



"The day had not dawned, there was a faint moonlight."



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SISTER AGNES;

OR,

THE CAPTIVE NUN.

A Picture of Convent Life.

BY A CLERGYMAN'S WIDOW,

AUTHOR OF "THE ORPHAN'S FRIEND," "THE WIDOW'S FRIEND," ETC.

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PREFACE.

CIRCUMSTANCES which it is unnecessary to detail, have unfolded to the writer of the following pages, the real character of that state of seclusion over whose deformities the golden veil of romance has been too successfully drawn; and have awakened a strong feeling of compassion for the victims of a delusion so terrible as that which is systematically practised by the decoys of Rome, upon hundreds of the youthful and unsuspecting.

It is in the desire of inducing some to pause before they enter a prison—of all prisons the most hopeless—that this little work is sent forth; and in the further desire of adding impetus to the movement now happily begun, for obtaining an efficient inspection and control of British nunneries.

The very howling with which priests and abbesses have greeted the proposal to look into their dens, is a proof that in those dens there are scenes which will not bear the light of day,—unhappy creatures who would gladly embrace the offer of liberty, and would

perchance tell tales to arouse the ire of this free country. Such tales *have* been told by some of the very few captives who have regained their liberty; but they have been drowned in the clamour of those who know that no *legal* means exist for verifying them, and whose religion teaches that to lie for the honour of the Church is meritorious.

But if the inmates of convents be happy, what possible harm can accrue from letting the world see their happiness—from overwhelming with confusion those who assert the contrary? If nuns desire above all things to remain in their paradises, why wall in and bar, and bolt, and lock, and guard those paradises more jealously than our gaols? If access be still denied, we cannot believe that there is no crime to hide; and we must persist in the attempt to have it ascertained, by law, whether frightful rumours be not true. Let an Englishman be reported to have done deeds of violence in his own house, be it but to have beaten a pauper servant, will the plea that his house is his castle, screen him from the visits of police, from the strong arm of law? Surely not. To bolt and bar his residence, and howl at the officers of justice, would be regarded only as a proof and aggravation of his crime; and so would England judge of conventual secrecy if infatuation had not seized her.

The narratives of escaped nuns, and converted priests, and ex-confessors are pretty widely known; but unfortunately they are but partially believed, partly from their excess of horror, partly from the clamour of those whose interest it is that they should

be disbelieved. They will not therefore be quoted here; the doctors of the Roman Catholic Church themselves will be brought forward, permitting, approving, enjoining, deeds which, by some of her sons, are stated to be impossible.

“The Church” *permits* what we call murder under many circumstances; *enjoins* it under some. He therefore who in those circumstances does not commit murder is a disobedient son of this holy mother,—he professes a religion which he either disbelieves or disobeys; that is, he is either a hypocrite or a rebel.

Such circumstances must frequently occur in nunneries—is murder committed then and there, or do the heads of those houses act in flagrant opposition to the laws of their church?

There is scarcely a vice, save heresy, for which canonized doctors do not find a palliative. Liguori was canonized for his successful endeavours to show how all crimes might be rendered lawful. Lying especially is transmuted into a virtue of inestimable worth, when it can contribute to the honour and aggrandisement of the church. Do the rulers of convents obey their sainted teachers in covering with falsehood deeds of which heretics disapprove; or are they so impious and false-hearted as to prefer truth to religion?

The morality of Protestants, and the religion of Roman Catholics, stand in direct opposition the one to the other. Which may a loyal son of “the Church”

be supposed to prefer—will it be the dogma of the heretic?

Much labour and much inquiry have been expended upon this volume. Its consistency with facts will be denied. What is denial worth from the disciples of Liguori!

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SISTER AGNES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"Along the dale

"With woods o'erhung, and shagged with mossy rocks,

"Whence on each hand the gushing waters play;

"And down the rough cascade white-dashing fall;

"Or gleam in lengthened vista through the trees,

"You silent steal; or sit beneath the shade

"Of solemn oaks."

THOMSON.

In a little glen, the earliest buds of spring are expanding; the brush-wood is already green and feathery; but the trees overhead are still bare; their white polished branches shining in the sun-light, and forming a trellis-work, between the interstices of which the blue sky appears. A wooded cliff on the one hand, and a grassy knoll on the other, bound the glen; and along its centre a tiny streamlet wanders. The stream has come dancing and flashing over a rock,

and sending out diamonds to stud the overhanging foliage; and now it has found a quiet, lowly channel, where it ripples, clear as crystal, over white pebbles, and green and olive moss; and its little wavelets are like liquid gold when the sunbeam glances upon them.

A child is standing with her eyes fixed upon the stream; its beauty has entered into her very soul, and she has forgotten that there is aught in the world besides. Every golden ripple, every changeful hue of moss and pebble is painting itself upon her heart, and the deep and passionate love of nature has taken possession of her young spirit. A sudden burst of music from an overhanging bough has broken the spell of the waters; and looking up to espy the tiny chorister, she sees him perched against the clear blue sky, with the trellis-work beneath him. How beautiful! Her eye now wanders over the heavens, and they, in their turn have woven their charm around her. Her foot is upon a stone, her clasped hands are resting upon her knee, and her head is thrown back while she gazes reverently upon the sky. She is already an enthusiast.

A little lower down the glen, near the arch of an old bridge, a lady is seated upon a grey stone, with a small basket in her hand. She rises and approaches the child, saying, 'Come, my love, we must gather our primroses and return home.'

'Mamma, mamma! did you ever see the sky so beautiful as it is to-day?' cried the little maiden. 'I do love spring above all the other seasons. Well, the primroses! ah! there is a tuft slyly peeping out from the root of that old tree among the moss. I will gather moss to dress them in, dear mamma, and then they will never know that they have left their own beautiful bed.' And then she sung,

"Now on mossy banks so green,
"Starlike primroses are seen."

'Is it not sweet to sing to the waters? Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, they are singing too.'

'You ought to be a fairy, to live on the green sward beside the waters,' said Mrs. Percy, smiling, 'with a primrose cup for your bower.'

'Charming! but the primrose would wither, and then I should have no house. I wish those golden stars would not wither; that they would hide themselves here all the year round.'

'Primroses will wither, and so will you, dear child.'

'But summer flowers will come, mamma, roses and harebells; and winter will bring bright icicles, hanging down from the fall; and green holly with red berries.'

'God's world is beautiful always, my love; and those who are good have flowers in their hearts all the year round.'

'Are there flowers in Heaven? dear mamma.'

'Yes, flowers that never wither.'

'Delightful! And a blue sky and little streams?'

'A sky that is always bright, and a river of the water of life.'

'Then I should like to go to Heaven.'

Ah! poor child, she would go to Heaven for earthly skies, and streams, and flowers! So would many besides her.

The primroses were gathered, and the wanderers returned homeward; but the child's mind was filled with heaven, such as she fancied it,—a paradise of blue skies, and dancing streams and little birds. She pictured too the form of a baby-brother there, with bright eyes, and flaxen hair and wings. She had been told that the child was now a cherub; and often she had wondered that her mother who had wept over his death, could not bear to hear her speak of his beauty and happiness. *She* would always have been talking of him and of his fair home, feeling neither sorrow nor separation; living in an ideal world where he was present. She had sometimes dreamed of him, and sometimes fancied a rustling among the trees as of viewless wings; and once she had awakened in the morning with the song of an angel ringing in her ears. Those wings and that song, she felt sure were her baby-brother's.

* * * * *

It was a splendid spring night; a slight frost had made the stars sparkle like diamonds in the deep blue sky; but the curtains were drawn, the fire was stirred, and the harp, on which Mrs. Percy had been playing, was returned to its corner.

Mary coaxingly begged for a promised lesson on the names of the stars. The window was thrown open; they stepped out upon the balcony, and the wish of the little girl was complied with.

'Is that Heaven up among the stars? I should like very, very much to go there,' cried she, clasping her hands eagerly, while she seemed to see her little brother looking down upon her.

'Oh! Mary, Mary!' exclaimed Mrs. Percy, with an expression of pain.

'Ho! you star-gazers! do you mean to cheat me of my game at blindman's buff, with your astrology? You shall tell me my fortune by those stars,' cried Mr. Percy, darting out of the window, and snatching up in his arms the youthful student, whom he bore laughing and struggling into the drawing-room, 'What say the planets? you little gipsy.'

'They say that papa is a very bad man; and that I will catch him at blindman's buff,' tittered the child; all her contemplations put to flight by the sudden interruption of fun.

'And that the gipsy will catch cold, and get nothing but water-gruel for a week. Didn't that come next?'

'No! the big star said that papa should get water-gruel, and I grapes and tamarinds.'

'Well, saucy one, look for the stars now,' said Mr. P. tying a handkerchief over her eyes; 'That is the way to the moon, and here is Orion's wand in your hand. Come, you are walking into the sun, it will burn you, young astronomer.'

'I have caught you, sir papa, ha! ha!'

'No, you have caught the Great Bear, ready to eat you; ho! ho!'

Worrying, laughing, struggling and screaming, the game rose to a perfect uproar, till the appearance of tea acted as a sedative; and when the child retired for the night, stars and primroses were mingled in her dreams. The gentle sleep of childhood fell upon eyes that had looked only upon loveliness and mirth.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST SORROW.

"A mother's grave, amid the earth!
 "Arrayed in flowers of summer dye;
 "Is like the moon-cloud that comes forth
 "To darken all the radiant sky;
 "For all the joys that life possest
 "Our drooping hearts to soothe and save,
 "Seem buried with the tender breast
 "That moulders in a mother's grave."

KNOX.

Two years had passed away. Primroses had come a second time, and violets and wood anemones were also in the glen; but they were unvisited. There was no sound of mirth in Avon House; but people spoke low, and trod softly, as if fearful of awakening a sleeping infant. In a half-darkened bed-room hung with black, lay a lady very fair, still and silent, like a finely-chiselled marble statue. Beside the bed kneeled her once happy husband, his evening merriment gone for ever; and the dark vista of a lonely, desolate existence opened despairingly before him. There was no light in his soul; all was black as midnight; his eye was glassy, unmoistened by a tear;

and his fevered brow and clenched hand told of the utter departure of joy and hope. He presented a strange contrast to the calm, passionless form upon which he gazed.

Her harp was covered and put into its corner, never more to be played upon; and all the little articles of needle-work and drawing which could remind him painfully of her, were carefully removed by a faithful old domestic.

'Why are the blinds all drawn down?' said Mary, chokingly, to herself. 'I want light and air.' So with a feeling of suffocation, and a strange sense of misery, as of some intolerable load upon her heart, she put her head behind the blind, and gazed upon the lawn and trees; and then she wished to run—to fly—whither, she cared not, if it were only away; to be any where but in that dim, desolate house.

She heard a voice in the room, 'Miss Mary, the dressmaker wishes you a few minutes.' She looked round; a black dress was in the woman's hand, she burst into tears, and wept long and passionately.

The dressmaker was gone, and the house was still and silent again; and again the longing, as of a prisoner for escape, seized the child. She crept into the hall, looked around her, and seeing no one, gently opened the door and fled. With beating heart she ran until she had reached the glen; and then, faint with the violent exertion, and the terror of pursuit,

she threw herself upon the grass beside the grey-stone where her mother used to sit, and wept herself to sleep. Two hours passed over, and still she slept; the sense of misery was lost in that sweet unconsciousness.

The loud bark of a greyhound awakened her, and immediately her favourite Di bounded towards her, whined and licked her face, and barked again. She looked up, wondering where she was, and saw the old butler, John, approaching her, while her father followed at a little distance. John looked grave and angry at first; but perceiving the traces of tears on the countenance of the child, who now stood trembling at the remembrance of her flight, he said, 'It is as I thought, sir; this is where my lady used to sit, and Miss Mary has been weeping here.' The old man's lip quivered, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

Mr. Percy spoke not, he sat down upon the stone, and folding the child to his bosom, his tears also, of which the fountain had hitherto been locked, burst forth in a copious and refreshing torrent.

At Mary's earnest request, she was taken to see her mother. Awe-stricken, she could not speak, she could scarcely breathe. From the cold form before her, so still, so white, so solemn, life, intelligence, and love were gone; and in the heart of the child, filial affection gave way to dread. She dared not touch

the corpse; and wondered when nurse kneeled down and kissed the clayey hand. Her dreams that night were frightful; she screamed in her sleep, and awakening, entreated to be taken to nurse's bed. Her father bitterly regretted the shock which had been given to her, and ordered her to be carefully kept in future from the room of woe. She never identified that solemn form with her mother; dreams of heaven visited her again, and there in the midst of flowers, and woods and sparkling waters, her fancy placed the beloved one, as a being of light, and joy, and beauty;—a being, having no connection now with the forsaken clay. In an agony of grief, she saw the funeral procession move from the house; and yet, the departure of the body was rather a relief, for it was not her mother. Away, beyond the blue skies, that beloved mother walked in white with her baby brother; and though she wept now when she thought of heaven, it was not quite for sorrow. More sorrowful were her tears when she thought of her walks in spring, and of her merriment on winter evenings. So strongly was she possessed by a pleasant idea of her dear one visiting her as a ministering spirit, that on one occasion, she actually uttered aloud the words her heart had dictated to the unseen, whom she imagined to be present.

Mr. Percy was not a religious man; he lacked the true source of consolation in his bereavement;

and it fell with almost intolerable weight upon a heart that had nothing to sustain it but human pride and cold philosophy. He had loved his wife passionately; and with her death the sun of his existence had gone down. He never spoke of her even to his little girl; but in the twilight when formerly they romped together, or when her mother used to sing, he often took her on his knee, and while the fire was unstirred, and the shadows were deep in the room, he rested his face upon her silken hair, and she thought that he wept. In daylight he moved about sad and silent, calling her sometimes to walk with him, but uttering scarcely a word as they went. The glen he utterly avoided.

Thus the child became more and more contemplative, and a shadow of premature sadness settled upon her youthful features. She delighted to go alone to the shrubbery, or to entice nurse to the glen, where she marked every varying aspect of the changing seasons with deep and passionate delight. Nature became her idol; and while she wandered in the midst of its beauties, her imagination roved in the fields of the unseen, and she held strange converse with the loved and the lost.

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION.

"Our most important are our earliest years;
"The mind, impressible and soft, with ease
"Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,
"And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clew,
"That education gives her, false or true!"

COWPER.

MRS. PERCY had superintended the education of her daughter, which was now for a time neglected, except by her French teacher, who still visited her twice a week. M. Bouquet was a favourite at Avon House, and sometimes Mr. Percy conversed with him for a little after Mary's lessons were over. Mons. B. ventured one day to suggest that the time was now come when the careful cultivation of his pupil's mind had become a matter of deep importance; her talents he believed to be considerable, and her disposition so amiable, as to present the promise of a very superior character.

