

CONVENTS OR NUNNERIES.

A LECTURE

IN

REPLY TO CARDINAL WISEMAN,

DELIVERED AT THE

ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BATH,

ON MONDAY, JUNE 7, 1852.

BY THE

REV. M. HOBART SEYMOUR, M.A.

REPORTED IN SHORT-HAND.

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CAPAM

A LECTURE.

INTRODUCTION.

It is at all times a grave thing to stand before such an assembly as the present—to stand before such an amount of intellect, mind, and acumen, all prepared to examine my words, to test my proofs, and to balance my arguments—all brought, like so many rays of light concentrated by a powerful lens, to pour all its searching light upon every statement that shall fall from me. I feel this fully; I feel it the more as I stand arraigned before you of having made statements, and declining to produce evidence in support of these statements. I stand arraigned by a Cardinal, the highest official of the Church of Rome in this country; arraigned, it is true, in a little private chapel, where I was not permitted even to whisper the faintest denial of the charge. But I feel that I now stand before a jury, not of twelve men, but of twelve hundred men. I stand before the assembled intelligence, candour, and fair-dealing of my fellow-citizens; and while, with confidence, I plead Not Guilty, I desire to be tried by God and my country.

How stands the question between us? I was invited by the ladies of Bath, as all here present are aware, to deliver to them a lecture on the subject of Nunneries. I complied: that lecture has been printed, and it is now before the public. I am free to confess that I was not disposed to ascribe to it much importance; but it seems that others thought it of much more importance, so that they sent to rouse

“ — the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall,”

and the Cardinal himself comes forth from his sacred enclosure—for the first time, steps into the arena—flings

down the gauntlet—denies my facts, and challenges my proofs. I accept his challenge, and I stand here to redeem it.

The precise facts are these:—A Roman Catholic gentleman, my neighbour, Mr. Stourton, called on me immediately after that lecture, and held a private conversation in my own private residence of more than two hours' continuance. After he withdrew, he committed that conversation to paper, and, without communicating with me, without even asking my consent, he placed that conversation in the hands of the Cardinal, to enable him to know my case, so as the more effectually to answer me. Immediately after this, I received a letter from Mr. Parfitt, of Midford Castle, in this neighbourhood, and this letter asks of me, courteously, certain information, and the sources of information as to the facts I narrated. I replied to him as frankly as I could; and he, without communicating his intention to me, and without asking my leave, placed this my letter in the hands of the Cardinal, to put him in possession of my case, and to enable him thus the more effectually to answer it. Now, sir, I make no complaint of these gentlemen, because to make any complaint would be to place myself on a level with persons capable of so acting. But their so acting has removed from me all delicacy or difficulty as to reading the correspondence which took place. The following is the letter from Mr. Parfitt:—

Rev. Sir.—In a lecture on Nunneries, published as delivered by you, in Bath, there are several points of great importance, which, as a Catholic, I feel ought to be fully investigated, and I take the liberty of requesting you to direct me to the best means of having it done.

1st. You mention, page 22, a "solemn inquiry" into the dreadful state of the convents in Tuscany, made at the request of noble families. The results, you say, are "too horrible to describe," but you "have read the evidence of nuns and abbesses on the occasion." From this I conclude that the evidence, or report on it, was published. I should feel most thankful to you to inform me in what form, or in what work, this is to be found. Even though the work should not have been published, but was accessible to you through some particular influence, if I can be made ac-

quainted with the title of the book I think that, through friends, access to it may be obtained.

2d. You further mention that, in consequence of these discoveries, "the Pope of Rome was constrained to reform and remodel some of the nunneries, and the Sovereign of Tuscany was obliged to abolish others." Would you be kind enough to give me the date of this reform, and the names of some of the suppressed convents?

3d. You mention, as of your own knowledge, many instances of injustice and cruelty committed in or through convents. Unfortunately, you withhold every clue to verification, so important in a matter likely to be hurtful to all Catholic feelings.

To the one mentioned in page 23, I can, perhaps, obtain a clue, as, from persons in Rome, it can be ascertained what married gentleman attends the Cardinal-Vicar in his visitation of convents, and so we can inquire into the frightful statement about his daughter. The following, however, I am desirous to obtain information about.

Page 20. A nun, when you were in Rome, rushed out of her convent, and plunged into the Tiber, and was drowned. In what year was this? What, and where, was the convent alluded to? When did she throw herself into the river?

Pages 50 and 51, are three cases of nuns being sent abroad, in two instances, in consequence, as you lead us to imply, of some immorality. Would you be good enough to put me in the way of verifying these two in particular. Give me the name of the convents and the dates; and I pledge myself to have a thorough investigation made.

I trust you will not refuse my requests, for, as a clergyman, you must wish to act fairly and justly. Yet, it is essential to the carrying out of the principle that proofs should be afforded of assertions, so injurious to our character, before an excited and prejudiced public. At least, the accused should be afforded the means of self-defence, by being informed of the source of the evidence referred to against them.

I am, Rev. Sir, your obedient servant,
Midford Castle, May 18th, 1852. C. PARFITT.

Such was the letter I received, and to it I gave the following reply at the moment:—

Bath, 27, Marlborough Buildings, May 19th, 1852.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your favour, and hasten to reply to enquiries so courteously proposed.

I had supposed that the affair of the convents in Tuscany, alluded to in my lecture, had been universally known, or I should have stated the detail with more precision.

The facts to which I referred occurred at the close of the last century, and the details will be found in De Potter's account of Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia. I saw the work some years ago, and an English translation was, I believe, lately published. It contained the evidence of superiors, nuns, &c., one of the former

stating that some of the nuns lived with their confessors more familiarly than married women with their husbands. It appeared that the confessors had private keys to the nunneries, and slept in them—that each nun had her favourite, &c. All this you will find in *De Potter*, with the names of all the parties concerned. When you read it you will feel that I might have said much more than I did.

You will also perceive the nature of the reforms introduced into some of these nunneries by the Papal authority, subjecting them to the visitations of the Bishops, and interfering in the appointment of the confessors, &c. ; also you will perceive how the Grand Duke suppressed some of them, turning them into a species of schools for the instruction of the poor.

If you cannot get access to this work, which contains the original documents, you will find quite enough in a life of Ricci, written by that accomplished and elegant author—Roscoe.

I am sure that when you have informed yourself on this part of your enquiries, you will feel that I have not stated the case as strongly as I might have done. The truth is that I wished merely to indicate the evils without entering on details that would have awakened the indignation of the meeting against the whole system of nunneries. I dealt with my subject as gently as I could ; and I hope there may never prove a necessity for my speaking more openly or entering publicly upon the details. They must prove painful and distressing to all parties, and might awaken an unfair prejudice against those establishments which are pure.

In reference to the other particulars to which you call my attention, and for which you ask authorities, I need scarcely remind you that it would be highly improper in me to give up the names of informants who have privately confided information to me, especially when the parties are citizens of Rome. You are, of course, aware that a Roman at Rome has not the civil privileges of an Englishman in England ; and that if I surrendered the names of my informants, they might be kept for months and years in prison, not only uncondemned, but even untried. You cannot, therefore, as an Englishman yourself, expect that I should betray my informants.

But I shall remove one or two mistakes into which you have fallen.

You have, apparently, identified the official gentleman mentioned page 7 with my acquaintance page 23. You will, on perusal, perceive that you have no grounds for this.

And also you seem to imply that because my friend was married and had a family, he could not have been an attendant on the Cardinal Vicar in his visitation of nunneries. But, of course, you are aware that, after having been for years such an attendant, he might marry, and so cease to be such, and obtain an appointment of a totally different kind. At the same time I may add, that it would seem rather strange to our English feelings that bachelors, instead of married men, are selected for the visitation of nunneries, and that the fact of a man being married should prove a disqualification ; with us, it would be thought a recommendation.

My friend was such an attendant, and married afterwards. And I am sure you are incapable of wishing me to name him.

The nun who threw herself into the Tiber did so in the early part of 1845. I was at Rome at the time.

Of the four cases mentioned of young persons being sent abroad you ask the particulars. One of the young ladies I saw and conversed with at a nunnery abroad last summer. The second was narrated to me by the father of the nun. He is a gentleman of fortune in the South of England. And when you ask the particulars of the other two, who were removed on the ground of "some immorality," you will feel it would be highly indelicate and improper in me to give the names of the parties, or even of the convents by which the names could so easily be ascertained. I have only to say that I know personally the family of one of them. With the other I had no acquaintance whatever, though I know the nunnery in which the circumstances occurred.

And now, having replied in detail to your inquiries, I must be allowed to protest with all firmness, yet with all possible courtesy, against the grounds on which you ask for information. You do so on the ground that my assertions are "injurious to your (our) character," meaning, I presume, the character of Roman Catholics. I have not said a word reflecting on your character or that of any man; I have reflected certainly on nunneries, as I feel them vicious in principle, and mischievous in practice; but I have not uttered a word that could reflect on your character. I trust I can denounce what is wrong in the Church of Rome, or in any Protestant Church, without being supposed to reflect injuriously upon the character of all the members of those Churches. To denounce an abuse, or a given system, in any Church is very different from reflecting on the character of those members of the Church who have nothing to do with these abuses or systems. I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

M. HOBART SEYMOUR.

In forwarding that letter I really thought (perhaps I was wrong) that I gave him as much information as I was justified in giving, or he was justified in expecting. But since to those gentlemen it seemed otherwise, and since by the Cardinal it has been proclaimed otherwise, I stand here this night to produce evidences which will justify, and more than justify, every statement I have made. And if my evidences should bring pain or sorrow to the breast of any Roman Catholic, if they should bring shame or dishonour to any nunnery, let the blame rest not on me who have shrunk from the subject, but upon Mr. Stourton and Mr. Parfitt, who seem to have stimulated the Cardinal to deny my statements and to demand my proofs.

Now, then, to begin. It is told of an infidel philosopher that he once said that, if he had had the creation of our world, he would have created it on a better system than the present. He imagined himself wiser than Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And in somewhat the same spirit the Cardinal has recommended the monastic system. For in the beginning God made them male and female; in the beginning he made them man and wife; in the beginning he desired them to increase and multiply amidst the purity, and the innocence, and the holiness, and the happiness of Eden. But the Cardinal steps in with another and a different arrangement, and he would separate the man from the woman, and separate the woman from the man. The Church of Rome has adopted the principle that celibacy is more holy than marriage, and that married persons, as such, are not so holy as unmarried persons, as such. And, accordingly, it is held by many in the Church of Rome that the true atmosphere of religion is solitude and retirement; and that if we would attain to the highest flights of perfection, it must be in the cell of the hermit, or the cave of the anchorite; and as this would not be seemly or possible with women, so we must seek the loftiest flights of holiness, and the lowest depths of humility, in those women who retire to the silence, and the solitude, and the devotion of the cloister. It is not my intention to enter upon any argument on this subject, as I really feel it would be a waste of your time and my own. But I would observe that it has long been the glory of England that we are in the possession, in the truest sense, of civil liberty and religious freedom; and that, if men choose to seclude themselves from the society of women, or if women choose to separate themselves from the society of men, we have no right nor power to interfere with them. If ladies choose to dress themselves in a monastic fashion, black, white, and grey, with rosaries and crucifixes, it may all seem to us ex-

tremely silly, but we have no right to interfere; and any interference would be an infringement of their civil and religious rights. If ladies choose to live in lonely houses, with ladies like themselves, and altogether secluded from men, it may be a self-inflicted penance, very foolish in our eyes, but we have no right to interfere; it were a violation of their civil and religious rights. And again, if ladies in such places choose to observe certain *formulae* of prayer, or to observe certain ceremonials of their own, or to adopt altogether the worship, to any extent, of the Church of Rome, it may seem to us very superstitious, but still we have no right to interfere; and any interference would be a violation of their civil and religious rights. And, even if it were not so, I conceive that all manly bearing, and right feeling, and proper delicacy, would lead us to leave them to their own wishes. But if it be found that young girls of sixteen years of age are allured into these establishments before they are capable of forming a judgment upon the importance of such a step; if young persons are entrapped into these establishments with the view of obtaining power over every right and property to which they may afterwards become entitled; if young persons are allured into these establishments, and then not permitted to leave them when they desire to depart from them; if young women are put into these establishments, and when they change their religious opinions, and desire to withdraw, are not permitted to withdraw; then, I say, we are justified in interfering; not indeed interfering against ladies, but interfering in order that those ladies may enjoy the free exercise of their civil and religious liberties. And in asking that nunneries be subjected to visitation on the part either of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, or on the part of Royal Commissioners appointed for the occasion, all we ask is, that there may be secured to every person in these establishments free ingress and free egress;

in other words, that they shall enjoy, in their full extent, their civil liberty and their religious freedom.

