

Forgotten Women--

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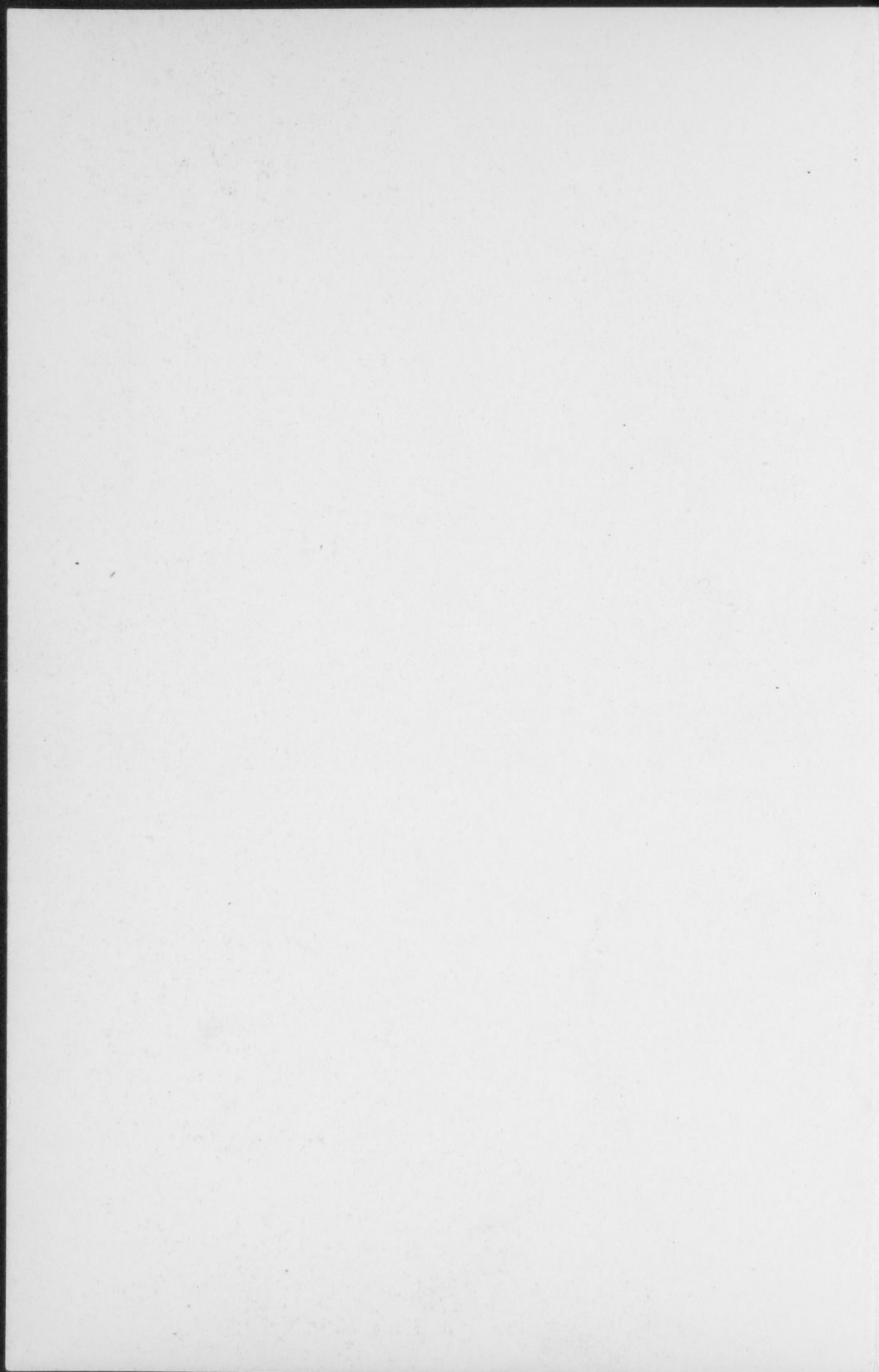
Convents



By
Helen Conroy
(Sister Mary Ethel)

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The Los Angeles Times
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"Her book contains no scandals about convents, but is a calm, candid and critical examination of the conventual institution on the basis of experience and a study of Roman Catholic authorities and canon law. It asks questions, answers them, and proves the answers."

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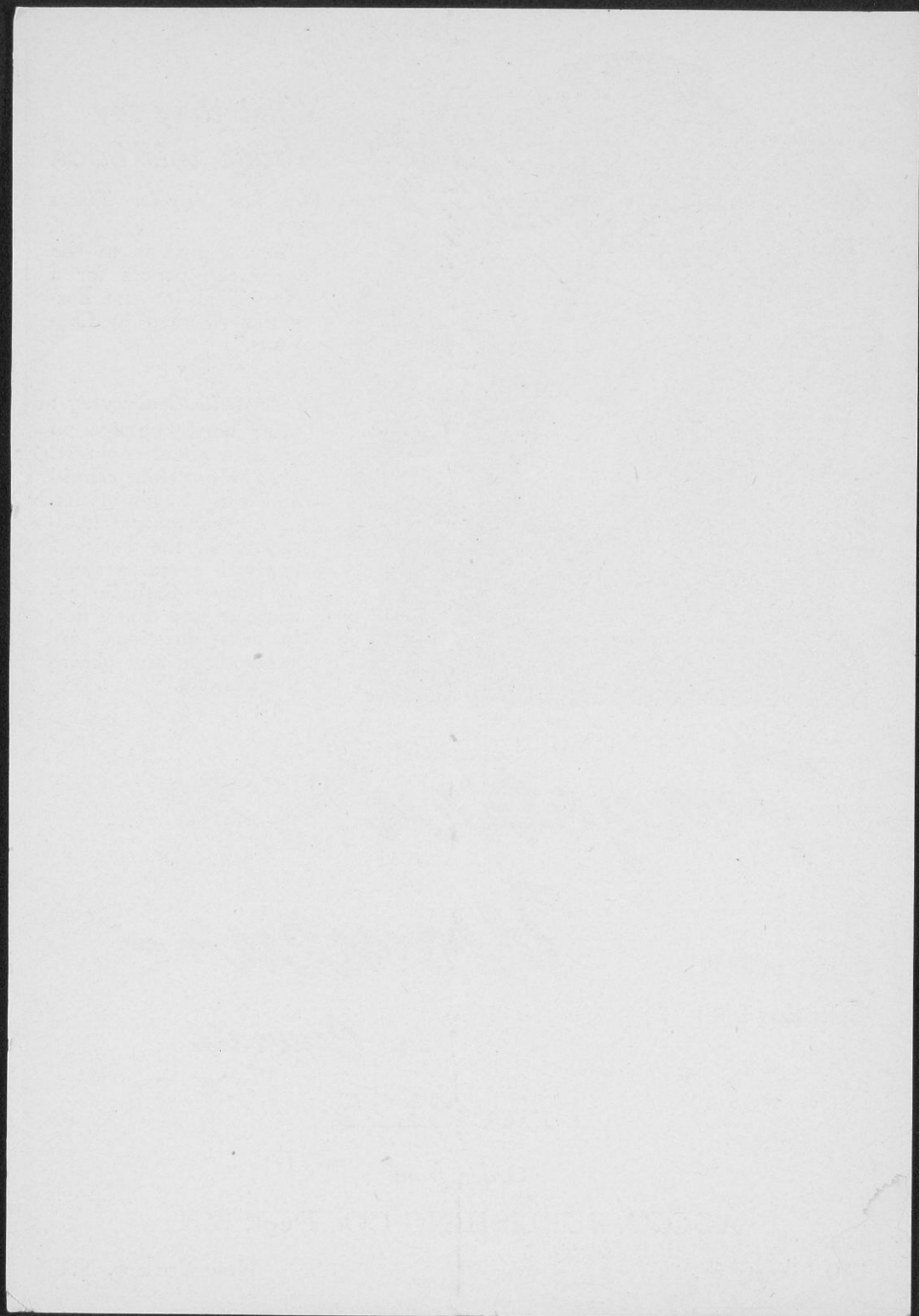
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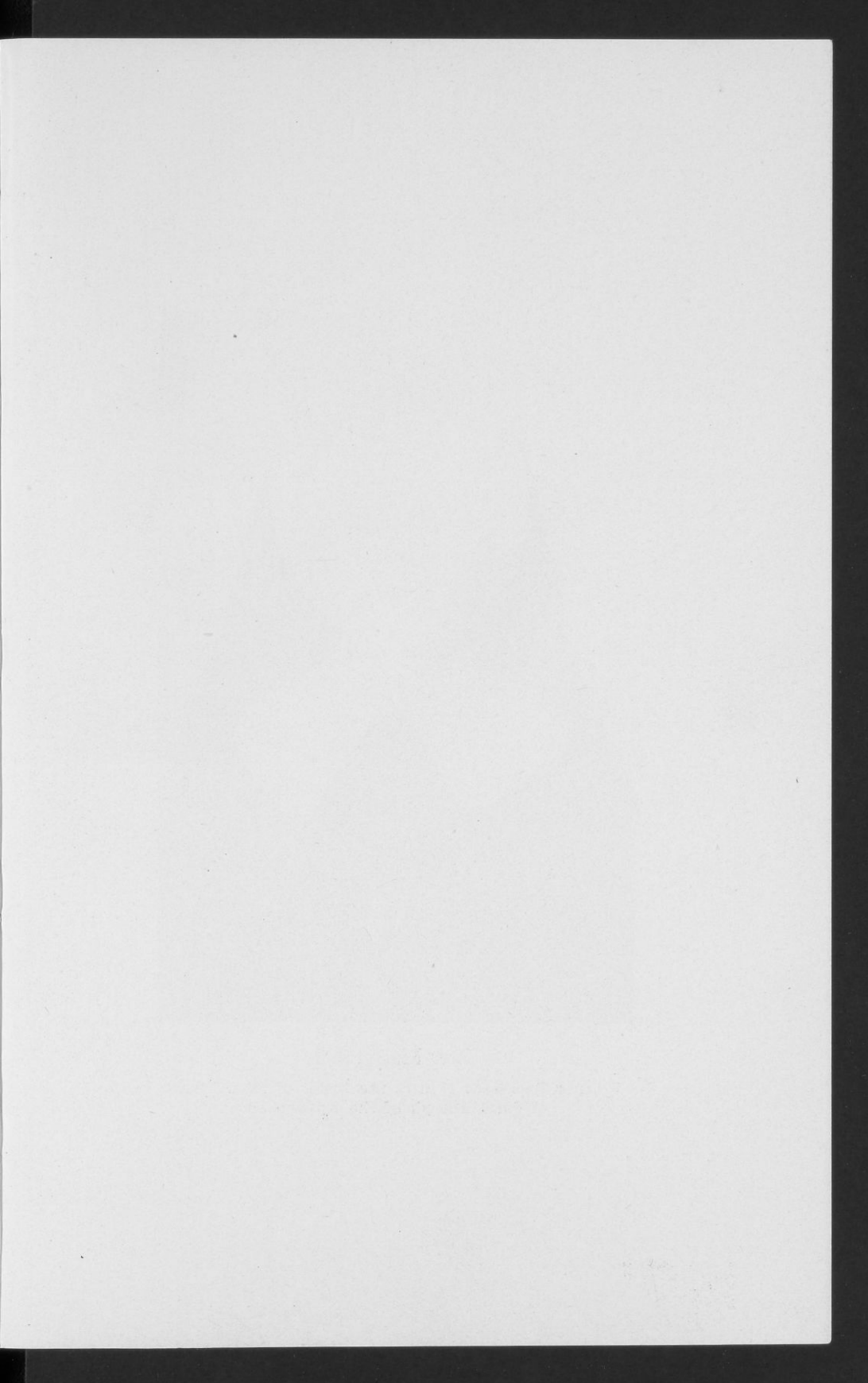
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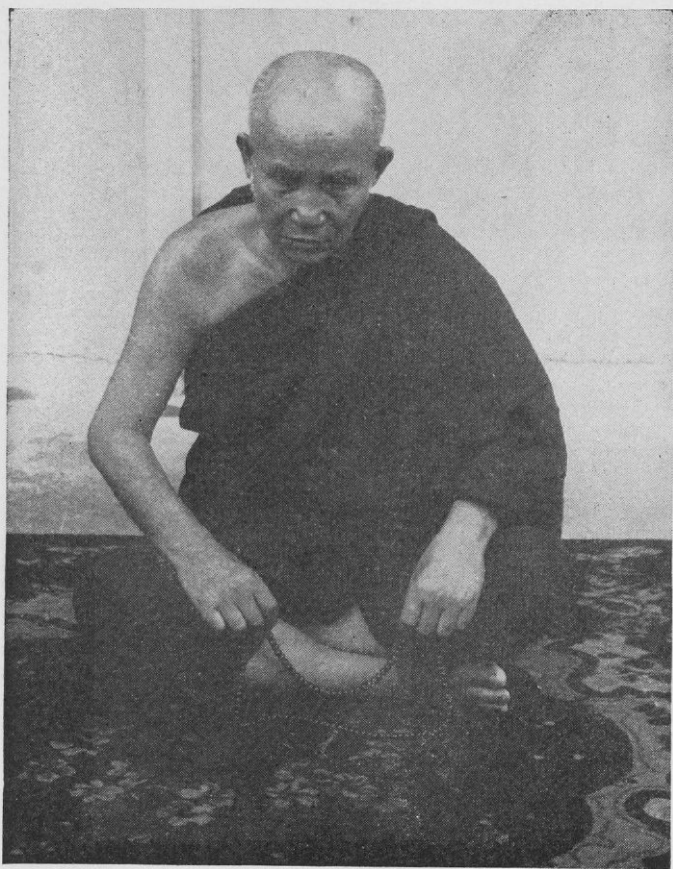
Sister Mary Ethel

Former Professed Nun of the Order of the Sisters
of Saint Joseph of the Apparition



St. Joseph's Convent, Mandalay, Burma

Sister Mary Ethel taught school here for seven years



Buddhist Nun Praying on Her Rosary Beads

Note the shaved head. The Buddhist convent system ante-dated the Roman Catholic system of pious slavery of women by more than 500 years.



The author as a young girl



Taking the Veil

Actual photo of the ceremony of the taking of the 'white veil' at the Novitiate, or Mother House, in Marseilles, France, of the Order of St. Joseph of the Apparition, to which the author belonged.

SISTER MARY ETHEL, born Helen Conroy in Waterford, Ireland, in 1890, was the youngest of a family of fifteen. She received her primary education there in the National (public) schools and later in the convent school of the Visitation Nuns in her native city.

After leaving school she went to Lancashire, England, and was employed as assistant to an older sister of hers who was house-keeper to Father Burke, Roman Catholic priest of the parish of St. Mary's in Bolton. While there she came under the influence of one of the priests, Father Dohman, a native of Dusseldorf, Germany. He was 42; she not quite 18. By him she was led to enter the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition in Manchester, England. Later she took the white veil and the black veil and made her three vows in the Mother House of the Order in Marseilles, France.

Immediately after her profession she was sent to the convent of the Order in Mandalay, Burma, and taught school there for seven years. After much internal struggle and heartache she revolted against both the heartless deception practiced upon her by her priest adviser and the slavery of convent life. She left and came to the United States on a passport issued by Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of Burma. In her own words, she "*evolved from being a 'God-wife' to being a 'real wife,' a happy mother, and a loyal American citizen.*"

"He who fights with priests may make up his mind to have his poor good name torn and befouled by the most infamous lies and the most cutting slanders."

—Heine

ADDENDA

- Holy See office of the Pope in Rome
- Ordinary local bishop
- Discreet trusty, a spy in the convent
- Exempt not under jurisdiction of local bishop
- houseselling communion
- juridical legal
- enclosure closed to public, part of convent where
none can enter without special permission, and
none can enter alone.
- De Profundis ("Out of the Depths"). . . Latin hymn sung
at funerals, at professions of nuns, etc., the song of
the dead.
- Canon Law . . . Catholic law

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This modest work is dedicated to the workers of the world.
And all labor on it has been done in a shop that is fair to
labor.

*"All truth is safe and nothing else is safe; he who keeps
back the truth, or withholds it from men, from motives of
expediency, is either a coward or a criminal, or both."—*
Max Muller

INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC OPINION when aroused, is the most potent, most powerful force of civilization. It demands its codes, its creeds, its laws, and indeed its very form of government. Basically it has the consciousness of right—right, as civilization has created it. Unfortunately, it is prey to political mongers, religious hierarchies, seeking to mould it to their wills, to the injury, yes, often to the very destruction of liberty itself.

Only a short while back, public opinion was shocked, after extensive investigation, to find that children in workshops were laboring under conditions unequalled in the annals of human depravity. It forced the passage of laws to protect these poor victims of greed. Henceforth, these workers in the mills will have recourse to the strong arm of the civil law to protect them from wanton exploitation.

How different with the sisters and nuns in convents! For them there is no light of public opinion to intercede for their emancipation. Confined behind gray walls where the light of love for humanity never penetrates; imaginary brides of Christ; slaves of the Catholic Church; kept in ignorance of the world; taught to hate their parents, and driven to drudgery and begging under the whiplash of the priests, they are doomed to live out a miserable, hopeless existence. For them the civil law does not exist. They are indeed "Forgotten Women," penniless slaves at the complete mercy of the law of the church of Rome.

On page 79 of his *Canon Law of the Papal Throne*, Judge Gilbert Nations says:

"Under the claim that it is a perfect society, divinely constituted and deriving all its prerogatives from God *THROUGH THE POPE*, the Roman Hierarchy prohibits any effort to subject any

prelate or priest to the jurisdiction of civil courts. That prohibition is expressed in Canon 102 which Woywood translates into English in part in these words:

"All cases against clerics, both civil and criminal, must be brought into the ecclesiastical court, unless for some countries other provisions have been made.

Cardinals, Legates of the Holy See, bishops, even the titular ones, abbots and prelates *Nullius*, the supreme heads of religious bodies approved by Rome, the major officials of the Roman Curia in reference to business belonging to their office, *cannot be sued in the secular courts without permission of the Holy See*. All others, clerics and religious, who enjoy the privilege of the forum, *cannot be sued in a civil court without permission of the ordinary (bishop) of the place where the case is to be tried*. The Ordinary, however, should not refuse such permission, *if the suitor be a lay person*, especially after his attempts to reach an agreement have failed.

Thousands of prelates, a quarter of a million priests, and scores of thousands of 'religious' of the papal government encircle the earth; vast numbers of them enjoy the rights of citizenship in nearly every country. Such rights are totally incompatible with the exemption from civil authority which the canon law accords to them. Though bound by paramount ties to the Pontifical throne, and subject to canon or Catholic law which they regard as divinely enacted, and which sets aside the whole doctrine of popular sovereignty, they enjoy protection and the ballot under the very law from which they claim absolute exemption.

A hundred enthroned prelates, about thirty-six thousand priests, and more than two hundred religious orders of men and women, with a vast aggregate membership, are in the United States. Thousands of them are employed as teachers in the public schools which their law condemns. Many hold public office of great responsibility and power. This condition merits the serious concern of all good citizens."

The charges made in this little volume are not new. They are as old as the convent system itself, having been repeated in every age of the church all over the world. Many now living will recall the sensation created by the secession from Rome of the cultured convert, Sister Mary Frances Clare Cusack, Mother General of the

Sisters of Peace. Thoroughly disillusioned, this charming onetime nun wrote in her autobiography. *The Nun of Kenmare*:

"No doubt injustices are practiced by members of Protestant churches, but they who suffer have at least the protection of the strong arm of the law, and of public opinion.

If I had not been a Roman Catholic sister I could have taken an action for defamation of character or libel against any of my accusers. As a Roman Catholic sister I could not do this, no matter of what I might be accused. Surely when the higher ecclesiastical powers are protected on every side from their subjects, they should use no ordinary justice, not to say mercy, in the exercise of their irresponsible power."

Mother Mary Frances Clare tells us further:

"In the Church of Rome evil is concealed, and exposure prevented, under the most severe penalties. The man who dares to speak is put under a ban and is condemned for 'attacking the church.' A man might as justly be condemned for attacking the government because he denounced violations of the law. Yet if the evil done in the church is shielded and concealed, so much the worse for the church. But if the evil is a blot on the church, why does the church condemn those who denounce it? But if the faults are condemned, those who do the evil must be condemned also, and if the church allowed this she must denounce some of her most exalted children."