'My sister has been urging me,' said Mr. P., 'to send my daughter to be educated along with her children, but this is a sacrifice which I cannot make.'

EDUCATION.

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And this was a sacrifice which it would not at all have suited the plans of Monsieur, that Mr. Percy should make at present; though he looked forward with exultation to the time when, after his own method, she should be torn from her parent's heart. He therefore replied that it would be cruel in the extreme to deprive one so solitary of his only remaining comfort; and suggested that a judicious governess might carry on her instruction without depriving him of her society.

Mr. P. started. He disliked governesses from unfortunate recollections of his own childhood, and he haughtily replied that he would not see a governess at his lonely table.

Monsieur B. dropped the matter for the present, trusting that time would assist in effecting his purpose.

Soon afterwards, during a visit from his sister, Mr. P. was again assailed by remonstrances on the subject of Mary's education. He firmly refused to part with her; but promised to consider of the propriety of engaging a governess.

About this time Monsieur Bouquet mentioned to Mary that he was obliged to go to the continent for a week or two, and that, if agreeable to her father, her lessons would be carried on during his absence by a countrywoman of his own, who had resided some time in England with an aged father, whose death had left

her solitary and poor. 'My only fear, Miss Percy,' said Monsieur, 'is that you will be so much enamoured with your new teacher, as to dismiss me on my return.'

'Non, non, Monsieur!' replied Mary, laughing, 'you know I like old friends better than new.'

Mons. B. was six weeks from home, and he had proved a true prophet; for so completely had his substitute wound herself around the heart of her little pupil that the child wept at the announcement of her departure.

'Dearest papa,' she entreated, 'do invite Mademoiselle Dupin to stay with us a little while; she is so very good, so very kind; she tells me such beautiful stories, and seems to love me so much; and she has no home, papa: she must seek one among strangers in the wide world. Her mother is dead, and her father is dead,' added the child, bursting into tears.

Mr. Percy took her upon his knee, wiped her tears, and after a pause inquired, 'Should you like to have this lady for your governess?'

'Oh! charming, charming!' cried the child, springing up and clapping her hands. 'Shall I go and ask her? Let me run, papa, she is not gone yet.'

'Stop, my love,' said Mr. P., smiling; 'you know it will be necessary first to make many inquiries. So you must not excite expectations which may be disappointed.'

'Inquiries? papa. Oh! you know she is good and gentle: at least, I know; and Mons. Bouquet told me how kind she was to her sick father,' urged the little maiden.

Mr. P. smiled again, and kissed the youthful pleader. 'You *must* wait,' he said; 'you must not mention it to Mademoiselle; but I will take means to ascertain whether she is a proper person to be your governess.'

'Kind, kind, dear papa; how happy I shall be!' And the sudden sunshine having dried the April shower of the child's tears, she skipped about the room and sang merrily, while her father summoned all his resolution to do what seemed to be for the welfare and happiness of his little daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUITS.

"Collecting all his serpent wiles."
MILTON.

'BIEN! Mademoiselle; of course you have succeeded,' said Mons. Bouquet to his substitute; 'for when did Sister Agatha fail in any spell she undertook to weave? You have mesmerized the young heiress—she sees as you bid her, acts as you will, and follows you at the end of an invisible chain.'

'Padre Carlo has seen miraculously what he never looked upon,' replied Mlle. Dupin.

'Is the affair settled? Are you installed gouvernante—having surreptitiously supplanted the benefactor who introduced you?' inquired M. B.

'The business is not finished, but I have no doubt of success; and we shall find a post for the poor padre even before he becomes confessor,' said Mademoiselle.

JESUITS.

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'Do you commence openly as true Catholic, or covertly as Protestant?'* asked M. B.

'I rather think I must submit to be Protestant for a time. Mr. Percy cares little about religion; but is hereditarily a Protestant, though high-church, if any thing, and therefore manageable; but those aunts and cousins might be troublesome to an avowed Catholic, and the child herself has notions about religion derived from her mother; besides that, her old nurse reads the Bible to her.'

'That woman must be removed,' said the padre, authoritatively.

'Nothing easier; leave that to me; by and bye it shall be done,' said Mademoiselle.

'It is well,' remarked Monsieur, 'that we Jesuits have a lofty end in view—that a subjugated world is to be the reward of our labours. But for the prospect upon which the vista opens, our spirits would flag, and our hearts sink in our tortuous and difficult path; and those stumbling-blocks which the world calls honour and compassion, would often lay us in the dust.'

'Quails the spirit of Padre Carlo before the tears of a child?' asked Agatha somewhat contemptuously.

'It is long since the spirit of Padre Carlo forgot to quail,' replied the Jesuit; 'it has watched un-

* See Appendix A.

moved a man's tortures; and a child's tears will not overcome it.'

'Small need will she have for tears,' replied the sister, 'when the salvation of her soul is secured.'

'Well! I did but speak of the lofty view which has steeled our hearts against all weak and womanish feelings,' continued Monsieur.

'Womanish!' said Agatha, 'ha!'

'Sister Agatha has nobly triumphed over *her* womanish feelings,' said Carlo. 'She is a true daughter of the Church, fully equipped for her mission; the circlet of saintship is kindling for her head, and the nail of her great-toe will yet be enshrined in gold, to restore the dead to life, and to quell the bandit on the mountains.'

'Alas!' said Agatha, 'many a toil and many a tear await me, ere the circlet of saintship be mine. Meanwhile the work assigned me now by the Church is very much to my taste—to bring over this young heiress to the true faith, and to secure her fortune to the Church, while she is safe and happy in the peaceful cloister, far from the snares which surround her position in society.'

'Safe, happy, and peaceful!' repeated the padre to himself; 'the cloister is safe, happy, and peaceful!' He smiled bitterly; for his sister's image rose before him, pale, desolate, dying; and yet that image fired him with a stern resolve to ruin others as she had been ruined.

Agatha's keen eye pierced his very soul, though she seemed to look away; for each Jesuit is a spy upon the other. She saw that bitter smile, but knew that the momentary pang would terminate in fierce and immovable determination, in a spirit stretched and strung like a bow, for the work of the Church, by the tension of feelings which needed to spring out in impetuous action, or to be suppressed and overborne by deep machinations.

Body, soul, and spirit had been given to the work of the Church by each of these Jesuits; but although their original motives had been similar, they were now impelled by different principles. Religious zeal, created by earnest belief, had been the spring of the devotion of each. In Sister Agatha that zeal had deepened and widened into a current of fanaticism which swept down every obstacle or overleaped every barrier in its appointed course. Acute, politic, insinuating, accomplished, endued with indomitable energy and perseverance, aspiring to the crown of saintship, Rome found in her an instrument fully fitted for its purposes. The dominance of the 'true Church' she had learned to set before her as the end and aim of her life, and to regard as pure and holy all the means by which that end could be accomplished. Skilled in the sophisms of the doctors, dissimulation was with her pious fraud; cruelty, Spartan resolution; the severance of all tender affections, exalted heroism.

and spirituality. She lived, breathed, and acted but for Rome and Rome's glory; and imagined that thus she was heaping up a store of merit which should be available in eternity.

She had been employed in Protestant families in various capacities; even in that of a lady's-maid; had always been prompt to report to head-quarters all that might be available to the cause of popery; had sometimes sown dissension and rancour in religious society; sometimes effected conversions to Rome, and always diligently, though covertly, promoted the interests of the 'Holy Catholic Church.' A whole school into which she had been received as governess, had been infected with popery; two Bible Associations had been dissolved with bitterness; and now she was entrusted, together with Padre Carlo, with the charge of securing to Rome the person and the fortune of the amiable and motherless child about to be committed to her charge. Little dreamed the bereaved father of the ruin and wretchedness which were to enter his house with her.

Padre Carlo had entered the Society of Jesus in a fit of youthful enthusiasm; had passed with eclat his period of probation, and had received marks of honour and confidence. The careful scrutiny of character and capability to which every young brother in that society is subjected, had ended in his being selected for the work of proselytism in England as a

teacher of languages; but a considerable time of preparation necessarily elapsed before he was sent forth upon his mission. His course of discipline and instruction had shaken his faith in the infallibility of Rome. Possessed of an acute and penetrating mind, and of an impetuous, ardent temperament, from the system of mental subjugation his spirit sometimes recoiled; and his moral sense rose occasionally in rebellion against the dogmas by which vice is sought to be transmuted into virtue, and the foulest crimes into deeds of merit.

But these risings of natural feeling and conscience were in a fair way of being put down by confession and penance; and every thing free and noble in the youthful devotee was fast yielding to slavery and debasement, when his sister, who had been inveigled into a convent, found means to escape and throw herself at his feet. Her reason had given way before the horrors and inhumanities of which some of the dens of Italy are the scene. She recited a wild story of her wrongs, became insensible, and was torn from him, while he was strictly forbidden to follow or make the slightest inquiry after her, assured that the spiritual authorities would secure her safety.

She was removed, he knew not whither, while all the information vouchsafed him was that she died penitent and absolved; and there was sent to their relatives such accounts as to induce them to pay largely for masses for the repose of her soul.

A fearful tumult raged within him. He had discovered the practical working of the Romish system; discovered it by dreadful experience. Its villany was unveiled to him; the utter falsehood of all its claims upon his belief and obedience stood naked and open to his eye. From the whirlpool he emerged an infidel. Religion to him was a fable, faith a mockery. But his feet were fast in the net of Rome—how could he escape? Every brother is a spy upon the rest; it was needful for him to dissemble, and to feign the same obedience as formerly. False confessions were easily invented by one trained in the school of dissimulation; and kneeling at the feet of a priest, lies were unblushingly told at which he smiled contemptuously in the solitude of his cell. But what of that? Falsehood is no more to the infidel than to the Romanist. The heart that believes that there is no eye to meet sin, will sin as comfortably as one who looks to a priest to forgive it—nay, more so, for there is no penance to endure for it.*

The very confessions of Jesuits are recorded, but to no confessor was his infidelity confided; and so well had he been trained in Jesuitism that it was not suspected.

But the question arose as to his future life—was he to continue the servant of the society he despised?

* See Appendix B.

In no other way could he find subsistence, except by going to a protestant country, and renouncing the yoke of Rome. But the tenets of Protestantism he equally disbelieved, although the morality of Protestants he saw to be superior. He resolved to remain a Jesuit, and soon the *power* at which the order aimed became his ruling passion. Ambition lighted its fires in his heart, he beheld grandeur in the idea of subjugating the world to his order. To bind princes to Rome's chariot-wheels, to rule fierce democracies, to turn the riches of the world into the channel of the church, to subjugate reason, conscience, intellect, these were deeds over which he rejoiced; though perhaps at times he felt impatient of the slow and tortuous mode of operation to which he was condemned, and sighed for the rostrum or the battle-field. But Jesuit discipline is perfect. Under it the impetuous becomes patient, the wilful submissive, the eagle learns to creep as the serpent. If the means were base, the end was noble, and Padre Carlo became schooled in all the arts of deception.

His powers of argument and oratory were considerable; and while as a teacher in a large town he was secretly undermining the faith of his pupils by day, at night he would don the fustian jacket and workman's cap, and together with a companion similarly attired, would proceed to the corner where workmen lounge; when a mock argument would be started,

his friend attacking his Romanism in a tone loud enough to draw attention, and he defending it with so much power as to command the applause of the listeners. The contest always terminated in the triumph of Romish, and the defeat of Protestant doctrine; and the crowd would disperse, impressed with the eloquence and plausibility of the one disputant and the meanness and weakness of the other. 'By such means,' said he, 'is it that our order shall emerge from its long degradation, that we shall rule vast empires, that America shall drop her boast of liberty at our feet, and haughty Britain be humbled in the dust;—the continent of Europe is ours already. And his spirit revelled in this dream of delirious joy.

But as if the man were not yet smothered in the Jesuit infidel, a thrill of compassion would sometimes shoot across his breast for some innocent victim. His sister's wrongs had cast a covering of steel over his heart; but they had also inflicted a wound which occasionally thrilled agonizingly to a touch above the shield.

The child, whose ruin he was now commencing, had thrown some tendrils of love around him; and though he swerved from his purpose not a moment, yet that purpose cost him a pang or two.

'I think,' he remarked to Agatha, 'that when you study Miss Percy's character, you will agree in the estimate of it which I transmitted to Ferrara, and in

the means which I consider most likely to be successful in gaining her over to Rome.'

'Entirely,' replied the sister. 'The poetry of her nature; her extreme sensibility and tenderness; the romance of her temperament, and the touch of sadness given by sorrow and solitude, will render it easy to enamour her with a convent-life. As to her conversion from Protestantism, the poetry of our beautiful ritual, and the lovely character of the Blessed Virgin as a mother of the motherless, will, I am quite sure, captivate her young imagination.'

'These prints will afford you opportunity of giving useful lessons. Tell her I brought them from Genoa for a friend, and have sent them for her to look over. While she admires the Madonna, recite to her Mrs. Hemans' Neapolitan Girl's Hymn to the Virgin, and afterwards you can teach her to play and sing, any of the compositions of the best masters, in honour of the Mother of God.'

'You must give us your portfolio for some time, if I am to read lectures upon all those saints as well as upon the convent-scene,' said Agatha, smiling.

'You are too discreet to *overload* her,' replied the padre. 'Give her from me this little crucifix, *as an ornament*,—tell her she must not worship it as popish ladies do, although they find consolation in such worship,—but she may admire it as an exquisite work of art, especially the loveliness of the countenance.'

Poor Mary was charmed by the prints, and by the kindness of Monsieur Bouquet in bringing her from the continent so beautiful a souvenir as the crucifix.

'I love to look at that nun, Mademoiselle,' she said, 'what a calm, loving countenance she has, just such as I fancy an angel to possess.'

'You are right, my love; by seclusion from a vain world, and meditation and mortification, she attained angelic virtues.'

'I think nuns would be very happy creatures, if they were allowed to walk in the woods, and gather primroses; but I should not like to be a *shut-up* nun,' remarked Mary.

'You will be a sister of mercy, perhaps, when you become one,' said Mademoiselle, smiling.

'Oui; as they are allowed to go about.'

'After all, I do believe that shut-up nuns are much holier and happier than we are,' said Mademoiselle.

CHAPTER V.

DOMESTIC CHANGES.

"Let us be keen, and rather cut a little,
"Than fall and bruise to death."

Measure for Measure.

THE old nurse White had always slept in Mary's room, and had been in the habit of reading with her a few verses of the Bible before retiring to rest; after which, while undressing her young charge, she often repeated to her some of Wesley's hymns.