In carrying out this subject in my former lecture, I remarked that, in my experience on the Continent, those establishments, which are called in Italy *clausura*, in France *clotures*, and in this country cloistered nunneries, assumed in my eyes very much the same characteristics externally as the bridewells, the penitentiaries, the gaols, and the prisons of this country. They are surrounded with the same lofty walls, the same massive gates, the same barred windows, the same grated openings, the same inaccessibility from without, and the same impossibility of escape from within. And I remarked at the time that the nuns seemed to me to be confined like birds within a cage, that might flutter their wings and hurt their feathers, but could not escape, being prisoners, victims, and recluses for life. I remarked that, although it was said that the interior of a nunnery was happy as the Garden of Eden, and that the nuns were joyous as the houries of Paradise, yet it seemed very strange, if all this were true, that the inmates of nunneries should be treated just like the penitents in our penitentiaries, and the prisoners in our prisons. It seemed wondrous strange, that, if all this were true, they should have recourse to so many cunning appliances, and clever contrivances, in order to prevent these happy spirits from flying from their garden of Eden, and these joyous houries from taking wing from their bowers of Paradise.

But the Cardinal has replied by stating that though there be indeed those lofty walls, and ponderous gates, and barred windows, and grated openings, yet they are all designed, not to keep the nuns within, but to keep the men without! It called to mind, as I heard it, the answer made to me when one day in conversation with two nuns at a nunnery in Rome. I observed that there was a double grating—not one, but two—separating the nuns from myself and my party of friends; and I

asked what could be the reason of those gratings? Could they be intended to keep you ladies within, or us gentlemen without? The answer I thought a happy one at the moment, namely, that one of the gratings was to keep the ladies within, and the other of the gratings was to keep the gentlemen without. But the Cardinal is not content with this, for he conceives the nuns to be too holy, too saint-like, too much charmed with their garden of Eden, and too much enchanted with their sister houries, to think of escaping; and therefore all is designed, not to keep the nuns within, but to keep the men without. And, to illustrate this, he mentioned, in rather a romantic way, a somewhat unromantic story of certain Spanish nuns, to whom the magistracy threw open the gates of their nunneries, and offered them either eight pence a day if they chose to remain in the building, or ten pence a day if they chose to depart; and the worthy nuns, shrewd and thrifty women as they were, thought they could do better upon eight pence a day with a good house over their heads, than upon ten pence a day, and find themselves; but while the Cardinal dilated thus romantically on the story of the Spanish nuns, he omitted to mention—no doubt it was one of those lapses of memory to which we public speakers are sometimes liable and which give us the appearance occasionally of a want of ingenuousness—he omitted to state the trifling incident, that on the very occasion of those doors being opened by the Spanish Cortes, no less than two hundred and ten—that was the number officially returned—two hundred and ten nuns embraced their freedom, renounced their vows, left the convent, and became secularised!

But, in the report of the Cardinal's speech—for I wish to be accurate—we read in one part that he said these external works "were not to keep the inmates in," and then he adds further on, "If they asked him why there were strong doors and barred windows, and grated openings to

convents, he would tell them that it was for protection against the violence of men." There are strange revolutions always going on in this old fashioned world of ours ; for when I was young, we used to put a bird into a cage under the idea that it was to prevent its flying away and escaping ; but the philosophy of the Cardinal is, that the bird is put into the cage to prevent other birds coming to it and mating with it ! And when I was young we always imagined that the muniments of a prison, the beetling walls, and the overhanging towers, were designed to confine the prisoner and prevent his escape ; but the philosophy of the Cardinal is, that all these are intended to prevent the rest of the world from visiting them, and intruding on their privacy.

But, let us examine nunneries in this new phase. The Cardinal told us he had had much personal experience of nuns and nunneries ; that he had himself the honour—an honour which was never conferred except upon important persons—of being the visitor, or having the chief authority, in one of the nunneries of Rome, the nunnery of St. Pudentiana, the nunnery from which he was happy to derive the title of his cardinalate, for he is the Cardinal of St. Pudentiana. And he told us that his experience of nuns and nunneries was such that he really felt that the nuns were women of above forty years of age, that they were nuns of advancing years, nuns of a green old age ; and he told us, in the very next breath, that all the walls, and the gates, and the gratings, were to protect these old women from the men ! And, considering that this convent of St. Pudentiana is in the very heart of Rome, in the heart of the most ecclesiastical city in the world, in the heart of that city whose populace is, for a great part, composed of Cardinals and Archbishops, and Bishops, and Prelates, and Abbots, and Priests, and Monks, & Friars, all unmarried ecclesiastics in black, white, and grey, it seems a strange scandal—I suppose it must have been

some lapse of memory—while he was speaking of it to say, that these old women in the nunnery required such muniments to protect them from such a male population. But while it is difficult to ascertain precisely what the Cardinal meant to insinuate, I feel that his words seem to imply that Roman Catholic ladies on the Continent require these muniments and defences from the Roman Catholic men of the Continent. It seems to me to be either a scandal against the morals of the women, or a slander upon the morals of the men. Protestant ladies in this country require no such protection. Our Protestant ladies devoted to religion and to charity may be seen walking our streets and traversing our lanes, visiting in our hospitals and teaching in our penitentiaries, frequenting our schools, and acting in every sort of public and private charitable institution: we see them ascending the creaking stairs of the garret to minister to the sick and the poor, and descending to the lowest depths of the cellar to minister of their substance to their fellow-creatures in destitution; but they feel no danger, they see no danger, they know there is no danger. And those of our Protestant ladies who desire to cultivate religion in seclusion, and retire to their own chambers, and pore over God's word, and pour out their prayers before Him who seeth in secret, feel there is no danger, they know there is no danger. And it appears to me that to say that muniments like lofty walls and ponderous gates, and barred windows, and grated openings, are necessary for the protection of ladies in Roman Catholic countries, is to put an insult upon the women, or an insult upon the men. Let the Cardinal, if he will insult the Roman Catholics of Spain; if he will, let him insult the Roman Catholics of France; if he will, let him insult the Roman Catholics of Italy; but let him not come here to insult either the Roman Catholics or the Protestants of England. We can all well understand the use of high walls and heavy gates, and bars

and bolts, to prevent a prisoner escaping; but if it be, as he asserts, to keep the nuns from the men, or to keep the men from the nuns, then is every nunnery a standing scandal against the women, or a standing insult against the men.

But, passing from this part of my subject, I stated in my former lecture that young persons were placed in these nunneries when they were sixteen years of age, and that, when so entering the nunnery, when they had assumed the black veil and taken the vows, they were then secluded from the outer world, separated from parents and friends, companions and kindred; divorced from all the hopes and wishes, the sympathies and the ties of human life; confined within the narrow limits of their cloisters, they seemed to me to be recluses and prisoners for life; and I asked the question, what purpose of religion could it serve to immure young girls of sixteen years of age in these ecclesiastical prisons?

When I asked—what purpose of religion it could serve to immure young girls in those ecclesiastical prisons, the Cardinal has made no reply as to the age of the parties; but he said that we were in the habit in this country of mystifying and concealing the preliminaries which the Church of Rome had appointed before the profession of a nun was made. He stated that there was ordinarily a probationary state, called the postulancy, extending sometimes to six months, and that, during all that time, the candidate was free; and that there was the shield of the ballot, and a noviciate of twelve months, and sometimes of four years, during the whole of which the candidate was free; and it was not till after this that she took the vows, and that, from that moment, she was no longer free. Now, the Cardinal, on this occasion, committed one of those omissions to which I have referred—to which public speakers are so very liable. He told us, indeed, of the postulancy, but omitted to tell us at what age the postulancy might commence; and he told us of the noviciate, but omitted to tell

us at what age the noviciate might commence ; and he told us of taking the final vows, but omitted to tell us at what age the final vows might be taken. He spoke, indeed, about there being many more nuns of his acquaintance over forty than under twenty-five years of age ; and he spoke jauntily of nuns of advancing years, and of a green old age ; and he spoke this out as if he wished it to be implied—he did not say it, but he appeared to convey the implication—that all the nuns were of that advanced period in life. I must so far bear testimony to the Cardinal's statement as to say that I was once present at the reception of a nun of forty years of age. I shall never forget the scene. She entered the Church clothed in the most splendid attire ; everything that velvet, and satin, and silk, and jewels could do, was done for her ; and as she sat beside the altar, I was much impressed with the appearance of her splendid head of hair—her ample and beautiful chesnut locks, which fell down on her face and mantled on her bosom ; and I thought it was really a sin and a shame for a Cardinal to cut off that glorious ornament of a woman's head. And when I looked afterwards at the grating, and beheld him take the shears in his hands, I was not a little surprised when I saw that it was not merely a lock which he cut off, but that the whole came off at once ; it was that unromantic thing, a wig ! And there was the nun with her bald head, above forty years of age, bringing to mind the saying of the respectable old Pope of by-gone days, who used to declare that no young girl ought to be put into a nunnery, and no woman ought to be allowed to take the vow of chastity, till she had given forty years proof of her intention to keep it.

I have stated that the age at which they were admissible to those honours was sixteen years, and, as the Cardinal has omitted to dwell on the subject, I shall now direct your attention to the evidence on it.

And the first point to which I shall direct your attention

is a narrative which we find in the Roman Breviary, a volume in the hands of every Roman Catholic priest, who is obliged, by his ordination vows, to read a portion of it every day. It speaks of St. Rosa, of Lima, the first flower of sanctity

“The first flower of sanctity from South America was the virgin Rose, born of Christian parents, at Lima, who, even from the cradle, shone with the presages of future holiness; for the face of the infant being wonderfully transfigured into the image of a rose, gave occasion to her being called by this name; to which afterwards, the virgin Mother of God added the surname, ordering her to be thenceforth called the Rose of St. Mary. *She made a vow of perpetual virginity at five years of age!*”

If that young lady were so precocious in her sanctity, she certainly must have been precocious on other subjects if she understood the vows she was taking.

I pass from the Breviary to that which the Cardinal told us was the great authority in the Church of Rome, to which he and others had what some might be pleased to call a superstitious reverence; he referred to the Canons of the Council of Trent. Now the law, as set forth by the Council of Trent, is sufficiently explicit. In the 25th session, and at the 17th chapter, I thus read:—

“A girl, more than *twelve years of age*, wishing to take the habit of a nun, is to be examined by the ordinary, and again, before making her profession. The Holy Councils, considering the freedom of profession of virgins to be dedicated to God, resolves and decrees, and that, if a girl, who is *twelve years of age*, wishes to assume the habit of a nun, she shall not assume it before the Bishop shall have examined her, nor shall she take the profession afterwards before the Bishop shall again have examined her.”

So that we have it here expressly stated, in the canons of the Council of Trent, that a girl, *twelve years of age* may take “the habit”—that is, the vestigione, or commence the noviciate.

Now, while it will be felt that this is sufficiently early to begin, the Council goes on to state at what period the vows are to be made. In the 25th session, 15th chapter, are these words:—

“In whatever order, whether of men or of women, the profes-

sion is made, let it not be made until the completion of the *sixteen years*; and let no one be admitted to make the profession in a less time than a year after taking the habit in the noviciate."

So that we learn that the noviciate may begin so early as *twelve years of age*, and the profession may be made at *sixteen years of age*; and this was precisely the age to which I referred when I asked the question—What purpose of religion could it serve to immure girls of sixteen years of age in these ecclesiastical prisons? The moment that young girl has taken the veil, hope and life are for her banished away for ever. Before her mind is sufficiently matured to form a right judgment upon the subject, she signs away her destiny. Before her heart has felt the flow of those affections which, sooner or later, will flow and settle on some object, she is required to sign away her doom. Before her physical frame has developed so as to understand the mysterious voice of nature within, she has signed away she knows not what. Oh, I know not a greater cruelty, I know not a more unmanly outrage, than to take a young girl—a young, tender, innocent, generous, confiding, loving, warm-hearted girl—of fifteen or sixteen years of age, and ask her to sign away all the flower and blossom of her future life, to leave her to mourn in bitterness and broken-heartedness all her after years, and to learn that her maturer judgment, and her woman's feelings, and all her after life, have been sacrificed to the law of the Church of Rome—a law that I feel is an offence against God, as well as an outrage against nature.