On page 404, she says:

"The Roman Catholic church points with pride to her charitable institutions, and the world, too, often, taking such statements at her own valuation, looks on and applauds and envies this magnificent organization. But how little of the truth is known. The crushing hand of ecclesiastical despotism stifles every cry of suffering or complaint. How then is the world, how is even the Roman Catholic world, to know the facts as they are? There is also a certain romance, and I use the word in its best sense, about a convent life, and while there is so much hard and painful fact in this poor world of ours, we do not like to be disillusioned, or have our little glimpses of heaven taken away from us."

I know that Roman Catholics will cry out with indignation, and Protestants will be surprised, when I say that the sisterhoods of the Roman Catholic church have often succeeded, not because of the help of the church, but in the face of its determined, and I may say, often cruel opposition.

I give proof of what I assert. Facts may be explained away and glossed over, but they remain facts all the same. Let the reader take up the life of the founder or foundress of any religious order and read it, and the truth of what I say will be made apparent. And let it be carefully noted that the lives of the saints are not written by Protestants, nor by enemies of the Roman Catholic church. They are written mostly by priests, who, for the most part, would naturally be anxious to conceal all those things, and who do conceal as much as possible.

It is probable that the world would never be allowed to know one word of the Roman Catholic persecution of its own saints, if it were not that a divine Providence has so ordered it, so that at least some facts must be known.

In order to obtain the canonization of a saint, it is necessary to prove that he or she has practiced virtue in what is called an "heroic degree." Hence, it becomes necessary for the promoter of a cause for canonization to tell at least some of the sufferings which have been borne by the person to be canonized. Thus the truth, or at least some truth, comes out.

What a sad record these lives are. A man or a woman, priest or nun, is, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church, inspired by God to do the noblest work that man or woman can do. He or she gives up all life's pleasures, all human natural interests, and all hope of personal advantage. They devote their existence to the poor of Jesus Christ. Might it not be sup-

posed that words of hope and encouragement and comfort be given them by the ministers of their church? Might it not be supposed that they would be at least tolerated? But no, persecution of the most unwarrantable kind follows them, for the most part, to the grave, and when there is no longer need of human comfort, or that spiritual comfort which is their right as children of the church, they are suddenly resuscitated for post-mortem honors and post-mortem applause. If indeed they are saints and with God, with what pity must they look down on this folly. They have their reward in the eternal sunshine of their God. They have their honors in His praise, and His praise is unchangeable. And now the infallible successors of the infallible men who made their lives a long weariness, turn and find out they were saints, and fall down and worship them.

It is time for the children of the Roman Catholic church to awaken from their slumbers, to see themselves as God sees them. It is time that they should take the bandage from their eyes, and the deafness from their ears.

If these founders and foundresses of religious orders were indeed saints, *what were the men who persecuted them?*

Is there any justification, human or divine, for the sufferings that were inflicted on them? It is useless to say that what they suffered made them saints. Does that justify those who inflicted the sufferings?

Yet, in all these biographies it is usual, or perhaps obligatory, to make excuses for the ecclesiastical persecutors, by saying that they were good men, well intentioned, and that what they did was for the best.

Now, this argument would pass, perhaps, for fallible people; but in this case, be it noted well, we have to do with those who

claim in an especial manner to be divinely inspired guides. I am not saying that individual priests or bishops claim a personal infallibility for all their acts, but this claim of infallibility has become so curiously elastic that it can be stretched or contracted at pleasure. Besides, they act for an infallible church.

The question of convent inspection has from time to time been raised both here in America and abroad. Convent inspection will not help the sisters nor in any way reform the system. France, Italy, Germany, Spain and Mexico would have adopted inspection if it would have solved the problem. Mother Mary Frances says on this point:

"I wish to remove the impression which prevailed at one time in England that there would be any benefit to sisters in convent inspection. At one time there was a regular rage on the subject in England. It was supposed that there were a number of sisters detained against their will in convents, who would be thankful for release.

"A sister is as free to leave a convent as she was to enter it, *from one point of view. She is bound in another and a very painful way*, but no convent inspection could help her. I am saying this because I firmly believe that there will be a reaction against the Roman church in America unless there is a reform in that church, which its past history does not lead us to hope for.

"A church which claims infallibility in all its doings as well as in all its doctrines, will neither listen to a cry for needed reforms nor avert calamity. It will not even learn from history. Already there are signs of the beginning of the end, if only those who could avert evils by reading them aright would read them."

More than fifty years have gone by since this pitiful story of persecution of sisters and nuns in convents by priests was penned

by a nun, whose heart was broken and whose splendid work for the illiterate Irish was wrecked. But the same condition exists—will exist—for Rome, the infallible church of the infallible popes, does not change.

We need not, therefore, look to the church of Rome for any amelioration of the condition of the inmates in its convents.

For those whose hands are tied by the infamous oath of obedience, whose lips are sealed by Catholic law which forbids them to seek the protection of the civil law of the land, I, who wore the black veil for seven long years, and who happily have emerged from my spiritual prison to a happy and normal life, appeal to you, the American people, for a 'new deal' for the Forgotten Women in the convents of Rome.

"To say that the state has no right to interfere in religious matters, is tantamount to saying that the state must condone any crime committed in the name of religion . . .

According to this theory Great Britain should facilitate the wanton human sacrifice of life by the voluntary immolation of the widows on the funeral pyre of the dead husbands. She should aid and abet those fanatics of so-called religious zeal who throw themselves before the car of the Juggernaut on its annual trip and be ground to dust that they the quicker ascend to glory. The United States was wrong in prohibiting polygamy among the Mormons, and the Canadian government should tolerate the nude processions of the Doukebors."—Daniel March, "Secrets of the Confessional."

CHAPTER I

WHY GIRLS ENTER CONVENTS

During the years of my public life no question was put to me more frequently than "Why do girls enter convents?" To this question the church of Rome answers, "Because they have a vocation." Such an answer is not only misleading, but, in many cases, untrue. We shall let the church explain what a vocation is.

According to Father William Doyle, a Jesuit priest, author of a widely-circulated book called *Vocations*:

"A vocation, or call to the religious (convent) life, in contradistinction to the general invitation held out to all men to a life of perfection, even in the world, is a free gift of God, bestowed on those whom He selects; 'you have not chosen Me,' He said to His disciples, 'but I have chosen you.' The evangelist tells us that, 'Christ called unto Him whom He willed.' Often that invitation is extended to those whom we would least expect. Magdalen, steeped to the lips in iniquity, became the spouse of the Immaculate. Matthew, surrounded by his ill-gotten goods; Saul, breathing out threatenings against the Christians, each heard that summons, for a sinful life in the past is, as St. Thomas teaches, no impediment to a vocation.

But, though the gift is of surpassing value, and a mark of very special affection on His part, God will not force the free will. He whispers a word. If the soul turns away, Jesus often withdraws forever, for He only wants willing volunteers in His service. But if the startled soul listens, even though dreading that that Voice speak again, and shrinking from what it seems to lead her to, grace is free to do its work, and bring her captive to the feet of the Divine Hunter.

Unconsciously, in that first encounter, she has been deeply wounded with a longing for some unknown, as yet untasted, happiness. Almost imperceptibly a craving for a nobler life has taken possession of her heart; prayer, and self-denial, the thought of sacrifice, bring

a new sweetness; the blazing light of earthly pleasures, once so dazzling, seems to die away; the joys, the amusements, of the world, no longer attract or satisfy; their emptiness only serves to weary and disgust the more, while through it all, the thirst for that undefinable 'something' tortures the soul. Slowly the soul comes to understand the excellence and advantage of evangelical perfection, the indescribable charm of virginity, and the nobleness of a life devoted wholly to the service of God and the salvation of souls. Louder and stronger has grown the faint whisper, 'Come, follow Me,' till at last, with an intense feeling of joy and gratitude, or even at times a natural repugnance and fear of its responsibilities, the weary soul realizes that 'the Master is here and calls for thee'—that she has got a vocation."

This may sound very pretty in theory, but in actual fact it is a sordid game. The truth is that girls go into convents because they are recruited. Father Doyle gives us a good picture of the manner in which even very young girls are worked on in the effort to get them to give in and be led to the feet of the so-called "Divine Hunter."

The truth is girls are recruited for the convents and nunneries because the church of Rome must have an unlimited number of pauper laborers to insure a fair return on the billions of dollars she has invested in "charitable" institutions, such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, and laundries.

The Divine Hunter is none other than the priest in the confessional. The season is always open. The method employed is that of the cattle rustler. First the prey is spotted. Care is taken not to startle the "chosen one." At the proper time the "chosen one" is roped and branded, and led to the feet of the Divine Hunter. The rustler can truly say, "you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." In both cases the chosen one is not consulted. Neither is it necessary that the chosen one be willing to go.

The method outlined by Father Doyle is diabolical in its cunning and cruelty. Versed in the ways of human nature, the girl, a mere child, is as wax in the priest's hands. He does with her untutored mind as he pleases. This religious rustler is careful to choose only perfect specimens. The law of the survival of the fittest works even among the Spouses of Christ. *Moral* defectives can be made whole and sound in the confessional. Does not St. Thomas teach that "a sinful life in the past is no impediment to a vocation?" This opens up a wide field in which to recruit. All those who are *physically* and *financially* sound are eligible.

On the subject of health the law of the church says: "Ill health is not a sufficient motive for dismissal, unless it can be proved with certainty that it had been fraudulently hidden or dissimulated before profession."

I recall an instance of how this carefully worded law is operated for the protection of the convent, and the benefit of the church. While I was in the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, La Cappelette, Marseilles, France, where I took the veil, there was an Irish girl, Sister Bridget, a big, rawboned peasant from the west of Ireland. Like myself, she began her convent life in the boarding-house convent operated under Mother Zoe, in Whally Range, Manchester, England.

When she entered she was a picture of robust health, but six months of eating garbage which the "lady boarders" left took its toll, as did the fact that we had no regular outdoor nor indoor recreation. Baths were "permitted" when the boarders could not stand the 'odor of sanctity' which the sisters emitted. The postulants, or beginners, were supposed to be detained only three months in the house where they entered before being sent to the novitiate to start their training. We did not learn till we arrived

in the novitiate, six months later, that the delay was caused by an outbreak of smallpox in the convent. Imagine our horror at the deception of Mother Zoe in not telling us the truth of the delay. But a nun in the hand is worth two in the bush, and she feared that we might withdraw from the Order if we were informed.

Poor Sister Bridget soon caught the malady which, for lack of proper medical attention and thorough fumigation and sanitation, still lingered in the old convent. After a terrible seige of it she recovered, but so shattered did it leave her, that it was considered best and cheapest to send her back to her people in Ireland. She pleaded that it was not fair to send her home when she had lost her health in the convent. She was informed that if her health had been good when she entered, a dose of smallpox would not have injured her!

Broken in body and in spirit, she was shipped back to face the humiliation which Catholics attach to one who has been sent back from a convent.

As soon as a priest selects his prey in the confessional, he loses no time in approaching the subject of entering a convent. As Father Doyle, the learned Jesuit priest, puts it: "He whispers a word." In other words, he makes a veiled suggestion, puts out a feeler. Then he sits back and watches the girl's reaction to the suggestion. If "the startled soul listens," the priest knows that she is an easy mark and can be influenced to enter a convent.

The idea of abandoning parents, brothers and sisters, and going into a convent is distasteful to most Catholic girls. This does not discourage the priest in the least. He knows that in time he can familiarize her mind with the thought, and thus break down her resistance. The wisdom of urging Catholics to select a priest and

confess their sins to him alone will here be seen to advantage. If a girl confessed to any priest who came along, there would be little chance to work on her. A regular confessor gets to know a girl's very thoughts. Her mind is his.

When a girl starts to go to confession, which is usually about seven years of age, the priest suggests, pleads, urges, louder and louder, till after a few years a girl becomes convinced that she is being called by God, and must make a choice. Can she refuse to become a bride of the Lord? Turn God down? She does not want to go into a convent, but she feels ashamed to tell the priest so. Wearing by the constant harpings of the religious recruiting officer, the "chosen one" realizes that there is no way to get around it and yields. The divine hunter has hounded her into a convent.

All, however, is not smooth sailing for the hunter, for, in spite of the training in psychology and diplomacy which he brings to his job, he sometimes chooses the wrong prey. Frequently he picks a girl whose will is as strong as his. What happens when this occurs? The hunter informs the rebel that of course she is free to turn down so brilliant an offer of marriage as that of marrying Jesus Christ, but she will have to take the consequences of her step.

What consequences? The "startled soul" wants to know. Then solemnly the priest pulls the card out of his sacred sleeve in the form of a veiled threat. Father Doyle tells us in his book on *Vocations*:

"There is no more important moment in the life of a young boy or girl than when they stand with trembling feet at the parting of the ways. With St. Paul they had said, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child,' but the days of irresponsible childhood are gone forever, and now they must launch their bark alone on the stormy waters of life, and steer their course for eternity. It is a solemn moment, a time big with

possibilities for good or evil, for the youth is face to face with the question what he will do with his life. A choice upon which not merely his happiness on earth, but even his eternal salvation may depend.

He has been made by his creator and given a precious gift to spend in a certain definite way marked out from all eternity by the hand of divine Providence. What this life is to be for many, circumstances and surroundings clearly indicate. But in the hearts of others arises a violent storm from the clashing of rival interests. On the one hand comes the call of the world, the pleading of human nature for a life of ease and pleasure; on the other the voice of Christ, softly, yet clearly, 'Come, follow Me—I have need of you—I have work for you to do.'

This then is the meaning of His life, the reason why he was drawn out of nothingness 'to work the works of Him who sent Him.' Is she or he free to hesitate? Is it a matter of indifference for her to live in a God-chosen state of life or in a self-chosen one now that her vocation is certain?"

To this question St. Liguori answers:

"Not to follow our vocation when we feel called to the religious state, [convent life] is not a mortal sin; the Counsels of Christ, from their nature, do not oblige under this penalty. However, in regard to the danger to which our salvation is exposed, in choosing a state of life against the Divine Call, such conduct is rarely free from sin, much more so when a person is persuaded that in the world [outside the convent] he or she places himself in danger of losing his or her soul by refusing to follow a vocation. Though one would not sin "mortally" by refusing to follow a clear vocation since it is an invitation, not a command, a person would run a great risk of imperilling his salvation by so acting. God foresees the dangers and temptations to each one; some, He knows, would never save their souls in the midst of a sinful world, and these He calls away to protect them from its dangers.

To the Vocation He has attached helps and grace to strengthen the weak soul. But, deprived of this help, for God may refuse to give them in the world the graces He would have granted in the convent, many will find salvation extremely difficult.

Hence, though the deliberate refusal to correspond to the Divine Vocation does not necessarily imply the commission of a sin, even when

the call is clear and unmistakable, yet it is a serious responsibility, without sufficient reason, to refuse to correspond to such an invitation, offered with so much love and liberality; for a Vocation not only shows God's eagerness for the sanctification of the person called to follow in His footsteps, but implies that the Saviour looks for her or his constant cooperation in the divinest of all works—the salvation of human souls.

Can it be wondered at, then, that, deprived of the special graces destined for them, the lives of those who have refused to follow, or have abandoned a decided Vocation, are generally unhappy, and, too often, as every confessor knows, sullied with great and numerous sins."

What is a poor girl to do in such an awful dilemma? God created the world without her assistance, but now He cannot go on without her help. In the face of this deceitful doctrine, which is secretly preached in thousands of confessionals and as many parochial schools, the church of the popes dares to say that girls are not forced to go into convents!

They are informed that they have a Vocation and if they go into the convent God will shower all kinds of graces on them to make it easy, but if they refuse to enter, God will withdraw His help and they are almost sure to go to hell. And this sweet choice is not forcing a girl to choose the convent!

Another obstacle to the schemes of the priest is the fact that among the Catholic people there is great diversity of opinion as to the wisdom and propriety of urging girls to go into convents before they really know anything of life. Many priests even share this view, which is bitterly condemned by the church.

On this subject, Father Doyle says: "It is a curious fact that although many pious and learned persons do not shrink from discouraging, in every possible way, aspirants to religious [convent] life they would scruple to give them any help or encouragement. 'A Vocation must be entirely the work of the Holy Ghost' they

say. Willingly they paint the imaginary difficulties and trials of convent life, and hint at unhappiness sometimes to be found there; they speak of the long and serious deliberation necessary before one takes such a step, and thus, unintentionally perhaps, but most effectually, extinguish the glowing enthusiasm of a youthful heart.

“Some even assume a terrible responsibility by deliberately turning away souls from the way into which the Master is calling them, forgetting the warning, ‘It is I who have chosen you,’ never reflecting on the irretrievable harm they are causing by spoiling the work of God. Others calmly assure a postulant [beginner] who has been found unsuitable for a particular Order, that this is a certain sign that God does not want her, that she has no Vocation and should not try again. It is quite true that a Vocation comes from above, but God’s design can be hindered or helped by His creatures, and He has ever made use of secondary agents in their execution. The formation of character and the direction of the steps of the young towards the sanctuary, is largely in the hands of parents and teachers. How many a happy priest and nun daily thank their Maker for the gift of a good mother who first sowed the seeds of a vocation in their childish hearts. . . ‘Know well,’ says St. Thomas, ‘that whether it be the suggestion of the devil, or the advice of a man, which inclines us to the religious [convent] life, and makes us thus walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, this suggestion is powerless and inefficient as long as God does not attract us inwardly to Him. Therefore, the proposal of entering religion [a convent] in whatever way it may be suggested to us, can come only from God.’ ‘No man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father.’ Hence, the saint adds, that even if the religious Vocation came from the devil it ought to be embraced as an excellent counsel given by an enemy.”

From this mass of Jesuitical jugglery certain facts stand out in bold relief:

The church of Rome admits that "many pious and learned persons" refuse to be a party to any shady schemes of stampeding girls into convents and do all in their power to stop the traffic, by revealing to these immature girls the fact so carefully concealed by the church, that human nature is the same in the convent as out of it, and that therefore the convent is not the bed of roses it is deliberately said to be.

Many of those "pious and learned persons" have been convent confessors who know from first hand what the life of a nun really is. They also know that the trials and tribulations of the convent are far from "imaginary." They believe that a girl should be told the truth before being inveigled to enter a convent. These "pious and learned persons" may, it is true, spoil some priest's game, and rob holy mother of an innocent victim, but God's work they cannot spoil.

Vocations, according to St. Thomas come from two sources, God and the devil. At least a use has been found for the devil. He has come into his own. Nevertheless, it does not seem fair to accuse even the devil of getting girls to go into convents. That is strictly the work of "God's secondary agents," the priests. Convents must be supplied with pauper laborers at any price. Even the devil has to pitch in and help.

We have seen the psychology of selling the convent. Following are the four steps to be observed in putting the deal through.

First, get your prospect.

Second, do not "startle the timid soul," but rather approach the subject at the psychological moment.

Third, do not permit the prospect to build up sales resistance.

Fourth, don't take no for an answer.

A girl may tell a priest that she has a "natural repugnance" for the convent life, but that will not make any difference. As long as Catholic hospitals need unpaid nurses, and Catholic schools need unpaid teachers, and Catholic laundries need unpaid washer-women, and as long as beggars are needed to panhandle for the church, so long will the Divine Hunter seek free help, and peddle Vocations instead of handing out pay checks to those "forgotten women" who do the work of the Roman Catholic Church.

With so much pressure from so many of God's so-called secondary agents, parents, teachers, and, above all, priests in the confessionals, with such dire threats of heavenly revenge on those who dare refuse to be led captive to the feet of the Divine Hunter, it should be plain to any one why girls enter convents.

"There is an incalculable power of conviction and devotion of idea in the daring of one against all. To brave at once, with no other power than individual reason, with no other support than conscience, human consideration, that cowardice of the mind, masked under respect for error, to dare the hatred of earth, and the anathema of heaven, is the heroism of the writer."—Voltaire

CHAPTER II

HOW CONVENTS ARE FINANCED

EVEN AMONG CATHOLICS there is a widespread notion that convents are financed by the church, so that those who are inclined may retire from the world of reality and spend their lives in seclusion.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The church of Rome operates convents for *profit*, a fact which has been studiously camouflaged by most writers, though the church admits it in her own law.