White was a good woman, and strove to impress religious feelings upon her beloved child; but, like many Methodists of the lower order, she had not very definite ideas of Christian doctrine. Yet she had built upon the true foundation, Jesus Christ, and had erected thereon a superstructure of consistent Christian practice.

It was important to remove Mary from the care of one whose quick eye and loving heart might detect and frustrate the efforts for her perversion, and as a

first step, Mademoiselle proposed that the little lady who was now growing too old for the nursery, should be transferred to a room which communicated with that of the governess, and the door of which might be left open at night to prevent the feeling of solitude. Thus the child would be continually under her own eye; and although she could not safely prohibit her evening scripture reading; yet she might select passages for her, and offer upon them such remarks as should neutralize their *dangerous* tendency.

Mr. Percy, although agreeing with his governess as to the propriety of removing his daughter from so much communication with a mere servant, would not permit White to be deprived altogether of the charge she had long and faithfully performed. She was installed as Miss Mary's maid—taking care of her wardrobe as formerly, and attending to dress her in the morning, although Mademoiselle managed to superintend personally her evening toilette, in order to read with her before retiring to rest.

'I miss my evening talk with my dear lamb,' remarked White to the housekeeper, 'it was a sweet time, the darling, when she used to read, and say hymns with her pretty voice; but Mademoiselle does read with her, and that is so far well.'

'You see,' replied the housekeeper, 'she is to be a great lady, very rich, and it seems to me they are afraid of you making her a Methodist.'

'The Lord keep her from the follies of the vain world!' ejaculated White.

'Tut, tut, woman,—a rich heiress must go to balls and the opera and such things.'

White sighed and was silent. 'I'll wager you,' said the housekeeper, 'that the first ball she goes to some great prince will take a fancy to her, like old Cinderella and her glass slipper. You and me will both dance that day with our old limbs, White.'

White tried to smile, but she could not. 'What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul,' rang in her ears, and she went to her own room to weep and pray for her darling.

Notwithstanding the change effected, White was still with Mary more than it suited Mademoiselle that she should be; her entire removal from the family was necessary.

One or two small articles of jewellery were missing from Miss Mary's room; and suspicion of dishonesty fell upon a new housemaid. Then the butler reported the mysterious disappearance of a piece or two of plate; and, finally, a portrait of Mrs. Percy, set with jewels, was abstracted from a cabinet in Mr. Percy's room. Mr. P. had been unwilling to have any disturbance in the house, until the last theft occurred. That however touched him in too tender a

point; it could not be passed over; a search *must* be instituted.

Mademoiselle concurred in the probability of the new housemaid being the guilty person, the other domestics having been long tried; yet she determined that it was impossible to dismiss her upon the mere suspicion of guilt; means must be taken to ascertain it. As she alone was aware of the search about to be made, she insisted upon placing in Mr. Percy's hands the key of her own room, and remaining with Miss Percy until the officer came.

'Your room, Mademoiselle!' said Mr. Percy, 'you do not suppose that I would subject a lady to the indignity of a search?'

'Although possessing the birth, the habits, and I trust, the principles of a lady,' replied Mademoiselle, 'yet I am a stranger in your house, and if the missing articles be not found with any of the servants, my repositories must be subjected to the same process as theirs, if it were only to prove your impartiality.'

'You are right,' said Mr. Percy, 'I esteem your sense of propriety.'

Very painful was such a proceeding to Mr. Percy in his state of depression; yet his sense of justice, and his grief and indignation at the loss of his beloved portrait, prompted him to take measures for the discovery of the guilty person.

The officer arrived, the domestics were all sum-

moned, and their apartments locked up until some preliminary search was made. That having failed to discover any of the missing articles, it was resolved to proceed by rotation, examining first those servants whose position in the household was the lowest, and proceeding upwards, until, if not found, they should be sought even with the governess. This plan was the suggestion of Mademoiselle, who remarked that thus the upper servants would probably be spared the painful investigation.

Nothing had been discovered; with the new housemaid was found nothing to excite suspicion; the rest were equally faultless; White, the housekeeper, and Mademoiselle Dupin, alone remained.

'It is enough,' said Mr. Percy, 'I cannot insult two old, tried servants and a lady.'

White and the housekeeper requested that the search might proceed—the former spoke faintly; she had religious papers in her box which she shrank from having unveiled. The officer noticed her hesitation, and fixed his eyes upon her.

'In justice, sir, you must proceed now,' said the governess.

'Tis amazing, sir,' remarked the officer, 'how often things are found with the very person you would least suspect.'

It was then White's turn. In the bottom of her large chest, which so far down had exhibited nothing

suspicious, some papers were lying. She darted forward—'How is this?' she exclaimed, 'these papers were in this drawer!' With a trembling hand and flushed countenance, she hastily drew open a small drawer beneath; and there, to the astonishment of all, and the utter dismay of Mr. P. were the miniature and jewels.

'I told you, sir, I knowed it,' cried the officer, with an ironical grin, 'I knowed it from her face. What more? my woman, make a clean breast, now the thing's begun.'

The other servants held their breath and looked at each other in astonishment. The unhappy woman clasped her hands, and looked wildly around; then throwing herself at Mr. Percy's feet, she exclaimed, 'My own master, you will not believe that I put them there.'

Mr. Percy gently put her aside, and sat down nearly as pale as she, having first placed the miniature in his bosom.

'I did not do it, indeed I did not, some enemy has been here,' sobbed the woman, frantically.

'What they always say, sir,' remarked the officer. 'Anything but the silver now?'

'Nothing,' said Mr. Percy, 'you need look no further.'

'Yes, sir,' said the housekeeper, drawing herself

proudly up, 'we are all under suspicion till the plate be found.'

At the foot of another and smaller box, belonging to White, but which she seldom looked into, the spoons and forks were discovered.

'I must take you into custody, madam,' said the officer, rudely. Poor White fell fainting on the floor.

'The hypocrite!' exclaimed the housekeeper; 'the base, villainous hypocrite, with her religion!—that my lady—bless her dear name, trusted so! You will look over *my* things too, sir, I insist you do.'

'No suspicion rests upon any one else,' said the officer.

Mademoiselle and the rest of the servants were raising White, who looked pale and rigid, as if in death.

'Lay her on her own bed, and apply restoratives,' said Mr. Percy. 'And you, sir,' (to the officer) 'come with me; I shall not prosecute. Is it impossible,' continued he, as they retired, 'that the articles have been put there by some one else?'

'That thought would shield the proved guilty, and wrong the innocent,' said the officer: 'but, sir, to dispel all doubts, there had better be a trial, truth will come out on *it*.'

Mr. Percy shrank convulsively, 'In my state of spirits, I could not consent to it,' he said.

'The woman's face was enough for me,' said the man; 'but justice is justice for every one.'

'She *did* look strangely,' said Mr. Percy, ringing the bell. 'James, send Dawson here.'

Dawson was the upper-housemaid, and she was interrogated whether White was in the habit of leaving her boxes open, or of keeping them locked. She said that she had never seen the large box unlocked, she believed White to have been particularly careful about that; the smaller box, where the plate was found, and drawers, where she kept her muslin things, were always open.

'Then, sir,' observed the officer, 'if nothing had been found in the lock-up box, there *would* have been a doubt—but *that* settles the matter.'

The swoon was long, but the unhappy woman at length awoke to consciousness—a consciousness of woe. 'Where am I?' she exclaimed. 'What has happened—am I in gaol?'

'That's where you *should* be,' replied the housekeeper.

'Oh! my lady! my lady!' she cried, 'if you were here they dare not kill your poor old nurse. O God, thou art the stay of the innocent. Oh! forsake me not. Where is my master?' she cried, frantically, springing up and rushing to the door.

Mademoiselle prevented her egress. 'You are ill,' she said, soothingly; 'you must lie down.'

'I *will* go to my master, and to Miss Mary, I *will* see them;' said she, stamping her foot upon the floor.

'You go to your bed, my lady, and hold your peace!' said the housekeeper; who had entered the room a few minutes before. 'Why my master won't send you to gaol is more than I can see through.'

'*Won't* he send me to gaol?' inquired poor White, suddenly becoming calm, and bursting into tears.

'No, spite of all the gentleman and me could say, my master wouldn't give you what you deserve, you ungrateful, hypocritical wretch!'

'O God, thou *art* the stay of the innocent, a refuge in times of trouble!' sobbed the woman, throwing herself upon the bed. Then, burying her face in the bed-clothes, she wept hysterically.

'None of your Scripture!' said the housekeeper; 'I never saw any good come of saints—she that couldn't look at a dance in the hall! though she did deceive both my lady and me,' said Mrs. Brown, turning to Mademoiselle.

'Well, good Mrs. Brown, do not be too hard upon her; we are all liable to fall,' said Mademoiselle, in a soft tone.

'La ma'am, you are too good, I am only sorry I had not my places examined, to prove my integrity; aint you, ma'am?' said Mrs. Brown.

'No suspicion rests upon us, now that the guilty party is discovered, but if we should hear a whisper of doubt, we can open up all, you know,' replied Mademoiselle.

Little imagined the simple housekeeper how unwilling the governess would have been to have any examination of her private repositories. But she had rendered it certain that matters would not be pushed to this extremity; she knew right well where the missing articles would be found, or she would never have hazarded a search. She had in her possession documents which would not bear the light of day—correspondence with Ferrara, directions from the general of the Jesuits—analyses of character—notes of the most secret affairs of the family—a scheme of her operations, and a journal, on the exposure of which any single-minded man or woman would have stood aghast.

These might have escaped unread; but there were also skeleton keys, popish symbols and books, a manual of Jesuit morals, and other things which would have rendered the exposure of Mademoiselle Dupin's secret repositories far more astounding than if all the jewels in the house had been found in them.

Yet Mademoiselle was a religious woman—a sincerely—earnestly religious woman. By all those things she thought she was doing God service, and

some persons would have called it *intolerance* to interfere with the *free exercise* of her religion. We are showing in what its "free exercise" consisted. Every tree is known by its fruits; and we display the fruits of the sincere, the devoted Mademoiselle Dupin's piety. The conveyance of the jewels and plate into the boxes of the nurse, and the contrivance of their being found where they were, could hardly have been accomplished save by a conjurer or a Jesuit.

The end was answered, White receive her dismissal. Mr. Percy steadfastly refused to see her; he sent her her wages for the time she had served him, and an additional sum of money to ward off present destitution until she could find employment. She received the wages—having *earned* them; but folding up the gift in a small packet, she returned it with the following note.

'MY HONOURED MASTER,

'Since you think me unworthy, I cannot receive your great kindness. The Lord will provide. I have saved a small sum, and I put my trust in him. My honoured master, I am innocent and heart-broken. I could not wrong so kind a master, nor the husband of my most dearly loved and lamented lady. I pray God to forgive all my enemies, and to bring my

righteousness to light. I will ever pray for you and my own Miss Mary.

'Your much afflicted and

'truly innocent nurse,

MARY WHITE.'

Mr. Percy was touched; he paced about the room uneasily, sat for some time in a thoughtful mood, and finally summoned Mademoiselle, who had, in truth, by this time gained much of his confidence.

'Is it not possible,' said he, 'that there has been treachery somewhere? That note has the appearance of genuine feeling—if the woman be guilty she is an accomplished hypocrite,—only—methodists are said to be adepts in hypocrisy.'

'I fear that is too true; I have known some strange instances of their deceitfulness,' remarked Mademoiselle, 'but if you doubt, why not have a judicial examination.'

Mr. Percy shrank as with sudden pain. 'Impossible, ma'am,' he exclaimed, 'the scenes of yesterday must not be repeated. I cannot pass through another such ordeal. I fear there is no doubt of her guilt. Malice alone could induce any of the other servants to put the articles where they were found—malice which might have failed in its object by twenty chances; then her manner was suspicious; she was not like the other servants, anxious for the

examination; and her nervous rushing forward contrasted painfully with the calmness of the rest. Her box too was locked; for another to have opened it, it would have been needful to possess false keys. Ah! Mademoiselle, I have been deceived—grossly deceived; and but for your care of my precious child, she would have been constantly with the hypocrite ever since her mother's death.'

'There is always danger, sir,' replied Mademoiselle, 'in young people being with even the best of servants. What has now happened, will, I trust, quicken me to greater and more affectionate vigilance in the care of my sweet young charge.'

'I thank you, Mademoiselle.'

Meanwhile Mary had crept up stairs to her nurse's room. She tapped at the door, but receiving no answer, she stood a minute, and heard the voice of sobs mingled with these ejaculations. 'O God, thou knowest my innocence—bring it to light. But I am guilty in thy sight, a poor sinner. I deserve it all—more than all! But Thou art merciful, plead my cause with those that rise up against me. Bless them. O bless my master and my dear young lady.'

The sobbing ceased, and Mary with tears knocked again. 'My own child,' exclaimed the poor woman. 'My own child, are you come to see me?'

'I could not let you go without saying good-bye,

nurse,' said the child, putting a sovereign into her hand.

'My own dearest,' sobbed the nurse, 'you have comforted my old heart. But I cannot take your gift, bless you for it.'

'It is my own, White, oh! do take it.'

'No, Miss Mary; but a thousand thanks. And one gift I will ask, a lock of that fair hair I have so often drest—will you give old nurse that?'

'Take it,' said the child, bursting into tears, and putting her head into nurse's bosom. 'You did not do it, I know,' whispered Mary.

Mademoiselle had the highest Catholic authority for this deed, "To injure another's reputation for any needful good is not sin," saith the Holy Church.*

* See Appendix C.

CHAPTER VI.

MADemoISELLE'S TALE.

"Thought and affliction, passion; hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness." HAMLET.

It was a winter afternoon. The shutters were not closed, nor the lights brought; but the blinds were drawn down, and the fire stirred, and its cheerful rays glanced and flickered upon our young heroine and her governess, as they sat together before it, throwing their shadows far into the room; brightening prominent objects with changeful gleam, and deepening into chiar-oscuro all behind those objects, and every recess. The lights and shades would have gladdened the very soul of Rembrandt or Corregio. Not with the eye of an artist, but with that deep poetic feeling which was a part of her nature, Mary gave herself up to the enjoyment of the hour. There was nothing to mar its pleasure, for not merely the elegancies of life, but all the elements that enter into that English idea, comfort, were there. Mademoiselle lounged in a high-

backed seat, cushioned with green, and her pupil, with slow and measured time, moved backwards and forwards in a rocking-chair, or balanced herself on its edge to look around her into the room. The child was happy, but not satisfied; there was a longing in her soul after something higher and nobler than earth can give, but she knew not where to seek it. 'Tell me, Mademoiselle,' she said, 'one of your dear delightful stories about the supernatural; and first say if you think that there really are angels here, up in the height towards the ceiling, or far in the depths of those recesses; as the cherub heads and wings peep out in that sweet picture of Saint——what is her name?'