But, while the Cardinal told us of the postulancy, and of the noviciate, and of the profession, he omitted to tell us the precise age at which they were each to commence. He did tell us that, during the postulancy, the nuns were free as air to depart and escape, and that during the noviciate they were free as air to depart and to escape; but, he did not tell us that the postulancy, being six months before the noviciate—that six months before the twelve years of age this postulancy begins—that is at eleven years and a half;

that the child is free till twelve, and that then commences the noviciate, which was sometimes four years; that is, commencing at twelve and ending at sixteen: and so the whole period of her freedom is from *from eleven and a half to sixteen years of age*, when we all know the mind of such a girl is plastic, & can be moulded by any one around her to desire, or to wish, or to do almost anything which those who are thus around her may desire. When she is in this state, and has taken the last vows, the decree of the Council of Trent expressly says that no one who has been so sanctified must be allowed to withdraw from the nunnery; and then, to prevent the possibility of any hope, the Bishop or the Cardinal—as it may be, and as I myself have frequently witnessed—and as no doubt this very Cardinal has himself performed—while as yet the poor girl kneels in his presence he rises, puts his mitre on his brow, and pronounces that awful anathema which, when once heard, will for ever tingle in the ears of men. He stands in his place and utters this awful malediction against all persons who shall presume to assist her in making her escape. “By,” says the Cardinal, with his crosier in his hand, and his mitre upon his brow, and the veiled recluse keeling before him—

“By the authority of Almighty God, and his holy Apostles Peter and Paul, we solemnly forbid, under pain of anathema, that any one draw away these present virgins. or holy nuns, from the Divine service, to which they have devoted themselves under the banner of chastity; or that any one purloin their goods, or hinder their possessing them unmolested; but, if any one shall dare to attempt such a thing, let him be accursed at home and abroad; accursed in the city, and in the field; accursed in waking and sleeping; accursed in eating and drinking; accursed in walking and sitting; cursed be his flesh and his bones, and, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, let him have no soundness. Let come upon him the malediction, which, by Moses in the law, the Lord hath laid on the sons of iniquity. Let his name be blotted out from the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. Let his portion and inheritance be with Cain the fratricide, with Dathan and Abiram, with Ananias and Sapphira, with Simon the sorcerer, and with Judas, the traitor; and with those who have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the know-

ledge of thy ways. *Let him perish in the day of judgment, and let everlasting fire devour him, with the devil and his angels—unless he make restitution, and come to amendment.*

Accustomed as we are to the language of Holy Scripture, we know that the religion of Christ is a religion of blessing, and not of cursing; and our blood freezes within us as we read such an unchristian malediction as this. And yet there kneels the veiled recluse before him. And, if in after years, perhaps, at the thought of friends, and family, and home—her own sweet, sweet home—feeling that there is no place like home—she may wish to withdraw; or, it may be, tired of the dulness, and the monotony, and the wearisomeness of the cloistered life; or, it may be, weary and sick at heart of the priestcraft, or the superstition, or the vice, which may be secretly practised within the convent walls; or, it may be, having changed her religious sentiments, she wishes for the free light of the Gospel of Christ in the Protestant Church; yet the moment she thinks of these things, the awful malediction, as a ghastly spectre, rises before her—

“Let her perish in the day of judgment, and let everlasting fire devour her, with the devil and his angels.”

Or, if her father, in after years, wishes to bring back his long-lost daughter to his bosom; or, if her mother should sigh over the dangers which she has learned are rife within the cloisters; or, if her brother, brave and generous, makes an effort to secure the freedom of his sister, then the vision of the Cardinal stands before him, with crozier and with mitre, and proclaims the sentence—

“Let him perish in the day of judgment, and let everlasting fire devour him, with the devil and his angels.”

Even, were the Chief-Justice of the Queen's Bench to issue the writ of *Habeas Corpus* to bring this young recluse into Court before him; or, if the Lord Chancellor were to issue his order that his veiled ward may be brought into his presence, and the officials of the Sovereign of England demand her presence, there the Cardinal stands, with crozier in hand,

and mitre upon his brow, and again the awful curse is ringing in our ears—

“ Let them perish in the day of judgment, and let everlasting fire devour them with the devil and his angels.”

While these officials are Protestants, breathing a Protestant atmosphere in a Protestant land, we may laugh to scorn such curses ; but if they become Romanists, then the curse is no trifle, but a terrible reality ; and the day may come when we shall require an enactment that any man should be banished from the shores of England who would dare to pronounce such an audacious malediction against any liege subjects of the crown of England.

I stated, on a former occasion, that one great evil connected with nunneries was the system of deportation. I stated that while we had those young women in nunneries in this country, they were under the broad ægis of our free institutions, and if they desired to escape there was, at least, if not a probability, a possibility of escape. But this is only while they are retained in this country ; and if there be a suspicion of their desire to escape, or if there be a suspicion of any change of religious sentiment, it is in the power of those who conduct the establishment to remove her, with or without, her own consent, to some affiliated nunnery on the Continent—to remove her to some land where the ecclesiastical laws will sanction any and every restraint upon her person, and where she may be made a prisoner and a victim for life. I stated, as illustrative of this, four instances which occurred under my own knowledge. One was the daughter of a clergyman, known to many on this platform, who entered a nunnery in England, and soon afterwards was transferred to the Continent. The second was a case mentioned to me by a gentleman, relative to his own daughter, who was afterwards removed to a nunnery on the Continent. I also mentioned two cases in Ireland, both being cases where nuns were removed—whether with or without their own consent, is a matter on which I can-

not pass an opinion. I only speak as to the fact, that, having been in nunneries under our free institutions, they were removed from their protection, and sent to nunneries abroad.

Now I confess that I thought this was one of the most important points in my whole lecture. But, to my surprise, while the Cardinal was playing with and cavilling at the instances I have given, he admits the fact, not only that the inmates are sometimes sent from nunneries in this country to nunneries abroad, but that it is the nature of their system that the nuns shall be held liable to be removed at any time from nunneries in this country to nunneries in other lands. I hold in my hand two reports of the Cardinal's address, one of them, namely, that in the *Gazette*, gives the Cardinal's words as follows:—

“Of the cited examples of deported nuns, they had in like manner sought in vain of the writer of the pamphlet for a verification of his statements; and of deportation generally he would only entreat them to make the inquiry whether the nuns who went abroad were of full age, and did so by their own consent; if this were so, what was to prevent their going to an affiliated establishment on the Continent, if they thought fit? There were but few convents in this country, in fact only two or three, that were affiliations of convents in France; all the rest were perfectly independent. But if a nun chose to join one of the affiliated houses, she was quite aware that one of the conditions which she accepted was that *she should go to any of the affiliated institutions to which it might be desirable to send her.*”

Thus we find the Cardinal expressly admits the fact, namely, that young women immured in nunneries in England are liable to be sent abroad to the affiliated nunneries upon the Continent. The report in the *Chronicle* is as follows:—

“There were a few convents in this country affiliated on those in France. What was the reason? One was for the purpose of taking care of orphans. The good nuns came over here and sunk their money in supporting a great number of orphans, without friends; others came for the purpose of education; others came to help the Catholics in the good work of education. But it was perfectly understood by those who entered the latter convents that they were not to settle, not to stay in particular houses, but *were to go abroad.*”

And thus the Cardinal admits the system of deportation, and that it is a part of their system in reference to the affiliated nunneries.

But he states that we ought to enquire whether it is done with their consent, and whether they are of full age. Now, as to this point, as the Cardinal has admitted so much to me, I will just quietly remind him that, according to the canon law, which he has been endeavouring to introduce into this country, the majority, or age of a nun, according to the conventual system, is sixteen years, and not twenty-one as with us. Accordingly, when a girl of sixteen years of age is received into an affiliated convent, she is then of full age, according to the canon law; and, therefore, at that age, she may be removed to the Continent, according to the statement of the Cardinal himself. As to its being with the consent of a girl of that age, I need scarcely say, speaking to men of the world, that we never find it difficult to persuade a girl of sixteen to go to the Continent; there requires no great power of persuasion to induce her, on some plea or the other, to visit Continental scenes. And thus we learn, from the admission of the Cardinal, that painful and distressing fact, which seems to me one of the most objectionable and most painful features in the whole system, that these young creatures may, at any time, be removed from the safeguard of the free institutions of England to some nunnery in Mexico or Syria, in Spain or Italy, where any change of religious feeling could be punished as heresy; and where any attempt to escape being made, she would be hunted down by the military and the police, as if she were a murderess; and where, as a punishment, she may be sent to some insalubrious convent in some pestilential clime, or else placed in one of those monasteries where every vice of earth and every crime of hell is perpetrated, and where the shriek of outraged innocence, and the death-sighs of a broken heart, are suppressed and stifled within the walls, and never can be heard in the outer world.

I stated, as a further objection, that many of these nuns were placed in the nunneries, not by their own inclinations, but against their own inclinations; not of their own choice, but by parental authority. I stated that it was the custom on the Continent, in years gone by, to act upon what is called the economical principle; a principle in which economy had a larger share than religion. All through the age of feudalism this prevailed, till, at the close of the last century, the French Revolution altered the whole state and tone of society on the Continent. At that period it was generally followed in Germany, Spain, Italy and France. All the distinctions and titles and wealth of the family belonged to the eldest son, and it was imagined that giving away any portion of this, to provide for the younger sons, or to provide a portion for a younger daughter, was so much wealth and influence subtracted from the family distinctions, and the consequence was that, although elder sons could marry elder daughters, yet younger daughters could not marry younger sons, for there was no provision on either side. Among them it was imagined that mercantile pursuits, commercial engagements, and professional occupations, were beneath the dignity and position of noblemen and gentlemen; and the consequence was, that too often the younger sons were placed in convents, and the younger daughters were placed in nunneries. And this naturally led to many of them commencing the life of a nun against their own inclination, and simply under parental constraint.

But the Cardinal protests against all this. He states that we ought not to suppose that parents on the Continent have acted on different principles from parents in England; and he besought us, in earnest language, at the opening of his address—stating that it was absolutely necessary before we could have a right judgment on the question—to divest ourselves of the idea that the English

people are superior to the people of the nations of the Continent. He assured us that there was really no such distinction, and that the people of England were not superior to the people of the Continent. It would really seem from what he said that we were quite as slavish as the serfs of Russia, and quite as uncivilized as the Mussulmen of Turkey, as fickle and as changeable as the French, as ignorant and superstitious as the Spanish, as immoral and uneducated as the Italians, to hear him speaking of England having no advantage over any other nation of the world. But there is one great peculiarity of the people of England which distinguishes them from all the nations of the Continent. It is, that we have here the freedom of the press. We have here freedom of religion. We have here freedom for the Bible, and our people breathe the language and the sentiments, the morals and the religion of the Bible. There *is* a difference between the people of this country and the people of the Continent; and the God above us has recognized it; for when the storm of revolution lately burst like a hurricane over all the nations of the Continent—when the heaving of a moral earthquake shook the foundations of every dynasty of the countries—when thrones, sceptres, and crowns were dashed to the earth and trampled under the feet of men—when constitution after constitution was torn to shreds, and scattered like the beard of the thistle on every wind of Heaven—when the free press of the nations was struck down by the iron hand of despotism in every kingdom on the Continent—the men of England stood by their throne and their altar, and their liberties, and preserved them all inviolate. There *is* a difference between the people of England and the nations of the Continent, and that difference is, among other things, our free and Protestant Christianity. That Protestant Christianity has given to England a married clergy—men who can honestly take their

wives to their bosoms and look at their daughters around their hearths, and who, therefore, can sympathize with the feelings of the women and in the interests of the daughters of the land. But Romanism on the Continent has given them an unmarried priesthood, who cannot honestly take wives to their bosoms, or see their daughters around their hearths, and who, therefore, cannot enter into the sympathies of the women and of the daughters of the land. And when we remember the influence which the clerical element always has on the ramifications of feeling throughout the social system, it will be at once seen that we have thus the secret which shows the reason why the parents in England act on one system of principles, and parents upon the Continent act upon another. The natural result has been that parents in England put their younger sons to professional pursuits, mercantile engagements, and commercial employments, thereby enabling them to make such an income as will capacitate them for marrying the younger daughters of the land. Whereas, on the Continent, their habit had not been to put their younger sons to these pursuits, but to place them in convents, thus leaving the younger daughters of the land unmarried, because, when there could be no husbands there could be no wives, and so they consigned them to the cloister.

Thus, then, there is a wide distinction between parents in England and parents upon the Continent. But the Cardinal protests against the conclusion at which I arrived, namely, that young women were put into those nunneries, not only by parental authority, but against their own inclinations. He at once boldly denied the statement, and he challenged my proofs.

I hold in my hand a work which was published only four years ago in this country. It is entitled "The True Spouse of Jesus Christ; or the Nun Sanctified by the Virtues of her State. By St. Alphonsus M. Liguori." This

last canonized saint of the calendar wrote this work for the edification of nuns within the nunneries; and, for the edification of the young nuns of England, they have translated it and published it in English in 1848. Now, I refer to it for the fact, that young women are sometimes put into these establishments against their own inclinations, because the writer himself is addressing nuns in the nunneries who are avowedly there against their inclinations; and he makes use of the fact that, in times past, nuns have been made nuns without their own inclinations, and yet afterwards have turned out very good nuns and very excellent saints. He says:—

“Blessed Hyacintha Marescotti, a religious of the convent of St. Clare, in Viterbo, was also induced to take the sacred veil *against her inclination*, and for ten years led a very imperfect life. But being one day illumined with a divine light, she gave herself entirely to God, and persevered till death, for the space of twenty-four years, in a life of holiness, so that she has deserved to be venerated on the altar.”