I have before me a copy of a "Specially authorized translation" of a Latin work called *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*. This book was printed on the Vatican Press in Rome in 1919.

Before quoting from this authorized translation of canon law with regard to persons in convents, I would like to explain that the term "religious" is the name given to all inmates of monastic institutions, whether they be men or women, that is, monks or nuns.

Though the laws of the church of Rome are binding on all members of the church, they are deliberately placed beyond the reach of all except the few favored ones, by keeping them in the Latin tongue. Even translations are rarely found in the hands of any save the priesthood.

Canon 469 of *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious* says:

"No religious house may be erected, unless it can be prudently estimated that it will be able to provide suitably for the habitation and maintenance of its members, either from its own resources, or from habitual alms, or otherwise."

This law clearly proves that the opening of a convent is a business venture, and therefore must comply with the first law of sound business. It must be self-supporting.

The methods commonly used in "suitably providing for the habitation and maintenance of the members" of these institutions are, hospitals, boarding schools, laundries, and boarding houses. Where none of these are feasible, begging is carried on in a very businesslike and aggressive manner. In the church of Rome, as among the Hindoos and Buddhists, begging is a profitable business, a fine art in which the sisters are carefully coached in the novitiates before being turned loose to ply their trade on a too gullible public. The plea of these begging sisters is "sweet charity," a term so elastic that it can be made to mean anything the church needs money for.

In justice to the unfortunate sisters who are forced to panhandle for the wealthy Catholic corporation, we must admit that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and the nuns have a perfect right to be "suitably maintained" out of the proceeds of the day's pickings.

This ever-increasing army of holy beggars are not only a burden to the already overburdened wage earner, but a drain on the prosperity of the nation, for the staggering sums of money which are collected yearly, and of which there is never an accounting, are taken out of circulation, and, when invested in non-taxable securities, add immeasurably to the wealth of a foreign corporation whose headquarters is in Italy.

Our legislators and labor organizations cannot possibly be ignorant of these self-evident facts, yet they either ignore them, or are afraid to demand that all "houses," whether religious or otherwise, be taxed; that so-called "charitable institutions" be charitable, and not, as all too frequently happens, a mere excuse

for all kinds of lotteries and gambling devices for wringing money from the public. Institutions that prey on the public for support should be under public supervision. Unpaid labor, whether it be convent or convict, should not be allowed to enter into unfair competition with paid labor. Panhandling, whether by nuns in robes, or bums in rags, should be prohibited.

We shall now turn our attention from the sisters and the ways in which their convents are financed, and examine the other and less known monastic institution, the nunnery, whose inmates are called "nuns." The term "nun" is often applied to both nuns and sisters. Sisters meet the public, nuns do not. How, then, are nunneries or cloistered convents financed?

The question of financing nunneries is taken care of by the law which requires every girl who applies for entrance into one of these institutions to bring with her a specified sum of money, known by the romantic name of 'the dowry,' or marriage portion of the Spouse of Christ.

This money, properly invested, is more than enough to take care of the meagre wants of the nun as long as she lives. Later we shall see who gets the money when the nun dies.

Canon 546 says:

"In the monasteries [convents] of nuns, the postulants [beginners] shall provide the dowry fixed by the constitutions, or determined by lawful custom.

"(2) This dowry must be given to the monastery before the reception of the habit, or at least its payment guaranteed in a manner recognized by the civil law.

"(3) In the institutes with simple vows, the prescriptions of the constitution must be followed with regard to the dowry of the religious women.

"(4) The prescribed dowry, in the case of institutes approved by the Holy See, cannot be condoned, either entirely, or partially, with-

out an indult [special permit] of the Holy See. In the case of diocesan institutes, without the consent of the local Ordinary [bishop]."

Canon 548 says:

"The dowry is irrevocably acquired by the convent or the institute on the death of the religious, even though she has only made profession of temporary vows."

Canon 551 says:

"If, from whatever cause, a professed religious, with either solemn or simple vows, leaves the institute, her dowry must be returned to her intact, but not the interest already derived therefrom."

The above laws of the church of Rome are like a powerful X-ray which enable us to see through the pious fraud of the convent and nunnery systems. A close examination of these illuminating laws will bring out some interesting points.

First, the girl who goes into a nunnery pays her way in.

Second, the sum of money required for admission into a nunnery is fixed by the church.

Third, this sum of money must be paid to the convent *before* the nun takes the white veil, not *afterwards*.

Fourth, if the money is not paid in advance, it must be guaranteed in a manner recognized by the civil law.

Rome has her price for everything, even salvation. Price fixing is no new experiment in the papal corporation. The pope will have his pound of flesh if he has to go into civil court to collect it. Nunneries are run on a strictly "pay as you enter" basis. When going to heaven via the Roman route, money is the golden key that most effectually unlocks the pearly gates.

Canon 459 says:

"After the first profession of the religious, the superior, with her council, and with the consent of the local Ordinary [bishop] and of

the regular superior, if the house be dependent on Regulars, must place the dowry in a safe, lawful and productive investment. It is strictly forbidden that before the death of the religious, the dowry be expended for any purpose, even for the building of a house [convent] or the liquidation of debts."

I shall here explain the meaning of the term, "first profession."

When a girl enters a convent or nunnery she is sent to a training school called a "novitiate." After a period of intensive training which may vary in some Orders from one or two years to three or more, she makes what is known as "first profession." She makes the three oaths, or vows, of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience for a certain number of years, instead of for life. A sister or nun who has made her "first profession" is really on trial. She is said in convent parlance to have made temporary vows.

At the end of this trial period of "first vows" the sister or nun can renew the vows for another period. At the end of the second try-out, she either makes perpetual vows, that is, for life, or she leaves the convent or nunnery. It is not uncommon, however, for a sister to refuse to make vows for life, but she sometimes is allowed, even urged to stay in the convent. Discretion is sometimes the better part of valor. Such sisters do pretty much as they please.

Canon 643 says:

"Whoever leaves his or her institute or convent, whether at the expiration of his or her temporary vows, or by virtue of an indult of secularization [permit from the pope] or whoever has been dismissed, cannot seek compensation for the services rendered by them to the institute."

Note carefully the way in which the church of Rome has laid down law after law to protect the interests of the hierarchy, but has left the inmates to shift for themselves. These "Forgotten Women" are even forbidden to leave the premises without a permit from the Pope which must be obtained by miles and miles

of red tape, and yet Rome wants us to believe that all a sister has to do is walk out when she wants. In reality she leaves when the warden tells her.

With regard to the "first profession" or temporary vows, it should be understood that the ceremony of profession is looked upon by the church of Rome as a real marriage ceremony in which the girl really marries Jesus Christ. Therefore, as soon as a girl makes her vows, or is professed, she is looked upon as a married woman, a "Spouse of Christ." The incongruity of such a marriage does not bother the church.

The Catholic church's boastful denunciation of divorce, which she permits to the wealthy, and her condemnation of trial marriage become a hollow mockery in view of the practice of the same things with the phantom Brides of Christ in her convents and nunneries.

What are temporary vows but a trial marriage to Christ? Not until the church is sure that the bargain is a suitable or a profitable one, does she make the union permanent. Here is an example of the well-known double doctrine of the church of Rome. By means of trial marriage the church has a chance of seeing what she is getting. Defects which perhaps were not apparent when the girl made her temporary vows, or trial marriage to Christ, might crop out later. Should this occur, the church is as usual protected, for she has been careful to have a law whereby she can dismiss any girl who can be proven to have had certain defects of health at the time she made her "first profession" and deliberately concealed them. No matter whether or not the girl had bad health at the time she entered makes no difference. It can easily be proven she concealed the fact. Christ wants only healthy spouses. The necessity for trial marriage to Christ will be realized when we consider

that according to Catholic law, "a sinful life in the past is no impediment to a vocation." Thanks to the confessional, by which criminal records are wiped out, any one can become a Spouse of Christ who has the health and the money.

It is the physical defects which cause trouble and resist absolution. Should one of these remodeled souls bring to the convent a disease which had not had time to show up, the church, instead of saying, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk," says, "Arise, take all you brought except the interest on your money, which we shall keep to pay for your room and board, and go back to the world. It costs too much money to cure you." And back the unfortunate girl goes. Trial marriage has saved the church a large doctor bill. A convent is a religious Monte Carlo where priests, prelates and theologians are the croupiers who see to it that the house wins.

From Canon 550 we learn that:

"(1) Dowries must be carefully and integrally administered at the monastery [convent] or house of habitual residence of the Mother General, or the Mother Provincial."

"(2) Local Ordinaries [bishops] must diligently see that the dowries of the religious are conserved, especially at the time of the pastoral visitation."

By pastoral visitation is meant the regular visit which the local bishop of the diocese in which the convent is located must make at stated times. Business is business, and the bishop, as general manager for the pope, who is too far away in Italy to attend to such minor details, makes a tour of inspection of all the monastic institutions under his jurisdiction to see that all is well, especially with the "dowries." Such reports are not mailed to his liege lord, the pope, but taken in person at stated intervals.

Canon 513 says:

"The visitator, or someone delegated by him, has the right and the obligation of interrogating the religious, whom he deems it well to hear, and to inform himself on all matters which pertain to the visitation; all the religious, however, are under the obligation of replying according to the truth, and it is not lawful for the superiors to divert them in any way from this obligation, or otherwise impede the scope of the visitation."

Who would think that it should be necessary to warn the "Spouses of Christ" to reply "according to the truth?" Or to warn superiors not to throw any obstacles in the path of the visiting bishop?

The fact is that the average convent is a hornet's nest of intrigue. In them are cliques and factions, and many an ambitious sister gets to be superior, the most coveted position in a convent, not by an honest election, but by stuffing the ballot boxes, crushing all opposition ruthlessly, and by catering to the priests.

I could name a host of other and possibly more serious abuses found in convents. It is to prevent the crushed minority from complaining to the bishop at the time of his inspection that superiors are prone to do all in their power, from cajoling to threatening, to prevent exposure and possible deprivation of office. No matter what scandal the bishop found in any convent, he would not dream of calling in the civil authorities. The Roman Catholic church is a law unto itself. The only time it calls on the civil law is when some sister or nun fails to pay the dowry, which, as we have seen, is guaranteed in a manner recognized by civil law.

A superior in a convent holds the same position as a warden in a penitentiary. There is, however, a difference in favor of the inmates in a penitentiary. Penitentiaries are open to inspection, and the findings are made public. Fear of publicity does not exist in the convent.

Canon 569 decrees:

"(1) Before the profession of simple vows, whether temporary or perpetual, the novices must cede, for the whole period which they will be bound by simple vows, the administration of property to whomsoever they wish, and dispose freely of its use and usufruct, except the constitution determines otherwise."

"(2) If the novice, because he possessed no property, omitted to make this cession, and if subsequently property came into his possession, he must then make the provision according to the regulations of § 1, for the newly acquired property, even if he has already made simple profession."

"(3) In every religious congregation, the novice, before making profession of temporary vows, shall freely dispose by will of all the property he actually possessed, or may subsequently possess."

Father Papi, in a book called *Religious Profession*, says on this subject, "But novices, whether belonging to a religious congregation, or to an Order of Regulars, are forbidden to give up their property by gift or donation under penalty of invalidity."

Canon 568 says:

"If, during the novitiate, a novice in any way whatever renounces his or her benefices, or property, or encumbers them, such a renunciation, or encumbrance, is not only illicit, but null and void."

Father Papi further explains, "Within sixty days before they make their solemn profession, they *must* renounce their property, and this *renunciation must be entire*, embracing all that they possess. This renunciation has to be made on condition that the solemn profession will actually take place. After the solemn profession has been made, care must be taken that the renunciation holds good in civil law. When the time of their solemn profession approaches, they are bound to renounce all they have. This renunciation, which they must make, is not in the nature of a will, but is an actual giving up of what they possess. This renunciation must

be made on condition that the solemn profession will actually take place. The reason of this is to avoid all possibility that religious may be deprived of their property before their status in religion has become permanent.

"What is the juridical value of a will and a renunciation if a religious made a will before she made this renunciation? The renunciation has a preferential character. Hence, if a religious made a will, this will loses all value the moment her renunciation goes into effect, but not before.

"Consequently, if a religious dies before having made her solemn profession, the will will have its full effect, whereas, the will will have no effect at all if the religious dies after having made solemn profession.

"Finally, in making this renunciation, it is necessary to comply as soon as possible with all the formalities the law requires for the validity of similar acts. Were the formalities omitted, the heirs at law could claim before the civil courts whatever property the religious might have in their possession at the time of death."

From this confused jungle of Catholic laws, which not one Catholic in a million ever heard of, and which no sister or nun knows anything about, though they are governed by them, we gather some very important facts.

First, we learn that nuns and sisters are not paid for their services to the church of Rome.

Second, convents are self-supporting, money-making institutions.

Nuns, or cloistered sisters, are financed by the sum of money which each girl must bring to the institution of her choice. This sum is specified by the church, not by the candidate. This money must be paid before the girl takes the veil, not after, unless pay-

ment is guaranteed in a manner which will enable the church to collect legally. This money must be safely and *profitably* invested. If a girl decides to leave, the interest on her money, which the church had safely and profitably invested, stays with the convent. In the case of a very wealthy girl the interest would amount to a tidy sum.

A nun or sister who for any reason leaves a convent, or is expelled from one, cannot sue for compensation. This, however, is sometimes done, and wherever it is done, an honest jury usually gives a verdict to the ex-sister or nun.

When a girl enters a convent she is forbidden to dispose of her property or in any way encumber it. Sixty days before her solemn profession she is *forced to renounce her property*. This is a legal renunciation, a binding document. The object of this is to prevent legal heirs from taking it from the church, in whose favor, in most cases, it is renounced.

I wish to draw particular attention to this last law which *forces the sister to renounce her property* sixty days before she makes her perpetual vows, while it strictly forbids her from disposing of her property when she enters. These two rulings are of great importance to the church. The church tells us that the novice is free to choose the beneficiary to whom she wishes to bequeath her property. Why, then, if this is the case, does the same church sternly forbid the girl from doing as she pleases with her property before she enters the convent, or immediately afterwards? Why does the girl have to wait till sixty days before she makes solemn vows.

We are told that Christ, before He had so many spouses, told his followers, "Go, sell all thou hast, give it to the poor, *then* come and follow me." Apparently Christ and the pope do not agree on money matters.

My answer to the two questions which I have raised regarding the renunciation of property sixty days before making solemn profession, is that nuns and sisters are papal 'Janissaries.' The Janissaries were the corps d'elite of the army of the Ottoman Turks, one of the most formidable bodies of shock troops of all time. From 1313 through five centuries they were the cutting edge of the sword of Islam. They were literally a foreign legion, in the ranks of which originally not a single soldier was a born Moslem. Sons of Christian parents, they had been seized as tribute from countries overwhelmed by the Turks, or captured in daring sea raids. Probably every European nation was represented in the ranks of the Janissaries. It has been estimated that half a million boys were thus conscripted by the Turkish press gangs.

The baptismal records of the parish priests were used as draft lists, and from ten-to-twelve-year-old lads forced to report, from which only the fittest, physically and mentally, were chosen. Then they were marched away (along with their pretty sisters destined for the harems) to the barracks of Constantinople. There they underwent the most rigorous kind of religious and military training, which forced them into a furious, fanatical fighting machine.

All family ties were severed, and a Janissary was forbidden to marry. Fortunately their families rarely ever saw them again, for parents would find their son had become an utter stranger, a Mohammedan, as Asiatic in all but birth, abhorring his Christian parentage; they might even perish by his sword.

Such were the Janissaries, "the strongest and fiercest instrument of imperial ambition which remorseless fanaticism, prompted by the most subtle statecraft, ever devised upon earth."*

* *Children of the Conquered* by Fairfax Downey, in the *Legion Magazine* of March 1935.

Likewise boys and girls of tender years are today being recruited all over the world by the papal press gangs in the confessionals and parochial schools. Only those mentally and physically superior are taken.

After an intensive course of training in novitiates, these once devoted sons and daughters are taught to abhor their parents. Father and mother, brother and sister are now looked upon as their deadliest enemies. Hate has taken the place of love. They are papal Janissaries. Women without a country. Soldiers of the Pope.

Common kidnapping is respectable beside the so-called religion which resorts to alienation of affections to gain her end, which is not souls, but money. These modern Janissaries are the strongest and fiercest instrument also of Roman Catholic ambition, which remorseless fanaticism, prompted by the most subtle statecraft, ever devised upon earth.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to have 138,079 nuns and sisters in the United States, 138,079 women who are *not* free to follow the dictates of their own conscience, but who are bound by a stringent oath of Obedience, which means that they must obey the voice of the superior as the voice of God. The superior in turn is bound to obey the voice of the local bishop, who, in turn, obeys his master's voice, the pope. This vast army of papal Janissaries, separated from the humanizing influence of home, forbidden to marry, the private property of a private corporation, is the bulwark of the church of Rome.

CHAPTER III

VOCATIONS

HOW DOES A GIRL KNOW whether she has a vocation or not? Father Doyle, the Jesuit priest, answers this question in his widely-circulated booklet called *Vocations*. In this booklet Father Doyle quotes another Jesuit priest, Father Gautrelet, who lays down no fewer than a dozen symptoms whereby a girl, or rather her confessor, may know whether she has a vocation or not.

The first sign of a vocation is: "A desire to have a religious vocation, together with the conviction that God is calling you. This desire is most strongly felt when the soul is calm, after holy communion, and in time of retreat."

That religion and sex are closely allied no one needs to be told, least of all the priests. At the age when a girl is budding into a new phase of life, the normal desire for the ideal mate presents itself to her romantic imagination. At this time wise mothers step in to protect the girl from possible mistakes. Gently, but firmly, the frail bark is steered over the rapids and into the deep waters of beautiful womanhood. That is, if the girl is not a Catholic; if she is, no kind mother will tell her the truth of her strange desires and feelings. That is left for the priest, the bachelor in the confession box.

What does the priest tell the girl? Not that sex is the normal procreative instinct found in every healthy animal, from man down, but that these romantic imaginings are a sin, something she should be ashamed of.

The girl who makes her first confession of "romantic inclinations" steps into the confessional a clean, healthy-minded youngster, but often steps out soiled and mentally confused. Christ, the priest tells her, is the only spouse who can fully gratify her desires. He alone understands her thoroughly. Christ is the great lover. She must give herself to Him without reserve in order to taste the sweetness of His love. Little by little the ignorant child falls into the carefully prepared trap, and before long she takes Christ as her secret lover.

Soon she craves a more intimate relationship with her secret lover. She is on her way to become a wife, a "Spouse of Christ." But nature will not be fooled. Secret or phantom lovers, whether they be Christ or the devil, lead to secret excesses, as witness the number of mentally affected women to be found in the novitiate or Mother House of any convent, where as a rule sisters are retired through age, infirmity, insanity, or depravity.

Since the priest in the confessional holds the place of God, it is easy for him to convince the girl that God is calling. Nothing could be simpler.

Father Gautrelet tells us that "Christ is the Divine Hunter." That the Divine Hunter always uses "secondary agents" in running down eligible souls.

It is the "secondary agent," the manhunter in the confessional, on whom He depends, as Father Gautrelet expresses it, to "bring the soul captive to his feet." When one of these pious bloodhounds gets on the trail of a suitable soul, nothing will stop him. At first "his voice may be a mere whisper," but as he warms to the chase, it becomes a bay not to be denied. Louder and louder it becomes till at last "the weary soul realizes that she has a vocation, and consents to be led captive to the feet of the Divine Hunter." God's

secondary agent, the religious mountie, has got his woman. It may have taken years, but he got her. She is now private property.

We are in a good position now to see through the secrecy of the confessional. Between the Catholic parent and the Catholic priest there is perpetual warfare for the possession of the child. The odds are on the side of the priest, for he is protected by the "confessional."

"This desire is most strongly felt after communion."