Mademoiselle replied, 'Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth.'

'A tale about them, then,' said her pupil.

'Shall we have time before Mr. Percy comes to dinner?' asked Mademoiselle, looking at her watch.

'Dear, good, naughty papa!' said Mary, 'if he come before we are done, I will kiss him away again.'

'Ah! here is a short one,' said Mademoiselle, and without preface she thus commenced:

At the base of the Pyrenees, in a lowly valley of Spain stood the castle of Don Alfonso Alcarras. His son Ferdinand was a handsome high-spirited youth; none so graceful as he in the festive hall, or so daunt-

less in the chase of the wild boar; erect and commanding, with slashed doublet and velvet cloak, he was the admired of all beholders. His daughter Isabella was famed for elegance and beauty; she was soft and gentle in her manner, but the height of her marble forehead, and the depth of soul in her large dark eye, impressed you with the idea of a superior being.

With a maid whom she loved and trusted, she delighted to wander among the wooded glades, and by the mountain-born streams of her father's domain, or to join a party of noble guests in exploring the hills, and gazing from their pine-clad heights upon the boundless prospect beneath. The peasant families blessed her bountiful hand; she was as an angel of light to many a dwelling darkened by disease and poverty; and her alms went up to heaven as the sweet incense flung from a golden censer. The very bandit would not have touched a hair of the head of the Donna Isabella, so greatly was she revered.

Thus her earliest days were passed, and many a patrician youth sought the hall of Don Alfonso to kneel at the shrine of his lovely daughter.

But Isabella's heart was fixed on heaven; no shadow of earthly love had ever dimmed the sunshine of her breast; her thoughts were with the saints and blessed ones of old, and she sighed when she saw the follies and the miseries of the world. The Holy Vir-

gin was the object of her adoration, in her secret soul she had early vowed to be the bride of Heaven alone, and in her dreams she had seen a seat prepared for her beside the throne of the Mother of God, in a palace radiant as the rainbow.

In her dark hair she wore no jewels; a garland of white roses was its only ornament; no necklace of pearls or diamonds glittered upon her bosom; but a rosary of pure gold, and a crucifix of exquisite workmanship at once adorned her and denoted her piety. Her brother married a young, fair girl who brought him a splendid dowry; the marriage festivities were great, and the hand of Donna Isabella was constantly sought in the dance.

But her heart was not in the illuminated hall; she would retire from it to drop a tear over the vanity of the world, and to muse sadly upon the cares and sorrows of life which awaited the young couple when the first flush of their gladness was past. 'For what are family ties,' she said to herself, 'but cords to draw down grief, till they be severed by the hand of death?' Be mine the pure and peaceful cloister.

With the marriage party she was carried to court, and moved among its splendors attracting all hearts, sighed for by lovers innumerable; but sighing only for seclusion and piety.

One morning when the dew lay upon the orange

blossoms, and the fountain sparkled in the earliest light, she was telling her beads in the soft morning air of the garden, ere the revellers of the previous night had awakened from their slumber. She longed to be speedily delivered from those vanities; but being her father's idol, she dared not tell him of her desire for the cloister; so she prayed the Virgin to direct her way. Immediately a new, ambrosial odour seemed to distil from the orange-trees; there was a rustling among the myrtles; then a gleam of unearthly light, and lastly, a figure stood before her, veiled in white. Her heart beat high. The figure uncovered its face, and revealed the Madonna radiant with celestial beauty, and smiling with love unutterable. 'You seek deliverance from the world,' said she.

'It is true, most holy Mother,' replied Isabella, 'but my father wills it not.'

'Steal from the dance to-night; and come hither in the moonlight; I will send thee a deliverer; follow her,' said our blessed Lady, in a voice of richest music; then she vanished, and Isabella, falling prostrate, kissed the flowers that had not bent beneath the celestial footstep.

Lights and music were in the hall at night. Isabella moved in a single dance with one to whom her smile was as the sunshine of heaven, and who meant on the morrow to demand her hand of her father. Then she slid from the hall to the garden where the moon-

beams kissed the fountain and the evergreen leaves ; they glanced upon her silken dress and crown of roses, and whitened still more her marble forehead. A veiled figure stood before her ;—it moved ;—she followed ; it opened the massive gate, and led her through the silent streets to a grand pile of architecture. Another gate was opened, and she was in the arms of a loving Abbess.

‘This is your home, my daughter,’ she said, ‘rest here from the world till you be fit for heaven.’

A solemn and triumphant strain of music broke forth, and a procession of holy nuns appeared. They led her to the chapel, where lights innumerable glittered before the Virgin’s shrine. She received the habit of a novice that night ; peace settled upon her soul ; she lived holy ; died in the odour of sanctity, with angels hovering round her couch ; they received her spirit and carried it to the bosom of the Queen of Heaven.

‘Is it true ?’ inquired Mary.

‘No lights yet ? Have I kept dinner waiting ?’ said Mr. Percy, opening the door.

Mary started as from a dream. By tales such as this were her affections directed. The serpent Rome fascinates before she destroys her prey.

CHAPTER VII.

PROGRESS OF PERVERSION.

“I see a hand thou canst not see,
It beckons me away ;
I hear a voice thou canst not hear,
It says, I must not stay.”

WE need not follow our heroine through the devious course by which she was gradually drawn over to Rome : it was the course usually pursued. The parish clergyman was a zealous Tractarian, but being the clergyman of the Establishment, Mr. Percy did not object to his daughter following his footsteps. Indeed Mr. Percy himself, so far as he cared about religion at all, liked the sensuous worship of the new mode ; he could understand it better than that which was spiritual. Mademoiselle Dupin was highly religious, in the Puseyite sense of the word, and she carefully instructed, or rather led her pupil, in all the observances which she herself practised. Week-day prayers, frequent communion, fastings, adorations of the crucifix, meditations on the virtues of saints, alms,

and at length confession, followed each other so naturally, that poor Mary had become a devout Papist before she was aware of it; and it only needed a few lessons on infallibility and the mission of St. Peter, to induce her secretly to assume the badge of allegiance to Rome. The whole course of her education had been bent towards this end. Everything calculated to strengthen her mind or to exercise her reasoning powers had been carefully repressed; her imagination had been fostered and fed with legends of saints and angels, and pious recluses, and mediæval deeds; painting and music had been made to furnish her with saintly countenances, miraculous apparitions, gorgeous festivals, and the entrancing strains of Popish worship; and her very love of nature had been enlisted in the service, by highly-wrought descriptions of desert solitudes and magnificent mountains,—of Libya, and Carmel, and Lebanon, whither confessors fled, and where anchorites dwelt. History too was perverted. The Empress Helena was held up almost to adoration; Popes and Popish Emperors were lauded, and their excesses veiled; the German, and Swiss, and British Reformers blackened; the crusades coloured with all the hues of romance, even to that against the Albigenses; a veil drawn over the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the bloody Mary represented as an upright and conscientious though somewhat stern upholder of the faith; Elizabeth

denominated a tigress; the perfidious Stuarts gentle unfortunates, Cromwell a fiend; William and Mary ungrateful and unnatural usurpers. And of the men of her own times,—the gentle, and amiable, and accomplished, were those who adhered to or connived at Rome; and the fierce, bigoted, intolerant, and *ungentlemanly*, were the uncompromising assailants of the Man of Sin.

Like all youthful enthusiasts, Mary had painted vivid pictures of beauty and happiness—had sought perfection in the creature, only to be disappointed. We have seen that from a child she had loved nature passionately; that love she continued to cherish, but it was never fully satisfied. Mingled with the enjoyment which she often really tasted, there was always a longing, a craving of her spirit after something unrealized: want or regret, of one kind or another, ever marred the *perfection* of her happiness; some memory of the past, or some dream of the future, still appeared more beautiful than the reality of the present. She would pore over the *spring feelings* of her childhood, when she gazed upon the golden ripples of the streamlet in the glen, and drew primroses from the mossy nooks; and then wonder why the same scenes did not now inspire her with similar sensations of delight. She would remember a starlight evening, when, standing alone upon the lawn, and looking up to the deep blue vault, a sound arose from its utmost verge as of

a distant wind, which, with strange and solemn swell, came slowly on, until it filled the immense area with the grandeur of its rushing, and she would sigh vainly for a repetition of the sense of the sublime which had then entranced her. She would anticipate for a week a visit to the sea-shore, and gaze in fancy into its emerald depths, while many-coloured sea-weed and shells clothed the bottom; or to a region of mountain and waterfall, where her heart might be filled with the glories of nature;—but a dull grey sky would rob the ocean of its transparency, or clouds would hide the hills, or rain render the torrents inaccessible; or if all nature smiled, some little care in her own breast would frown; or if even happy and light-hearted, still she was not *satisfied*.

Her affections too were warm, and, from living in comparative seclusion, she was the more ready to bestow them upon a being whom her imagination might clothe with ideal excellencies. A young relative spent a few months with her when she was about fifteen, and by her wit and apparent ardour greatly captivated her. They commenced such a correspondence as young ladies alone indulge in, and were to be friends to their life's end. But circumstances arose to cast more than a doubt upon the integrity and truthfulness of her confidante, and especially upon the sincerity of her professions of attachment to herself. The discovery inflicted a wound which almost

disgusted poor Mary with society; especially as she marked with scorn the levity and vanity of other girls among whom she had been introduced, and the reckless, unintellectual rattle of her male cousins.

In short, by the time she had attained the age of sixteen, she had attained also to the conclusion of the aged and inspired monarch—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And having discarded the Bible, and possessing no friend to lead her to the fountain of living water, the thirst of her spirit consumed her, and she turned for relief to the broken cistern of superstition.

This state of feeling did not escape the observation of her eagle-eyed governess, who turned it to the account of Rome. She contrived to have sent her from the Continent, a manuscript relation of the extasies of a singularly holy and happy nun, with a vivid description of the serenity and satisfaction of conventual life; she confided to Mary some doubts which had arisen in her own mind, as to the lawfulness of continuing in the Protestant Church, while that of Rome alone provided for their spiritual wants; and so skilfully did she succeed in transferring her views to the mind of her pupil, that together they decided upon renouncing the Protestant faith, and declaring themselves daughters of the "true Church."

By the advice of Mademoiselle, their feelings were confided to M. Bouquet, who at once declared himself

to be a priest of Rome, and became their confessor. He told them he had prayed and laboured for their conversion, and that now the great object of his life was accomplished.

Was not the victim of his artifice startled by the discovery? it may be asked. Not at all. She had, ere it was made, been well schooled in the "doctrine of reserve," and had learned to appreciate a "pious fraud;" and she was even quite prepared to practise one herself, upon her confiding, and affectionate, and unsuspecting parent. She was exhorted to keep her conversion secret for the present: the reason of this will afterwards appear. Once she would have shrunk with horror from deceiving her father; now she believed that the end sanctified the means, and in fact she had resigned her conscience to her confessor.* Her father only knew that she was a strict Tractarian, rather too religious for his taste, and he wished that her music consisted a little less of chants and anthems, and hymns to the Virgin. But they were all by the best composers, and exquisitely performed: these considerations reconciled him to them.

The time arrived when it was proper for her to be introduced into the world of fashion. She was now nearly eighteen, was elegant and attractive, notwithstanding the seclusion in which she had been brought

* See Appendix D.

up; and her father had almost resolved upon going to town himself, and venturing upon a winter, or rather a spring campaign for her sake. The crisis of her history had arrived, and her skilful guardians were too sagacious to run the risk of losing their prey. Mademoiselle deeply lamented the approaching trial, pathetically set forth the dangers and miseries of the world, and urged her to strive to dissuade her father from his purpose for at least one year.* Very wily were her dealings, and they succeeded. Mary inwardly decided, not upon opposing her father's wishes for the present—that would have been but delay—but upon eloping to a convent. And yet she was not conscious that any human being had assisted in forming her intention. It was necessary to mention the matter to her confessor. With consummate art he received the intelligence as if with profound astonishment; counselled her to be cautious; to weigh well her vocation; inquired if she could bear to part with the splendors of the world, to incur her father's anger—he did not say *grief*, that might have softened her heart—to spend her days in seclusion and humility and prayer. While seeming to dissuade, he contrived still more to disgust her with the world, and to enamour her of conventual life; and he concluded by enjoining her to spend an hour in the evening before

* See Appendix E.

her image of the Virgin, and to pray for some miraculous intimation of the Holy Mother's will. 'The step is of sufficient importance in your case to call forth a miracle,' said he. 'Without some such intimation I cannot consent to your desire.'*

'And if the Virgin should not deign to notice poor, insignificant me, must I give up all my long cherished hopes, father?' she inquired, sorrowfully.

'Do not fear on the score of your insignificance;' replied the priest; 'assuredly the Virgin loves you, and if she would accept your offering, she will encourage you to make it.'

Mary's heart sank—if no miracle were vouchsafed, she must remain in the giddy, heartless world.

A friend dined with Mr. Percy that evening. Her *hour* was selected as the one preceding dinner; and her prayer was offered, as that of a papist seldom is, from the heart. It tranquillized her—not as true prayer to the true God tranquillizes, indeed, but by a simple law of nature—by confiding her anxiety to one whom she *believed* to be able to help her. She felt tolerably cheerful at dinner.

Music was requested after the gentlemen repaired to the drawing-room. Mary sang a hymn to the Virgin. It seemed the very outpouring of the soul of an impassioned devotee. Mr. Courtenay, her father's

* See Appendix F.

guest, rallied her upon it, declaring that Roman Catholicism had now become fashionable, and inquired if she used a crucifix, and cherished the idea of becoming a nun. Mary blushed, but readily replied in the negative; for she who would once have started at the meanness, if not the guilt of falsehood, now practised it with perfect unconcern, and even reckoned concealment of her true sentiments a pious fraud.

'In sooth,' said Mr. Percy, 'she looks sad enough sometimes for a nun.'

Mary put back her head from the piano, and looked up lovingly into her father's face; filial affection was still strong and ardent within her heart. He parted the glossy ringlets from her forehead, pressed her head to his bosom, and remarked, 'She loves her father too much to be a nun—nuns have no fathers!'

Her eyes fell, her lip quivered, her breast heaved; it required all her jesuitism to repress a burst of tears. But she did repress it, and as her voice would have been too tremulous for a song, she ran her fingers over the piano in a lively air* or two, and then quitted the room. Gaining her own apartment, she bolted the door, threw herself upon the bed, and indulged in a passionate fit of weeping, after which she bathed her eyes, washed her face with eau de Cologne, and rejoined her father and his friend.

'Your daughter is possessed of exquisite sensi-

bility,' said Mr. Courtenay, when left alone with her father.