And not content with this example, he gives another:—

“Likewise sister Mary Bonaventure, a nun in the convent of the Torre Dei Specchi, entered *against her will*; but after a life of tepidity and dissipation, she went, during the first meditation of the spiritual exercises, and threw herself at the feet of Father Lancizio, of the Society of Jesus, and courageously said to him: Father, I have learned what God wishes from me. ‘I wish to be a saint, and a great saint, and I wish to be one immediately.’”

And so the writer goes on to tell those nuns who are nuns thus against inclination, that if they can only bring their mind to like it, afterwards they may turn out very good nuns and excellent saints.

But, since our friends are very anxious that we should have evidence on the subject, I shall read a little more of this edifying book. “Perhaps,” says this saint, addressing the nuns—

“But, perhaps, you will tell me you can never have peace, because you find that you have entered religion *to please your parents*, and *against your own will*. I answer thus: if, at the time of your profession, you had not a vocation, I would not have advised you to have made the vows of religious; but I would have entreated you to suspend your resolution of going back to the

world, and casting yourself into the many dangers of perdition which are found in the world. I now see you placed in the house of God, and made (either voluntarily or *unwillingly*) the spouse of Jesus Christ. For my part, I cannot pity you more than I could pity a person who had been transported (even against his will) from a place infected with pestilence, and surrounded by enemies, to a healthful country, to be placed there for life, secure against every foe."

I will not pause to examine the casuistry of this person, for I feel it would be a waste of your time and of my own; but I shall read something more of it:—

"I add; grant that what you state is true; now that you are professed in a convent, and that *it is impossible for you to leave it*, tell me what do you wish to do? If you have entered religion *against your inclinations*, you must now remain with cheerfulness. If you abandon yourself to melancholy, you shall lead a life of misery, and will expose yourself to great danger of suffering a hell here, and another hereafter. *You must then make a virtue of necessity*. And if the devil has brought you into religion, for your destruction, let it be your care to avail yourself of your holy state for your salvation, and to become a saint. Give yourself to God from the heart, and I assure you that, by so doing, you shall become more content than all the princesses and queens of this world. Being asked his opinion regarding a person who had become a nun *against her will*, St. Francis de Sales answered: It is true that this child, if she had not been *obliged by her parents*, would not have left the world; but this is of little importance, provided she knows that *the force employed by her parents* is more useful to her than the permission to follow her own will. For now she can say: If I had not lost such liberty, I would have lost true liberty. The saint meant to say, that had she not been *compelled by her parents to become a nun*, her liberty, which would have induced her to remain in the world, would have robbed her of the true liberty of the children of God, which consists in freedom from the chains and dangers of the world."

Here, then, I presume, we have ample evidence that nuns are sometimes nuns against their inclinations, nuns by parental authority, and not by their own wills. And I ask any feeling man to conceive the case of one of these young girls, who has been induced to make these vows, and now wishes to escape from the nunnery; to see her wandering through the long passages, or, as sitting in her lonely cell, and thinking over these things, she is haunted by the recollections of the past; and as she looks up she sees, "It is impossible for you to leave it"; and as she

looks below she reads, "You must make a virtue of necessity." Is it any wonder that the poor girl with breaking heart, and fevered pulse, and burning brain, should be found to lapse into the drivelling of idiotcy, or into the frenzy of madness?

I will read one passage more describing the state of the nun who is a nun against her will :—

"It is true, that, even in the cloister, there are some discontented souls; for even in religion there are some who do not live as religious ought to live. To be a good religious, and to be content, are one and the same thing; for the happiness of a religious consists in a constant and perfect union of her will with the adorable will of God. Whosoever is not united to him cannot be happy; for God cannot infuse his consolations into a soul that resists his Divine Will. I have been accustomed to say that a religious in her convent enjoys a foretaste of paradise, or *suffers an anticipation of hell*. To endure the pains of hell, is to be separated from God; to be forced against the inclinations of nature, to do the will of others; to be distrusted, despised, reprov'd, and chastised, by those with whom we live; to be shut up in a place of confinement, from which it is impossible to escape; in a word, it is to be in continual torture without a moment's peace. Such is the miserable condition of a bad religious; and, therefore, *she suffers on earth an anticipation of the torments of hell*."

Here is the testimony of the "Saint" himself, as he is called, that a young girl in a nunnery against her own inclination "suffers an anticipation of hell:" these are the words. Again, he says, that she is there "forced against the inclinations of nature:" these are the very words. Again, that she is "distrusted, despised, reprov'd, and chastised by those with whom she lives:" these are the very words. Again, she is "shut up in a place of confinement from which it is impossible to escape:" these, again, are the very words. She is in a state of "continual torture, without a moment's peace:" these again are the very words. And yet more, "she suffers on earth an anticipation of the torments of hell:" these are again the very words! And can we wonder at anything befalling a young creature who reads these words, and remembers them in her cell? Oh! if there be an anti-chamber of madness for the human mind in this world, it must be in the state of the poor girl made a nun against her inclination. Her heart must be cold as marble; her heart

must be made of the ice of the coldest iceberg of the north, if her mind does not sink under the sorrows laid on her. The wonder is not that her reason should fail; the wonder is that she should preserve her reason and live!

But the Cardinal asks, What purpose or object can be assigned to induce cardinals, bishops, and priests, to allure girls into the nunneries? He asks, what assignable object can be given for their extending the monastic system; what possible profit or advantage can be ascribed to them? He asks this with great simplicity, and with a taking and winning innocence of manner. But it occurred to me, that in a case so lately before the public—the case of Miss Talbot—there were eighty-five thousand reasons—very earthly reasons, certainly, but very substantial reasons all the while. And the very same thought occurred to Bishop Hendren, of Clifton, for he wrote to the *Times* newspaper, saying that he did not see why the Roman Catholic Church should not get a share of that money; and it is said he anticipated building a Cathedral with a portion of it. But still the Cardinal asks, what assignable motive can exist for promoting the monastic system? He had one very strong reason in the lecture before him for the solution of the question; for on that occasion I showed that every young woman on coming to a nunnery, is called the Bride of Jesus Christ, and is expected to bring her dowry with her; that that varies in different countries; that on my inquiries throughout Italy, I found that it extended from £300 up to £800 and £1,000, and that in Ireland it was at the lowest £500, and I remarked that all these nunneries were so managed, that the interest of the dowry was sufficient to maintain the ordinary expenditure of the nun, and that the capital was preserved intact. I stated, that as money produced six per cent on the Continent, £300 would give an interest of £18; and that this was adequate for the purpose, for I have been at a nunnery in Belgium, where I asked the Superior the charge for a single individual boarding in the establishment, and she told me it was only £12

a year. This statement is substantiated by the fact that the Spanish Government, itself a Roman Catholic Government, and the people a Roman Catholic people, allows precisely £12 : 3s. 4d. as the allowance for each individual in a nunnery. Well, then, if they have but £300 as the dowry, the interest is fully adequate to support the expenditure of the nun, and the capital is laid by and reserved for the purposes of the Court of Rome.

I remarked, also, that when I was in Tuscany, they told me there were from five to six thousand nuns in that country, and that if we multiply 5,000 (the lowest number) by £300, the smallest sum supposed for the dowry, it would give a capital of something like £1,500,000; and that if we went to the city of Rome, and its vicinity, where there are about 2,000 nuns, the lowest sum, £300, would give a capital of £600,000; and, estimating the whole number in Italy at 12,000—20,000 is nearer the true number—it would give a result not much short of £4,000,000 of capital. And I remarked that this was not a dead or inactive capital, but, that, as each nun died, her dowry was available, being supplied by the dowry of her successor; so that if all the nuns died out in twenty years the whole of the capital would be available in twenty years; and if all the nuns died out in ten years, the whole of the capital would be available in ten years. And, therefore, I observed, there was a premium on the rapid dying away of the nuns, for the faster they died out the faster was the capital necessarily available. Now, when it is considered that I applied my calculation only to Italy, and we are to add thereto the Church of Spain, and the Church of France, and also if we allow a calculation for these islands, then I think it will be found that the Court of Rome will be in possession of a capital so enormous that we shall have brought to mind what Hume says in his History of the early Kings of England, that the Court of Rome drew a revenue from this country greater than all the national revenue of the Crown of England.

But the Cardinal has replied to all this by stating that I have taken too high an estimate in naming £300 as the ordinary dowry of the nuns; that his experience is that £200 was nearer the mark; that he seldom knew any beyond £200. Now I am not disposed to bandy words with the Cardinal, or any other man, or to set his word against mine, or my word against his. And I am sure that every man in this assembly would act as I would act myself, when I met such rival and contradictory statements. I would ask if there were any certain or independent authority distinct from either party. And, above all, if I found that the matter had come before any Law Court of England, and if the judgment of Jury and Judge had settled the question, I would defer to that judgment, and waive the opinion of Mr. Seymour on the one hand, and that of the Cardinal on the other. Now, my own personal experience was that, at Chiavari, in the North of Italy, I asked the question, and was told that the amount was £300; and when I was in Perugia, in Tuscany, they told me it was £300, and upwards, and when I was at Rome, and asked the same question, they told me it was £300, sometimes ascending to £800 and £1000; and when I have asked the question in Ireland, they have told me that the very lowest was £500. But, as I have stated, I waive my own experience, and lay aside my own assertions. I come to what my friends are so anxious for; I come to the evidence.

Now, the first proof I will give is the judgment of a Baron in the Court of Exchequer, in the case known to lawyers by the name of "*White v. Reed*," in 1827. The Judge, in giving his judgment, used the following words:—

"In 1825, this young woman entered into the establishment as a lodger, and unquestionably not as a person who had irrevocably bound herself to take the veil; and what is that which was stipulated?—viz., that she was not to be professed till she attained the age of twenty-one; under this stipulation she entered the convent. And it was further agreed that she was to pay £40 a year until she took the veil, and afterwards £600."

The Judge states further:—

"Her brother-in-law is denied access to her; her sister is allowed to see her, but never without a member of the convent being present; and

in such circumstances as these she transfers £1100 to the convent, and the whole of her real estate, with the exception of some small portion of it, which she gave to her relations."

Now here we have evidence in a Court of Law that £600 was the dowry in that convent. That was the convent of Ranelagh, near Dublin.

But I am determined that the public in this city shall see how much and how far they are to depend upon the accuracy of the Cardinal. I am determined that when he visited this place and impeached my credibility, he must stand the test of his own. Now, bearing in mind what he said on that occasion that he never knew the sum to be greater than £200, he must have had a knowledge of the case now before me. This case is one published in the *Jurist*, and is so far an official document that that which I hold in my hand would be received in a court of law as evidence. It is the case of the Macarthy's, tried in the year 1844, and appealed to the House of Lords two years ago. It appears from the evidence and in the charge of the Judge, and in the documents before the House of Lords, that "Mary and Catherine Macarthy" in the life time of their father, and with his own consent, became members of the Ursuline Convent at Black Rock, and he paid to the Society a sum of £1000 with each of them as a portion." I think, therefore, I have set at rest, so far as legal evidence is concerned, the fact that when I stated £300 might be taken as a moderate estimate I was not very far above the mark, whatever I might have been below it.

But I have not done with the credibility of the Cardinal. It is not every day I catch a Cardinal. The Cardinal stated, that he only knew of £200 given for a dowry, and he omitted—perhaps it was one of those lapses of memory to which I have before referred—he omitted to state that, whenever that dowry is given, much or small, it comprehends all rights and all properties to which that nun may ever afterwards become entitled. So that if she gives her £300 or her £1000, believing it to be all she has, yet, if in after times she inherits many thousands, or be bequeathed a million, the whole of that becomes part and parcel of her dowry, and is absorbed into the nunnery. The Cardinal omitted to state this in his lecture; but it is stated broadly in the evidence

before the House of Lords ; and if any gentleman wishes to question it, I will call a most competent witness before me. Let the crier call Cardinal Wiseman ! I hold the Cardinal's evidence in my hand. There has been a committee of the House of Commons sitting on the Mortmain Act, and Cardinal Wiseman was called as a witness before it. It may suit his purpose to tell an auditory in Bath, in a little private chapel, where no man can contradict him—it may suit his purpose to give any statement about the extent of dowry in a nunnery, and the rights and privileges involved therein ; but when he stands before the searching men of a committee of the House of Commons of England, his evidence bears rather a different colour. “ Is it the case ? ” was the question put to him,

“ That, according to the rules and regulations of the canon law, all such property as devolves on every nun after becoming a nun, becomes the property of the community of which she is a member ? ”

“ It would become in Catholic countries, and be recognised in Catholic countries as the property of the community, but in this country it is usual to make what is called a will before hand, and that is practically the rule pursued, to the best of my knowledge.