A person under the influence of liquor is not held responsible for his actions. A person who could believe that the host which he has eaten is actually the body and blood, teeth, hair, and toenails of Jesus Christ, his blood, sinews, muscles, entrails, etc., neither should be held responsible for his strange desires. That a girl, after such a feat of holy cannibalism, should imagine that she felt a call to enter a convent is not at all surprising. Why go into a convent to be nearer to God, when, if she really believes in the doctrine of "Transubstantiation," she has God in her stomach?

But, Catholics do not think. A girl, after communion, is really on an emotional spree, a spiritual jag. Every priest knows this, and it is part of his game to get her to act while under the influence of a powerful emotion. He must not wait till she comes to a more sober frame of mind. It may then be too late. He must strike while the iron is hot. What happens when the first heat of fanaticism cools is no business of his. His business is to get the girl.

A "retreat" is a fine specimen of mob psychology. It is a sort of spiritual housecleaning. A group of girls withdraw to some secluded place, usually a convent. This catering to "retreats" is another of the many ways of "suitably providing for the sisters." Each girl pays for her room and board while on retreat. Here, again, it is pay as you enter. All communication is cut off. The

priests hate competition. They can get better results if there is no one to interfere with them.

A retreat usually lasts from one day to ten, depending on how well off those on retreat are. Most working girls can stay only from Saturday night till Sunday night. Retreats, like everything else in the line of religious luxuries, cost money.

In the small grey hours of the morning the girls on retreat are in the chapel for meditation. How delightfully different from their usual employment. Seated like so many spectres in the dim light of the significant red lamp, which keeps constant vigil before the altar where rests the object of their affections, what sweet dreams are theirs. The services are usually in the hands of Jesuit, Dominican or Franciscan, or some priest belonging to one of the Orders.

Countless hymns are sung and countless rosaries are recited. The chapel bell tolls incessantly for one exercise after another. Meals are eaten in silence. It is all so marvelously different. The very air is charged with mystery and novelty.

Under the hypnotic spell of a priest of dynamic personality, these poor cinderellas are not to be blamed if, through the incense, they fail to perceive the deception. They are being given, for a reasonable sum, the outlet which their inferiority complex craves. In the world of reality they could never hope to be anybody. Here, they can be queens, prospective wives of God. It is only natural that some of them would be willing to exchange the menial garb of a common servant for the robes of a religious slave.

The church of Rome is the greatest title-monger in the world. She has for centuries been exchanging the empty-sounding title of "Spouse of Christ" for the life and labor, body and soul, money and property of pious, unsuspecting girls. She is the greatest free

employment agency on earth. All who enter her fold must work for her—free.

The deference which the church forces the Catholic people to pay the priests and nuns is another incentive to a certain class of people, particularly to those on the outer fringe of society. These upstarts, desiring to feed their hunger for social recognition, instinctively turn to the church, the back door to society. This deference extends itself to the family of the boy who becomes a priest, and of the girl who becomes a nun.

Here we have another interesting feature of the girl who becomes a nun. She becomes a wife, or spouse, of Christ. Her mother and father then are Christ's in-laws. Can He refrain from saving them? Well, hardly. The Church of Rome wastes nothing, not even human foibles, and social climbers are encouraged to give as many of their boys and girls to the church as they possibly can; all, if they can manage it. By showering honors and dignities on the families that have donated children to the convent, or priesthood, Rome cleverly makes them her active allies. For, should the boy or girl desert his or her vocation, it would be a reflection on the family, and many a Catholic family that owed its prosperity to the influence of the church marked its decline from the day a son or daughter abandoned the religious life, especially where the parents sympathized with them and helped them.

In a retreat the priest works on these things. Sermons that fairly sizzle with ardor are poured forth with an eloquence that sweeps the inexperienced girls off their feet. Christ becomes a prince charming, and the convent as alluring as Hollywood.

The priest offers a premium to all who give their young lives to the church without pay. This premium is nothing less than a throne in heaven.

"I hold it for certain," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "that the greatest number of the vacant thrones of the fallen Seraphim will be occupied by souls sanctified by the religious state [monks and nuns]. Among the sixty persons canonized, made saints, during the last century, there were only five who did not belong to religious orders."

What girl could pass up such a bargain? Nor is this the whole story. Father Doyle says: "Seeing how pleasing is this lifelong sacrifice to God, the Fathers of the church, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, the Angelic Doctor, and many others, have always called religious profession a 'second baptism,' by which the guilt and punishment due for past sins is entirely remitted." This offer makes a powerful appeal to those damaged souls who abound in all churches.

The magician who tries to make us believe he can bring a rabbit out of an empty hat is a piker beside the church which says it can, for a consideration, restore the lustre to a tarnished soul, and the state of virginity to an erring sister. For such a favor, plus a throne in the sky when you die, any sinner should be willing to wash, teach, beg or do anything else for the rest of her life.

No wonder the "desire to have a vocation is felt during retreat." The business of the retreat and of the priest who conducts it is to create this very desire. These spiritual dope peddlers give the girls an emotional 'shot in the arm' by painting the delights of the convent and the wonders of a throne in the sky, till they create the desire for the life. No mention is made, of course, of wash tubs, begging tours, poor food, mean superiors, smelly nun's robes, hysterical and homosexual nuns.

Each retreat leaves a girl more unsettled than before, more unwilling to come down to earth and resume the ordinary duties of

her every-day life, till at last she can stand it no longer, and consents to be led captive to the feet of the "Divine Hunter."

A second sign of a vocation is, Father Gautrelet tells us, "*A growing attraction for prayer and holy things in general, together with a longing for a hidden life, and a desire to be more closely united to God.*"

Why should an attraction to prayer and a desire to draw closer to God mean that the girl should bury herself in the convent? Should a family man who felt drawn to spiritual things desert his family and go into a monastery? The idea that one cannot enjoy spiritual things without fleeing human society is fallacious, and the church knows it. But there must be free help to run the convents.

The third sign is: "*To have a hatred of the world, a conviction of its hollowness, and insufficiency to satisfy the soul. This feeling is generally strongest in the midst of worldly amusement.*"

It is not easy to see how a mere girl could hate a world she knows so little of. The church leaves no stone unturned to get possession of the girls as early in life as possible, in order that they have no chance of getting to know the world; so that they may never get to know the sweets of freedom and develop character. No normal girl hates the world. The priest in the confessional can, however, destroy her young life by telling her of the awful punishment she is laying up for herself in the next world by enjoying innocent pleasure now. Thus a priest can nag a girl into a convent, just as a woman can nag a man into a saloon.

The fourth sign is: "*A fear of sin, into which it is so easy to fall, and a longing to escape from the dangers and temptations of the world.*"

Fear, the favorite weapon of every priest, is the destroying angel. Fear is man's oldest and worst enemy. I believe it was Frank Crane who said, "What indescribable misery has been caused by fear! From that came the terrors of the dark ages when the world was tormented by the nightmare of superstition and intolerance. Fear is the father of cruelty. Fear dehumanizes. When the devil can make us afraid, we are right in his hand. It is when they are in a panic of fear that the rattlesnake strikes, the dog bites, the horse runs away, the cat scratches, the bee stings, the scorpion attacks, the bull gores, the woman lies, the man kills. Fear is the devil's other name."

- Fear is the chief weapon that yearly drives thousands of girls to sacrifice their young lives by entering convents.

Elbert Hubbard tells us that "the feeling of fear of evil is largely, if not entirely, a morbid, and therefore an insane idea."

And again Hubbard says: "Don't run away from a difficulty; if you do, you'll find the difficulty, like a polar bear, will follow you. Besides, you cannot run away from a fault; because you carry the cause of a fault with you."

The church knows this. The girl does not. So much the worse for her. The church will take advantage of her ignorance and profit by it. This is the church which says that public-school education is godless. If God could not keep temptation out of the garden of Eden, how can the superior keep it out of the convent?

The fifth sign is: "*It is sometimes a sign of a vocation when a person fears that God may call them, when they pray not to have a vocation, yet cannot banish the thought from their minds. If the vocation is sound, it will soon give way to an attraction!*" Father Lehmkuhl says: "*One need not have a natural inclination for the*

religious life; on the contrary, a divine vocation is compatible with a natural repugnance for that state'."

Of all the strange signs whereby God is supposed to make known that a person has a vocation, this last is surely the strangest. The first sign of a vocation is a desire to have a vocation. The fifth sign of a vocation is a desire *not* to have a vocation. Either way, the girl has a vocation and is perfectly safe in entering a convent. The fact of the matter is, it does not appear to make any difference whether a girl has any vocation or not. All that is necessary is that she go into a convent. Her vocation or lack of vocation will in no way effect the quality of the washing she puts out. St. Peter may have been a great fisher of souls, but for plain sheep herding, he cannot hold a candle to the priests of the Catholic church.

The sixth sign of a vocation is: "*To have zeal for souls. To realize the value of an immortal soul, and to desire to co-operate in their salvation.*"

To the mature man or woman the idea of sacrificing a life to save the soul of another is all nonsense. To the poor half-educated girl in the hands of the priest it is a reality. For every prostitute in the lands where Rome flourishes, and elsewhere, there is a girl wearing her life out in a convent somewhere. Instead of one wasted life, we have two. Education would save both.

The seventh sign of a vocation is: "*The desire to devote our whole life to obtain the conversion of one dear to us.*"

We believe that Christ died to save souls, but it seems not. Note well that the church of Rome does not guarantee salvation to anyone—not even to a girl who sacrifices her whole life in a convent. The church of Rome is a religious opportunist who loses no chance

to get slaves to man her vast enterprises. One lie is as good as another. Results are what count. The Hindoo widow, who immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband that she may accompany his soul to the other world, suffers torture for a brief period. The Catholic girl who immolates herself in a convent suffers a long, drawn-out hell in this life, with no assurance that she is benefiting her loved one, and with no guarantee of salvation in the next life.

Hell? In a convent? Yes, if we are to believe Rome's prince of theologians, St. Alphonsus Liguori. On page 22 of his famous work, *The True Spouse of Christ*, Liguori says:

"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 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.

Whoever is not united to Him, cannot be happy, for God cannot infuse His consolations into a soul that resents 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."

The eighth sign is: "*The desire to atone for one's own sins and the sins of others; and to fly from the temptation we feel too weak to resist.*"

The same old story. The futility of flight is too absurd to be discussed again. It appeals to cowards and moral weaklings. The

girl who has not enough sand in her makeup to resist temptations before she enters the convent, will not resist them after she gets in.

But, are there temptations in the convent? Yes. But, do not take my word for it. Listen to St. Alphonsus Liguori, a great Catholic authority:

"A religious, after a dispute with some of her sisters, will, at first, retain feelings of dislike, and thus is held by a single hair.

After a little time, she will neither speak to them nor salute them; she is bound by a slender thread. Next, she will begin to injure them by words, and 'deeds;' she is fettered by a strong cord; then, on the first occasion for provocation, she conceives a mortal hatred toward them, and thus puts on the chains of hell, and the slavery of the devil." (True Spouse of Christ, page 66.)

And the church of Rome says to a girl, "Go into a convent to avoid the temptations you are unable to overcome."

Temptations against charity are not the only ones to be found in convents. Listen to this from the same saint:

"Another religious will, at first, entertain a human affection for a friend. She then cherishes 'his' affection under pretext of gratitude; mutual presents follow; they are succeeded by words of endearment, and at the first assault of passion, the miserable soul is bound in the chain of death."

What? Passion in a convent?

The reader will, I hope, pardon me if I relate a little experience along this line which I witnessed while in the convent.

During the hot summer months the sisters of the convent of St. Joseph of the Apparition in Mandalay, Burma, closed school and retired to the convent of the Order in the hill station of Maymyo, where we owned a cottage on the grounds of the convent there.

A very devout sister of the Maymyo branch worried so about the health of the priest, Father J—, a French priest, that she

took a daily stroll over to his house, which was close to the convent, and could be reached by a little path. Her daily visits roused the ire of a Turkish sister, who was called the 'Terrible Turk', because she was known to be a spy.

The superior put a stop to the pleasant visits, not, as she explained, that she cared, but Maymyo was a military station, and some of the soldiers, who were largely Protestants, might get wise and there would be scandal. Sin could be handled in the confession box, but not scandal.

Angered, the Irish sister set to work to find out who the stool-pigeon was. It was no easy task, for the convent system is honey-combed with spies, who are known by the name of "discreets." They are the G-men, the undercover agents. They are seldom known. This is what makes friendship among sisters and nuns an impossibility.

One night we were celebrating the feast-day of Mother Maltilda, the *Superior*. There are no birthdays in the convent. A nun celebrates on the feast-day of the saint whose name she received when she was professed.

We had recreation, which meant that we were free to talk, where otherwise we would have eaten in silence. Wine loosened our tongues, and talk flowed freely, too freely, in fact; for the 'Terrible Turk,' from her place of honor by the right hand of the Superior, made an insinuating remark about the Irish sister and the loss of her privileges in visiting Father J——.

True to the tradition of our race, we might fight among ourselves, but when an outsider stuck his nose in we forgot our private quarrel to gang up on the common enemy. Before the Superior could intervene, we had rushed the head of the table and

were beating the "spouse of Christ" till she looked like a lost soul. Bottles were smashed over holy heads, curry and rice were plastered on the ceiling, and the Superior had to call in the native servants to stop the riot.

Next morning, with black eyes and bruised faces, we lined up outside the confession box of Father J—— to confess our part in the fight and receive absolution from the very man we had fought over! Three years later I left the convent and the Irish sister and the 'Terrible Turk' had not up to that time ever spoken a word to each other.

The ninth sign of a vocation is: "*An attraction to the state of virginity.*"

Roman Catholicism, like its counterpart, Hindooism, is a religion of sex worship. Hindooism is based on sex gratification; Roman Catholicism on sex repression. Under the misleading name of "virginity," the church of Rome has capitalized on the false notion that the instinct of procreation is, in itself, the greatest foe to spiritual advancement, and should be crushed out of existence. The whole theory of virginity rests on a solid foundation of ignorance of man's physical nature, and has given rise to some sad results.

The very fact that something is prohibited adds immeasurably to its attractiveness.

This late Justice Holmes said that "*anything that assumes the necessity of the extermination of instincts which were given to be regulated, no matter by what name you call it, no matter whether a fakir, a monk, or a deacon believes it, if received, ought to produce insanity in every well-regulated mind.*"

The tenth sign is: "*The happiness which the thought of the religious life brings, its spiritual helps, its peace, merit and reward.*"

How much does a girl, or anyone else, really know of the life of nuns in a convent? Nothing but what she sees of them as they walk two by two in public, and in some school or hospital.

The girl who goes into a convent in the hope of finding happiness there, will learn that Frank Crane was right when he said: "We carry happiness into our condition, but must not hope to find it there."

The eleventh sign of a vocation is: "*A longing to sacrifice oneself, and abandon all for the love of Jesus Christ, and to suffer for His sake.*"

The convent is a good place for a girl with a martyr complex. She will have plenty of opportunity to gratify her sadistic tendencies, from stepping out on a cold stone floor at four or five on winter mornings, to having to eat fat meat, even if she throws it up. Soon, these brave souls would gladly lie down and die, but they will find they cannot do so. It is against the rule. Rome is not looking for martyrs. One nun on the hoof is worth a thousand on the calendar.

The twelfth sign: "*A willingness in one not having any dowry, or much education, to be received in any capacity, is a proof of a real vocation.*"

I agree. Anyone who would want to go into a convent that much, should be given the opportunity. Note the important place given money. It ranks first in importance. After money comes education. How carefully "God's secondary agents" select His spouses. Under these circumstances a vocation would be genuine. Not even the devil would be cruel enough to urge a girl to enter a convent without money or education.

In most convents where sisters are received without money or education, they are called "lay sisters," or servant sisters. They do all the dirty work of the convent.

"Choir sisters," those who bring money or education, or both, and "lay sisters," those who bring neither money nor education, are supposed to be "Spouses of Christ," the same Christ who chased the money changers from the temple.

Were it possible to find a Catholic girl who did not show any of the various signs of a vocation, the cause for the church is by no means lost. Father Doyle, the learned Jesuit priest, says that even though a girl has no sign of a vocation, she may, nevertheless, go into a convent for any or all of the following reasons:

"Thwarted ambition."

"The failure of cherished hopes."

"The disappointments of a loving heart."

Many honest Catholics vehemently deny that girls are urged to enter a convent because of some blighted romance, yet Father Doyle, a Catholic writer of note, especially on the question of convents, readily admits the fact.

A jilted girl, in the first rush of shame and agony at the shattering of her romance, is an easy victim of any priest. Knowing that such intense grief cannot last very long, the girl is urged to go into a convent at once. The poor girl sees in it a chance to get away from an embarrassing situation, and this, coupled with the fact that she is assured she can leave any time she wishes, has led thousands to rush headlong into the convent.

The methods used to entrap the unwary into so-called voluntary slavery are reminiscent of the fable of the spider and the fly. Picture, if you can, the fate of a girl who impetuously follows the

advice of an ambitious priest and hastens into a convent because of a disappointed love affair. Can she shut out memory? No. "Memory is the only thing that grief can call its own." Salvation for her lies in motion, not emotion.

In active Orders of sisters, the activities we are familiar with, such as nursing, teaching, begging and so forth, are not in the novitiate curriculum. It is at this time that the girl mentally and emotionally sick needs action. This is exactly when she does not get it.

One little word sums up why girls go into convents; that word is *fear*. Fear on the girl's part that she may have a vocation and must either go into a convent in this world, or go to hell in the next. Fear on the part of the church that the girl it wants may slip through the net, and thus deprive its organization of the wealth, health and labor of one more religious slave, which it badly needs to keep down the overhead on its invested billions.

CHAPTER IV

AGE FOR ENTERING A CONVENT

PRIESTS and preachers everywhere are loud in their condemnation of the flippancy with which young people now enter the married state. With many of them marriage is a gay experiment into which they enter with the mental reservation that if they do not like it they can leave it. While most creeds hold that marriage is indissoluble, and can end only with the death of either party, the church of Rome holds that marriage between two humans is indissoluble unless the parties to it happen to be wealthy, when it can be annulled. But marriage to God, or, as she likes to put it, "Becoming a spouse of Christ," is strictly a trial marriage.

The chameleon church of the popes, while publicly condemning trial marriages for the people in the world, actually practices trial marriage in the convent.

Just what this has to do with the age for entering a convent will be seen presently.

The State has laid down laws governing the age for legal marriage. Where these laws have been violated parents and guardians have the right to demand the annulment of such marriages. The girl who regrets her too hasty entrance into marriage has her parents and the civil law to fall back on.

The girl who regrets her too hasty entrance into a convent has neither. She is not free even to communicate with her own parents. Her mail, like that of prisoners in any other penitentiary, is censored, and, if necessary, mutilated before she gets it, if she gets it

at all. The girl in the convent is in a pitiful quandary, for even to own up that she had all she wanted as Christ's spouse is to put herself on the spot. She automatically becomes her own accuser. She says to the petrified superior that she is no longer in love with Jesus Christ, not at least to the extent of wanting to marry Him. She is guilty of spiritual breach of promise, a monster of iniquity, a child of the devil, yellow to the core. She can leave, of course; no girl is wanted in the convent if she does not want to marry Jesus. If she wants to turn Him down, she may. It is nobody's business but her own. If she wants to return to her people branded a yellow renegade, she may. They will give her back her clothes and open the gate. She was only a fraud anyway. Good riddance to bad rubbish! She is in the pillory. How many girls want freedom enough to ask it at such a price? The girl who leaves the convent is in the position of a soldier who has been drummed out of the army.

Breaking humans is like breaking horses. The sooner it is done the easier it is. No institution in the world knows this any better than the church of the popes, for they have been breaking and crushing humans for centuries. Rome needs trained servants to keep the wheels of her machinery going, and it must get them early if the training is to be done easily. The earlier the better.

In his book on *Vocations*, Father Doyle says:

"'It is well for a man to have borne the yoke from his youth,' says holy scripture; mindful of this counsel, and realizing that the pure heart of the young receive the impressions of virtue without difficulty, and easily form good habits, that it is above all the time of earnestness and generosity, the church has always encouraged her children to give themselves to her service from their tender years.

"The Council of Toledo has laid it down that, '*As soon as a child has*

arrived at adolescence, that is to say, at the age of twelve for girls, and fourteen for boys, they may freely dispose of themselves by entering religion.'