'She is,' replied Mr. Percy, 'although, owing to my own long depression, it has acquired a morbid touch. Her affection alone has rendered it possible for me to exist. The very idea of leaving me almost made her weep. I ought not to have tinged her young mind with gloom; but I mean to repair the mischief now, even at the expense of my own feelings. I shall take her to London after Christmas.'

'You are right,' replied Mr. Courtenay; for the man of the world knows of no other cure for gloom than the world's gaiety. 'You are right; she will be much admired. Yet—if she were mine—I would discourage those popish hymns: fanaticism is so much on the increase, one cannot tell what the end of such things may be.'

'As to that, my dear sir,' replied Mr. Percy, 'I see little difference between Protestantism and Popery, except in the romantic ceremonies of the latter, which young persons of taste and devotional sentiment admire. Its beauty attracts them; and the horror of popery felt by our grandfathers is decidedly old-fashioned;—Roman Catholics are viewed in the light of the nineteenth century. Not, however, that I should like to see my daughter a Catholic; I quite object to the éclat of changing one's religion, and I

have no love of Romish priests in general, although there are finished gentlemen among them.'

'Gentlemen of very bad morals, I fear,' remarked Mr. Courtenay.

'Oh! my good friend, we must not listen to sectarian calumnies,' said Mr. Percy.

Mr. Courtenay was silent. He proceeded to turn over some prints on a table. Madonnas; exquisitely beautiful heads of saints; pensive nuns; sleeping infants with guardian angels; miraculous legends; popish festivals, and views of monasteries, with Pugin's ecclesiastical architecture, were spread over the table. On his return home, he mentioned the circumstances to his wife, adding, 'It would not surprise me to hear of that sweet girl becoming Catholic; such are usually the preliminaries.'

'You forget that she has a tractarian clergyman,' replied Mrs. Courtenay; 'doubtless he encourages all those things.'

'All preparatory to Rome,' persisted her husband. 'It is rumoured that Mr. B. uses confession; and that young persons kneel to him in a small apartment communicating with his vestry. If *my* wife or daughter were to go to confession, my house should be their home no longer.'

'Why? love,' said Mrs. C.

'It is a diabolical institution,' replied her husband, 'invented by wretched men for poisoning the mind with

ideas of sin they never thought of; and is, moreover, a secret engine of power over families, by which the priest pries into all their secrets, and wields complete authority over them. Napoleon's secret police was not half so efficient to him, as the confessors are to Rome.'

'I thought confessions were never divulged,' said Mrs. C.

'Never to do good,' replied Mr. C., 'never to save a life, or to detect a murder; but whether actually divulged or not, they are made the instrument of the foulest tyranny, and the most abominable espionage. You must be the slave of the man who holds all your secret thoughts; and doubt not that a church which dispenses with oaths * and virtue,† can dispense also with the secrecy of the confessional if it suit her purpose. In fact, during the palmy period of the inquisition, penitents were obliged to disclose to their confessors the smallest word or act on the part of even their nearest relatives, by which they might be suspected of heresy; and then they were commanded to denounce them to that terrible tribunal, on pain of their own everlasting destruction. It was by such means that Rome shed torrents of blood; and the same system prevails at this day in popish countries, as far as practicable.'

* See Appendix G.

† See Appendix H.

'Then I may flee when I become Catholic,' said Mrs. C., laughing.

'Yes, straight to the nearest nunnery.'

'To give you a pretext for inspection,' she added, archly.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MIRACLE.

"Stay, illusion,
"If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
"Speak to me;
"Tis here!
"Tis gone!"

HAMLET.

MARY'S slumbers that night were feverish and disturbed. She had not at all considered the step she was about to take—having been accustomed to act, not from the deductions of reason, but from emotion and impulse. Her religion was entirely emotional; and her guide in this important matter was simply *feeling*, excited by the artifices of those whose aim it was to bring her over to their designs. Indeed so much had she been accustomed to indulge in flights of fancy, and to follow impulses, that, had she set herself fairly to reason out the case, to examine her motives, to sift her principles, to judge of her duty,—she would have found it impossible to carry on the process; her mind would have exhausted itself, and she

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would have fallen into a dream. It is to this state of mind, half poetical, half indolent, not at all *intellectual*, that popery owes its triumphs at the present day. Its aim is to crush *reason*, that it may establish *authority* on the ruins; authority not legitimate, as that of God through the Bible, but usurped, as that of the church through tyrannical priests. Those who lose the power of reasoning out the truth for themselves, lose also the power of detecting the falsehood of others.

Thus, instead of spending a few hours in cool deliberation before taking a step which was to involve the destiny of her whole future life, the misguided girl strove to work herself up into what she deemed a devotional frame for the sacrifice, and she called up pictures of religious peace and love, of a state of halcyon enjoyment, such as, when too late, she found to be utterly destitute of reality. She depicted the long processions among the twilight shades—she listened in imagination to the solemn jubilate—she seated herself before a picture of the Virgin—she laid her head upon the lap of the loving Abbess, and walked through the cloisters with a young sister, her bosom friend; and her spirit leaped with extacy. But anon her father's image presented itself—amazed, disconsolate, pining away, weeping for her, cursing her cruelty—and conscience whispered the stern word 'ingratitude.' She strove to drown the sound

by the soft term 'piety.' She recalled stories of youthful nuns and pious anchorites who had broken the ties of nature, become transformed into saints, and held intercourse with angels after foiling demons; and she repeated the text so often presented to her: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Strange, pitiable perversion of the word of God! Could she not compare it with the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother?" But to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture was no business of hers—she had but to receive it in the sense put upon it by the church.

Thus her mind was tossed, and she had no guide in the tempest. She had long since ceased to study the Bible. But her confessor had pointed out a way by which she might attain certainty. She recalled her hour of devotion before the Virgin, and she now felt sure of the guidance of the holy mother; she arose, and on her knees repeated a few aves, and retired to bed satisfied and assured. Alas! those who scorn the true guide are often left in righteous retribution to the wiles of a false one. She knew the truth in her childhood—she had still the means of ascertaining the truth, but her heart went after error, and to the delusions of error she was left.

About three in the morning she fell asleep, but was awakened by what seemed a kiss upon her cheek, and immediately a strain of low, sweet music was poured

forth, apparently in her apartment. She listened with awe and wonder. 'Is this the answer to my prayer?' she inquired; and as the mysterious strain continued, with a strange feeling of mixed solemnity and fear, she concluded it to proceed from some celestial visitor. Soon words became audible, and with a beating heart she heard distinctly the invitation:

"Come! Come!

"Pensive orphan, come away!

"Far from wealth's deceitful home,

"Far from pleasure's blinding ray,

"Far from dangers wild that roam

"Over earth's bewildering way.

"Come! Come!

"Wanderer of the weary breast,

"Come to my secluded cell,

"Come, and I will give thee rest;

"Where the peaceful sisters dwell,

"Where the sorrowful are blest.

"Come! Come!

"Sad no more, and motherless,

"A mother opes her arms to thee,

"Virgin mother, swift to bless;

"Near my heart thy home shall be,

"Home of cloudless happiness.

"Come! Come! Come!"

The music ceased, there was a slight rustling in the chamber, and then all was silent. She scarcely dared to stir, or even to breathe; her spirit was entranced. 'This then,' she said to herself, 'is the

answer to my prayer. Holy mother! I will come to thee. Mother of the motherless! I will seek rest in thine arms, on thy breast! My heart is empty, my spirit is often desolate, I have sighed for a mother's love, and I have found it. Thou wilt fill this aching void, and I shall have peace. What is the world with all its splendors, when compared to celestial love? Holy Mother! I dedicate myself to thee; from this moment I am thine, body, soul, and spirit.' What was it that, as she finished, whispered in her ear the word 'Father?' Was it a warning spirit, or was it conscience? Or was it the last striving of Him whom she was now finally forsaking, in her blind and wilful idolatry? That word *did* fall upon her mental ear, and it disturbed her transport. Could she leave her parent utterly desolate, to seek happiness for herself? Could she rob him of his only joy—him who had said that she loved him too well to become a nun? And as she recalled his words, his countenance arose before her, as when he gazed down upon her with affection like a mother's. She burst into tears, and wept until her pillow was bathed; she tried to think, to consider, to judge, but the effort was in vain. Exhausted, at length she fell asleep, and slept until awakened by the morning sunshine,—calm, golden, genial. She was tranquillized; and raising herself upon her elbow, she saw upon the coverlet of her bed a white rose of exquisite beauty,

its stem bound in moss, and tied by a white ribbon embroidered in gold with the word 'Come.' It was some time before she ventured to touch this rose from paradise, as she supposed it to be: at length, with trembling fingers, she took it; it felt like an earthly rose—an earthly white moss-rose; but more perfect in formation, more delicate in hue, more exquisite in odour than earthly rose ever was; at least, so her excited fancy deemed. She cast herself upon her knees before her beloved image, and gave thanks. The rose was carefully concealed, ere her maid was summoned, and her father—was forgotten.

She related the circumstance to her confessor, who desired her to conceal it even from Mademoiselle; 'unless,' he artfully remarked, 'you find it requisite to relate it, for overcoming her scruples relative to your flight.'

To Mary's astonishment, in the afternoon Mademoiselle informed her that she no longer entertained any doubt of the propriety of her pupil entering a convent. 'A most remarkable dream,' she said, 'has assured me of your vocation to a religious life. I saw the Virgin standing by your bed, radiant with celestial light, and musically uttering heavenly words, of which I could only distinguish that of "Come!" She bent over you with a look of unspeakable affection, with one hand holding aloft the saintly crown, while with the other she laid upon your pillow a white rose,

whose odour of sanctity filled the chamber. She drew from her bosom a transparent veil, which she spread over you; and then all vanished like a morning mist when the sun rises.'

The sentimental, unreasoning girl, did not perceive the artifice of all this; her colour went and came, yet she kept the secret; she did not say that she had in her possession the rose which her governess had seen in her dream. The incident powerfully affected her. To have been the subject of a miraculous interference was enough to remove all hesitation. The only thing remaining to be considered was when and how she should make her escape.

This was arranged without much difficulty. Her father was to go from home for a week or two, and during his absence she was to leave Avon House under the care of Monsieur B., alias Padre Carlo, her confessor, leaving to the care of Mademoiselle a note for her deserted parent.

The note was tender and affectionate, detailing her reasons for choosing the monastic life, giving her address, and entreating some token of her father's forgiveness, if not of his acquiescence in her self-devotion. It was watered with tears, and the night on which it was written was one of agony.

'Oh! that the struggle were over!' she mentally exclaimed. 'Oh! that I were at rest in the peaceful cell! Sweet will be its seclusion after this torture.

Mother, it is a weary heart that comes to rest upon thy bosom; but welcome that rest will be!'

Alas! what was the rest she dreamed of? Whence did she expect it to descend upon her soul? Some charm, she fancied, there must be in the very air of a convent,—something in the walls and windows, the arches and the shadows which would breathe peace into her heart. She almost expected to find there the living presence of the 'holy mother,'—the goddess of her idolatry.

It never occurred to her that her *own heart* would be unchanged in those pious shades,—that she would carry into them all the hopes and fears, the longings and the affections of her human nature. It never occurred to her that a nun is a woman still, with a woman's feelings burning within her breast, and burning the more intensely, because pent up and concentrated. Popery has borrowed much from heathenism; one thing it needs to borrow still—the water of Lethe, in which to bathe its devotees.

Ere the convent can be happy, memory must be abolished, a parent's love must be blotted from the heart; the deep longings of woman after sympathy, and communion and affection, must be expunged from her nature—her soul must be chilled, converted into stone, or like a tree in winter, it must be stript of its verdure and beauty; *then*, perhaps, it may sparkle in the sunshine, as ice-crusts branches sparkle. But

bitter, bitter the blasts, cold the frosts of hopeless despondency must be, ere, dead and shrivelled; and encrusted with worthless glory—it shines in the cold glitter of saintship! True religion sanctifies the affections; it does not extirpate them. Popery never does the one; it usually fails to do the other.

The fair victim could not bid farewell to her father, he was from home; but she paid a last visit to his study. Her mother's portrait hung there; and the last book her father had been reading, lay open upon the table. She bolted the door, threw herself upon a sofa and wept, until the shadows deepened in the room. She then went to her chamber, and when, at an earlier hour than usual, her maid was summoned, the girl remarked that her eyes were red and swollen, although the perfume betrayed that they had been bathed with rose-water. She remembered a letter in an unknown hand which she had brought to her mistress in the morning, and constructed a romance out of these materials.

CHAPTER IX.

A DISAPPEARANCE.

"Lost! Lost! Lost!"—SCOTT.

"Will you follow, gentlemen; I beseech you follow!"

SHAKESPEARE.

THE morning light broke sweetly through the interstices of the window-shutters, with calm, soft gleam, when Mademoiselle turned upon her pillow, and deliberated upon rising.

There was a hurried tap at the door.

'Come in,' she answered.

It was Miss Percy's maid, looking puzzled and mysterious. 'Mademoiselle,' she inquired; 'do you know where Miss Percy is?'

'Miss Percy!' said Mademoiselle, with a yawn—'what do you mean?—In bed I suppose. What o'clock is it?'

'Miss Percy is not in bed, Mademoiselle, nor in the house; the shutters of the middle window of the library are open, and the window unfastened. They were all bolted last night.'

'What o'clock is it?' repeated Mlle.

'Nine o'clock, ma'am.'

'Is the morning fine?'

'Beautiful—but Miss Percy?'

'Why, if it is nine o'clock, and the morning fine, I suppose Miss Percy got up while you were fast asleep,—drest without you,—and is gone to walk before breakfast.'

'She never does so, Mademoiselle, except in the height of summer, and then she always rings for me.'

'Why, foolish girl; what was to run away with her? Do you suppose she has eloped with the man in the moon? Where was the housekeeper? where were all the servants? A pretty lazy set to allow their lady to be up before them.'

'They were late, ma'am, having sat up telling ghost stories in the hall. The cook heard something in the house in the night, and the sound was so like a ghost, that she dared not stir. It seems they all fell fast asleep in the morning.'

'Oh! then, you think it was a ghost that ran away with Miss Percy. Send all the men to Tartarus after them.'

'I don't think it would be of much use going to Tartarus after them; but I have my own thoughts,' said the girl, looking mysterious and speaking low; 'Miss Percy got a letter yesterday morning. I did not know the hand. There has been something the

matter with her these three or four days; and last night she was long locked up in the study. I listened at the door and heard whispers and sobs; and when I went to undress her, her face was swollen with crying.'

'Girl, you are a fool!' cried Mlle., starting out of bed, and beginning to dress with energy. 'First ghosts, then sobs and whispers—speak out at once, what do you mean?'

'Why, my thought is—an elopement,' replied the girl, hesitatingly.