“ Are you acquainted with the convent of New Hall ? ”

“ I am, to a certain extent.

“ Do you think vows of poverty and obedience, such as nuns usually take, are in themselves sufficient to give the convent the right of the property ; supposing no contract to exist before they entered the convent ? ”

“ In that case the property goes to the convent, but in this country a nun is herself considered legally entitled to it ; but, by the laws of Catholic countries, *ipso facto*, it is considered that the property goes to the convent.”

With this testimony from Cardinal Wiseman himself I am sure I may dismiss this part of my subject, simply stating that the Cardinal's calculation about the £200 and the £300 reduced my four millions to something like three millions as the capital in Italy ; and, though I am not disposed to split hairs with the Cardinal, I have no objection to split the three millions with him. But it seems to me strange that, when the Cardinal loves to launch out in the most vehement eloquence against the avarice of Henry VIII. for seizing the enormous wealth and estates of the monastic orders, in order that he might heap them on his flatterers and his followers, it seems like blowing hot and cold out of the same mouth. The monastic

wealth is enormous and great beyond expression when he has to vilify the opponents of the nunneries; but that wealth is a mere romance of my imagination and they are all children of poverty, whenever he wants to applaud the defenders of those establishments.

But now, it is time to come to more important matters. I have shown, I trust, to the satisfaction of this meeting, that these establishments partake, in appearance, of the nature of ecclesiastical prisons, looking like the bridewells and penitentiaries of our own land. I think I have shown, on the irrefragable evidence of the Council of Trent, that young girls of twelve years of age are admissible to commence their noviciate in the nunnery. I think I have shown, on the same evidence of the Council of Trent, that the canonical time of taking the vows is the age of sixteen. I think I have likewise shown, on the evidence of Liguori, that young girls are sometimes made nuns, not by choice but by constraint, not only against their own inclination but by parental authority. I think I have shown that, having once taken the vows, they are recluses, they are prisoners for life, and that there is no possibility of escape.

Having said thus much, I proceed to reply to the denial that the Cardinal made so boldly, concerning the demoralization of the nunneries of Tuscany.

In these nunneries, there are sometimes thirty, sometimes forty, sometimes fifty, and in many even one hundred nuns, and these nunneries have almost always convents near them, more or less large, for those monks who are to be the confessors of these nuns; and living, as these nuns always do, in a state of seclusion and dulness,—living, as they do, a life of hopelessness and monotony—without the interest of mothers, for they have no children—without the interest of children, for they have no parents—without the interest of sisters, for they have no brothers—without the interest of wives, for they have no husbands—they are thrown upon their own confessors for society, and the visits of the monks from the adjoining convents break the tedium of their lives, break in and wile away their hours of idleness, bring to them the gossip of the neighbourhood, and reveal to them the news of the outer world; and the result is, that from the rising to the setting of the sun, the visits of these monkish confessors are the

object looked for in the morning, and remembered in the evening. Now it is only in human nature to suppose that, under such circumstances, attachments may spring up between the younger nuns and the younger monks. It is no unkindness, it is no scandal to say it—it is only what nature seems to dictate; the real unkindness, the real scandal is that the Church of Rome interposes a law, and forbids the consecrating of these attachments by the bonds of holy wedlock. But in such a state of things, if there is among these nuns one black sheep, one vicious girl, one of violent passions, who can say the evil that may follow? Or if among those monks there is one black sheep, one young man of licentious habits, who can say the evils that may result? It is my duty this night, in answer to the challenge of the Cardinal, to substantiate my statements, and adduce evidence to prove the reality of such melancholy results. But, in coming to this part of my subject, I must intreat of this meeting, and I do it from the depths of my soul, to subdue and solemnize its feelings. I beseech of every man in this assembly, by every high and holy motive, to ask of God to enable him to hallow and chasten his feelings. I am now obliged to read to you that which is filthy, revolting, and disgusting; you have to hear that which is hideous, horrible, and unnatural. I am to lead you through the interior of the nunneries of Tuscany—to lay before you scenes of vice, profligacy, and debauchery which continued throughout many—many years. Alimani, Bishop of Pistoia, did all he could to reform these convents; but they belonged to the Dominican order, and they had the privilege of being exempt from the local episcopal jurisdiction; and the Bishop laboured, failed, and died. He was succeeded by Bishop Hypolite, and he, too, saw the evils and tried to remedy them; he, too, laboured, failed, and died. He was succeeded by Bishop Scipio de Ricci, and being a man of considerable influence, he obtained from the Pontiff an authority which overrode the authority of the convents. Accordingly an inquiry was held by the authority of the Sovereign of Tuscany, and the full sanction of the Pontiff of Rome, and under the superintendence of the Bishop of the diocese. The documents are full and explicit; the depo-

sitions and evidences are still preserved ; and, in calling attention to a few, a very few of these, I do, as I have already said, entreat you to solemnize and hallow your feelings. The task is enough to make the heart sicken at the thought of it ; and I undertake it only because I solemnly feel it is a duty laid upon me ; I feel that I am bound to vindicate my own character and credibility ; I am bound to vindicate that which the Cardinal has so causelessly impeached ; and I owe a duty to my fellow-citizens, before whom he has so expressed himself ; and I owe it as a duty to my God and to my country to expose the real nature of the whole system of these nunneries. The doctrines which prevailed amongst these nunneries are described in three short propositions :—*First*.—Happiness consists in union with God, in mystical marriage, the nun being consecrated to “the bridal chamber and bed” of God. *Second*.—God has appointed a priesthood to whom he has delegated some of his powers as his representatives. *Third*.—Union with God may be best attained by a real and actual union with his priests on earth. This is the root of that state of mind which led to their depraved and abominable practices. In order to understand the documents I am now about to read, you will bear in mind that, in all these nunneries, there is an apartment called the parlatory, or parlour ; it has a division formed by a large iron grating, so that the nuns are on one side, and the visitors, monks, or confessors, on the other. A similar grating is frequently seen in their convent-chapels, screening the nuns from the other worshippers.

The first document I will read is a letter, or declaration, written and signed by six of the nuns of one of the nunneries, addressed by them to the Grand Duke, that is, the Sovereign, of Tuscany, and the object of this letter was to denounce to him, as their Sovereign, the iniquity that was practised by some of the monastic confessors and some of the nuns within the establishment. It is dated 1775.

Presented to the Grand Duke.

“ Declaration touching the conduct of the Dominican fathers directors of us, the nuns of St. Catherine, of Pistoia.

“ Instead of leaving us in our innocence, they have corrupted us by their words and their actions. They come frequently to the Sacristy, of which they have almost all the keys. And there, where the grating is sufficiently

wide, they commit a thousand indecencies, even * * * * *
placing their hands in the bosoms of their favourite nuns, &c., &c.

“When, besides this they find any occasion or any pretence for entering the nunnery, they remain alone with their favourites in their chambers. And they are all alike, even the provincials. And they take advantage of the occasion of their visit to do such things as these. They give expression from their lips to sentiments that are beastly, saying that we ought to consider ourselves fortunate * * * * * without the inconvenience of having or rearing children * * *”

“They allow every indelicacy to take place in the parlour. And though often admonished by us, they do not leave off or break their dangerous connexions. And it has there occurred that very often in the night men, having obtained the keys, are admitted, * * * * * They let the nuns in like manner stay away a long time from the sacraments, and are at no pains to introduce mental prayers, but preach only about the happiness of this life. The nuns who live according to such direction are praised and gratified in everything, however extravagant. The others must needs strain their consciences, or be in a perpetual warfare.

“This is the simple truth, without passion, and according to our consciences, and we the undersigned attest it,

Sister ANNA TERESA MERLINI, the Mother of Council.

Sister ROSA PERACCINI,

Sister FLAVIA PERACCINI,

Sister GAETANA POGGIADI,

Sister CANDIDA GIOCONDA BOTTI,

Sister MARIA CLOTILDA BANBI.”

Such, then, is the letter these poor women themselves wrote, and had placed in the hands of the Sovereign of the country, denouncing the state of things existing in the nunnery in which they lived.

After this one of these nuns wrote herself this letter—for, the Cardinal informed us that, if any impropriety took place in a nunnery, a nun had the right to inform the Bishop of it. Her name was Flavia Peraccini.

The letter of Sister Flavia Peraccini.

“To reply to all the questions you propose, I hasten to make the attempt, but I know not how to commence. I should require much time and good memory to recall successively all that has passed during the twenty-four years I have had to do with the monks, and also all I have learned respecting them. I will not name the monks who are no longer alive. Of those who are still living, who are blameable, there are very many. Among them are a Provincial, whom they call Father Master Bellucchi, then Father Donati, Pacini, Buzzacchirini, Calvi, Zoratti, Bibliacci, Guidi, Miglietti, Verdi, Bianchi, Ducci, Scrofini, Bolla, Niri d’Luca, Quaretti. But why mention more? Except three or four of the living and dead, with whom I have had to do, they were all of the same calibre, had all the same maxims and the same conduct. They lived with the nuns with more freedom than married men with their wives. * * * * *

"When they come to visit a sick nun, they eat with the nuns, sing, dance, play, and sleep in the nunnery. They have as their maxim that God has forbidden hatred and not love, and that the man was created for the woman, and the woman for the man. * * * * * I know they have had the art to succeed; not only with innocent ones but even with those who were more circumspect, so that it is a miracle not to be enticed so as to yield to them.

"The priests are the husbands of the nuns, and the lay-brothers are the husbands of the lay-sisters. One day a nun was caught in a room with one of them. He ran off, and afterwards they appointed him confessor extraordinary. They do anything bad in one place, and then they are appointed to another, and so things go on. How many bishops in the Papal States, who have cognizance of certain disorders, which they have heard of and visited, but which they have no power to remedy, because the monks say that those persons are excommunicated who reveal anything done in the convent.

"'Poor girls,' I said one day to an English Provincial, whose name I do not recollect, 'poor girls! in withdrawing from the world they think to escape its dangers, and they find themselves in dangers still greater. Our fathers and mothers have given us good instructions, and now all is the very opposite.'

* * * * *
 "Every year when the monks bring to us the Holy water, they upset it in their playing with the nuns, on the beds. What revels they make! One time they washed Father Manni's face, and dressed him up as a nun. In short, they make scenes of constant amusement for themselves, comedies, and conversazione continually. Every monk who passes to visit the chapter, finds means to visit the nunnery, and they persuade some sick one to confess to him. News are continually told of husbands whose mistresses are stolen away by some one else, &c. &c."

"Do not say that these things occur in our nunnery alone. The same go on at St. Lucia, at Prato, at Pisa, at Perugia, and I have heard things that would astonish you. In them all there are the same proceedings, in all the same disorders, in all the same abuses. A monk said to myself that if a nun's veil were placed on one pole, and a monk's cowl on another, so great is the force of sympathy that the veil and the cowl would come together and unite. I say and repeat it, that whatever the Superiors know, they do not know the least portion of the great evils that pass between the monks and the nuns, &c."

Now, I call attention to these two letters, not only for the purpose of showing the extent of the immorality and depravity between the monks and the nuns, but, likewise, for another purpose—that of bringing to the test the credibility of the statements of the Cardinal, and to test the accuracy of his historical memory. When speaking on this subject, he expressly stated that all this was an affair got up by Bishop Ricci, whom he describes as a man more non-Catholic than Protestant—and that all this was a got-up affair, against the Dominican order. I say that I have cited these two letters in preference

to others, because they were in existence before ever Ricci was called to the Bishopric, and, in consequence of these letters, the Pope removed five of these nunneries from under the direction of the monks. This took place before the time of Ricci. Ricci's predecessor was Hypolite, and Hypolite's predecessor was Alimani, and these documents came forth in the time of Alimani; that is, two episcopates before the time of Ricci! It may be, as I have said, one of those unhappy omissions to which public speakers are so frequently liable; but, I must say that it looks either as if the Cardinal knew nothing of the real facts of the case of which he was speaking, or else, as if he knew them and designedly misrepresented them. I leave the Cardinal to his alternative, and pass on to the evidence—the depositions of two of the nuns, out of a whole volume of depositions, as to the state of things in the nunnery itself. I feel intense difficulty in reading these, and I am sure that every good man present will feel for me in the painful and loathsome task of reading these depositions.

[The documents here read—namely, the depositions of the Prioress Cicile-Salvi and of Sister Ursula Passi—are of such a nature that they are wholly unfit for the public eye.]