"It is not forbidden to enter at any age. The Council of Trent simply ordained that no one should be admitted *to profession* before the age of sixteen years complete. It did not forbid entrance before that time. According to recent legislation of the holy See, novices are not to be received below the age of fifteen. Experience has proven that a larger number of 'subjects' persevere among those who enter between the ages of sixteen and twenty, than among those who enter when they are older."

The reason for this legislation is plain:

The girl of tender years will of course receive the impressions of "virtue," especially in the novitiate where the impression is made with the mailed fist of a soul-destroying, heart-breaking discipline. The older girl is more liable to be critical, to defend herself, and to resist the branding iron and halter. It is so much easier to put the blinders on girls of tender years. It is therefore important that girls be turned over to the convent as early as possible, that their immature minds and hearts may be warped into the thing the church of Rome wants them to be, empty shells of humanity, soulless husks, fanatical morons, papal Janissaries, creatures of a system stealthy and roguish as a fox, tortuous and treacherous as a snake, secret, cold and greedy as the grave.

The Word of God is cleverly twisted to aid materially in the work of exploiting helpless childhood.

It is well for man to have borne the yoke from his youth, forsooth! It is well to learn the art of the treadmill from one's tender years. It is so much easier than cracking one's shins later in life. It is good, indeed, to erase all trace of love for mother, father,

brothers and sisters, lest these frivolous, worldly sentiments clash with the loyalty which they owe the church of the popes. It is good to balk nature early and turn the procreative instincts into the sterile channels of religious ecstasy and borderline insanity.

Much is heard of the regimentation of women in Soviet Russia, but little is heard of the regimentation of women in convents everywhere, not for the defense of the country in case of need, but in the interests of the politico-religious borer in international politics, the pope.

A girl who has been in a convent from her tender years may reasonably be expected to persevere, for, like a child born in prison, she knows no other world. Such girls have no trouble in dying to the world; they never lived.

Father Doyle sighs for the days when the church was in the heyday of her power. He tells us in *Vocations*, that:

"Special provisions were made in the Rule of St. Benedict for the admission of little children, who were offered by their parents to be educated and thereafter to persevere perpetually in the Order.

The reception of a child in those days was almost as solemn as a profession in our own. His parents carried him to the church. Whilst they wrapped his hand which held the petition, in the sacred linen of the altar, they promised in the presence of God, and of His saints, stability in his behalf.

Little beings, three or four years of age, were brought in the arms of those who gave them life, to accept at their bidding, the course in which that life was to run.

They were brought to the sanctuary, received the cowl, and took their places as monks in the monastic community. St. Benedict was only twelve when he entered the cloister; St. Thomas of Aquin barely fourteen; St. Catherine of Ricci was professed at thirteen; Blessed Imelda died in a Dominican convent at the age of eleven; St. Rose of

Lima VOWED HER CHASTITY TO GOD WHEN ONLY FIVE! In our own day Soeur Therese, the Little Flower, was scarcely fifteen when she entered the monastery at Lisieux.

The spirit breatheth where it will. There is no rule for vocations. No age limit for the 'call.'

Innocence attracts the gaze of God; deep-rooted habits of sin (provided they are not persevered in) do not always repel Him. One comes because the world disgusts him; another loves it, and LEAVES IT WITH REGRET; docility draws down more graces, while resistance often increases the force of His invitation. The little child hears His whisperings, while others have not been summoned till years were far advanced."

Picture, if you can, a band of toddlers, some still in diapers, wearing the outlandish robes of monks and nuns and living in convents and monasteries, whose "chastity" was vowed to God before they knew they had any sex. The mind and heart revolt against parents who could thus abandon mere babes to the care of half-human fanatics, who, by swearing stability on their behalf, sold them into a bondage worse than death.

A girl put on the auction block and sold to the highest bidder, was no worse off than a baby girl dumped into a convent for life. For sheer brutality I know of no religion except Hindooism which can even compare with the church of Rome in child traffic.

Alexander Powell in his superb book, *The Last Home of Mystery*, says on page 73:

"It is by no means unusual for the pregnant Hindoo woman, in the hopes of obtaining a safe delivery, to make a vow that she will devote to the service of the gods the child which she is carrying in her womb, should it turn out to be a girl."

It will be argued that the barbarous custom of putting babies

in monastic institutions is no longer tolerated in our day. But the Roman Catholic church never changes of her own accord.

Nothing but modern enlightenment prevents her from being her old intrinsic rotten self. Rome never changes, public opinion merely forces her to be cautious.

The putting of children into monastic institutions is still practiced where feasible. Orphanages, for instance, are a fruitful field for future Spouses of Christ. This was forcibly brought home to me when I was a sister in St. Joseph's Convent, Mandalay, Burma.

One day some of my pupils were discussing who had been the longest in the convent. One bragged that she had been in the convent since she was two years old; another had been there since she was a year old, and so on. At last, Mother Superior Marie's pet chimed in and told the others that she had been in the convent longer than any of them—she had been born there!

Therefore, according to Father Doyle, and he has the infallible Council of Trent back of him, a girl is never too young to go into a convent, or to be put there by her parents. The younger she is put in the better the church likes it. She is not to be given the white veil till she is fifteen, and not to be allowed to make the three vows till she is sixteen. Outside of that there is no age limit.

Have Catholic parents nothing to say about girls of twelve freely disposing of themselves by entering convents? Are all Catholic parents willing to let the church cash in on their years of toil in bringing the girl up and educating her?

Father Doyle answers the question for us:

"So jealous," he says, "is the church of this liberty for her children, that the Council of Trent excommunicates those, who, by force or fear,

hinder anyone from entering religion without a just cause. As parents often exceed the authority given them by God, over their children, in the question of a choice of a state of life, it will be well here to quote the words of the great Jesuit moralist, Father Ballerini. He says, 'Paternal power cannot take away the right which sons and daughters have of making their own choice of a state of life, and if they will, to follow Christ's counsels.

"The duty, however, which filial piety demands, ought not to be disregarded, and leave of the parents ought to be asked. If it is refused, the children ought not to at once take their departure, but should wait for some little time, till the parents have realized their obligations.

"If, however, there should be danger of unjustly hindering the fulfillment of their children's vocation, they may, and ought to go without their parent's knowledge.'"

St. Liguori quotes a number of theologians who hold that "*parents who prevent their children from entering religion sin mortally.*"

"To turn one from a religious vocation," says St. Jerome, "is nothing else than to slay Jesus Christ in the heart of another."

Parents' objections do not count with the church of Rome when there is a chance of getting another slave for the treadmill. The priest in the confessional has duly impressed on the mind of the girl the fact that she does not have to pay any attention to her parents in the question. If they object, all she has to do is sneak off without saying anything.

The parents are on the spot. The priest generally wins. Many parents try to talk the girl out of the notion of deciding in too big a hurry. Even this, honest as it seems, is bitterly condemned by the church.

Father Doyle says in *Vocations*:

"Endless harm has been done by well-meaning people, who, under pretext of trying a vocation, keep their girls from entering a religious house for years. They urge that getting to know the world will develop their faculties, and enable them to understand their own minds better; that such a process will broaden their views, and help them to judge things at their proper values; finally, that a vocation that cannot stand such a trial, the buffetings of dangerous temptations, and the seductive allurements of worldly pleasures, to which it has been unnecessarily exposed, is no vocation, and had better be abandoned."

To all of which I heartily agree. Not so the church, whose greedy fingers itch to get possession of the girl before she has a chance to find out whether she is fitted for life in the convent or not.

Father Doyle goes on: "Is the world the place for testing a vocation?" asks St. Vincent de Paul. "Let the soul hasten as fast as possible to a secure asylum." As "secure" as a penitentiary. He continues:

"The church, realizing the necessity of such a trial, prescribes at least a year of probation in every novitiate. There, safe from the contagious atmosphere of a corrupt world, with abundant time for prayer and thought, with liberty to remain or leave at will, each one can test for himself the sincerity of the desire he felt to abandon all things and follow Christ, *before binding himself irrevocably by his vows.*"

It follows from what has been said that once the voice of God has been recognized, that is, when the thought of leaving the world has been more or less constantly before the mind for some time, and the soul realizes, *though she dreads it*, "that the Lord hath need of her," the call ought to be promptly obeyed.

St. Thomas holds that "the invitation to a more perfect life should be followed without delay, *for those lights and inspirations*

from God are transient, not permanent, and therefore the divine call should be obeyed instantly. As of old when He worked His miracles, He went about doing good. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. If you do not take advantage of His passing, He may never return. 'I stand at the door and knock,' He said. 'If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me, I will come to him,' if not, He may never call again."

"Make haste, I beseech you," exclaims St. Jerome, *"and cut, rather than loosen, the rope by which your bark is held fast to the land, for even a day's delay deprives a person of invaluable merit, which he would acquire in religion."*

"Delay is dangerous, and long deliberation," as Msgr. Malou assures us, "is unnecessary, for, of all the states of life, the religious life is, without any deliberation, and is that of which the choice should cause less doubt, and provoke the least hesitation, for it is in this state that fewer difficulties are met with, and the most means are found for saving souls."

After listening to Father Doyle and a whole army of saints and theologians who assure us that a girl should take wings and fly into a convent without the least deliberation, one is tempted to ask a few questions.

Why the hurry?

Why should a day's delay be dangerous?

Why should a girl go into a convent if she dreads it?

Why should a priest, "God's secondary agent," care whether a girl goes into a convent or not?

Why are Catholic parents excommunicated if they try to reason with a girl and get her to take her time about going in?

Why are pious and learned persons accused of "spoiling God's work" if they insist on telling girls the truth about the convent before they go in, instead of letting them go in and find out from bitter experience?

Because the church fully realizes and admits that the idea of going into a convent is only a "transient" notion, not a "permanent" resolution, therefore they must rush the girl in before the notion passes out of her head. They must strike while the iron is hot.

The church admits she is afraid to allow a girl to get a little experience of life before shutting her up. It is maddening for the priest to see years of urging, threatening, cajoling in the confessional lost. Rather than do that the girl must be stampeded in. She can take as many years as she wants, all her life, if she cares to, to think it over—in the convent.

This puts the girl who regrets her haste in a quandary. She has rushed into the nearest convent, perhaps over the protest of her parents, who wanted her to think it over. Now she has thought it over and regrets her unwise haste. Being a spouse of Christ seemed a grand thing, but living in a religious harem with an army of other spouses of Christ has cooled her ardor. What is she to do?

She is a criminal; a renegade. She is guilty of breach of promise. She has turned down Jesus Christ. The stigma which the church deliberately attaches to all those who dare to abandon convent life is another powerful reason why a girl, happy or not, feels she must remain.

Stripped of its sanctimonious camouflage, we can see the naked truth of conventism, which is nothing but the recruiting of as many as possible of the mentally, physically, and financially fit

into an army of soldiers of the pope, whose uniform they wear, whose laws they obey, and to whom they owe allegiance as to God.

Candidates for the honor of spouse of Christ need not be morally fit, for the damaged souls can be given a dip in the confessional, the sacred Ganges of Rome. Nothing is permitted to stand in the way of the selective draft for the Battalion of Death.

Slavery of the Negro has been abolished, but slavery in the church of Rome has not been interfered with.

Frank Crane says truly: "Slavery is a danger to the nation, because it makes a politically non-active group of inhabitants. Any group or class for whatever reason, that does not participate in public responsibilities, is dangerous, including slaves, women, the idle rich, the highbrows who despise politics, and the anarchists who do not believe in government. The same principle holds true of the world. The world will never be 'safe for democracy' till the last autocratic government is removed. Liberty is a boat we're all in. A leak anywhere will sink it."

While we pity the child-wives of Mother India, let us not forget the child-wives of mother church.

One system is as disastrous as the other, and as detrimental to the welfare of the State.

Should the pope, the most absolute ruler in the world, be permitted to cull the best of the youth of both sexes, and under pretext of religion maintain thereby a veritable army of religious slaves, answerable to no one but him?

When will the American Catholic people wake up?

"In case of doubt, the presumption is in favor of the superior. Thus in cases where the lawfulness of an order given by a superior is doubtful, an inferior is bound to obey." —Manual of Christian Doctrine

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Q. "In what case should we refuse obedience to the civil authorities?"

A. "In case it should demand something opposed to divine law or to conscience." —Catholic Manual of Christian Doctrine

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Q. "Are we sometimes allowed to use mental reservation in a loose sense or determinable equivocation?"

A. "Yes, when there is grave reason to do so. Such a manner of speaking is not bad in itself; we have not the intention in that case of deceiving our neighbor, nor do we, as a fact, deceive him. We merely permit him to deceive himself concerning matters which he has no right to know and which oftentimes it were better for him not to know."

—Catholic Manual of Christian Doctrine

CHAPTER V

THE VEIL AND THE VOWS

THROUGHOUT the Orient the veil worn by women has been a badge of inferiority to show that woman is the property of man.

Happily, civilization has made great strides. In our own day the women of the Orient have risen in revolt against being the mere chattels and slaves of the men.

In the Orient the veil is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, to be preserved in museums as a token of the times when women were considered unclean animals, who were created for the sole purpose of satisfying man's needs. In the world of emancipated women the veil is an anachronism, to be found nowhere save in Roman Catholic convents, being still worn by the "Lost Tribe," the Forgotten Women of the papal hierarchy.

For them the veil, the emblem of slavery to man, is in order, for they are slaves of the pope who holds them in thrall by the Triple Cord of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

The *New Century Dictionary* defines the word "slave" as "*A person who is the chattel or slave of another, and is wholly subject to his will; a bondservant, a serf.*"

"Slavery" is defined as "*Entire subjection to the will and commands of another.*"

Nuns and sisters are chattels of the church of Rome, slaves, entirely subject to the will of the pope.

Canon 499 of *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*, says:

"All religious are subject to the Roman Pontiff as to their high-

est superior, and they are bound to obey him even by virtue of their vow of Obedience."

Does any girl of sixteen realize the importance of such an oath?

Is it fair to put mere children into monastic institutions and rear them up to be slaves of the pope? By virtue of this oath and the law just quoted, when the pope cracks his whip in Rome, the puppet army of Janissaries all over the world jump to execute his commands for they are bound to him as to their highest superior. Orders from the pope are orders from God, whose vicar on earth the Pope claims to be.

In every conflict between church and state, the pope has always relied on his "loyal subjects" to swing the tide in his favor.

With regard to the use of the veil in the church of Rome, Murphy & McCarthy in the *Pictorial Catholic Library*, a Catholic publication carrying the seal of approval of Michael Augustin, Archbishop of New York, tell us:

"The nuptial veil, or flammeau, as is well known, was in use among the Romans. St. Ambrose speaks of a veil (pallium stretched over the heads of the bride and groom during the celebration of marriage) with a mystical significance.

"The priest officiates with veiled head in several Oriental rites—Coptic, St. Anthony, Abyssinian, Maronite."

In Maskell's *Monumenta Ritualia* is printed a form for the consecration of nuns:

"On the day of profession, the novices, clad in white, each bearing on the right arm the habit that the religion and profession requireth, with the veil, ring, and scroll of her profession attached upon said habit, and in her left hand bearing a taper without light, go in procession from the place where they were arrayed towards the western door of the choir, with looks bent on the ground, singing the response, *Audivi vocem*. Passing through the choir and going up to the altar, they lay their veils,

rings, and scrolls on the right end of it. Then they take the oath of Chastity, and after receiving the habit from the bishop, return whence they came.

After the *credo* the virgins return to the western door of the choir, bearing lighted tapers in their right hand. The rite proceeds; after the litanies each makes her profession before the bishop and the Abbess, and signs her scroll of profession with the cross.

After the psalm, *Domini quis habitabit*, during which the virgins prostrate themselves, they rise and go with the bishop to the right hand of the altar, and, taking their veils therefrom, hold them in their hands with their faces turned towards the bishop. He, standing in his place, blesses the virgins' hands with orisons.

The first of these prayers is:

'We suppliantly beseech thee, Oh Lord, that in thy clemency, a blessing may come down upon these veils which are about to be placed on the heads of thy handmaidens, so that they may be blessed, and consecrated and spotless, and holy for thy handmaidens.'

The second prayer is:

'Oh God, creator of all things visible and invisible, be mercifully present with us, and vouchsafe to bless and sanctify with the streams of thy grace these veils which are the type of holiness, and the sign of humility; may Thy servants deserve through Thy gift, to take and hallow them in heart and body.'

Every virgin, before the bishop puts the veil upon her head, kisses his hand.

Being veiled, she sings, 'The Lord hath clothed me with a garment woven of gold, and with immense jewels hath He adorned me.'

The ritual of the ring succeeds, followed by the long Benediction, during which the virgins lie prostrate. Before their 'houseselling' the bishop draws down their veils over their eyes. After the communion, each gives up her taper to the bishop, after kissing his hand, and he gives to them all his benediction.

Then the Abbess pulls their veils down beneath their chins, and so they remain for three days. On the third day, after they have communicated, the Abbess lifts up their veils, and from that time on, they go and come as the other nuns in a convent."

The above ancient form of taking the veil in a convent has been very slightly changed in our day. I took the veil in the Novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, in Marseilles, France, in 1910.

When I took the vows we were covered by a black pall commonly used to drape caskets, while we prostrated ourselves. The object of the pall was to show that we were dead to the world. A very pretty story was kept constantly in circulation about a novice who, when the "De Profundis" had been chanted while the candidates were lying face down under the black pall, had died, of love, of course, and she lived happily ever after.

Before the ceremony of profession the church gives the convent authorities a good coat of whitewash. This is accomplished by means of an official visit to the novitiate, either by the bishop of the diocese, or some priest delegated by him. The object of this visit is to see that the girls are taking the veil of their own accord, and not being forced into it.

A feast is served the visiting priest. After wining and dining, the priest takes up his place on a divan in the parlor. The novices are lined up like convicts outside the door, and are presented to him one at a time.

According to canon 522 of *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious* we learn that:

"The superioress even of exempt religious, must inform the local bishop at least two months in advance, of the approaching admission to the Novitiate, and to profession of temporary, and perpetual, or of solemn or simple vows.

(2) The local Ordinary [bishop] or if he is absent, or otherwise impeded, a priest delegated by him, must, at least thirty days before the admission to the Novitiate and to profession, carefully examine the disposition of the aspirant, and this gratuitously, without however, entering the enclosure.

He must inform himself whether she has been constrained or beguiled, and if she understands the import of the step she is about to take; and, if he is fully satisfied, regarding her pious intentions, and freedom of action, then the aspirant may be admitted to the novitiate, or if already a novice, to profession."

This law proves that it is customary to "constrain and beguile" girls to enter a convent. The right of parents to force their daughters to enter a convent even against their will, is freely admitted by the great Ligouri, and many others of equal standing. We have already seen that in the Rule of St. Benedict little children were dumped into monastic institutions by their parents and the latter swore "stability in their behalf." This attempt at fair play is mostly stage play, and is staged to keep the public quiet.

"Tell the truth, but God help you if you do," was the advice given to us before we were examined by a priest. What does the visiting priest do if a novice tells him she had been "beguiled or constrained" or, to put it in plain language, "railroaded?" He merely informs the Mistress of Novices, and washes his hands of it.

There is little danger, however, of many girls telling the priest they were forced, constrained, beguiled, lured, or whatever you like, into the convent. The church knows that after a year or two in the novitiate a girl will be sufficiently cowed not to have enough moral courage left to dare speak out.

As I stood in line awaiting my turn to go in to the parlor and answer the question of whether or not I was beguiled or constrained to enter the convent, an Irish novice had the courage to tell the priest she was leaving for Ireland with her brother, a

priest, who had come from Ireland to be present at her reception.

Why did she do it? She had backing in the presence of one of her own flesh and blood. A girl far from parents and not at liberty to write them without censorship, would have hesitated to do so brave a thing. It would have required less moral courage to go on.

Some days before the taking of the vows, which is known variously as "the ceremony of the Triple Cord" and "reception," the chosen few are headed for the last shampoo. The hair is carefully washed, braided, and cut off as closely as possible. It is sold to the hairdresser who makes the highest bid.

God, we are told, tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and the church tempers the wind to the shorn nun by forcing her to wear a bonnet which is as unsanitary as it is outlandish.

The day before the taking of the vows and the black veil is looked upon as the last day of single blessedness for the novices. In the morning they will become the wives of God, phantom Spouses of Christ.

