

THE DEATH OF POPE GREGORY XVI.

From the Tablet.

Pope Gregory XVI. is dead: God rest his soul! After a life of great labours and unspotted sanctity this excellent Pontiff has passed away to his reward, and has left behind him the memory of his virtues and the greatness of his example. The heart of every Catholic who reveres the Head of the Church and the Majesty of Christ in the person of his Vicar, must be struck with the news of his great event. No matter though it had often been prematurely announced and was familiar in the expectations of most of us. No matter that he died full of years as of honors, and that his span of life had extended considerably beyond the average of human existence. There is a solemnity in the death of such a man which derives but little of its impressiveness from surprise. It is not a rushlight of human manufacture that has been extinguished, but a sun that has set in the heavens. The lips that are closed were the keepers of God's revelations; were by him guided and preserved from error; and were the fountains from which the streams of Christian Doctrine were appointed to flow upon the earth. Infalible but not impeccable, the tongue which *could not* falsify the truths of religion, has gone to render an account of those things in which it could err; and like the lowest air of mortality and immortal life or death, to plead for mercy at the bar of an omniscient Judge who is no respecter of persons; who weighs in impartial balance the sins of Pope and beggar; who rigidly exacts a stricter account from him to whom more has been given; but rewards with an infinite munificence the good works of those who under the weight of the frailties of their nature have earnestly and sincerely struggled to fulfil the duties of their stewardship. From so merciful a God with what reward may we not hope that this holy Pontiff will be glorified! And if in the course of nature some taint of sin or of weakness stained his soul, who is there of the flock of which he was the Supreme Pastor, that will not raise his heart and voice in prayer to God for him who for sixteen years kept such heedful watch over the spiritual interests committed to his charge.

Yes; the Pope is dead. A great Prince of the Church has fallen into the clutches of Death.—The light of the world set by God upon a hill has been extinguished. Rome is without a Bishop. The company of the Faithful is without a ruler on this earth. Christ, our Redeemer, is without a Vicar among the sons of men. Truly, this death is not like the death of common men. The calm extinction of this Servant of Servants is a shock felt deeply by every true member of that Mystical

Body of which he was the Head. It is not a soul that has passed away; it is the whole body that has suffered a disruption. The living representative of that Unity which is the Spouse of Christ has departed and for a time every member of that Unity must feel himself maimed, and shorn of some portion of his life. Let us pray fervently that God, in his unspeakable goodness, may be pleased soon to restore us to our former condition, and to place us under the rule of a Pontiff—if so it may be—even more devout, more capable, more full of zeal, of masculine energy, of intrepid and undaunted resolution, than the great and holy Priest who has just been severed from us.

Of the early life of his late Holiness; of the circumstances that have attended or are expected to follow his death; and of the opinions entertained about him both within and without the Church we have given such particulars as at a short notice were within our reach, in another part of this journal. At the end of the present remarks will be found an article we have translated from a paper sent us by a valued correspondent, which draws an accurate picture of the Pope's personal character. His public character, or rather—for every man's character is one, and that division into public and private is a crafty invention to cover the wickedness of the great criminals of the earth—his public career is as yet, not susceptible of a very accurate delineation; except, indeed, by those who have enjoyed the benefit of a much nearer view of him than can be gained in this country. The principal events of that career are, in the main, tolerably fresh in the minds of most of our readers; but it would be presumptuous in us to attempt a more elaborate sketch without far ampler materials, than we, at present possess.

It is known to all that the Pontificate of Gregory XVI. has been placed at a most eventful time. It commenced at the beginning of a new social and political era in Europe; and if we could now behold the future distinctly, it would, we little doubt, be found to end just as Europe is about to enter on another phase of its existence, that will one day admit of being marked off with tolerable distinctness from that which has preceded it.

Not less remarkable has been the past Pontificate in a religious point of view. It has been a period of great hopes, great triumphs, great disasters, great developements, great strength and some weakness. It has been a period in which the expansive power of the Church has been wonderfully displayed. The number, zeal, and heroism of the missionaries who have carried the Faith to distant countries, have been great and consoling. The martyrdoms have brought to