I have now done with these two documents. I have called your attention to these two documents, not only with a view of showing the horrible vice that prevailed in the nunneries but also with a further view of again testing the accuracy of the Cardinal; because the Cardinal was pleased to state that all this was a got-up affair on the evidence of two women, of whom he said, if ever two women were mad they were mad. Now the facts of the case are these:—The Cardinal, by a singular mistake,—perhaps one of the strangest and wildest blunders ever perpetrated by a public man—has declared that the enquiry was on the evidence, not of witnesses, but of the criminals themselves! He positively substituted the persons accused for the persons who gave evidence, and gave the statements of two criminals, as if they were witnesses in the case! I have, therefore, called your attention to the depositions of the witnesses in which these two mad women—and I believe they were mad—were

accused criminals, and not witnesses. You are all aware that, on the Continent, in all the courts, they subject criminals to a personal examination, instead of following our more simple form of pleading guilty or not guilty. They subjected these women to this process of examination. I will read one extract, and then dismiss all further allusion to that loathsome subject.

[The examination of this unhappy criminal, with her answers, is of such a character as to be altogether unfit for the public eye.]

And now, having disposed of this evidence, sufficiently loathsome and disgusting as that any man might shrink from it, as I am sure that there is not one man in this room but will say that, the Cardinal having challenged me to produce evidence of the immorality and depravity between monks and nuns, I have now brought forward that evidence in sufficient abundance. But the sad and painful part of this subject is, that this depravity extended not to one or a few of the nunneries, but to almost all the nunneries, in the dioceses of Prato, Pisa, Pistoia, Lucca, Florence, Fienza, Perugia, and Sienna. The number of nuns was, by official returns, seven thousand six hundred; and the painful fact is that similar loathsome and disgusting scenes took place in the nunneries of the Pontifical states, and throughout Italy, France, Germany, and Spain. The evidences upon this subject are known to many, but they are not in the same precise and authentic and official form as those which have been preserved in the archives of Tuscany. But these evils did exist all through the middle ages, and if the meeting will bear with me, I will read two or three historical evidences of the general character of the monastic establishments during those ages. The first instance which I shall read concerns the nunneries of France. Nicholas Clemangius, who was present at the Council of Constance, gives us the following account of the then state of the nunneries:—

“The nuns only remain, in order, according to our promise, to carry our narrative from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, no grade being omitted. Modesty forbids me to say much concerning these which might be said, lest, instead of speaking of an assemblage of virgins dedicated to God, we should have to protract a shameful discourse about

brothels, the crafts and wanton tricks of harlots, about lewd and incestuous deeds. For what else, I pray you, are the monasteries of young women at this time than certain—I do not call them sanctuaries of God, but—execrable stews of Venus, and receptacles where lascivious and shameless young men gratify their lust; so that it is the same thing in our days to put a nun's veil on a girl as to expose her to public prostitution."*

The next illustration of the demoralized state of the nunneries of the middle ages is in the words of Saint Bridget, speaking of the nuns of Italy:—

“Some monasteries were constructed in such a manner by blessed Gregory and other saints, that women might be so enclosed in them, that they could scarcely be seen all day long. Now, however, a very grave abuse is to be found in them, in that the doors are open alike to clergy and to laity, to whomsoever the sisters choose to give admission, even during the very night. And thus these places are more like brothels than holy cloisters.”†

Another illustration, sufficiently authoritative, is in the words of a Pope—Gregory VII. Writing to an Abbot in Friesland he says:—

“It has lately come to our knowledge, that in the country of Friesland there are twelve Benedictine monasteries, in the dioceses of Bremen and Maastricht, in which not only nuns of the said order reside, but also males of the same profession live, after some fashion, with the nuns. In these monasteries, almost all religion and observance of the said order and fear of God has been laid aside, and lust and carnal corruption between the males and the nuns have entered in, with many other evils, excesses, and vices, which shame forbids us to speak of minutely. Many, indeed, of the nuns commit fornication with the very monks who are placed in authority over them, and with the lay brothers; and in the same monasteries many bring forth sons and daughters; and they cause their sons and daughters so begotten to be received sometimes as monks and nuns in the same monasteries; and what is most grievous, not a few of the nuns of this sort, forgetting maternal piety, and adding evils to evils, *fatus eorum mortificant*, and destroy the children who see the light.”‡

I feel that as the time is growing late, I must omit some of the evidence on this subject; and I shall, therefore, at once notice the statement of the Cardinal, that I had charged these things on the nunneries of the last century, and not upon the nunneries of the present day. I can state for

* The original will be found in N. de Clemang. De Corrupt. Eccles. Stat. Lib. in Fasc. Rer. Expet. et Fug. Lond. 1690. Tom. II: it is also quoted in a very useful volume, “Nuns and Nunneries,” Seeleys, 1852, p. 214, 5.

† See “Nuns and Nunneries,” Seeleys, p. 227.

‡ *Vide* “Nuns and Nunneries,” Seeleys, p. 184.

the satisfaction of the Cardinal, that it was not for want of information on the subject of nunneries in the present day, and it may be an interesting fact to many to know that, during the last week, I have received the information that the present Pope of Rome has been induced to issue an order for an investigation into the nunneries within the Neapolitan dominions. When I was at Rome, too, I was informed, by one on whose means of information I have entire reliance, that in one of the nunneries near my residence, four nuns were found to be in the family-way, that they were removed elsewhere, that their confessor was dismissed, and that the public feeling was that he was dismissed as the scapegoat of one who held a higher position in the Church.

But the Cardinal will tell us that this is simply impossible; this is what he calls a simple untruth; that the interior *menage* of a nunnery is so arranged that, so far as a nun is concerned, it is simply impossible; and that the exterior of a nunnery is so arranged that, so far as a monk is concerned, it is simply impossible. Is it impossible? Why if it is impossible for a nun or confessor to act so, if what the Cardinal says be true, what did they mean by charging Dr. Achilli with corrupting and seducing a nun? What, I ask, did they mean by imprisoning him for six months, without trial, on a charge of that which the Cardinal says is simply impossible? The charge was made in all the French newspapers and Irish newspapers; they rang and rang again the changes upon it, echoing and re-echoing charges against Dr. Achilli to such an extent, that when a deputation from this country waited on the foreign minister in Paris, he showed them a dispatch which he had received from the Court of Rome, stating that he had seduced at least one nun. I believe the charge to be as false as hell, and that those who made it knew it to be such; for they have since withdrawn it. But it served *their* purpose then; and it shall serve *my* purpose now! The Cardinal was exceedingly accurate in discovering that Dr. Achilli had seduced a young woman—that she was a nun of Viterbo, and that she was eighteen years of age; but he has since discovered that it was all impossible, and the charge has been withdrawn!

But why was it impossible? How was it impossible? For it appears to be not only possible but probable, when men consider the union of the two systems—the system of nunneries on the one hand, and the system of the confessional on the other. I will not, after all that has passed,—I will not enter into the minutæ of detail; it will be enough to say, that I hold in my hand a book of devotion and prayer, which is, perhaps, more popular than any other amongst the Roman Catholics of this kingdom—a volume which I myself have found in the drawing-room of a Roman Catholic family of distinction in Ireland—a volume which I know was lying on the drawing-room table of a Roman Catholic family in this city—a volume which I also know was the favourite devotional reading of a young lady in the vicinity of Bath—it is called “The Garden of the Soul.” I know not if every one here present is acquainted with the examen for confession; but young persons are required to examine themselves before going to confession; and some of the questions they are to propose to themselves are as follows:—

[For obvious reasons, these disgusting questions are omitted here. They are abridged in some of the later editions.]

And so it goes on putting a young girl to the pain and torture of examining herself on the subject of vices which she had never heard of before, and had never conceived; and then, with a mind shocked by reading this loathsome stuff, and her whole nature bewildered, she goes before the priest to confess all the sins in thought, word, and deed that may occur to her mind. It is not a wonder that such a volume should pollute an individual; the wonder is that any nunnery could exist without being polluted by the language of such a volume.

But I am asked for evidence as to the results of the system. I summon then two witnesses—living witnesses—before the meeting. I summon first, the Reverend William Hogan, a Roman Catholic priest, educated at Maynooth, and an ordained priest of the Church of Rome; he afterwards became a Protestant, and when asked the reason for the change, he gave one of the most painful narratives ever written. I will read a few sentences from it, to put the meeting in possession of the facts.

“When quite young, and but just emerging from childhood, I became acquainted with a Protestant family, living in the neighbourhood of my birth-place. It consisted of a mother (a widow lady) and three interesting children, two sons and one daughter. The mother was a widow lady of great beauty and rare accomplishments.”

He goes on to describe how intimacy grew up, and that—

“Soon after the daughter was sent to school, I entered the College of Maynooth as a theological student, and in due time was ordained a Roman Catholic Priest, by particular *dispensation*, being two years under the canonical age. An interval of some years passed before I had an opportunity of meeting my young friend again; our interview was under peculiar circumstances. I was ordained a Romish priest, and located where she happened to be on a visit. There was a large party given, at which, among many others, I happened to be present; and there meeting with my friend, and interchanging the usual courtesies upon such occasions, she—sportively as I then imagined—asked me whether I would preach her *reception sermon*, as she intended becoming a *nun* and taking the *white veil*. Not even dreaming of such an event, I replied in the affirmative. I heard no more of the affair for about two months, when I received a note from her, designating the chapel, the day and the hour she expected me to preach. * * * On the receipt of my friend’s note, a cold chill crept over me; I anticipated, I feared, I trembled, I felt there must be foul play somewhere. However, I went, according to promise, preached her reception sermon at the request of the young lady, and with the special approbation of the *Bishop*, whom I had to consult on such occasions.

He adds immediately afterwards—

“Having no clerical connection with the convent in which she was immured, I had not seen her for three months following. At the expiration of that time, one of the *lay sisters* of the convent delivered to me a note. I knew it contained something startling. * * * I, of course, lost no time in calling on her, and being a priest, I was immediately admitted; but never have I forgot, nor can I forget, the melancholy picture of lost beauty and fallen humanity which met my astonished gaze in the person of my once beautiful and virtuous friend.”

He goes on to say that she addressed him thus:—

“I sent for you, my friend, to see you once more before my death: I have insulted my God, and disgraced my family; I am in the *family way*, and I must die.”

The narrative goes on to relate—

“I gave her such advice as I could in the capacity of a Romish Priest. I advised her to send for the *Bishop* and consult him. ‘I cannot do it,’ said she, ‘My destroyer is my confessor.’”

I give that as one authentic instance, on the authority of a man who was an eye-witness of the scene; and the next evidence I adduce is one whose name is familiar to many of us, the Rev. Pierce Conelly, domestic chaplain to the Earl of Shrewsbury. That gentleman, who lived a long time in

Rome, gives a long description, both of England and of Rome, by no means favourable to the morality of the nunneries—

“ I have known, in Derbyshire, a young lady not eighteen years of age, the daughter of a widowed mother, the mother also a Roman Catholic, seduced into the convent under false pretences, kept there in spite of every effort of her family, with the approbation of the Papal authorities, and only delivered by my own public threat, as a priest, of application to the civil power and consequent fear of scandal. I have seen clerical inviolability made to mean nothing less than license and impunity. I have read to the pure and simple-minded Cardinal-Prefect of the Propaganda, a narrative, written to a pious lay friend by a respected Roman Priest, of such enormities of his fellow-priests around him that the reading of them took away my breath,—to be answered, ‘ Caro Mio, I know it, I know it all, and more, and worse than all ; but nothing can be done.’ I have known a priest (here in England) practise Liguori on his clientele simply as an amateur of wickedness, apparently without conscious malice, just as he would try poison upon dogs or cats ; an Iago, without even an imaginary wrong from anybody. I have known this creature get up, and very successfully, a miracle,—(I have proofs in his own handwriting,)—at the very moment when, as a brother priest satisfied me, he was experimenting in seduction. But nothing could be done ! I have known a priest received and honoured at a prince-bishop’s table, when the host knew him to have just seduced a member of his own family. But nothing could be done ! I have been mocked by dean and bishop in denouncing a young priest in whose bedroom—and before there had been time for him to dress himself—in broad day, in England, under a convent roof, I had myself found a young nun, apparently as much at home as her confessor was himself. I have been forced to let pass, without even ecclesiastical rebuke, a priest’s attempt upon the chastity of my own wife, the mother of my children, and to find instead, only sure means taken to prevent the communication to me of any similar attempt in future.

“ This is a part of what has come within my own experience. But it is not yet the worst of that sad experience.

“ I have seen priests of mean abilities, of coarse natures, and gross breeding, practise upon pure and highly-gifted women of the upper ranks, married and unmarried, the teachings of their treacherous and impure casuistry, with a success that seemed more than human. I have seen these priests impose their pretendedly divine authority, and sustain it by mock miracles, for ends that were simply devilish. I have had poured into my ears what can never be uttered, and what ought not to be believed, but was only too plainly true. And I have seen that all that is most deplorable is not an accident, but a result, and an inevitable result, and a *confessedly* inevitable result of the working of the practical system of the Church of Rome, with all its stupendous machinery of mischief.