For a week before the appointed day the Mistress of Novices takes the candidates to the chapel where she puts them through their paces. In most novitiates today it is the custom to allow a certain number of prominent people to witness the ceremony of profession. There must be no hitch. The girls are coached. Questions and answers are memorized, and the whole thing, instead of being spontaneous, as the public is led to believe, is mere pantomime.

Working girls into the convents and working them after they get in is a many-sided graft. Apart from the methods employed in "constraining and beguiling" girls to rush headlong into these institutions, there is a little side line which is worked overtime in most convents.

If the girl who is about to become the bride of a mere man should have a wedding dress, how much more important is it that the girl about to become the "Spouse of Christ" have a trousseau?

Each novice is told to write her parents or closest relative and ask them to send her a sum of money to purchase a fitting layout in which to be married to the Lord of Lords.

The poorest of parents respond to this, and beg, borrow or steal, the money to send to the girl. It goes where all other money goes, into the bank to swell the bulging coffers of the papacy. Does the girl get a new bridal outfit? Certainly not. The robes in use for the ceremony last years and years. When they do wear out, some rich Catholic is persuaded to replace them with new ones. The holy racket goes merrily on.

The three vows of a sister or nun are, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

As has been said, convents are operated for economic reasons, to supply the Catholic corporation with an army of slaves. Therefore the first vow is, as it should be, that of Poverty.

The vow of Poverty not only deprives the girl of the fruits of her labor, but denies her the right to sue for just compensation in case she should ever abandon the system. The church is protected all the way around. The vow of Poverty reduces those who take it to the status of paupers.

St. Alphonsus Liguori on page 159 of his *True Spouse of Christ*, says:

"Woe to them who introduce into religion a relaxation of holy poverty. Examine, Oh blessed sister, whether you keep money or any other kind of property without leave. And remember that the permission of the superior is invalid whenever its object is not just; for she cannot permit you to retain what cannot be lawfully kept.

All the money, furniture, clothes, and whatever species of property you possess, all that you receive from your parents or relatives, or the fruits of your industry, belong, not to you, but to the convent.

You have only the use of what the superior gives you. Hence, if you dispose of anything without her leave, you are guilty of theft, by violating the vow of poverty."

The saint goes on to explain that this oath of poverty, rigid as it is, is not enough. The poor sisters and nuns should practice "perfect poverty," of which there are three degrees.

Liguori says: "The first degree of perfect poverty, is not to possess anything as one's own."

"Hence," he tells us, "a religious should regard only as a loan whatever she possesses, and should be ready to give it up at the first inclination of the superior's will. *She ought to be like a statue, which when dressed, is not elated, and when stripped, is not dejected.*

"The second degree of perfect poverty is to deprive yourself of whatever is superfluous; for the smallest superfluity will prevent a perfect union of the soul with God."

The same saint says that "The third degree of perfect poverty requires that you not complain when you are in want of necessities. Never ask your relatives anything for yourself; you may ask them something for the community, but never reserve anything for yourself."

This oath of poverty includes such luxuries as love of parents, who must not only be given up, but actually hated for the love of God.

St. Alphonsus, Rome's prince of theologians, tells us that: "*If attachment to relatives were not productive of great mischief, Jesus Christ would not have so strenuously exhorted us to estrangement from them.*"

Liguori continues:

“If, he says, ‘any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple.’ (*Luke xiv:26*) And again, ‘I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother.’ (*Matt. x:35*)

But why does the Redeemer insist so strongly on alienation from relatives? Why does He take so much pains to separate us from them?

He, himself, assigns the reason; it is because ‘*A man’s enemies shall be those of his own household.*’ (*Matt. x:36*). Relatives are the worst enemies of the sanctification of Christians, and particularly of religious; because they are, according to St. Thomas, the greatest obstacle to advancement of virtue. ‘Frequently,’ says the holy Doctor, ‘carnal friends oppose the progress of the spirit; for in the affairs of salvation, *the nearest of kin are not friends, but enemies.*’ (2.2.-q.189)

The truth of this assertion is fully established by experience . . . He who desires to walk in the way of perfection must fly from relatives, must abstain from taking part in their affairs, and when they are at a distance, must not even enquire about them. The religious who tells her parents, and her brothers, and her sisters, that she knows them not, is the True Spouse of Christ.”

“It is,” says St. Jerome, “a great advantage to forget your parents; for then ‘the King shall greatly desire your beauty.’”

“For my part,” says St. Teresa, “I cannot conceive what consolation a nun can find in her relatives.”

“How many monks,” says St. Jerome, “have by compassion towards their father and mother, lost their own souls. A religious who is attached to her relatives has not as yet left the world.”

This infamous system, not satisfied with getting the girl away from her parents, poisons the mind and heart of the girl against the mother who bore her, as well as against father, sisters and brothers.

Of all the crimes committed in the name of religion, this forcing of hatred of parents is the blackest. Siva may be the Great Destroyer, but Rome is the Great Dehumanizer.

This doctrine of hatred of parents by nuns and sisters fully explains why a girl is not allowed to dispose of her property till sixty days before she is to take the veil and the vows. The church fully expects that by that time the girl will have learned the hymn of hate, and refuse to leave them anything.

Chastity is the second vow.

Catholics are wont to believe that their church is the only one which requires a vow of celibacy from its devotees. Paganism abounds in cults where a vow of celibacy is required.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic church on this question is too well known to require only passing mention. She holds that sexual relationship, even in marriage, is a shameful thing, the married state little better than whoredom. Virginitv, which merely means the unmarried state, is held up as the perfect state, and therefore more pleasing to God. Marriage is spoken of slightinglv, as a lower form of morality, especially designed for the less perfect.

On page 3 of *True Spouse of Christ*, Liguori says, " 'The unmarried woman,' says St. Paul, 'and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord; that they may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.' " (*I Cor. VII. 34*)

In the confessional the married state is painted as dangerous. Dire warnings are given to any desirable girl who may be matrimonially inclined in order to turn her toward the convent.

St. Alphonsus Liguori even brings up the in-law question. He says: "The married woman must provide for her family, educate

her children, please her husband, his brothers, parents and relations, who are sometimes to her a constant source of trouble."

He says further: "The husband must be attended to, and if his directions are neglected, or his commands be not immediately executed, he breaks out into complaints and reproaches. The servants disturb the house, at one time by the clamor of their quarrels, at another, by their importunate demands. The children, if small, are a perpetual source of annoyance, either by their screams and cries, or by the endless variety of their wants; if grown up, they are an occasion of still greater inquietude, fears and bitterness, by associating with bad companions, by the danger to which they are exposed, or the infirmities with which they are afflicted."

This pious monstrosity is the holy Roman Catholic church, who, when occasion demands, can preach with so much unction: "*Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" This is all right when she is wildly exhorting the illiterate masses of Catholics to increase and multiply like flies, but when her priests are luring a suitable girl into a convent, marriage and motherhood are condemned as degrading. Children then are a "perpetual source of annoyance."

Liguori again says:

"How unhappy and miserable is the life of the generality of married persons, from the highest to the lowest classes of society. I have known the circumstances, feelings, and dispositions of a great number of married persons, (through the confessional). How few of them were content!

The bad treatment of husbands, the disaffection of children, the wants of the family, the control of relatives, the pains of childbirth—pains which are always accompanied by danger of death—plunge poor seculars into constant trouble and agitation; and fill their souls with continual regret for not having been called to a happier and more holy state. God grant, that in the middle of such trouble and agitation many of them may not

lose their immortal souls, and that, along with passing through a hell in this life, they may not be condemned to an eternity of torture in the next."

Yet the Catholic church, which thus paints marriage as a sort of hell on this earth, and a good beginning for the real hell to come in the next world, will not even let people get out of it by means of divorce.

There is no lie, no slander, I may say no crime to which the church of the popes will not stoop to get slaves for her institutions. Perversion of the truth is her chief means.

If marriage has its drawbacks, celibacy has them also, but of these no words ever escape the priest.

Forbidding something is only another way of making it popular, and desirable. A writer on the subject of celibacy has said: "A morbid fear of sexual excitement, a constant turning of the thoughts to dangers of sin from that source, are calculated, in some temperaments, to weaken, and not to strengthen the resolution. Nature seeks what is not allowed, and the result of overstrained terrors manifests itself occasionally in fearful scenes of violence."

Like the vow of poverty, that of chastity is purely economic in its objective. It secures in almost all cases the wealth of the members of religious orders. Married nuns, sisters, monks, and priests would naturally leave their wealth to their families.

Obedience is the third oath.

Elbert Hubbard says in his Note Book, "*That which would destroy initiative, would destroy civilization.*"

The vow of obedience destroys initiative completely. A glance at Catholic countries is proof of this. Even the laity feel the deadening effects of the obedience which the church requires of them.

Catholic lands stagnate. The vow of obedience is the death of morality. It substitutes the voice of the priest for the voice of conscience. The vow of obedience destroys conscience. Blind obedience and conscience cannot live under the same roof. One must go, and it is conscience.

The first effect of the vow of obedience is to deify the superior and the confessor, so that the sisters need have no scruples in blindly obeying either in any thing they might choose to command. The theory of that is that these two are God's representatives, and therefore can do no wrong, and, anyway if they do, the sister need not let that worry her, since she will not have to answer for it. In the hands of a skilled casuist of the church, Holy Scripture becomes a sort of pious poison.

Liguori says in *True Spouse of Christ*:

"The principal and most efficacious means of practicing the obedience due to superiors, and of rendering it meritorious before God, is to consider that in obeying them, we obey God himself; and that by despising their commands, we despise the authority of our Divine Master, who has said of superiors, *'He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.'* Hence, St. Paul addressed to his disciples the following words, 'Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but, as the servants doing the will of God from the heart.'

When, then, a religious receives a precept from her prelate, superior, or confessor, she should immediately execute it, not only to please men, but principally to please God, whose will is made known to her by their commands. In obeying their directions she is more certain of doing the will of God, than if an angel came down from heaven to manifest his will to her."

What a cinch for the priest!

Liguori has more to tell us about the divinity of the priests and the superior and the bishop. He says:

"St. Bernard says God deigns to make prelates His own equal, hence he takes to Himself the reverence or contempt manifested towards them. Obedience shown to superiors is obedience shown to God; for He has said, 'He that heareth you, heareth Me, he that despiseth you, despiseth me.'

Bear then always in mind, oh blessed sister, that the obedience which you practice towards your superior is paid to God Himself. If Jesus Christ Himself came down from heaven and imposed any duty upon you, or gave you any particular charge, would you attempt to decline it? Or would you dare to disobey His commands? 'But,' continues St. Bernard, 'whether God, or a creature who is His representative, impose a precept, they are both to be obeyed with equal exactness.'

If, then, you receive a command from one who holds the place of God you should observe it with the same diligence as if it came from God Himself. By some masters of the religious life, the priest and the superior are placed higher than God. Blessed Egidius used to say that it is more meritorious to obey man for the love of God than to obey God Himself."

In spite of the efforts of the church to make gods out of priests, prelates and superiors, these persons remain very human, as history plentifully proves.

The reader is liable to wonder what a sister should do in case she would receive an order from the superior or priest which she knew was manifestly bad.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori says:

"There is more certainty of doing the will of God by obedience to superiors than by obedience to Jesus Christ, should He appear in person and give the commands. Because, should Jesus Christ appear to a religious, she would not be certain whether it was He who spoke, or an evil spirit, who, under the appearance of the Redeemer, wished to deceive her. But when her superiors speak, she knows for certain, from the words of Jesus Christ, that in obeying them, she obeys Him. 'He,' says the Lord, 'that heareth you, heareth Me.'

Even when it is doubtful whether the object of a precept is conformable to the law of God, the generality of theologians and masters of the spiritual life teach that a religious is bound to obey, and in obeying, she is certain of not sinning, and of even pleasing God.

Speaking particularly of nuns, the Lord once said to St. Catherine of Sienna, 'Religious will not be obliged to render an account to Me of what they do through obedience; for that I will demand an account from the superior.'

And, Oh blessed spouse of the Lord," Liguori goes on, "if you practice obedience, when, after death, you shall be asked by Jesus Christ why have you not done greater penance? Why have you not made more mental prayers? You can answer with confidence, that in all this you only fulfilled His commands by obeying your superiors, whom He commanded you to obey as you would Himself; and that if you have done wrong, the blame is imputable to your superior, whose authority you obeyed."

This scandalous doctrine not only victimizes the helpless women in these institutions, but is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a dissolute confessor. No question is raised as to the moral character of the priests, prelates, and superiors who are raised to the godhead, and given power of life and death over these Forgotten Women.

St. Gregory teaches that "The commands of superiors should be respected, though their lives be not deserving of praise."

And again St. Liguori tells the unfortunate women in the convents, "All things whatsoever they say to you, observe and do, but according to their works, do ye not."

He says in another place, "To regard as good whatever superiors command, is the '*blind obedience*' so much praised by the saints, and is the duty of every religious."

In the face of such an immoral doctrine, of what use is conscience to a nun? Like an appendix, she can, and does, get along

very well without it. In fact she is better off without it, for she could not use it anyhow.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi sums up the vow of Obedience very nicely in the *True Spouse of Christ* (p. 122): "*Perfect obedience requires a soul without a will, without intellect.*"

In plain English a nun or a sister is a mere robot who is owned and operated by the priest, bishop, and superior, who represent God, and are answerable to Him alone, or to His other self, the pope, in far away Rome. From the decisions of this unholy trinity the Forgotten Women have no appeal. Moral, or immoral, the orders of this religious triumvirate *must be obeyed*.

We now see why the church of Rome is ready to fight to the last ditch any attempt to open convents to the civil authorities. Such a move would interfere with the "smooth operation" of the institution. How "smooth" only those who, like myself, have been victims of it, are in a position to tell.

Poor nuns! I pity you far more than the wives of the gods in the temples of India, who are the object of constant solicitude by hordes of missionaries. Their unfortunate lot is open for all the world to see. Over the lives of the phantom Brides of Christ, the church of the popes has carefully drawn a screen of fake sanctity and phoney mystery, lest an aroused public demand a square deal for the Forgotten Women, in the harems of the pope.

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"Are there cases wherein children should not obey their parents?"

"Yes; 1. When their parents make them do something directly opposed to the commandments of God, or of the church; 2. When they unreasonably oppose their children's vocation; for, with reference to the choice of a state of life, children are independent of their parents."

—Catholic Manual of Christian Doctrine

CHAPTER VI

ARE GIRLS FREE TO LEAVE THE CONVENT?

"The vows of a nun are a fetter of brass. Around the nun is an invisible wall so high she cannot scale it, so strong she cannot pierce it. If she abandons the convent she abandons the only friends she knows. The years she has spent in the convent, far from fitting her to cope with reality, have made her a creature without a will of her own." —Daniel March

ARE GIRLS FREE to leave the convent? To this question the Catholic church answers an emphatic yes. This, of course, is to be expected. One could not reasonably expect the church to answer truthfully a question which so vitally concerns her interests and welfare. The question is, however, too important to be thus lightly dismissed. We shall see what the church permits her spokesman to say on the subject.

Father Doyle is a good witness because he is a Roman Catholic priest, and his book *Vocations*, not only bears the official stamp of church approval, but, due to its cheapness, it has attained a wide circulation among the poorer, uneducated classes, from which the greater number of priests and sisters are recruited.

When, as occasionally happens, a member of some prominent family "has been led captive to the feet of the Divine Hunter" the newspapers ring with the story of it. When, however, one of the inhabitants of shady lane, or one of the rag-tag and bob-tail enters, nothing is said. When a particularly malodorous soul enters a convent, she is quietly sent to a distant place where the fame of her exploits will not follow her, for we must not forget "*that a sinful life in the past is no impediment to a vocation.*"

The church admits that a vocation to the life of a nun should be tested, but insists that the testing be done on the inside, after the girl has entered, and not on the outside before she takes the final step. This "leap before you look" policy is obviously unfair and dishonest.

"'Is the world the place for testing a vocation?' asks St. Vincent de Paul. 'Let the soul hasten as fast as possible to a secure asylum.'

"The church, realizing well the necessity of such a trial, prescribes at least a year of probation in every novitiate before admitting candidates to the profession. There, safe from the contagious atmosphere of a corrupt world, with abundant time for prayer and thought, with liberty to remain or leave at will, each one can test the sincerity of the desire he felt to abandon all things and follow Christ, before binding himself *irrevocably* by his or her vows."

This generous offer of a trial sample of convent life, while appearing in the guise of a fair offer, is in reality a sugared pill, a subtle taunt to the youth in search of a thrill. It is a powerful appeal to the dare-devil spirit of bravado common to youth. It smacks of gambling. Life itself is only a gamble, why not take a fling at convent life? If you do not like it you can leave it, but by all means go in.

The system has been long ago made famous by the song, "'Won't you walk into my parlor,' said the spider to the fly." The church, a religious Black Widow, is willing to promise anything to her victim, till she gets possession.

We have examined the methods used to get the girl into the convent, from bribery to force. Let us take a look at the girl who wants to leave a convent, and see if the promise to be free to leave any time she feels like it is true.

A novitiate is a training school for nuns and sisters. Every Order has one of its own. No matter where a girl enters a convent

she must go to the novitiate to make the vows, unless the pope grants some special permit to the contrary.

A novitiate is commonly spoken of as "the mother house," because it is usually the residence of the Mother General, or highest superior of that particular Order. Most convents permit a girl to remain a few months in the local convent where she entered before sending her to the Mother House to begin training. This is done to wean her gradually from her parents, lest a too violent separation from them cause resentment on the part of the parents.

It is thought best not to kill the girl at once, but let her die to the world a little at a time. In the place where she has close relatives, the officers of the institution have to be careful how they treat her, lest she manage to inform her family that she is disillusioned, and desires to return to her home. Later, when she cannot personally communicate with them, except by mail, there is no danger of anything detrimental to the convent getting out.

A postulant, or beginner, is a sort of decoy to entice others to take a chance. The presence of a girl or two is a good talking point for the local priests.

On the trip to the novitiate the girl is accompanied by a trusty, or "discreet." The girl is not trusted to make the trip alone. The trusty handles all money, tickets, etc. She must also see that the neophyte does not talk to strangers while en route between pens. Many a steamship acquaintance has ripened into a romance which has robbed mother church of a worker.

When the shipment arrives at its destination, they are met by the closed convent car and conducted to the novitiate, as cats are conducted to the mill pond. As girls are usually permitted to travel in their own clothes, the first step on arriving in the no-

vitiate is that of divesting them of their own garments and replacing them with the robe worn by the postulants.

The girl's trunk and her belongings, including photos, even of her parents who are so soon to be ranked as enemies, are locked in the store room to which the Mistress of Novices has the key. Photos are abhorred by every Mistress, for they not only make "dying to the world" harder by prolonging the agony, but may put that happy event off indefinitely. Even the memory of parents must be obliterated, if the girl is to become a "True Spouse of Christ," a Janissary. Her hair is left to her, but it must be kept out of sight till it is shorn when she takes the vows.

The final step in the program is the removal of all identification marks. This is done at one stroke by changing the girl's name and giving her a fictitious one, usually the name of some imaginary saint.

I was given the name of Sister Mary Ethelreda, which was shortened to Sister Mary Ethel.

If the girl could see herself now she would not know herself, but fortunately she is spared this humiliation, for there are no mirrors in the convent. After being solemnly warned that she must not reveal her real name or the whereabouts of her parents to her "sisters," she is led to the community room and presented to them. The wisdom of this last precaution will readily be appreciated if we stop to realize that a disgruntled sister who knew the whereabouts of the families of others who were unhappy, might cause a world of embarrassment to the convent by carrying uncensored messages to the families concerned.

Father Doyle says a girl in the novitiate is free to stay or leave at will, but the same girl is not even free to write her parents at will. She is to all intents and purposes a prisoner, whose mail is

censored. The moment a girl enters the massive portals of any novitiate she ceases to exist as an individual. She is one more sheep in the flock. This is fine for the institution, but how about the effect on the girl?