'Par ma foi! that is too much,' said Mlle.; 'I vow that when Miss Percy comes in, I will tell her the sort of maid she has got—listening at doors and imagining wickedness. What is the last novel you have been reading?'

'What you gave me yourself, Mademoiselle—The Only Daughter. The story was so similar to Miss Percy's case.'

'My plan succeeds,' said Mademoiselle to herself—then, aloud to Rose—'Go and see if Miss Percy has returned, and if not, step over to Widow Gray's, and ask if she is there. I should not wonder if, while you were asleep, she took a basket with provisions for the old woman's breakfast.'

Off flew Rose. She rapidly made known to the housekeeper Mademoiselle's directions; but by-and-bye returned from Widow Gray's with the intelli-

gence that no Miss Percy had been there that morning. Mademoiselle by this time was seated at breakfast; she now began to seem a little alarmed, summoned the housekeeper, and ascertaining that it was ten o'clock—an hour beyond her pupil's usual breakfast-time—desired one of the men-servants to be sent to the glen. 'That is Miss Percy's favourite resort,' she observed; 'It is quite possible that she may have wandered thither and forgotten the hour. She will be annoyed if a fuss be made about her; but we must really seek her.'

From the glen there was no intelligence, and when the man returned, Miss Percy was still absent. Conjectures ran high in the hall; but Miss Percy was no flirt; no gentleman who visited at Avon House could be selected as having appeared to interest her more than another, so as to justify Rose's idea of an elopement. Old John decided that the young lady must have gone out for an early walk on the bright morning, and he greatly feared that some evil had happened to her; to this conjecture Rose added the new one of her having been carried off by armed banditti or Irish reapers. 'The reaping-time is over,' said old John, 'or I would have feared the Irish, for Miss Mary always wears her watch, and that golden cross thing; but other folks might pass:' and the old man began to tremble.

'I tell you what,' said the coachman, 'I will take

the road to the village; William shall run up from the glen to the farm. You, John, had better go to the garden and tell Hobbs and Jackson to search it and the plantation. The rest of you go in different directions, for I am persuaded that some mischief has happened.'

'You know,' said old John, 'Miss Percy often rows herself. The grass was wet with frost this morning; she may have slipped off the bank in trying to get into the boat.'

'Send Hobbs to the lake first, then,' said the coachman. 'I'll mount, I think, and if there are news, send to Ryton village after me.'

'Take pistols and sword, in case you meet the banditti; also a poignard,' said Rose.

'And here's a sandwich,' added the housekeeper. 'My young lady must be faint. Tell her the chocolate is waiting. I'll keep the egg-pan boiling, so that she will have eggs in three minutes. Henry, are there potted shrimps on the table?'

'Yes; if Mademoiselle has not eaten all up.'

'I'll go and see what dress Miss Percy has eloped in,' said Rose, suddenly. 'If the white lace is gone, that settles the matter with me. She has met some young foreign count by moonlight, when we were all in bed, and they are gone to his castle in—in—Tartary. Oh! aye, that was the name Mademoiselle gave it; I am afraid she knows.'

'In that case she will have caught a Tartar, or the Tartar will have caught her,' said Henry.

'I beg you will be done with your unfeeling jokes, sir,' said the housekeeper, 'and go, look after the breakfast table. To think of its being eleven o'clock, and that dear young lady having had no food,—she that always breakfasts at nine! She might have told me the secret, and have got some cold game and sandwiches with her.'

'Aye, and well the secret would have been kept,' said Henry.

'Mrs. Brown! Mrs. Brown! Miss Percy's jewel-case is gone! all the diamonds and pearls and rubies! Oh! oh! oh! and her writing-desk; and she has nothing on but her riding-habit and old garden-bonnet, and a black silk gown! It *does* pass my comprehension!' cried Rose, as fast as the words would patter.

'*What* do you say?' vociferated Mademoiselle, who entered the hall at the minute, gesticulating with truly French energy, 'Par ma foi—*what* do you say?'

The housekeeper folded her arms across her breast with a sudden start, planted one foot forward, and stared in speechless astonishment.

'It passes my comprehension,' repeated Rose—'a clear case of elopement.'

'Miss Percy, *my* pupil, eloped,' cried Mademoiselle.

'No, if I *saw* it I would not believe it. Somebody has broken into her room, and carried off all that was precious out of it.'

This was too absurd to be believed; but she added, 'I have it now! Miss Percy has gone out to walk before breakfast; Mr. Courtenay often does the same, and they have met. He has persuaded her to return with him; so while we are running all over the world after her, she is quietly masticating muffins with Mrs. Courtenay. As to the jewels, Rose has overlooked them.'

'I'll go to the house and inquire,' cried Henry.

'Yes; and go by the wood; that is the road she likes; then if any thing *should* have befallen her—'

'Take loaded pistols,' said Rose authoritatively.

The wood was the longest road to Mr. Courtenay's, whom Mademoiselle did not wish to apprise too soon, although as Mr. Percy's friend and nearest neighbour, she felt that he must be made aware of what had happened, at a period sufficiently early to remove suspicion of collusion from herself. Before any thing effective could be done now, the fugitive would have sufficiently distanced her pursuers.

Old John proceeded to the gardener's, where, on hearing of Miss Percy's disappearance, the consternation was extreme. John searched the shrubbery in vain; the woodman was despatched to the plantation, while the gardener and a boy went to the lake. The

boat was untouched, not a footstep appeared upon the grass, from which the glittering frost had not yet evaporated; yet a boat-hook was plunged again and again into the water; and getting into the boat, they examined the lake in vain. The coachman galloped straight to Ryton, but could gain no intelligence; he then proceeded to the nearest post-town, and rode up to the principal inn.

'Wedding haste, surely,' said the groom, with a low bow, 'What's now, Mr. coachee?'

'Had you any travellers here last night?' said the coachman.

The groom graphically described the various parties who had slept in the house; among them was a 'foreign prince,' with moustaches, and diamond rings, who had left at three in the morning with 'a prime pair of horses.' The groom was lauding his gentlemanly conduct and handsome pay, when the landlord, approaching, interrupted the conversation, with—'Good morning, sir, all well at Avon House: Miss Percy, Mr. Percy, Mademoiselle?'

'All well,' said the coachman, impatiently. 'Jim, what more about this foreign count?'

'Oh! he was a pretty gentleman,' cried mine host, 'worth looking at—noble—a well-filled purse—only he drank nothing—would you credit it, sir, my brandy—'

'I'm in haste,' interrupted the coachman, with such

vehemence that the landlord started—'Jim, I say, finish. Where on earth did he go?'

'A friend of Mr. Percy's?' asked mine host.

'Friend or foe! I want to know where he went, and when.'

'On to Allerton,' said Jim, yawning.

'If Mr. Batty won't dismount,' said the landlord, 'you can go to the stable, Jim, and leave me to do the honors.'

'For the love of goodness, let me know the end of this count!' said the coachman.

'My dear fellow,'—began the landlord.

'The postillion that took him, is a comin' back with the horses!' cried Jim, who now began to comprehend that something important was connected with the count.

'So he is,' said mine host; then addressing him with the air of one about to make an oration, 'Bob,' he said, 'Mr. Batty wishes—'

'To know,' cried Mr. Batty, 'what you did with the foreign count?'

'Did! why I put him up at the Queen's Head at Allerton—him and the young bride he'd run'd away with.'

'The young bride!' exclaimed the coachman, and the landlord.

'Aye; and a beauty too, if I could ha' seen her face when he fetched her.'

The coachman's heart beat like a girl's—'Where did he get her?' he inquired.

'Just where the road to Ryton meets that from Avon House.'

'Describe her!'

'Why, I was half asleep, but I see'd her dress as she went into the Queen's Head—tall and thin—a riding habit, straw hat, and blue veil.'

'And you let my horses stand, sir, whilst they were a comin'?' shouted the landlord.

'No, sir; I drove them up and down in my sleep.'

'Get on, you rascal!' cried the coachman, 'What became of them?'

'Had breakfast, paid, and went out—that's all I know,' replied Bob.

'Then saddle me your very best horse—quick as lightning!'

The groom vanished.

'Do come in, sir, till he be ready,' said mine host.

'No, thank you,' said Mr. Batty, dismounting.

'Mary! bring a glass of brandy,' said the landlord. 'Now, my dear sir, here is some singular mystery—some visitor run away with from Avon House. I am impenetrable secrecy, sir, and my interest in the family impels me to ask—Miss Percy all safe, sir! Mademoiselle? Oh! these Frenchwomen—you are never sure of them!' And mine host looked sure of having discovered all. 'My advice is, sir, if she chose

to run away—let her stay—she isn't worth looking after.'

Mary brought the brandy—Mr. Batty swallowed it, and paced about till the horse arrived. He then mounted and galloped off. 'The fellow will kill Toby,' said the landlord, looking after him. He then called a council of the women, to whom he related how Mademoiselle had run off with a worthless fellow of a foreigner; and the comments were long and loud.

Mr. Batty rode to Allerton, there the faithful servant obtained such a description of the pair, as left upon his mind no doubt of the young lady being Miss Percy. Who her companion was, he could not divine. He traced them to Liverpool—heard of their inquiries after American vessels, but there the scent was lost. All his exertions failed to throw the smallest additional light upon the mystery. He had to pawn his watch until he received a supply of money from home to pay his expenses; and with a sad heart he returned to Avon House.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT.

"At eve my lonely breast,
"Seeks in vain for perfect rest,
"Languishes for true content."

AKENSIDE.

WE must now return to our heroine, who passed a sleepless night : morning at length came—four o'clock of an autumn morning. Mary's jewels and her writing-desk, with the money she had in her possession, were all the goods she was directed to take with her, indeed all that could be removed without fear of detection. She was dressed in her riding-habit ; but to prevent recognition, her hat with its plume of feathers was replaced by a close bonnet and thick blue veil.

The day had not dawned, but there was a faint moonlight. Mary shed no tear, as she left her room ; the excitement of preparation had bewildered her, and she felt nothing but the strong beating of her heart, whose pulsations threatened to choke her, while her

limbs could scarcely sustain her weight. The articles were carried down stairs by Mademoiselle, who had *reluctantly* consented to aid the adventure, and had promised to use all arguments to reconcile her father to the step, and to induce him to visit her in the convent, when the place of her flight should be known. Her father, however, was not to be made aware of Mademoiselle's assistance : the latter was to *find* the letter for Mr. Percy, and to transmit it to him unopened. Ere he should receive it the fugitive would be safe.

A double purpose was to be served by allowing Miss Percy to suppose that her father should be made acquainted with her true situation ; but Mademoiselle coolly destroyed her letter, and left him in ignorance. Her fortune of forty thousand pounds, being independent of Mr. Percy, could be secured to 'the church' without his consent.

The windows of the library reached to the floor, and opened into a shrubbery : the fastenings of one of them were stealthily withdrawn, and Padre Carlo stood before it disguised as an Italian, with a moustache and cloak. He assisted the trembling girl from the window, and they fled to a private door, the bolt of which they undid. Mademoiselle shut the window, but left it unfastened.

The Jesuit had engaged a carriage at the nearest post town ; had stopped it at the junction of two

roads, one of which led to the village of Ryton, the other to Avon House. But the high hedge and a bend of the road concealed the direction he took, when he desired the driver to wait until a friend should join him from the village. The man was sleepy, and did not watch him; and when he returned with a lady, the light was not sufficient to reveal her form.

'Now drive on; according to your speed shall be your reward,' said the Italian, when they were seated in the carriage.

'A Gretna Green job; it shan't be spoiled for me,' thought the man, as, grinning, he mounted his seat, while a golden guinea gleamed in imagination before him. With a flourish and crack of the whip, they darted forward at the highest speed of horses fresh from rest.

With difficulty Mary had gained the carriage, and, the effort over, she sank back and burst into tears. Her ideas were confused, she scarcely knew why she wept, although in reality she had much to weep for. She had left the home of her childhood for ever, to follow a phantom. But the phantom was still a reality to her, and with its airy finger it beckoned her forward.

Padre Carlo spoke little; he knew the human heart too well to obtrude consolation. His victim was now in his power. But the few words he did

utter were well fitted to preserve the delusion. 'The Abbess longs for your arrival; she already loves you deeply,' he said softly, taking her hand. 'The Virgin accepts our sacrifice; she will wipe away those natural tears.'

When the first emotion had subsided, he led her into conversation upon the early history of the Church, and related some new anecdotes of primitive recluses, garnished with extasies and revelations and angelic appearances. There was little danger of pursuit, seeing that Mr. Percy was from home; but they took the precaution of not ordering a fresh carriage at the inn where they stopped to breakfast. After discharging their bill there, they walked to another, carrying with them the few articles they had brought away as best they could. They were quickly on the road again, and at last reached the railway-station, and took places for Liverpool. Having arrived at the terminus, Padre Carlo made special inquiries after American vessels, and obtained the address of the agents, after having obtruded himself upon the notice of the officials, to mislead any one who might trace them thus far.

This done, he slipped off his moustache; his companion exchanged her blue veil for one of black; they proceeded to the quay, and embarked in a steamer just about to sail for Cork.

No separate berths were to be had. The crowded

ladies' cabin was the only retreat for one who would fain have hid her face to weep. But she was obliged to endure officious kindness and rude familiarity; and at length, wearied and sad and confused, she fell asleep. She slept long, but awoke with a start. A feeling of wonder at her situation succeeded, and then a sense of misery, almost of despair, rushed over her. She hastened upon deck; the light was dawning, and the land lay like a cloud upon the horizon.

Beyond that cloud nestled the peaceful home to which her hopes turned: a few hours would take her to it. All was still save the heavy plunging of the engine, the rush of the vessel through the water, and the movements of the helmsman. Crouching in the fore part of the ship, a few wretched Irish lay asleep, the victims, as they believed themselves, and as she had been taught to believe them, of English misgovernment; but, in reality, the victims of a false religion and tyrannical priesthood. 'How different from these grovelling beings,' she said to herself, 'the gentle, bright-eyed sisters of the convent, polished and intellectual, yet simple and unsophisticated, with the warmth of the Irish heart, but chastened and subdued by salutary discipline! Ah! this poor heart of mine needs discipline. How has it been wrung by the severance of its earthly ties! how far is it from the spirituality of him who, from his saintly cell in the desert, mocked the solicitations of even

a dying sister for an interview! Well, the time may come, when such sublimity shall be mine. Nuns and angels have no special loves; their affections embrace alike all the world; therefore they have no sorrows—no cords to cut.' Yet with a pang she remembered her father's words, 'Nuns have no fathers.' 'No,' she replied, with a strong effort, 'No; therefore they have no grief, therefore they are like angels.'

Poor girl! God could have created thee an angel, if that had been wisest and best for thee. He made thee a woman, a daughter; thou impeachest His wisdom, His benevolence: the impeachment shall not go unpunished.

