in England, a small leaflet, dated April 19th, 1857, and bearing the title: "Who was Father Louis? Read what follows, and then ask, can you be absent from the Chapel on Tuesday, April 21st, 1857?" As it corrects several statements made in my sketch I reprint it in full. The near approach of the dedication services of the new church of St. Mary gives additional interest to this sketch of one who was pastor of that parish more than thirty years ago, and whose memory is still fondly cherished by its people:

"Father Louis, whose friendship so oft sustained us with sound advice, and whose example urged us on to the practice of virtue, was born at Lavagna, near Genoa, in the kingdom of Sardinia, of pious parents, and distinguished family. His early youth was innocent and good, and the recreation of music was the pastime of his leisure hours. Up to the age of twenty, he was no mean adept in the practice of melody, and some pieces of his composition were so worthy of admiration, as to tempt a rival amateur to claim them as his own; but in this trivial circumstance, we find the early dawning of our sainted Father's submissive humility, for having claimed his rights and won his honours, he was ever after restless, until he humbly apologized to his unjust competitor, for having contended with him even in a matter which was his due.

"About this age, our lamented friend was attacked with a painful and intractable disease, terminating in caries of the bones of the arm, and fore-arm; for this complaint he was placed under the most celebrated surgeons of Rome and Italy; he had all the advantages that medical science could afford, but to no purpose. Physicians and surgeons recommended, as the only remedy, amputation of the arm, but Cæsar Sambucini, (his family name,) objected, and in the religious bent of his disposition, turning towards heaven, he trusted in *Mary* for the accomplishment of his wishes, and bearing his sorrows to the Church he prostrated himself before an image of our Blessed Mother, and with confidence besought 'Our Lady of Dolours,' to obtain the fulfilment of the Divine will in his person, vowing to dedicate himself to religion, in the event of recovery, but if otherwise, submitting to the will of God. The event proved that Father Louis was another triumph of the Power of the Prayers of *Mary*, for young Cæsar Sambucini recovered, and presented himself to the Fathers Capuchins, to be received as a *lay brother*.

"The Father refused to entertain this proposition. The dignity of his family, and the luxury of the circle in which he was accustomed to move, were more than opposed to the humility and endurance of a poor Franciscan lay brother, but young Sambucini persevered in his request, and adroitly urged, with an innocent simplicity, that his former delicacy, interfering with his classical studies, he was more suited for the lay, than the ecclesiastical state; to which the Superior replied, 'Since you are so humble, we will place you at the head of the list of Novices for the Priesthood, and as obedience is a part of our order, you have only to comply.'

"Once entered into the order, he edified all by his strict practice of poverty, obedience, humility and mortification. The bare boards were his bed, and the discipline, with other austerities, he practiced with a courageous spirit. His repast was often and often the scanty and mean meal that we read of as sustaining the hermits of old, but he walked in the strength of that food, even to the mountain of *Co.* Living thus mortified, and lamenting the wicked indulgence of the world, he wished to oppose the severity of his order to the pampered luxury of a self-indulging people. With this view, in establishing his order in this country, he strove to check its avarice, vain pride, and gluttony by the example of poverty, humility, and self-denial. For this purpose he arrived in England in 1851, and having for six weeks received the

hospitality of The Sisters of the Christian Retreat, in Hill Street, Peckham, and afterwards of Mr. O'Sullivan's family, of Denmark street, Camberwell, he repaired to Webb street, where he joined in the labours of Fathers Hodgson and Dolman. His earliest intention, though only known to one, was to retire to Canada, when he had once securely fixed his order in England, according to the Spirit of St. Francis. His ruling idea was, 'Strict observance,' and though circumstances led to his departure before the tree he planted arrived at maturity, still his constant anxiety was that it should be well watered, and deserve from God an hundred-fold increase.

"The present chapel at Peckham is a monument to his memory. When in Rome, he obtained permission from the Holy Father to collect for the building of a Capuchin Monastery in England. In a few weeks he collected £200 from his admirers in France, where he was generally known, and considerably respected, particularly for his firmness in not yielding to the more violent of the red republicans, who tried by force, and with drawn swords, to eject him from a church in which he was giving a Mission during the days of the revolution, on which occasion he shook the dust of his sandals in the face of the Captain of the band, and triumphing over them, returned to his church, refusing to abandon it, except by order of the Bishop, who sent him to give the retreat. From the King of Naples he also received £100, and with this small fund the Peckham chapel was chiefly built.

"When Lord Fielding presented his church and ground to the order, Father Louis' permission to collect was withdrawn, as being thought no longer necessary, and he, with the other Fathers, repaired to Pantasaph, and from thence he got his obedience to Rome, thence to Bombay, but being overtaken with a severe fever in Malta, on his recovery he received a counter obedience for Canada, where he died on the 17th of March, 1857. To describe the good he did in Toronto would be to write a large chapter in the history of the Church, and the good bishop of that diocese declared 'that he would rather lay down his crozier and mitre than lose the services of good Father Louis.'

"The following appeared in the *Register* of April 11th, as extracts from the Toronto letter:—

"I have the painful tidings to relate to you of the death of our dearly beloved and much to be lamented friend, poor Father Louis, who died on the 17th inst., after a short illness of five days, which he bore with the utmost patience and resignation to the will of his God, to whom his life was dedicated for the past thirty two years. You can scarcely imagine the sympathy which is felt for him, and the manner in which his loss is deplored by all the parishioners of St. Mary's congregation. Never was there a deeper feeling of regret more manifest by all parties in the city of Toronto, than on the occasion of his death. He died on the evening of our Patron Saint's day (St. Patrick.) Notwithstanding the severity of our Canadian winter, he lived up to his Order, to the very letter, proving to the last his love and his zeal for his beloved Founder, whose example he closely followed up to the last moments of his life, and dying with the crucifix clasped firmly in his hands, like St. Francis. His sickness was brought on by cold, privation, and laborious exertion in the discharge of his spiritual duties, ending in inflammation of the lungs. Medical aid was of no use. His

"The Nuns subsequently removed to larger premises, the Manor House, Kennington Lane, where they are still staying;—waiting, however, only the completion of the Convent now building for them in Gordon Road;—in June they hope to return to their first English home—their endeared Peckham! May their presence amongst us be an instrument of blessing to this congregation, and both combined, a glory to Father Louis and themselves. The author of *this Note* looks backward with a delightful but painful pleasure at his interview with the dear Capuchin Father Louis, on the first day of his arrival in Peckham—it was on that occasion the first idea of founding a Franciscan Monastery and Mission in Peckham, through his instrumentality, was agreed on between us; though time rolled on—delays arose—insurmountable difficulties appeared to beset the effort—thank God every subsequent interview, during these years, increased our confidence;—now one has been accomplished in a humble way, still with hopeful prospects,—and, if we deserve it, the Prayers of Father Louis, in a more glorious state, will help us to accomplish the other; though on earth, he was absent in our recent success—and yet he helped us!—he is absent now, in heaven—MAY ALMIGHTY GOD PERMIT HIM TO HELP US MORE.