"A number is never tough," a great penologist in America recently said of a notorious prisoner. The same is true of an alias wearer. The man or woman who for any reason finds it necessary to use an assumed name, loses self-respect, and with it courage and initiative. Such individuals lose out in their own esteem. Over such a character one might as well write "here lies." The inmate of a penitentiary living under a number, and the inmate of a convent living under an assumed name, are in the same boat. The transformation is complete. The girl's clothes, money, name, all are gone. She has burned her bridges, or rather the bridges have been skilfully burned from under her. Soon a yawning gulf will separate her from all she once loved and held dear in the world of reality.

She is alone. There are no friends in the convent. This is only one of the things she was told before she entered. She will discover many more as she goes on. In friendship there is union, and in union there is strength, hence there is no friendship allowed in the convent—in any convent. Friendship is the one thing the church dreads among sisters and nuns. A sisterhood united in the bonds of genuine affection would be more dangerous than all the anti-Catholics in the world. They must be kept strangers, suspicious of one another, lest, if trouble arise, their unity be the cause of bringing about needed reform.

Under these circumstances, the girl soon falls back on herself, for she learns that she dare not trust anyone in the novitiate, where the spy system is in full force. Enemies are all around her, but nowhere a friend.

The first week she is allowed to sleep till time for mass. Nothing much is required of her. She has been taken in tow by an old novice who breaks her in. This novice shows her how to put on the robes, etc. About the second week, before the sharp corners of reality begin to show through, she is "permitted to write to her parents."

Naturally the unsuspecting girl gives her impressions of the novitiate. She invariably seals the letter and lays it on the desk of the Mistress of Novices, for she has no stamp, and if she had the stamp, she is not free to go outside the gate to mail her letter to her own parents. Such is the *freedom* in the convent, where we are assured the girl is at absolute liberty to stay or leave at will.

If her letter does not meet with the full approval of the Mistress, the culprit will make the transition from the romance of convent life to the reality at one step. Her letter will be handed back to her with the curt order to delete all underlined parts and re-submit it for approval. So sharp a curtailment of personal liberty often opens the eyes of many a would-be Spouse of Christ. She now begins to know what Father Doyle meant by "being led captive to the feet of the Divine Hunter." As the cold reality creeps in on her she realizes that she is in a trap.

I marvel when I recall the day, years ago, when a new girl stood up and informed our Mistress of Novices, Mother Xavier, that she would not take out one word that she had written her parents, and that in addition she intended to return to her home on the next boat. After all, she was only doing what she had been assured she could do any time she felt like it.

I can still see the stunned look on the face of the Mistress of Novices. The Mother Superior had the girl's money, her trunk was locked up and the Mistress had the key. The girl was not free

in a supposedly free convent to go into her own trunk, and the rags she was wearing were not hers, but the property of the community. We saw her no more.

By what authority does the church of Rome tamper with the mail? No authority, save that of the pope, who claims to be a law unto himself.

St. Alphonsus Liguori says in his *True Spouse of Christ*: "Be careful not to make known to externs the internal concerns of the convent, and particularly what might tend to the discredit of the superior or the sisters." Rome, as usual, is only concerned with concealing the defects of the system, and not in honestly correcting the abuses. The whole cry is do not let the public know what goes on in the convents and all will be well.

The following list of persons to whom a girl in a convent may write is taken from *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*.

"All religious, whether men or women, can freely send letters, exempt from all control, (1) to the Holy See [the pope himself]; (2) to his legate in the country; (3) to their cardinal protector; (4) to their own higher superiors; (5) to the local Ordinary [bishop] to whom they are subject, and, in the case of nuns, subject to the jurisdiction of Regulars, to the higher superiors of the Order; (6) to the superior of their own house [convent] when absent.

From all these persons, the religious, men or women, have the right to receive letters which nobody has the right to open."

Parents are absent from the list of those to whom religious may write without having the letters opened and read.

The law which governs the coming and going of inmates of convents, is known as "The Law of Papal Enclosure."

Canon 602 says:

"The enclosure of the monastery of nuns should be protected on every side in such a manner as to prevent, as far as possible, those within from being seen by, or seeing persons without."

Canon 607 says:

"The superioress, and the local Ordinary, shall attentively see that the religious, except in case of necessity, do not go out singly from the house."

This canon, or law, explains why sisters are never seen alone in public. Always there are at least two.

In "constraining and beguiling" girls to go into the convent the slogan is, "Be a sport and take a chance. If you don't like it you can leave it."

Now, the tables are turned, and holy and wise mother church is not taking any chance on losing a good slave.

Whenever a case of necessity arises and it is necessary to send someone out to shop, beg, or transact some other business, the "Law of Papal Enclosure" is freely interpreted and the superior selects two suitable sisters. She makes her choice among those who have been the longest in the convent, as being most likely to be dead. She sometimes selects a younger sister to accompany an older one for the purpose of observing, so that she, when her turn comes, may be made a "Discreet" or trusty. It is understood, of course, that the older sister is to keep close track of the younger and not let her get out of sight, or permit her to speak to anyone.

When a choice has been made, the portress is informed. The reason is obvious. The portress will open the gate for the sisters she knows are going out with the permission of the superior. None others need apply. It has been tried many times.

Outside of the superior, the most important functionary in the convent is the portress. Liguori says to her in his *True Spouse*:

"Be not idle at the turn [gate], employ the little moments of time you have in working or reading; or at least in recollection with God, looking occasionally at some sacred image. When you open the door, cast down

your eyes, if you wish not to expose yourself to a thousand defects, and a thousand temptations.

Do not, I say, remain idle; do not neglect the duty of opening the door, and giving, without delay, the message to the nuns. You must, however, take care not to bring them inconvenient messages, nor call them, without first speaking to the superior, to any person who might wish to speak to them. Be careful to lock the 'inner' as well as the 'outer' doors at the prescribed hours."

To make assurance doubly sure the rule of Grand Silence was invented.

In convents where the sisters or nuns sleep in individual cells, the superior or a trusty makes the rounds to see that all are where they should be, instead of holding bootleg conversation with other sisters, or, worse still, with outsiders.

In convents where the sisters sleep in dormitories, "Grand Silence" is very helpful. It begins every night, usually at nine o'clock, when the bell tolls lights out. It lasts till seven o'clock the following morning. During this time no sister is permitted to utter a word unless in case of grave necessity, such as fire, severe illness, or other emergency. In such cases the sister who desires to leave the dormitory must notify the trusty who occupies the cell nearest the door, and get permission from her.

If a girl is not free to write to her parents without having her mail censored;

If she is not free to use her own name;

If she is not free to speak to her so-called sisters except at stated times, and then under close supervision;

If she is not free to leave the dormitory without the permission of the trusty on duty;

If she is not free to make any friends in the convent;

Is she free to leave the convent?

Leaving a convent is like leaving a penitentiary.

The first step on the road to freedom is a discharge. A sister is not free to walk out. The sister, even though she is only a postulant, or beginner, who dares to leave the convent without first obtaining a discharge, is as much a fugitive in the eyes of the church of Rome as a prisoner who flees the penitentiary is in the eyes of the civil law.

It is precisely to avoid the temptation to take French leave that the convent adopted the custom of taking a girl's clothes away from her and putting them where she could not get to them, and forcing her to wear a strange regalia known as the "holy habit."

In penitentiaries the striped jacket and trousers take the place of the "holy habit." The extreme singularity of the garb worn by nuns and sisters is in itself a formidable barrier to a sister's walking away without drawing attention. A girl who would show up among her former friends in the garb of a sister or nun would be branded as a renegade, and only those who have lived among Catholics know the opprobrium attached to that name.

A nun or sister, or postulant, who leaves a convent without obtaining permission to do so, is automatically excommunicated.

Between the canon law of the church and the glib promises dished out to a gullible candidate there is a world of difference. Someone is lying. In the convent freedom is an unknown quantity. So alone is the girl in the novitiate that she is not free to speak even to the old sisters who have been through the mill, and, for one reason or another, have been sent back to the novitiate to await the last lights out. The old sisters occupy a separate wing of the building and eat at different tables. Communication between them

and the younger sisters is absolutely prohibited. The church fears that many of these poor old creatures would tell the Postulants to turn back while they still have will power left, before they sink in the morass of despair, and begin to float listlessly down the river of "I don't care." The old nuns' secrets go to the grave with them. Dead nuns tell no tales; nor live ones either, in the novitiate, for they are not free to speak to each other.

Canon 564 says:

"The novitiate shall be, as far as possible, separated from that part of the house inhabited by the professed religious, so that, without a special cause, and the permission of the superior, or the master or mistress of novices, the novices may not communicate with the professed religious, nor these latter with the novices."

And again:

"Do not permit the novices to be familiar with the religious, or with the postulants, much less with each other; be careful, then, not to allow them to wander about the monastery without a companion. Do not permit any particular friendship either among the sisters or with externs, and should you be unable to prevent them, you should have recourse to the prelate."

Deprived of every human right, the unfortunate girl finds herself up against a conspiracy of silence. The word "sister" is, in the convent, a hollow mockery. Instead of being sisters they are strangers, even enemies. Where is the priest who so eloquently talked her into the convent? Will he help get her out? Of course not. He is paid to get recruits for the church. His duty ends there.

Blocked at every turn there is nothing for the novice to do but work up enough spirit to approach the Mistress of Novices and tell her that she wishes to return to the world, the flesh and the devil.

The church says a girl should rush into a convent the moment she imagines she has a vocation, for "the lights and inspirations from God are transient, not permanent." Does she tell the same thing to the girl when the light goes out in the convent, and the girl sobers up to the fact that she had no calling except what the priest persuaded her to do? Does she urge haste in leaving as she did in entering?

Certainly not. The notion to go in could only come from one source—God. The notion to leave could only come from one source—the devil. Therefore it should not be acted on without mature reflection and due consideration.

The frequency with which nuns and sisters apply for the right to leave the convent inspired St. Alphonsus Liguori to devote a chapter to that problem in the *True Spouse of Christ*.

To the nun who applies to the priest, the following colloquy is addressed:

"But perhaps you tell me that you will 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 make the vows of religion; but I entreat 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 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 infested with pestilence and surrounded with enemies, to a healthful country, *to be placed there for life*, secure against every foe. I add; grant that what you say is true, now that you are professed in a convent, and *it is impossible for you to leave it*, tell me what you wish to do about it?

If you entered against your inclinations, *you must now remain with cheerfulness.*

If you abandon yourself to melancholy, you will lead a life of misery, and will expose yourself to great danger of suffering a hell here, and a hell 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 to gain salvation and to become a saint. Give yourself to God from the heart, and I assure you that by so doing, you will become more content than all the princesses and queens of the world."

Quoting from the same standard textbook on the life of a nun, we read:

"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 that 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 *if she had 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.

You may say in reply, 'but, how can I be content, if I have not been called to religion?'

But what does it matter, that you have not had a vocation from the beginning?

Although you have not become a nun in obedience to a divine call, it is certain that God has permitted your profession for your welfare; and if He did not call you then, He certainly calls you now to be His without reserve.

St. Paul, the first hermit, went into the desert, not to remain in it, but to fly from the persecution which was then carried on against the church; but he was afterwards called by God to remain in the desert; he remained, and became a saint."

Thus is Father Doyle, and any other priest who says that a girl is free to leave a convent any time she gets ready, given the lie direct by the most eminent doctors and canonized theologians of the church of Rome.

Liguori goes on to tell us that:

"When St. Teresa first entered into a monastery, she entered not without reluctance; she said that in leaving her father's house the pain she felt was so great, that she thought it equal to the pain she should suffer at death. In her life it is related that she took the habit, as it were by force. But after all she became a saint, and the reformer of the Carmelite Order.

Blessed Hyacintha Marescotti, a religious of the convent of St. Clair in Viterbo, also was induced to take the sacred veil against her inclinations, and for ten years led a very imperfect life. Being one day illuminated by a divine light, she gave herself entirely to God, and persevered till death, for a space of twenty-four years, in a life of holiness, so that she was deserved to be venerated on the altar.

Likewise Sister Mary Bonaventure, a nun in the convent of Torre Dei Specchi, *entered against her will*, but after a life of tepidity and *dissipation*, she went during the first spiritual exercise and threw herself at the feet of Father Lancizio of the Society of Jesus [Jesuits] and said to him, 'Father, I have learned what God wants of me; I wish to become a saint, and I wish to become one immediately.' By virtue of the divine aid she executed her purpose. She went to her cell, and there, at the foot of the crucifix, wrote the following protestation: 'I, Mary Bonaventura, this day, in the beginning of the spiritual exercises, offer myself entirely to Thee, Oh my Jesus!'

It is in this manner that you must act; thus your misfortune, as you call it, will be a source of great happiness to you. Begin to make a little

more mental prayer; make a spiritual lecture every day; visit the blessed sacrament, and an image of Mary. When reproved be humble, when despised be silent; *cut off all correspondence*; mortify your appetite, curiosity, and selfwill."

Slowly, but surely, the convent system, like a venomous snake, is uncoiling itself. Its fangs are now quite visible. How well the great theologian and saint reveals the real reason back of the strict censorship of the mail coming in and leaving the convent. The unhappy nun must be prevented, at all costs, from letting her people know of her unhappy condition. She may live a life of "dissipation" in the convent, but she must not leave. Hence, the saint says that as soon as life becomes unbearable she is to "cut off all correspondence." He should have said that from the moment she makes it known that she is sick of the life and wants to quit, all correspondence will be cut off for her by the superior.

Why does the church of the popes object to convent inspection? Because we have it on the highest and most unimpeachable Catholic testimony that not only are Catholic girls lured into convents under false pretense, but are sometimes actually forced in by their parents, and this with the full knowledge and consent of the church.

A criminal in solitary confinement in a penitentiary is not more to be pitied than a girl who works up enough grit to say she wants her freedom in accordance with the promise she was made when she entered. She is immediately isolated lest she spread the contagion of her discontent. She is purposely made the aggressor in the struggle for the return of her money and her clothes. When, if ever, she gets her freedom, the church, as we have seen, keeps the interest on her money, and denies her the right to sue in the civil courts for any recompense for the services rendered by her to the community.

The church takes all and gives nothing. She will not take a chance, even on the Spouses of Christ, but makes them pay as they go, whether entering or leaving.

What has been said refers to the girl who tries to leave a convent before she has taken the veil and made the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

What happens when a sister or nun who has taken the black veil tries to leave? Let His Holiness the Pope, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, answer this question in *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*.

Canon 601 says:

"No nun, after profession, may, under whatever pretext, leave the monastery, even for a short time, without a special indult [permit] of the Holy See, [the pope] except in a case of imminent danger of death, or other very serious evil.

(2) This danger, if time permits, must be recognized as such by the local Ordinary [bishop] in writing."

We thought the girl could leave the convent any time she wanted. So did the girl.

Before a professed sister, or nun, that is, one who has taken the three vows and the black veil which go with them, and which is an index of her marriage to Jesus Christ, can leave a convent, she must first obtain an "*indult of secularization*," a permit from the pope to return to secular life.

True to his Jesuit training in sophistry, Father Doyle makes no mention of this in his popular book. He merely says that the girl can leave or stay at will, *before she binds herself irrevocably by her vows*.

So shallow a deception can readily be seen through. If a nun is free to leave the convent any time she wants, why should she

have to get the permission of anyone, even the pope? Simply because the pope stands in the same relationship to her as the warden in the penitentiary does to a prisoner. Both are free to leave—when the warden says so.

The sister who attempts to leave the convent by the regulation route of asking permission of the local superior, who in turn sees the confessor about it, who sees the bishop about it, who communicates with the pope about it, begins a torture worse than that of the Inquisition and hell together. The superior sees to it that the "unfaithful spouse of Christ" is properly isolated. Like a criminal in solitary confinement, no one dares to speak to her. Food is carried to her by an unfriendly "discreet," or trusty. Abandoned by all, the sister is an object of pity, if there be any in the convent who know how to pity. She has betrayed her heavenly spouse; she has nailed Him to the cross again.

Driven to despair, the poor sister may retract her statement and settle down for the rest of her life, usually in some other convent where the scandal of her attempt to leave will not be known, though, of course, the superior of the convent where she happens to be sent to, is secretly told of the affair and warned to watch her lest she take French leave. The last state of that nun is worse than the first, for she now is an object of suspicion, something to be watched. Never will she be selected to go out and do any shopping.

If, as often happens, a sister sees a good chance to make a getaway, and takes it, the church catches up with her. This is just another of the things the priest failed to tell her before she entered. The church has good reason for condemning those "pious and learned persons" who insist on telling a girl the whole truth before she enters a convent. The church accuses them of "spoiling

God's work." The fact of the matter is they are spoiling, not God's work, but the church's little game.

How does the church catch up with the nun or sister who simply believes she has a right to leave the convent and does it without asking anybody's permission? Canon 644 tells us:

"An apostate from religion is one who, having made profession of perpetual vows, whether solemn or simple, unlawfully leaves the religious house with the intention of not returning, or who, with the intention of withdrawing himself from religious obedience, though he has lawfully left the house, does not return to it.

(2) The perverse intention, referred to in the above, is legally presumed when the religious within a month has neither returned, nor manifested to his superior his intention of returning.

(3) A fugitive is one, who, without the permission of his superior, deserts the religious house with the intention of not returning to the institute."

Therefore, the nun or sister who walks out of a convent, though she has been led to believe she was free to do so, far from being a free woman, is an apostate, a fugitive, and subject to penalty under canon law.

Canon 645 says:

"Neither apostates nor fugitives are freed from the obligation of the rule and the vows, and must without delay, return to the institute.

(2) The superior must seek them out with solicitude, and receive them if they return animated by a sincere repentance; but as to apostate, or fugitive nuns, the local ordinary [bishop] shall prudently see to their return, and the regular superior also, in the case of an exempt monastery."

Canon 646 says:

"The following religious are ipso facto regarded as lawfully dismissed:

- (1) Religious who have publicly apostatized from the Catholic faith.
- (2) Religious who have run away with a person of the opposite sex.
- (3) Religious who attempt to contract marriage, even the so-called civil marriage."

Canon 669 says:

"The religious who has made profession of perpetual vows, and who has been dismissed from the institute, remains bound by her or his religious vows, except the constitutions, or apostolic indults determine otherwise."

Canon 2358 says:

"Without prejudice to the prescriptions of canon 646, the religious who has apostatized from his or her institute, incurs by the law itself, excommunication, reserved to his own higher superior, in the case of a lay non-exempt institute, to the bishop of the place where he resides; he is excluded from all ecclesiastical acts, deprived of all the privileges of his or her institute, and, if he or she return to it, must remain for ever without active or passive voice, and besides, he or she must be punished by the superior with other penalties according to the gravity of the fault, conformably to the constitutions."

Far from being obsolete, the laws of the church quoted above are in full force everywhere there is a convent today, including the United States, where the *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*, is sold by Catholic publishers.

In a book called *Religious Profession* by Father Papi, another Jesuit priest, professor of Canon Law at Woodstock College, published by P. J. Kennedy & Sons, New York, which carries the approbation of not only Cardinal Farley of New York, but also of the Apostolic Delegate, John Bonzano, Archbishop of Metilene, we read:

"The written form of profession should be signed by the one who makes the profession, and at least by him before whom the profession was made. Moreover, in the case of profession of solemn vows, the superior who received it should communicate the fact to the pastor of the place where the professed religious was baptized, in accordance with canon 470."

"Moreover," Father Papi adds, "when there is a question of the solemn profession, the superior must notify the pastor of the place where the religious was baptized."

To understand the object of this measure, we must understand that the solemn vow of chastity contained in the solemn profession has the effect of making the professed religious incapable of entering a marriage contract.

Moreover, if he or she should attempt to enter it, his contract, or marriage, would be null and void. By keeping a record of the solemn profession in the baptismal register, the danger is lessened that at any time a religious may succeed in attempting a sacriligious union.

The reason is obvious. Before the celebration of a marriage, the contracting parties must procure their baptismal certificate from the baptismal register of the place where they were baptized. Should a religious of solemn vows therefore attempt a marriage, it would be found out that he or she had an essential impediment, arising from his or her solemn profession.