Kneeling behind the companion, Mary repeated her morning prayers; then folding her cloak close about her, she chose a sheltered seat, opened the 'Garden of the Soul,' read listlessly, and finally fell asleep again. She was awakened by the noise of passengers and seamen upon deck, and found, seated beside her, a mild-looking Quakeress, holding in her hand the book which had dropped from her own.

'What is this, friend?' the Quakeress inquired in a soft voice, turning upon Miss Percy her large, loving, blue eyes; 'What is this that thou hast beside thee, even in thy sleep?'

'My book of devotions,' replied Mary blushing.

'Would'st thou not like a surer guide?' asked the

Quakeress, so gently that the implied censure could scarcely offend.

'I consider it perfectly sure,' replied Mary.

'If God should hand thee one from heaven, would not that be safer?' pursued the young woman.

Mary was silent, and the 'Friend' proceeded: 'A Guide *hath* been sent to thee from heaven, a Guide, a Comforter, a Companion. Be not offended; I saw thee sorrowful, and my heart yearned over thee. I would give thee consolation.'

She took the passive hand that rested near her own, and gazed so earnestly, so lovingly, upon the sad countenance, that the desolate heart was touched, and tears rushed forth irresistibly. 'Wilt thou take this from me?' she pleaded, putting upon her knee a very small Bible. 'Wilt thou take it and read it? It tells thee of a Man of Sorrows, who knoweth how to comfort the afflicted.'

At this moment Padre Carlo stood beside them. Mary started; he was unwelcome, for the soft voice and affectionate manner of the pure simple creature beside her, had won her pliable heart, and she had nearly promised to read the gift, which had also awakened a recollection of childhood. That recollection had stirred a chord, such as is touched in the exile's bosom by the music of his fatherland.

'What is this elegant little tome?' inquired the

padre, as he held out his hand for the book which Mary had taken.

'A very kind gift from a very kind stranger,' said she, blushing scarlet as she handed it to him.

He bowed haughtily to the Quakeress, as he said—'The donor is kind indeed to a *perfect stranger*.' Then offering his arm to Mary, he led her away to walk on the deck. The young woman gazed wistfully after them; she saw that her effort was neutralized.

As they promenaded, Mary ventured to observe—'She is very pretty and very sympathizing;' but without daring to allude to the book, which Padre Carlo had put in his pocket. With consummate art he replied—

'She owes much of her attractiveness to her almost nun-like habit and manner. Her sect is more free than many others from the vices and vanities of the world. In the midst of their errors they have preserved some good ideas from the primitive times.'

'I long to be among the gentle sisters,' said Mary, 'I shall find consolation in their love.'

'You need consolation, my child,' returned the padre, 'after the noble sacrifice you have made. You will find much among the sisters, but more in the heart of the "Mother of God." Look on this countenance; I sometimes think it instinct with life.'

He drew from his breast an exquisite miniature of

a Madonna, habited almost as a nun. Mary gazed upon it. Her natural enthusiasm was kindled: 'Father,' she said, 'she smiles! I saw her lips move. Lovely countenance.'

'Keep it, my child: keep it instead of that heretic book. A living heart is better than dead writing,' said the deceiver.

And the girl *was* deceived. She accepted the ideal picture; the embodiment of a fancy, instead of words which are 'Spirit and life'—which reveal the very heart of God.

CHAPTER XI.

IRELAND.

"These are thy glorious works, parent of good,

"Almighty; thine this universal frame

"Thus wondrous fair."

MILTON.

"All save the spirit of man is divine."

BYRON.

It was during a glorious sunset that the travellers arrived in the harbour of Cork. The rocky promontories, which guard its entrance by their fortifications, had their summits and projecting crags bathed in sunlight, while their seaward faces were dark and threatening. The strait between was of a blueish silvery tint, and the wide expanse of water into which it opened lay sleeping, like a lake of paradise, in the reflected refulgence of the crimson and golden clouds; the sails of the nearer vessels on its bosom fluttered in the light breeze, white as snow; and those more distant were tinged with the hues of the heavens.

As Mary looked out upon the noble scene, her spirits grew lighter, and she gave herself up to the impression of its beauty.

'Ah!' she said, 'as we approach the lands of the true faith, the very aspect of nature becomes more lovely. Ireland, Italy, Spain, all seem designed for paradise.'

The padre smiled inwardly; he knew something of at least the moral and mental state of those paradises, but he answered, 'It is true; and when English misgovernment and bigotry shall cease, Ireland will be the glory of all lands.'

'How exquisite is the contrast,' continued Mary, 'between these rocky islands, with their wild-looking towers, and those rich hills with their autumn foliage. What lovely cottages and villas are nestling among the trees! Ah! there is a ruin—a monastery surely—a charming retreat indeed!'

'Yes, once,' said the padre: 'still *charming*, but not quite a *retreat* now.'

'No;' replied Mary, 'too many people have discovered its charms, it would not be a seclusion now therefore I suppose it is deserted. Is the convent of — in a situation of equal beauty?'

'Not quite,' replied the padre. 'Your object for a time is concealment, you know. It was necessary to select one on this ground rather than on that of natural beauty.'

'Right,' replied Mary, 'quite right; only I am so *fond of nature*.'

'When the mind is absorbed in devotion,' said the

padre, 'it little needs external delights. Tell me, did nature ever *satisfy* your heart?'

'I think not—never *satisfied*—but often *delighted*,' said Mary.

'The delight was imperfect, if it did not *satisfy*,' observed the priest. 'As an immortal being you could not be content with it. You are in quest now of satisfaction, and for this you are giving up some delight.'

'You are paradoxical, father,' said Mary.

'It is a paradox which you can well understand,' the padre pursued; 'but in fact you are going to a new and higher style of beauty—the quiet walk, amid graceful columns; the lofty, fretted roof; the dim, religious light, stealing through the many tinted windows; the long procession, the swelling music, the still small voice of prayer, the atmosphere of holiness, of serenity, of purity—is this enough?'

'Enough,' replied the voluntary prisoner for life.

But still she gazed around her with delight. 'We seem landlocked,' she said; 'Where is the outlet of this lake?'

'Near that line of silver,' was the reply.

'So that is the famous Cove!' said Mary. 'I do not wonder that invalids frequent it. Independently of the air, its very aspect is enough to send the blood healthfully through the heart.'

At that moment some one approaching the enthusiastic girl, repeated those lines of Beattie—

"Oh! how can'st thou renounce the boundless store
 "Of charms which nature to her votary yields;
 "The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
 "The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields,
 "All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
 "And all that echoes to the song of even;
 "All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields
 "And all the dread magnificence of heaven;
 "Oh! how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven?"

Mary listened with a sad smile, turning to the priest, she said, in a low voice—"I renounce, shall I be forgiven?"

'The sacrifice is a noble one,' replied the padre, drawing her away. 'It will not only be forgiven, but rewarded by such an increase of holy joy here, and of heavenly bliss hereafter, as shall swallow up all thoughts of this low earth. Remember, this exquisite creation must be burned up, and the pleasure arising from the sight of it is but physical enjoyment after all,—the love of nature is but an earthly love. Some of the exiles of the Lybian desert, of whose heroism you delight to hear, had doubtless an admiration of nature as keen as yours; and yet, for the good of their souls, they dwelt among barren rocks and burning sands. You seek the mortification of the flesh in all its forms. The lust of the eye is one of them.'

Mary was too little acquainted with the New Testament to remember how deeply the blessed Saviour loved those beauties of flower and field, of mountain and valley, which he had created: how he drew his choicest illustrations of spiritual truth from natural loveliness; but something within her whispered, 'Why did God make the world so beautiful?' Yet the whisper was silenced; she did not attempt to answer it herself, and she did not venture to put it to the priest. So skilfully had he interwoven truth with falsehood, that she could not unravel the sophistry.

On they went, until a quiet crimson alone decorated the west; the mid and eastern heavens were of a delicate blue, and the moonbeams became clearer as the sunlight faded. The river Lee was now all silver; the objects on the banks became more and more shadowy, and in something between twilight and moonlight they reached the quay of Cork, the bustle of which presented a strong contrast to the quiet of the river. Porters, coachmen, and all the etceteras of a landing-place crowded around them; and although the beggars were not so numerous, or rather innumerable, as in daylight, still a troop assailed them. From the midst of a clatter of Irish tongues, such sentences were distinguishable as the following, 'For the luv of the Vargin, a ha'penny to a poor cripple, that has tasted nothin this blessed

day, and it's night that's coming widout a pillow to put his ould head upon.' 'Lave a penny for a widdy woman, wid six starvin childer.' 'Oh! handsome young leddy, for the luv ov all the saints, lave a ha'penny for an ould widdy, and the boy that was the light of her eye and the bread ov her mouth is lyin' in the salt say.'

'I have no copper,' said Mary, sorrowfully.

'Then it's silver you're goin' to give me, and the sweet young handsome face will never grow black wid want,' she replied.

'You cannot see the young lady's face,' said a fellow-passenger, laughing.

'I hear her swate voice,' was the response, 'the voice of the handsome leddy I saw in my drame, that pulled out the silver sixpence for the blessin' of the ould widdy.'

Mary could not but laugh, and she took out her purse, when the young man interrupted her with asking the beggar 'if she really had the impudence to ask sixpence.'

'And it's yer honour's nobility that will give me one yerself!' replied the old woman.

'Here's a shilling then, mind, you owe me sixpence,' said the young man.

'Long life to yer honor! may yer honor live till I pay ye,' cried the woman; 'blessings on yer noble

face. Your leddyship 'ill surely do the same,' she added, turning to Miss Percy.

'No;' said Mary, returning her purse to her pocket. 'One shilling is enough at a time.'

'May the faver and the small-pox blacken ye!' cried the woman, suddenly changing into a virago. 'May the black—' But here Padre Carlo turned to hand the subject of the malediction into a coach, whither the shrill tone of the woman followed her.

'What a strange, clever race!' said Mary, still laughing. 'That woman is a perfect actress.'

'But for English misgovernment, the finest peasantry in the world;' said the padre, echoing the accustomed cant. 'But England has degraded Ireland into a nation of beggars.'

Softly, good father, what has degraded the peasantry of Spain, Naples, Austria? The characters of all are much alike.

They drove to an hotel, and next morning M. Bouquet took leave of his victim, delivering her over to the care of two priests, who met them, in order to conduct Miss Percy to the convent.

She parted with her tutor with regret, and obtained a promise that he would visit her, and bring intelligence of her father. She felt very desolate after the departure of the last being she knew and esteemed. Henceforth she was to be among stran-

gers ; she was entering upon a new existence, an untried, unknown condition.

Somewhat similar is the feeling of a young bride, when she leaves the happy home of her childhood, and all its familiar faces for a foreign land ; but *she* has one by her side whose love will make amends for all, whose companionship she deems will be more to her than that of father and mother and brother and sister, and early friends ; the poor recluse was *alone* in spirit, she had parted with *all* she loved, and her heart sank within her.

The two priests were very different in appearance, and seemingly also in character. One was tall, thin, dark and reserved, with a thoughtful air, and an eye that made her shrink. The other was short and fat, full of broad Irish humour, which, in spite of her sadness, provoked a frequent laugh.

The drive was longer than she had anticipated ; for a time it was through a rich and lovely country, studded with villas, churches and hamlets ; but as they proceeded the scenery became less interesting, and she grew weary and sad ; even the sallies of the merry priest failed to arouse her. They entered a village, where a few good houses stood on the outskirts ; but within the squalor and filth were truly Irish. Children nearly naked rolled on the ground ; heaps of refuse almost hid the doors of the low hovels, at which ragged and dirty women stood

gossiping with arms a-kimbo, or holding starved and filthy children. It was the most direful spectacle of human wretchedness which she had ever beheld.

At length they arrived at the convent. Mary's heart beat high when its massive form appeared ; but on reaching it a feeling of disappointment passed over her heart. She had pictured a gothic pile, grand and imposing, embowered among trees ; and she beheld a large gloomy edifice, with great iron-studded door, small grated-windows ; bolted, barred, and seemingly formed to exclude the very light of heaven. It stood on a bare spot, at a little distance from the village, and formed a strange contrast to the halls of England to which she had been accustomed. But she had renounced the pomps of the world. They stopped at the gate, and the bell was rung : its deep, hollow tones startled her, for she was excited. The summons was answered by a portress, dressed in the habit of the order ; her sallow, cadaverous countenance was surrounded by the thick folds of her white linen hood ; her person was enveloped in a coarse serge gown, with a hempen girdle, from which hung a rosary ; and in her hand she carried a large key. She silently opened the gate, and when the carriage had passed into the court, closed it again.

The court was a gloomy square, surrounded by dark walls, black doors and grated windows. The

centre door, opposite the gate, opened, and the Lady Superior stepped out. She was tall and sallow, with white hood, serge gown, rosary and crucifix; her features were fine, but stern and melancholy. Standing erect, she stretched out both hands to Miss Percy, then kissed her forehead, and pronounced a benediction. She led her into a small room where a frugal repast was spread, and bade her be seated. The hushed solemnity of all around, awed and pleased her, although the place was plain even to meanness; and she felt a little disappointed by the want of high fretted roofs and stained windows, which, somehow or other she had pictured even in the domicile of a lady Abbess. She ate but little, and was shown to her own apartment, which she found small and dim, but tolerably comfortable; and she gladly threw her exhausted frame upon the little cottage-bed which occupied one corner, for sofa or easy chair there was none. Two cane-bottomed chairs, a small round table, with a crucifix upon it, and her bed, were the chief furniture of the room; and a transient depression stole over her as she contrasted it with her own elegant chamber in her father's house. She fixed her eyes, however, upon the crucifix, and strove to meditate; but her thoughts flitted to and fro in confusion, until they were dissipated by the ringing of the convent-bell, when a sister entered to inquire if she was sufficiently refreshed to attend vespers.

She accompanied her through the narrow corridor, to the door which opened into the cloisters, where they joined the procession of the nuns moving slowly along the aisles in their dark robes. The architecture was not remarkably striking, but the solemn gloom pleased her; it accorded with her ideas of religion, which was truly a religion of the senses. The chapel was small, but fine; the tapers on the altar, the officiating priest, the dark kneeling figures of the sisters, the high vaulted roof, filled with the swell of music, wrought up her mind to a high pitch of what she considered devotion. She was overcome and wept.

The service over, the Mother Superior offered her her arm, and conducted her to her own private room, where they had tea alone. She spoke soothingly to her victim; assured her of the deep interest she took in her; promised her peace and holiness beyond her most sanguine expectations, and crossing her hands on her breast and looking upwards, exclaimed, 'Oh! the life of a nun is indeed a holy, happy life.'