“ And the system is irrevocable and irremediable.”

Now I think that I need not read any more ; but simply let the case rest, as far as the modern nunneries are concerned, on the public testimony of two men who are now

alive, and are ready, in any court of justice, to prove and substantiate these facts.

But I have a further task to perform. I throw myself on the kind indulgence of the meeting, who, I am sure, must feel that it is not possible to answer all the Cardinal's address of two hours and a quarter in a period of short duration. I have to throw myself on the kindness of the meeting while I answer the statements of the Cardinal—statements personal to myself and to my credibility. First, he called attention to my statement that a nun had rushed from her nunnery, at Rome, and plunged herself into the Tiber. The facts of the case are these:—In the early part of the year 1845, during my residence in the city of Rome, I became very intimate with a number of influential Jesuits, priests, and laymen of the Church of Rome; they constantly visited my residence in the endeavour to proselytise me. On one occasion one of them, on coming in, appeared very much excited, and he stated, as the reason of it, that just as he was passing, the abbess of one of the nunneries had rushed out, nobody could stop her, and she had plunged into the Tiber; and afterwards he stated, that she was taken out of the water before she expired. This was the narrative of the occurrence just as it reached me; it was naturally the subject of conversation in society at Rome, and, considering my means of information, it will be thought that I could not have been deceived. But I think it is too late, now seven years have passed, to raise doubts upon it, the more so as I published that very fact in my *Pilgrimage to Rome* in 1848. That work has gone through four editions in four successive years; that work has been before the Roman authorities I know, for they have honoured me by putting it into the *Index Expurgatorius*—thus they have given evidence that they have seen it, and that they might have contradicted the statement if they could; and now it is rather late for the Cardinal to raise doubts respecting it. But the Cardinal says that he discovers a discrepancy between the statements of the *Pilgrimage to Rome* and of the lecture; in the first, it is said to be an abbess, in the second a nun. Now, it is the same sort of contradiction as if

in writing from London, I said an archdeacon of the Church of England had thrown himself into the Thames; and afterwards I had said, that it was a clergyman of the Church of England. And this is the amount of contradiction discovered by the Cardinal; for though certainly every nun is not an abbess, yet we know that every abbess must be a nun. But the Cardinal said if it were an abbess she must have had authority in her own hands; she must have possessed the keys of the convent; she must have been able to open the doors and go forth, by commanding the portress to open the doors, and needed no occasion to rush forth. All this is very true, and I said nothing to the contrary. I did not say whether she did herself or did not herself open the doors; I did not say whether she did or did not command the portress to open the doors; I did not say whether the doors were opened on an ordinary occasion or whether they were opened on a special occasion; I did not say whether the doors being opened, the thought striking the mind at the moment or not, she rushed forth; I only said that the doors being opened for some purpose or other, this woman rushed forth, and flung herself into the Tiber. The Cardinal then said that I did not see this myself, and, therefore, it was mere hearsay. But, truly, we are come to a strange pass, if we may not believe or state anything which we have not seen with our own eyes. I believe that her Gracious Majesty is married to Prince Albert, although I was not present at the ceremony. I am quite sure that Pio Nono is the Pope of Rome, although I was not present at his election. And I am quite satisfied that the Pope has conferred the Cardinalate on Nicholas Wiseman, although I was not present when he performed the act. Truly if one may not say anything but what one sees with his own eyes, we shall be in a strange position. But, then, the Cardinal says—and here he seemed to put out all his strength—he said if it had been true, it would have been mentioned in the newspapers of Rome. Talk of the newspapers of Rome! As well talk of the newspapers in the moon! When I was at Rome, there were but two newspapers published there; one of them was about the size of a sheet of letter paper,

and it contained the names of all the Germans, Russians, French, and English strangers who had arrived at Rome, with the names of the residences where they were to be found, but no articles on political or local concerns, or anything whatever of the kind; and the other was a small official paper, occasionally published, and sometimes not larger than a sheet of note paper, containing official notices without a political article, or one on any subject of interest whatever. Talk, then, of the newspapers at Rome! Why, so far did the authorities carry their dislike of newspapers, that when those of Paris or London arrived in Rome containing articles that were displeasing to the Court of Rome, they did not permit those newspapers to be delivered to us at the Post-Office. So far was this carried, at the time of the affair of the holy coat of Trêves, when some strong articles on that subject had appeared in the *Times*, they would not give us our copies of the *Times* at the Post-Office; and when *Galignani's Messenger* arrived from Paris, because it contained articles copied from the *Times*, they would not let us read the French paper. Yet, the Cardinal talks of the newspapers at Rome! Why no man knows better than the Cardinal that no paper dare publish the narrative I have alluded to, in the city of Rome, and the Cardinal knows, as well as any man, that before 1848, the press of Rome was chained and silent, and the result was, that the Pope and the Cardinals in tranquillity ate the fruits of their priestcraft; and that in 1848, the press of Rome was unchained and free, and the result was, that the Pope and Cardinals became exiles and fugitives from Rome; and that when in the year 1850, the press of Rome was again chained and silent, under the cold steel of the bayonets of France, then the Pope and the Cardinals returned, and were reinstated in the Vatican; and when the day comes, as come it must, when that press is again unshackled and free, then shall the Pope and the Cardinals become again fugitives and vagabonds on the face of the earth!

And now I turn to the point about Milan—the only telling point in the whole of the Cardinal's address. I stated that there were no nunneries in Milan. The facts are

these :—Having heard that there were no nunneries permitted in Milan, I resolved to make inquiry while on a visit to that city last autumn, and where I proposed to visit the convent of St. Maurizio. While in the church of that convent, beholding the celebrated frescoes of Luini, I received the information that only two old nuns remained of all the ancient nunneries of Milan—that of the nunneries one had become a barrack, another an office of records, and others were devoted to various purposes ; that only two nuns remained ; that no new ones were allowed to profess ; and this information, I say, I received within the walls of the convent of St. Maurizio. This, then, I intended to state ; but still I feel that I expressed myself more loosely than I ought. The Cardinal, in his reply to this statement, admits a part and denies a part ; he admits that it is true, as far as the old nunneries are concerned, that they were all abolished, and that of the old nunneries only two nuns remained ; but he says his information goes further, and that, of late years, nunneries & nuns have been introduced into Milan, and then he proceeded to say that he had written to Milan for information, and he read a list of convents in Milan. Now the reporters for the newspapers, although usually so accurate—the wonder is that they are so accurate—do not always see the force of particular words, and are thus occasionally led into mistakes. I must appeal to the gentlemen around me for the precise words of the Cardinal ; he gave the names of four nunneries, or boarding-schools, kept by nuns ; he said one of these had three or four branch schools ; and thus he stated there were seven nunneries, or schools kept by nuns, in Milan ; and also that there were ten more in the surrounding country. Of the province, however, I spoke nothing, because in speaking of the city of Bath we do not include the whole of the county of Somerset. Now the secret of the discrepancy between the Cardinal and myself is this ; you are aware, in this country, it is usual that a clergyman should be at the head of any large public school of boys. In like manner, in Italy, they require a nun to be at the head of any large school for girls ; it is their custom ; and accordingly, when any females desire to establish a day or boarding

school for girls, they do not act independently there, as they do in this country, but they are obliged to connect themselves, or affiliate themselves, with some convent or sisterhood, it may be a hundred or five hundred miles off; which gives them the power of calling themselves Sisters of St. Bridget, or Nuns of St. Genevieve, Sisters of St. Theresa, or Nuns of St. Ursula, or some name of that kind; and in this new name the school is opened. But you will perceive that these are schools kept by nuns rather than nunneries, and are recognised as schools rather than as nunneries. And the Cardinal himself, as if seeing that he might have been detected in this by any one acquainted with Italy, added quietly that two of them had cloistered nuns—which is an implication that none of the others were really nuns at all. And now, I ask, whether, allowing the Cardinal the force of all he asks for his statements, and allowing that I had expressed myself, as I honestly allow, more loosely than I should if it bore on the argument of my subject—allowing this, I ask, is there anything in the Cardinal's statement which justifies him in impeaching my credibility? Or is there anything in his statement on the subject that touches the real point of the argument before us? My argument was this: that nunneries ought to be open to inspection; that nunneries ought not to be mysterious concealments; that young girls of sixteen years of age ought not to be allured into them, to take vows for life. My argument was, that the system of nunneries is wrong, unnatural in principle, and immoral in practice. And how does it bear on this, whether there are or not two or more cloistered nuns or nunneries in Milan? Even if it be true, as the Cardinal asserts, that there are such nunneries, how does it follow that the system is not unnatural or immoral? And why does the Cardinal dwell so much on this point? And why do his followers harp so much upon it? It appears to me as if they felt desirous to run away from the real question at issue; as if they felt that in the Cardinal's lecture on behalf of nunneries there was nothing really tangible, nothing they could really grasp, nothing that was firm in their hand; and, therefore, they endeavour to turn attention to a little side part,

in order to take away attention from the real question at issue.

And now, dismissing Milan, I come to the closing point of our whole argument, where I stated that, when at Rome, I made acquaintance with a gentleman high in official position who had been a visitor with the Cardinal Vicar in the various nunneries, and who told me that, entering these nunneries at the early age of sixteen and eighteen, for a few years the nuns seemed sufficiently happy, but that, afterwards, having discovered the extent of the step they had taken, some of them pined, and drooped, and withered, and died; while others, struggling against it for a time, in the end gave way to despair, and died of madness. He stated that, of his own experience, the majority of these young nuns died deranged before twenty-five years of age.

The Cardinal at once meets the statement by declaring unhesitatingly that he does not believe it; and I meet him by stating as unhesitatingly that I most decidedly believe it. And when the Cardinal states that all the statistics of deaths and burials would prove me wrong, it is a pity there was an omission of memory in not supplying the statistics, because the fact was written in my "Pilgrimage to Rome," four years ago; it was in the hands of the authorities at Rome four years ago. But since he speaks of statistics, he should recollect that there are other persons in the world who have the command of statistics as well as Cardinals themselves. And what are the statistics? In the city of London, by the public statistics, the number of deaths, as compared with the number of souls, is 1 in 45—in London, the greatest city of the world, the capital of the commercial world. But in the city of Rome, that city of the ecclesiastical world, that city which has more nuns in it than any other city in the world—in the city of Rome the deaths are, by public statistics, 1 in 25, nearly double the number as compared with the population of London. Two deaths in Rome for one in London! Does not this look as if the statistics told rather the other way from the Cardinal's inference? But the Cardinal himself let out, in another part of his address, the statement that he, in his experience of nuns and nunneries, could say there were more nuns above 40 than under 25.

Now if this language means anything, it means that there are very few under 25 ; in other words, it seems an undesigned evidence of the truth of the statement that these young girls die before twenty-five years of age.

But the Cardinal asks me the name of my informant. I do not know what purpose it would serve to have the name ; but this much I will say, that though it is not usual to give up the name of an informant, or to betray a friend, it has been my habit, without any reserve whatever, for the last five or six years, in mentioning this narrative among my friends and intimates, always to mention the name of my informant. I have never concealed it ; and to show that I have no wish to conceal it from my friends—from any one upon whose honour I can rely that he will not imperill my friend—and upon whose right feeling, as a man, I can depend, I tell you, sir—the Chairman of this vast meeting—you shall have his name whenever you ask for it. And there is not a personal friend about me that I have not mentioned it to, and that I am not willing to mention it to, in private. But I will not mention it to Mr. Stourton. He showed his ideas of honour and good feeling by reporting a private conversation in my own house to the Cardinal. I will not trust him with so important a private communication as the name of my informant. And I will not communicate it to Mr. Parfitt. He treated my private letter in answer to his own as if it were a public document, and put it into the hands of the Cardinal. I do not know but that he would do the same with the name of my informant. Neither will I give it to the Cardinal himself, as he availed himself of a private conversation in my private residence, and of a letter which I wrote to another gentleman ; and if the Cardinal, or any other man, is capable of making such uses of private communications, I will not trust him with such a communication as might peril the life or liberty of my friend. And I will trust him all the less, because I know that, if I communicated it to him, it would be imperilling the life and the liberty of my friend. At Rome they seize a man at midnight, tear him from his family, and consign him to the cells of the Inquisition or to the dungeons of St. Angelo, not only without crime, but without even an accusation of crime. At Rome they cast men into dungeons, and keep them there for months,

and years, not only uncondemned, but actually untried. At Rome they put men of the loftiest stations into their prisons, chain them to fellow captives, leaving them there sleeping or waking, eating or drinking, or any other duty of nature, for months and years, not only without law but directly against law. Let any man read the burning & eloquent words of Mr. Gladstone, when describing the tyranny and malignity of Italian Governments. Let any man read the records of Dr. Achilli, while confined for six months in the prison of St. Angelo, and within the walls of the Inquisition, without even the prospect of a trial, and escaping only by the connivance of the French, who were unwilling to give him up to the malignity of the Papal Government. Or read what passed in our own free House of Commons only a few nights since, when, in reference to Mr. Murray, the question was proposed by Mr. Bright whether that gentleman had been allowed to remain in prison at Rome from July, 1849, to November, 1850, two years and four months; and whether it was the fact that he had been imprisoned without any specific charge against him. Lord Stanley replied that it was true that Mr. Murray was arrested in 1849, and that he was not brought to trial till two years and a half afterwards. It was also true that during that time no communication on the subject had been forwarded to the Foreign Office. Here, then, we have a state of things sufficiently dangerous for us to feel that, if I gave the name of my informant and betrayed my friend, it might be his destiny to pine for months and years in a dungeon. I have shown, then, that I should not be justified in giving up my friend; and I state without any hesitation, that I will not surrender his name to the hands of the Cardinal. Chivalry and high feeling, and honour and friendship are not yet banished from the breast of an Englishman, and I will not betray the name of my friend, and none but an Italian priest would have asked it!