The nature of this so-called "essential impediment," is explained by Liguori in his *True Spouse of Christ*. He says: "A religious on the day of her profession is espoused to Jesus Christ; for in the ceremony of profession, the bishop says to the novice about to be professed, 'I espouse thee to Jesus Christ; may He preserve thee inviolate. Receive, then, as His spouse, the ring of faith, that, if thou serve Him with fidelity, He may give thee an eternal crown.' "

If, at the end of the period of "temporary vows," or trial marriage to Christ, the sister and the institution are satisfied, the "marriage to Christ is made permanent." This is known as making "perpetual vows," and is a marriage in the eyes of the church. Therefore, since the church pretends not to grant divorce, the sister who tries to marry after she has made perpetual vows is a bigamist, for she is the wife of Jesus Christ.

Some orders of nuns wear a wedding ring. All nuns and sisters change their names, but as "Mrs. Jesus Christ," would sound ridiculous, each wife is given a fictitious name.

Father Doyle in *Vocations*, tells us: "To hesitate or doubt when the vows have been taken, would be treason. 'He who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back, is not worthy of Me.' "

Could a good Catholic be anything but an enemy of one who could turn her back on Jesus Christ? The Catholic woman who feels that she has just cause to leave her mortal husband is easily forgiven, but the nun who leaves her husband, Jesus Christ, never! Marriage to Christ is like marriage among the Hindoos. The Hindoo woman belongs to her husband for time and eternity. She cannot marry again. She is an outcast.

It is a crime against God and man to allow the church of the popes to entice girls ignorant of the binding nature of the vows they make to thus throw their lives away without benefit of disinterested legal counsel. By the time the young girl finds out that she has sold her birthright for a mess of theological pottage, she has put her signature to documents that are legally binding.

Why do not more nuns demand their freedom? Because the years spent in a convent, like those spent in a penitentiary, foster "prison stupor." The church knows well that the "training" given in the convent unfits the victim for the everyday struggle. In

his book, *He Who Eats Out of a Tin Plate*, the German novelist Hans Falada gives a true picture of what prison life does to a human.

I shrink at the memory of the awful struggle back to normalcy which I, in common with every other ex-nun, went through. With no business training, no knowledge of homemaking, no sense of values without which any life is a failure; with no decision; a prey to a thousand terrors, afraid of herself and everyone else; timid, cringing, physically emancipated, still mentally chained, the unfortunate ex-nun in too many cases "returns to her cell voluntarily," as the hero in Hans Falada's novel returns to his nice prison cell, because "here were no decisions to be made." Rome clips the wings of her victims so that they cannot fly, and then tells the believing world that they stay because they like it.

* * * *

"To whom does the power of dispensing from vows belong?"

"It belongs to the pope, to bishops and their delegates; but not to vicars-general, nor penitentiaries, nor curates, nor confessors, considered simply as such."

—Catholic Manual of Christian Doctrine

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY OF CONVENTS: A NEW CODE FOR NUNS

IT IS to the Orient that we must look for the origin of the convent system.

The custom of consecrating women to the service of the gods antedates Christianity by many centuries. Practically every temple in India has women consecrated to the service of the god. These Hindoo "virgins" have much in common with their sisters of the Roman church. This was strikingly brought home to me when I was a sister in St. Joseph's convent, in the Golden City of Mandalay, Burma.

Through a chink in the blinders which the church had put on me, I soon discovered that the scabby followers of Siva, Vishnu and Brahma, on the banks of the sacred Ganges, had a priority claim on holy water, holy smoke, holy ashes, holy sheep, holy cattle, ticks and all; charms, bones, bells and pictures, blessed by arrogant priests in both cases, in whom the space usually reserved for morality was unoccupied. Here, too, long before there was a pope in Rome, Purgatory was paying big dividends.

Nowhere, however, is the essential pagan origin of the "Faith of Our Fathers" more in evidence than in the convent system. The nuns and sisters of the Catholic church are an up-to-date brand of the dancing girls of the pagan temples of India.

Among the oldest systems of "god wives," of which anything authentic is known, is the "Vestal Virgins of the Moon." These nuns are found in many parts of India, and are a hangover from the Buddhist regime of centuries ago. According to an old legend,

it was King Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled ancient Babylon some five or six hundred years before Christ, who organized the first convent of the "Vestal Virgins of the Moon."

Thanks to modern psychology, we now know the reason for the strange cult. Tradition tells us that old King Neb had a physical defect which brought about a terrible inferiority complex. He was forced, to avoid disclosing his weakness, to turn his back on the fair maidens who would gladly have become his wives. Whereupon, we are told, he turned his thoughts upwards, and fell madly in love with the moon. When King Neb died he is supposed to have gone to the lady of his insane love, the moon. He became the Man in the Moon to the "Vestal Virgins of the Moon."

These nuns, or priestesses, are, like their Roman counterpart, forbidden to marry anyone but the "Man in the Moon, King Nebuchadnezzar."

Once a year these Moon priestesses go on a spree, in their convent, of course. During this annual frolic, men are permitted to enter the convent. The lovely "Virgins" go through the audience and pick out the man whom they think is King Neb. He pays her a ruby and is king, not for a day, but for a night.

Catholic "Wives of God," or, in the sweet camouflage of theology, "Spouses of Christ," do not spend their time dancing gracefully before the image of their god in the tabernacle. We must not forget that the church of Rome is a Big Business church, and any amusement the god gets he gets after business hours.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, so to relieve the monotony of convent life, sisters are given plenty of diversion over washtubs, in schools, emptying bedpans in hospitals, and pounding the sidewalks, panhandling, not for themselves, but for

the church. The pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests, are the stockholders in the company selling real estate in the New Jerusalem, the money being paid now.

In most cloistered Orders the nuns rise at midnight and serenade their "Husband" with soft canticles, much as the "wives of the god" in Hindoo temples pour "ghee" or holy butter on their god's head.

On page 72 of the *Last Home of Mystery*, the author, Alexander Powell, writes:

"Priestesses, or wives of the god, as they are called, are attached to the temple of both Siva and Vishnu, ostensibly to gratify the sexual desires of the deity. They are quite a different class from the temple dancing girls, though equally depraved, being generally the unfortunate victims of the immorality of the priests. The latter, by way of keeping up a reputation for sanctity, and in order to conciliate the families whose daughters they have seduced, put the whole blame on Siva or Vishnu, and the poor gods, as is only fair, do the right thing by taking the poor girls in marriage.

The women who are thus consecrated to Vishnu are known as 'garuda-basavis,' wives of the 'Garuda' or eagle, which is the vehicle of Vishnu, and have the image of this bird tattooed on their breasts.

The priestesses of Siva are called 'lingam-basavis,' or women of the 'lingam,' and bear this obscene symbol tattooed on the inner side of their thighs. It seems scarcely necessary to add that the wives of the god are the concubines of the priests."

When a Hindoo priest seduces a girl he puts her into a temple as the wife of the god.

When a Catholic priest seduces a girl he puts her into a convent and marries her off as a wife of god, a "spouse of Christ." In neither case does the priest cease his depredations. There is always room for one more victim. The doctor hides his mistakes with a spade and shovel; the priest with a simple black veil.

Do I mean that all nuns and sisters are in convents because they were seduced by priests? Certainly not. When, however, a priest does seduce a girl, he is at liberty to put his victim into a convent. A priest cannot under any circumstances marry a girl, but he can do better than marry her himself—he can give her to Jesus Christ as a spouse, for a “sinful life in the past is no impediment to a vocation.”

The ceremony of the “Triple Cord,” or profession, is a marriage ceremony and gives the recipient the status of a married woman, and, as the priest alienated her affections before she was a wife of God, there is no comeback. The case is closed as far as the priest is concerned, and “God’s secondary agent” is free to lead some other soul captive.

During the ceremony of profession, the officiating bishop says to the novice:

“I espouse thee to Jesus Christ; may He preserve thee inviolate.”

What if the novice has been a victim of priestly lust? What is the confessional for, if not to repair any damage done to souls? And it is indispensable in cases where a priest must get rid of a too-trusting girl.

We have seen that “Magdalen, steeped to the lips in iniquity, became a spouse of the Lamb.” Apparently the “Lamb” has no objection to salvaging whatever is left of the priest’s victim.

Holy mother church wastes nothing. She has devised a neat method of bringing these slightly used models up-to-date. The ceremony of profession is known to Catholic and Hindoo alike by the name of “The Triple Cord.”

In his chapter on “The Triple Cord—the Vows,” Father Doyle says, ‘Seeing how pleasing is this lifelong sacrifice to God, the

fathers of the church, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, the Angelic Doctor, and others, have always called religious profession a "Second Baptism" by which the guilt and punishment due for past sins are entirely forgiven." Thus the sinning soul is born all over again by the magic formula of the ceremony of the "Triple Cord."

No matter to what depths she may have sunk, she is now a "virgin." What with a new name and a new birth, one would scarcely recognize the old model. The only fly in the ointment is human nature. This the priest is powerless to alter, as is proven by the startling number of these remodeled souls that revert to type as soon as the novelty wears off.

Among the Hindoos and Catholics, those who have been through the ceremony of the "Triple Cord" are known as "Twice Born Souls." These twice borners go through life grovelling at the feet of a highly sensitive deity, who thrives on palaver, and damns those who do not cater to his every whim, in the hope that if they annihilate every vestige of self respect they ever had, his nibs may assign them a corner in his harem in the sky.

With regard to the ceremony of the "Triple Cord," among the Hindoos, Powell, in his *Last Home of Mystery*, says, "The Brahmans have ever represented the sacerdotal class in India, and, like the priestly clan the world over, they have directed the political destiny of the country, and still exercise the most potent influence of any caste in India."

The great difference between their caste and all others is that it is not hereditary, for a Brahman only becomes a Brahman after the ceremony of the "Triple Cord." Until this essential ceremony has been performed he ranks as only one of the lower castes, and hence is called "Twice Born."

The church of Rome says: "The ceremony of profession, or the ceremony of the Triple Cord, is a second baptism." Those who go through it are Twice Born.

Among Catholics, as among the Hindoos, the simplest and surest way to step from the lowest caste, the laity, to the highest caste, the priesthood, is by the ceremony of the Triple Cord, religious profession. Nor is the elevation confined to the person who goes through the "essential ceremony," but extends to the family of the "Twice Born."

Amongst the Tibetan Buddhists, where the same doctrine of Twice Born is still strongly held, the father of the child selected as the Delai Lama, or Living God, who is, like the pope, spiritual and temporal head of the Buddhist sect, becomes automatically a "King," which is the highest office to which a layman can aspire.

The church of Rome carries out this form of spiritual bribery to the letter. The family which contributes a son or a daughter to the ceremony of the Triple Cord, or religious profession, either as sister, nun, monk, or priest, are automatically raised to the highest place to which the laity can aspire. This is a powerful incentive to parents with social ambition. It puts a premium on every girl the parents can put in a convent. The more sons and daughters in "religion" the more prominent the family. Not all Catholics have the wealth necessary to buy a papal title, but all, or nearly all, have sons and daughters with which to purchase social prestige. Planting a girl in a convent is the surest way for a Catholic nonentity to start a family tree. The church will obligingly lop off the shady branches for a consideration, or another slave.

The convent system is un-Christian, inhuman, un-American. It is un-Christian, because Christianity teaches that all creatures are the children of God. How then can the child become the wife of the

father? Is heaven a mere harem with Christ at the head, and thousands of His children as His spouses?

The church says, "all things are possible to God." It is immoral only when a man tries it.

The convent system is inhuman because it tramples on the rights of the individual. It urges heartless parents to force their unfortunate offspring into convents even against their will. It allows its priests to lure mere children into its cruel clutches by means of verbal promises which she is in no way bound to live up to, and then holds them in her toils by means of shame and fear. It is inhuman because it teaches hatred of parents, and contempt for motherhood, God's greatest gift to woman.

It is inhuman because it follows with its withering power even those who have been fortunate enough to shake off its shackles, and makes them wanderers on the face of the earth, a prey for every Catholic.

The convent system is one hundred per cent un-American because it denies its members the essential American rights of free speech, free and untrammelled intercourse with their fellow citizens, and puts them thereby on a par with criminals in our penitentiaries.

It arrogates to itself the right to change the names of its members without recourse to the civil law. It assumes the right to tamper with the mail; to deliver it or not, as it sees fit.

Above all, it is un-American because it makes its members obedient to a foreign power. This charge, so vehemently denied by the spokesmen for the Vatican, especially since the restoration of the temporal power of the popes, can be proven beyond any shadow of doubt by referring to canon 499 of *Canonical Legislation Concerning Religious*. This canon reads:

"All religious are subject to the Roman Pontiff as to their highest superior and are bound to obey him even by virtue of their vow of Obedience."

The vow of Obedience, it must be remembered, is an unconditional vow. They must obey regardless of whether the thing ordered is right or wrong.

That such an arrangement is inimical to the best interests of the United States goes without saying. Friends of despotism will plead that to interfere with Rome's right to maintain a standing army of religious slaves in an unwarranted interference with religious freedom.

There is freedom and freedom. The American government grants freedom of religious worship as long as the sects do not abuse their freedom by any doctrine or practice which would endanger the welfare of the country. It reserves the right to interfere with any church which violates this principle.

Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and of nations. I, therefore, in the name of humanity, call on the government of the United States to exercise her right on behalf of the Forgotten Women in the convents of the Roman Catholic church and give them a new deal, a deal based, not on the canon law of the church of the popes, but on the Constitution of the United States of America.

First, it should abolish by law the practice of accepting little children in monastic institutions and holding them till the age of sixteen and the binding them by vows at an age when they do not know what they are doing. It should be made illegal to accept into any convent or monastic institution of any kind any boy or girl under eighteen years complete, with or without the consent of their parents.

Second, no person should be allowed to make vows till twenty-one years of age. This would end the exploiting of mere children in the name of religion.

Third, every state where monastic institutions exist should have on file a sworn statement of the exact number of inmates in the house. This list should be kept up to date.

Fourth, all arrivals and departures of members of these colonies should be reported. This would put an end to the custom of keeping human cargo in transit, especially in cases where the sister or priest has reason to complain of foul play.

Fifth, the state should have a certified list of the real names of the inmates, together with the names and addresses of their parents, or of their nearest kin.

Sixth, since the act of entering a monastic institution is, to all intents and purposes, a renunciation of the rights of citizenship, for no man can serve two masters (the Pope and the State) members of monastic communities should be debarred from voting in any election, state, county, or national and from teaching in public schools.

Seventh, members of religious Orders entering the country should be fingerprinted and required to take out citizenship papers within the time specified by law. This would protect labor from the menace of flooding the country with cheap foreign labor under the cloak of religion. Once in the country, this horde of religious is lost track of by the civil authorities. Do they all stay in the convents? No one knows.

Eighth, all persons entering a monastic institution should be required to make a will and file the same. The renunciation which the church of Rome forces all religious to make sixty days before profession, should be null and void.

Ninth, the use of special regalia by religious should be confined to the premises.

Tenth, the boards of public health should have full control of monastic institutions, and should make regular visits to them.

Eleventh, the death certificate of all persons dying in monastic institutions should be signed by a non-Catholic doctor as well as a Catholic doctor.

While these recommendations may not be perfect, they would point the way to much-needed reform of convents and monasteries in this country. It is to be hoped that the fair-minded people in the church of Rome will see that our legislators turn their attention to these Forgotten Women, and draw up a New Code for Nuns.

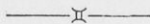
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"Extol your theories, proffer your advice,
And chains or banishment may be the price,
For despot hands, since might's initial sway.
Have fashioned chains for worthier hands than they;
And oftentimes beneath the tyrant's heel
Are crushed the lives which strive for human weal;
Who dare to hold the gonfalon aloft
For human rights and progress, yes, how oft
Since Cain that fratricidal murder wrought,
Have death and durance been the price of "thought"!
He who espouses radical reform
Invites upon his head the gathering storm;
Each forward step from Custom's hackneyed school,
Draws forth the floods of scorn and ridicule;
Witness the dungeon, guillotine and rack;
Chains for the feet and scourges for the back;
Bestrewn with insult, diatribe and scuff,
The pathway of reform was ever rough;
And when reforms like tidal waves have come,
The foremost breakers dash to martyrdom."

THE END

RECOMMENDED BOOKS



The following books have been chosen and are recommended as containing good source material on the aims and activities of the Roman Catholic church today:

DER FUEHRER, by Conrad Heiden, who is recognized as knowing more about the rise of Hitler and Nazism than any objective historian alive. He does not omit the part played by the Vatican and the Catholic hierarchy in bringing Hitler to power. **778 pages. Price\$3.00**

THE SPANISH LABYRINTH, by Gerald Brenan; the most authoritative and best documented account of the social, political and religious background of the Spanish civil war. **384 pages. Price\$3.50**

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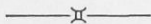
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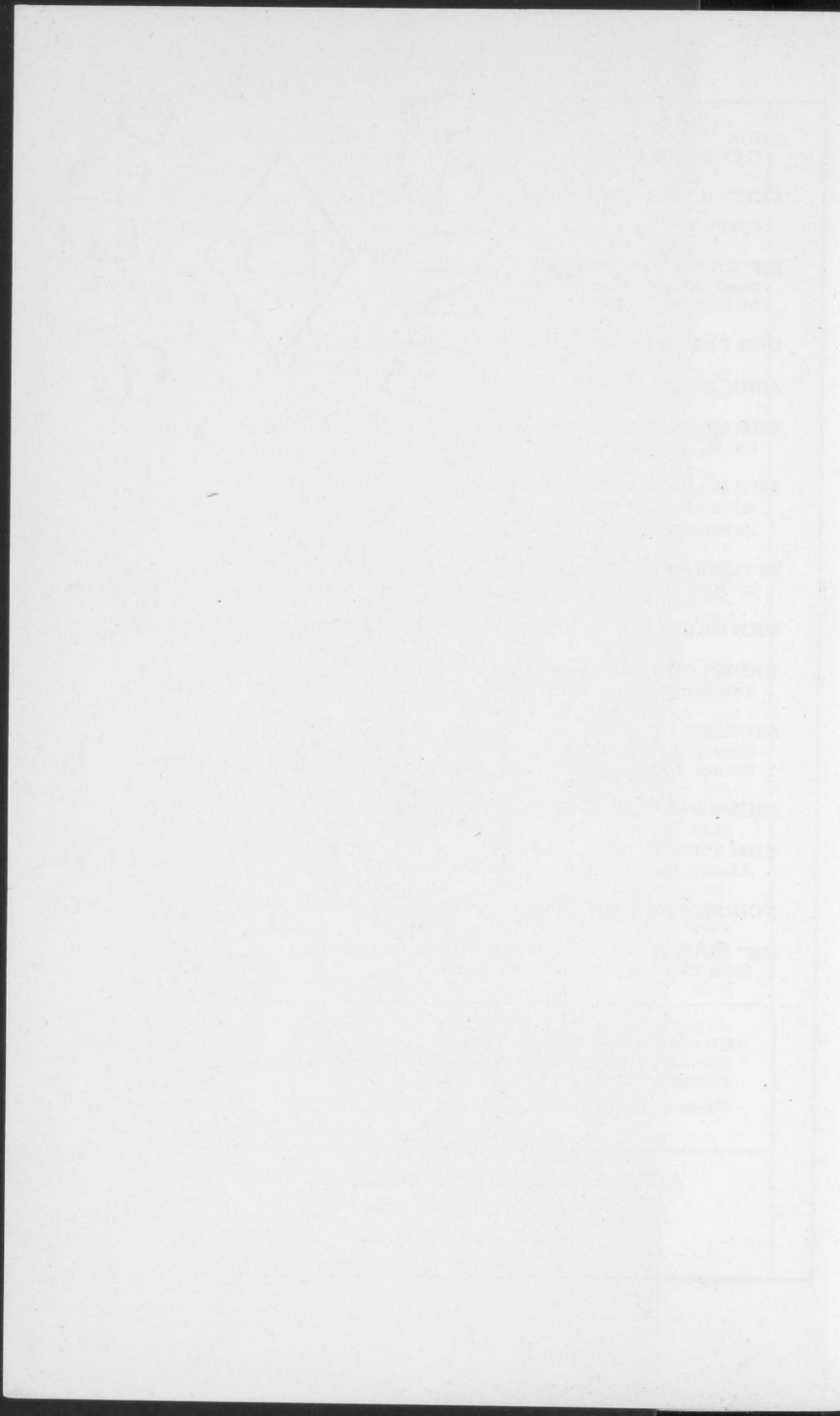


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