But that Italian Priest and Cardinal, tells me he will give me his bond that, if I will furnish him with the name of my informant, my friend shall not suffer. He will give me his bond! Pray what might the value of that bond be. When my friend is dragged from the bosom of his family, and lies in the dungeons of the Inquisition, where even his voice

cannot reach the outer world, and the lamentations of his family reach my ears, crying against my treachery, what satisfaction will it be to them to be told, "The Cardinal gave me his bond." I value—I highly value—the honour of a gentleman and a Christian, but I honour the Cardinal's bond as I do the paper which I thus tear to pieces. But what a picture does the offer of the Cardinal give of the state of law and justice at Rome! Whoever heard in this country of a Bishop giving his bond that a warrant should not issue against an offender? That an attorney-general should not prosecute? That a jury should not give a verdict according to their oaths? That a judge should not faithfully and truly try him? Whoever heard of the bond of a bishop over-riding the law of the country? And yet the Cardinal would give his bond, because his bond is to over-ride the law and the justice of Rome! I am not prepared to go with Shylock, and stand on the bridge before St. Angelo, and cry, "My bond! my bond! I will have my bond!" Truly there are things in England in which we have a superiority over other lands. At least we have not the inquisition nor the Grand Inquisitor; and the Cardinal confesses to both. It is true he does not like my picture of the Grand Inquisitor, and says it is not like him, and that I must be mistaken as to his identity, the more especially as the Grand Inquisitor has no place in the papal processions. I presume the Cardinal's memory, so treacherous here as elsewhere, made the omission of the little word "official," meaning—that he has no "official" place in the processions. But I have seen German, and Italian, and French, and English gentlemen take their places in the papal processions, though they had no official appointment there. And it may be for the information of the Cardinal to add that my own name was inserted in the list as one to take part in the procession on Palm Sunday; and though I declined the questionable honour, for certain reasons of my own, yet the fact was so, that I might have joined the procession, though I could not, of course, have any official place therein. But this is trifling with the subject, and the Cardinal must have felt it to be so. And as they have an Inquisitor, so they have an Inquisition. And on this point I called atten-

tion to the fact that when the storm of revolution burst on the palaces, and the temples, and the Campaniles of Rome; and the ancient temples, and the ruined Coliseum, and the fallen pillars of that glorious city rang with the shouts of popular feeling; then it was that the Grand Inquisitor and his myrmidons were obliged to flee from Rome, and the Cardinals, and the Pope, and all his satellites were obliged to flee from Rome; and the gates of the Inquisition were thrown open, and the people entered, and there they beheld, with their own eyes, the bones and the composts of decayed animal matter; masses, clotted masses, of human flesh and blood and soil; and even the tresses, the long tresses, of woman's hair; there they beheld these ghastly relics of the sacerdotal villanies of Rome. But the Cardinal tells us it was all a got-up affair, an affair got up by the citizens of Rome, a kind of theatrical scene got up by the Republicans of Rome; and he seems anxious to convey the idea that there was no truth in this statement. Now my statement was taken from an eye-witness, and I hold in my hand the narrative. It is deeply interesting, and I hope the meeting will permit me to read it.

"I was struck with the outward appearance of civilization and comfort displayed by the building, which owes its erection to Pius V., another of the last creed; but, on entering, the real character of the concern was no longer dissimulated. A range of strongly barred prisons formed the ground floor of a quadrangular court; & these dark and damp receptacles I found were only the preliminary stage of probation intended for new converts, as yet uninitiated into the Eleusinian mysteries of the establishment. Entering a passage to the left, you arrive at a smaller courtyard, where a triple row of small barred dungeons rises from the soil upwards—somewhat after the outward look of a three decker—"accommodating" about 60 prisoners. These barred cages must have been of en fully manned, for there is a supplementary row constructed at the back of the quadrangle on the ground floor which faces a large garden. All these cellular contrivances have strong iron rings let into the masonry; and in some there is a large stone firmly imbedded in the centre, with a similar massive ring. Numerous inscriptions dated centuries back are dimly legible on the admission of light, the general tenour being assertions of innocence. The officer in charge led me down to where the men were digging in the vaults below; they had cleared a downward flight of steps, which was choked up with old rubbish, and had come to a series of dungeons under the vaults, deeper still, and which immediately brought to my mind the prisoners of the Doge, under the canal of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, only that here there was a surpassing horror. I saw imbedded in o'd masonry, unsymmetrically arranged, five skeletons in various recesses, and the clearance had only just begun;

the period of their insertion in this spot must have been more than a century and a half. From another vault full of skulls and scattered human remains, there was a shaft about four feet square ascending perpendicularly to the first floor of the building, and ending in a passage of the hall of the chancery, where a trap door lay between the tribunal & the way into a suite of rooms destined for one of the officials. The object of this shaft could admit of but one surmise. The ground of the vault was made up of decayed animal matter, a lump of which held imbedded in it a long silken lock of hair, as I found by personal examination as it was shovelled up from below. But that is not all; there are two large subterranean lime kilns, if I may so call them, shaped like a beehive in masonry, filled with layers of calcined bones, forming the substratum of two other chambers on the ground floor in the immediate vicinity of the very mysterious shaft above mentioned."

Now the Cardinal began by stating, it was all a thing got up by the republican citizens of Rome, and then he ended by getting up an affair of his own, and turned the scene into an ancient grave-yard, on which the Inquisition was built. And thus he accuses the Grand Inquisitor of building his dungeons and cells in such a place, and making their floors of a compost of human flesh, and human blood, and human bones, for the wretched prisoners therein immured. The beginning of his answer was, that it was all a modern affair, made up at the time of the revolution; and the end of it was, that it was an affair of some three centuries' standing in Rome!

But, I have done with my subject; and I have only to express my regret that I have been compelled to detain you so long. I have certainly not exhausted my subject, though I have really exhausted myself. I have spoken of the nunneries on the continent instead of those in England, because I am more acquainted with those on the continent than with similar establishments in England. But I desire to believe that the nunneries in England are pure and blameless. I am assured that there are nunneries in France, and Spain, and Italy, on which the breath of censure cannot blow. I am sure there are nuns in England as pure as the undriven snow of our mountains. I believe them to be as fresh as the fairest ray of light from the morning sun; and I believe this, because I believe that the hearts of the nuns, as Englishwomen, would bear them above the evils of this system. They are better than their system; I believe them to be infinitely better than their system. I say nothing

of the reflex light of Protestant freedom, and Protestant morality, and Protestant information around them, because I wish to believe that there is a something in their own high and noble hearts which lifts them beyond the fetid atmosphere which stagnates in the nunneries of the Continent. And I have such respect for many of the ancient Roman Catholic families of England, such a pleasant memory of their high bearing and their noble chivalry in years gone by, and such an opinion of their great respectability and their great amiability as individuals, that I am anxious all the more to shield them from the introduction of the cloistered life into this country as it exists upon the Continent, and as Cardinal Wiseman is endeavouring to introduce it here, on the principles of the canon law. So far from breathing a word to their disparagement individually, I would not say a word of them as Roman Catholics that I would not say of others as Protestants. I believe, as surely as I am certain of anything in this world, I believe that if we had such things as Protestant nunneries they would be just as mischievous as Roman Catholic nunneries; and that if Protestant girls of sixteen years of age were induced to take the vows of a nunnery, to be shut up within the walls of a cloister, removed from all the society and associations suitable to their years and their circumstances; if they were compelled to live in all the dulness and monotony of the cloister; if they were obliged to take the unnatural vows of celibacy; if they were constrained to be subject to the sapping and mining process of the confessional; and above all, if they were deprived of the light and the comfort of God's Holy Word, for their own private reading, I believe that the disasters would take place in such Protestant nunneries that we read of as taking place in Roman Catholic nunneries. For, after all, Protestants and Romanists are the children of the same fallen parents, and we all must sing with the great poet,

“Of man's first disobedience and the fruit,
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into our world, and all our woe.”

We are of the same nature, we are of the same instincts, we have the same passions, we are of the same flesh and blood; and, if we are in the like circumstances, we can only expect

the like results. I believe it the law of universal nature that like causes will always produce like results ; and, believing this, I will exert my energies as much against the establishments of Protestant as against the establishment of Roman Catholic nunneries. And I lift my voice, once and for all, that there may be such a visitation of every such establishment as will secure, to every inmate, free ingress and free egress for the full enjoyment of all their civil rights and religious freedom.

☞ All the authorities in the preceding Lecture are taken from the originals in my own possession, except the three for which other references are given, p. 41.

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The attendance on Mr. Seymour's Lecture was limited to men, and the admission was by tickets, which were issued to all applicants, and, excepting those for the platform and reserved seats, gratuitously. The number of persons thus admitted amounted to FIFTEEN HUNDRED, including a majority of the clergy, and many of the most respectable and influential inhabitants of Bath.

The Lecture occupied nearly four hours in the delivery. At its conclusion, the Rev. W. C. OSBORN proposed—

“That the cordial thanks of this meeting be presented to the Rev. M. Hobart Seymour, for his able and instructive statements, in reply to Cardinal Wiseman, on the subject of nunneries or convents; and that it is the opinion of this meeting that it is desirable that all nunneries or convents should be subject to visitation by her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, or by Commissioners appointed for the purpose, to enable the inmates to withdraw from them, if they shall desire to do so, and that all assignments of property to such institutions, by any person who may become the inmate of a nunnery, should be rendered void.”

The resolution was seconded by the Rev. J. OWEN, and was carried by acclamation.

W. T. BLAIR, Chairman.

Bath, June 8, 1852.

The following MEMORIAL to her Majesty the Queen, from the Ladies of Bath, with regard to Nunneries, was adopted after Mr. Seymour's former Lecture on that subject, delivered at the Assembly Rooms, Bath, April 21, 1852. It has since received more than two thousand signatures. Petitions to the Houses of Lords and Commons, embodying similar requests with regard to Nunneries, were also adopted on that occasion, and they have since received more than sixteen hundred signatures :—

“To her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, by the Grace of God of Great Britain and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith.

“The loyal Address of the undersigned Ladies, Inhabitants of Bath and its vicinity.

“Humbly sheweth,—That we, your Majesty's loyal and devoted subjects, are deeply thankful to him, “by whom kings reign and princes decree justice,” that our destiny has been appointed amidst the institutions of a nation in the enjoyment of civil liberty and religious freedom, and especially under the benignant and gracious sovereignty of your most excellent Majesty.

“That we have learned with much grief that, with the aggressive efforts of the Papacy against the Protestantism of this crown and realm, a very considerable increase in this land of certain establishments, usually called Nunneries, has of late taken place. To these establishments many young and inexperienced females are allured, where they are encouraged to make ecclesiastical vows, not recognized by the laws of the land, are deprived, under pretence of these vows, of their personal liberties, and are induced to alienate their property, and place it at the disposal of the Court of Rome.

“We, therefore, most humbly beseech your Majesty to extend your Royal sympathy and protection to these unhappy females, and to take such measures as in your wisdom may seem best, to make all Nunneries open to visitation by your Majesty's Justices of the Peace or to Commissioners appointed for that purpose, to enable the inmates to withdraw from them if they shall desire to do so, to recover for their future maintenance such a proportion of the money which they contributed on their admission as is equitable, and to render void all assignments of property to such institutions by any person who may become the inmate of a Nunnery.

“And we further pray your most excellent Majesty to recommend to the Most Reverend and Right Reverend the Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church, that they be most careful to give no countenance whatever to institutions of similar character amongst the members of the Church of England, as your petitioners feel persuaded that, if they are not insidious attempts to increase the influence of the Papacy, they do generate principles which prepare minds for the reception of the doctrines of Rome, which are, and always have been, injurious to the best interests of your Majesty's crown and realm.”

W. T. BLAIR, Chairman.