Miss Percy looked upon her with reverence and something like affection. 'Reverend Mother,' she said, 'it cost me a pang to leave those I loved; to leave them so desolate; but the vanities of the world were hateful to me; I sighed for purity and spirituality. I will pray for the consolation of my father,

for his conversion to the true faith.' Her lip quivered and her voice failed.

'My child,' added the Superior, 'we will join our prayers to yours, and ere long a novena shall be appointed for this purpose.'

'Ah! mother, that is indeed too good,' exclaimed the poor enthusiast; 'I am a most unworthy daughter of the church, and often wonder that the Virgin should have deigned to choose me and bring me into its pale. The steps of my conversion, and of my coming hither, have indeed been singular.'

'Doubt not, my child,' the mother rejoined, 'that from your very birth the Virgin has had her eye upon you. I am sure she loved you in your cradle; and when your heart was desolated by your mother's loss, she pitied you, and resolved to supply that loss by her own maternal heart.'

Mary wept. 'And yet it was bitter,' she said, 'to leave her father.'

'Mark,' observed the Superior, 'the advantage which arises from early divesting the heart of earthly attachments. We must sooner or later part with all the objects of our regard: when we do it voluntarily, we acquire merit, and then we reap advantage in getting the struggle over while strength remains for the encounter; we meet the foe face to face, instead of being struck down with our back turned. Having

fought and conquered, the rest of our life is tranquil, without need to fear coming evil.'

The deceiver knew that the boasted tranquillity was that of a starving man, who is aware he can get no food.

'But you must go to rest,' she proceeded, 'for you are weary and sad. Will you rise to our early devotions, or do you require longer sleep after your fatigues?'

'My best rest will be found in devotion, mother.'

'Then come, I will take you to your room. Tomorrow we shall talk of the future. You shall find all that you require prepared for you. May the saints watch over you, "Benedicite!"'

She was wearied, solemnized, tranquillized; and after performing her devotions, gladly threw herself upon her bed, and, notwithstanding its hardness, slept.

The convent was one of the "clausura"—strictly secluded. Those of this class are usually occupied by young women of fortune; they are the more wealthy convents, whose inmates do not require to support them by educating the young; and there it is politic to place those who are in danger of changing their resolution to take the veil, for they have not that communication with the outer world which is afforded to nuns who receive pupils. Once within the walls of such a convent, a girl is cut off from all hope of escape—unless indeed, as in the case of Miss Talbot,

the power of a Lord Chancellor of England can be brought to bear upon it. But if a young woman be confined there without the knowledge of her friends, she is consigned for ever to despair; the gloomy secrets of her prison can never transpire until the day of judgment. And Miss Talbot's is a rare case of escape, for in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, means will be found to baffle the strictest inquiries of friends and relatives, and even of government itself, so long as right of search is denied.

At five in the morning the convent-bell rang; the sisters arose, and at six, as on the previous evening, one of them went to attend Miss Percy to the chapel.

A dim light streamed in through the painted windows, which warmed the cold grey with gold and flame colour; while the statues and pictures, and the fine architecture of the chapel were disclosed, not distinctly but with a hazy splendor. Matins were beautifully chanted; and but that recent sorrow had depressed her, (Mary had always a but,) she would have been in an ecstasy of devotion. As it was, she was softened and elevated by something which she mistook for piety.

Mary breakfasted alone, to give her time, the mother said, to recruit from her fatigues. At half-past seven there was mass in the choir, after which

she was summoned to meet the Lady Superior in her own room.

She was received with much apparent interest and affection, was questioned as to her reception of the Catholic faith, and her desire to embrace a conventual life.

'I fear,' said the mother, 'that you may not have weighed sufficiently the important step you wish to take, and I would have you wait a little before commencing the noviciate, *even at the risk of your father's discovering your retreat, and forcing you from it.* If spared until you are of age, you would in that case be free to act for yourself.'

'What I dread above all things, Reverend Mother,' replied Mary, 'is to be forced back into the world, after having effected my escape—after having endured the pain of separation from my father. In fact, after my clandestine flight, I should be ashamed to appear again in society, even though my father were reconciled to me.'

'You desire the mortification of the flesh,' said the mother, 'I am not sure that in the world you might not attain this object more surely than in our peaceful walls; amidst the scorn that falls upon one who embraces the Catholic faith; the frowns of friends; the temptations with which society is filled; the continual struggle, in fact, which you would have to maintain against the world, the flesh, and the devil, you might

win a higher crown of saintship, than in the pure, calm, loving seclusion of a convent, where temptation is shut out, and the mind soars unopposed to the sublime heights of heavenly contemplation.'

'Mother,' said Mary, 'your arguments have an effect upon my mind the very reverse of that which you intend; they incline me more and more to be a nun. I am a poor weak girl; what if amidst the temptations to which you refer, I should be, not strengthened, but overcome? You tell me of a place of safety, and yet counsel me to choose danger.'

'I counsel you to choose danger only for the glory of surmounting it,' replied the mother. 'For myself, you see, I prefer the calm, the repose within, to the heroism of encountering the storm without. But if you really will it so, my child, it may be that a retired religious life is your vocation. Here your vows will be easily kept.'

'I have been accustomed, reverend mother, to consider a life of celibacy and mortification, of higher merit than one of worldly enjoyment.'

'Surely, my child, you have thought correctly. I would not dissuade you from a life of celibacy and mortification, but that may be maintained outside the walls of a convent.'

'Amidst the taunts and solicitations of friends, and the fascinations of pleasure!—oh! mother, what a conflict! How sure I should be to fall! No; give

me the peaceful cloister; the safe seclusion. Mother, I entreat you, urge me no more.'

'I will not, my child. I yield; I am at length convinced that the holy estate is your vocation. The bishop will, I have no doubt, be satisfied as to the propriety of permitting you immediately to commence your noviciate; even without continuing long as a postulant; after that you may write to your father. For a few days you had better live as a boarder here, and not join the sisters in their regular duties; go to the chapel to the services, walk in the cloisters, examine the paintings and statues, and read what you please in the library.'

The library contained nothing but legends of saints and similar popish productions.

CHAPTER XII.

DESPAIR.

"I must

"Count the world a stranger for thy sake.

"The private wound is deepest; O time most curst

"Amongst all foes, that a friend should be the worst."

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

MR. and Mrs. Courtenay, alarmed by the inquiries after Miss Percy, proceeded to Avon House, where they were so overwhelmed by improbable conjectures that they could scarcely form any of their own. At the earnest solicitation of Mademoiselle, Mrs. C. remained with her, while Mr. C. informed the rural police of the circumstances, and rode over to the village and the post-town, whither the coachman had gone before him. Here he learned what that faithful servant had done, and having full confidence in him, returned with the intelligence. To the servants, however, he only mentioned that Miss Percy had been heard of; and he hoped soon to have full intelligence. He then wrote to Mr. Percy, requesting his immediate

return, *as something* unpleasant had occurred in the household; and next morning sent to the provincial paper an advertisement which he hoped might elicit some information.

'I cannot at all comprehend this count with his moustache,' said Mrs. Courtenay. 'Miss Percy is the very last girl of my acquaintance whom I would have suspected of a clandestine marriage, and where she could have seen such a person is a mystery. I think the count's lady cannot be she, I fear she has been robbed and murdered.'

'No,' said Mr. Courtenay, 'it is evident she left the house intentionally, taking her jewels with her. But had it not been for the count, I should have suspected a nunnery. She was all but a papist, and her fortune would be a famous prize. I am not quite sure about Mademoiselle, at least she ought not to have taught her all those popish songs and chants, and allowed the drawing-room table to be filled with such papistical trash.'

'Oh! love,' replied Mrs. C., 'you think of nothing now but popery and nunneries.'

'Popery is at present the great foe of families and of the country,' said Mr. C.

'Miss Percy loves nature too much to shut herself up in a nunnery,' observed Mrs. C. 'Of the two suppositions, to run away with some romantic foreigner is the more probable—but—I don't know what to think.'

'I know that whatever has become of her, her father's heart will be broken,' said Mr. C. 'Of such cruelty I should never have suspected Miss Percy. But you remember I told you of that strange scene when I dined at Avon House; depend upon it, popery is at the bottom of all this in one way or other.'

On receipt of his friend's letter, Mr. Percy immediately set off for Avon House, supposing some misconduct among the domestics, intending however to halt at Oakham on his way, according to Mr. Courtenay's request, for explanations. 'The ——shire Chronicle, sir, to-day's paper,' cried a boy, as he stopped a few moments on the borders of his own county. To beguile unpleasant thoughts Mr. Percy purchased one, but it was not long before his eye lighted on the following—"Advertisement"—"Left her home, near Ryton, early on the morning of the 24th, a young lady, aged eighteen, tall and thin, with dark hair and large dark eyes; she is supposed to have been drest in a riding habit, straw bonnet, and blue veil, and to have been accompanied by a foreigner in a moustache and blue cloak."

The paper dropped from his hand. The description fearfully agreed with that of his daughter; and yet it was impossible; his own modest, retiring, dutiful, loving child, in whom his very existence was bound up, whose existence seemed bound up in his!—A foreigner, with a moustache!—no such person

visited at Avon House except old Count Potowski, who had a little shrill-voiced wife;—no; the thing was impossible—yet it haunted him;—"something unpleasant" had occurred. How slowly they travelled to-day! What could be the reason of their lack of speed? His watch too was going slow. He had an almost irresistible desire to leave the carriage, and to run, bound over the road. *Reason* kept him upon his seat, but it was difficult to *feel*, while sitting there, that he was getting on at all,—that he could not have got on faster on his own feet. Excited and feverish, he at length arrived at Oakham, where he was received with such a tender air of commiseration as prepared him to hear the worst. He *did* hear it; with what feelings our readers may imagine. Mortification, anger, grief, despair succeeded each other. Though late, he insisted upon proceeding to Avon House, whither Mr. and Mrs. Courtenay accompanied him.

He spent half the night in examining the servants, but without eliciting the smallest light. It was evident they were all profoundly ignorant of the matter. He inquired for Monsieur Bouquet, who had still been in the habit of coming once a week to read French and German with Miss Percy, but was told that about the time of Mr. Percy's leaving home he had gone to the continent for a few weeks.

'Had he been at home,' said Mademoiselle,

'we should have had another able assistant in our search.'

'Alas!' said Mr. Percy, 'the infatuated girl chose her time well.'

Next morning Mr. Percy and his friend Mr. Courtenay followed the track of the coachman to Liverpool, and set in motion every engine that could be devised for the discovery of the lost one, but in vain. A plan was arranged for obtaining intelligence from all the American steamers as they returned, of the passengers they had carried out; and advertisements were sent to American newspapers. The "Times," for many weeks, among its numerous sad announcements bore the following:

"If M. P. who left her home clandestinely on the morning of the 24th —, will return, or write to her desolate father, she is assured of his forgiveness."

It was all in vain. No record of his daughter ever reached the ear or the eye of Mr. Percy. For a year he cherished hope at intervals, but seldom spoke to any one; his health declined; and at length an attack of paralysis reduced him to the condition of a fatuous old man.

Colonel Hayward, Mrs. Percy's brother, and Mr. Courtenay were almost the only persons he would see. Mademoiselle, not quite unsuspected, left when her services were no longer required, to further the interests of "the church" in another place; and M.

Bouquet, who in a week had returned to be thrown into the greatest distress by the flight of his pupil, removed to a large manufacturing town to carry on operations there; after which he was removed to a higher sphere.

Mr. Percy's estate was strictly entailed in the male line; it was to pass to his nephew, therefore no efforts were made for his conversion to Romanism, otherwise the paralytic man would in all probability have had some ecclesiastical *consolation* in his trials; as it was, he was left to bear them as best he might. Fretful and discontented, no one could please him. He would order his daughter to be sent for, bitterly chiding her undutifulness in remaining so long from him, then the remembrance of the truth would burst upon his mind, and he would weep like an infant; again he would draw himself erect, and utter upon her some fearful malediction. Another stroke deprived him of articulation, and many a weary day he lay helpless, attended carefully by the faithful old housekeeper, who ever and anon broke forth, sometimes in apology for her young mistress, sometimes in indignation against her.

The old nurse White was sheltered by a friend, who, with the instinct of Christian love, fully believed her innocence of the charges made against her. The Methodist minister whom she attended, being about to proceed to America, offered to take her with him.

There she procured a situation, and by her exemplary conduct, fully justified the confidence reposed in her. Among her fellow-servants she was never exonerated; but a day is coming when all secrets shall be revealed;—when the righteousness of the people of God shall be fully manifested to an assembled world.

CHAPTER XIII.

A JESUIT'S REFLECTIONS.

"O Jupiter! how weary are my spirits!

"I care not for my spirits if my legs were not weary."

As you like it.

IMMEDIATELY after consigning his pupil to her new guardian, Padre Carlo, alias M. Bouquet, turned his face homeward. He attempted to be satisfied with the work he had accomplished; and in which, so long as there was any thing to *do*, any difficulty to surmount, any feeling of adventure to brighten it, he had been really interested. It was now over, and in spite of himself he felt very *flat*. Jesuit-infidel as he was, conscience gave him a sting or two, and even self-interest began somewhat rudely to call him to account.

'I have given myself soul and body to hypocrisy,' said he, mentally, 'and what have I gained? I am labouring day and night for this despot church, and what is my reward? I am accumulating wealth, and

may not touch a mite of it—sworn to *poverty*, forsooth ! I am building up power, and am rewarded by chains and slavery—vowed to *obedience* !

‘My order is enriched and glorified, truly, but what is that to *me*, so long as I have personal consciousness, and not brahminical absorption into the great essence of the church ? What am *I* benefitted by all I am doing ? Like the bee, I am but toiling for others ; and when my honey is made, if it suit them, I shall be destroyed. This is the fate of Rome’s obedient sons ! Fools ! to heap up treasures which we may never touch,—to build a chariot, at the wheels of which we shall be dragged. It is well enough for those who fancy they have souls to be saved, and that such deeds will save them ; but for me, and for hundreds like me who know better—who know that the grave is our endless home—why should *we* deny ourselves and toil night and day ? “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die !”

‘Rome, I could almost cast thee off, turn heretic, and revenge myself upon thy despotism, by exposing and crushing it ! Nay, this would not improve the case ; it would not aggrandize *me* ; it would only gratify the adversaries I have sworn to quell.’

‘But stay. Have I really achieved nothing for myself ? I have. I have gained a *victory* ; there is delight in that. I have accomplished my purpose—satisfied my will—what more could Jove have done ?

My will is myself, or what am I—vanity, appetite, fame ? For these all the world labour ; but my vanity, my appetite, my fame, are something I possess ; they are not myself : nay, they are things which may be my masters, while my will is a part of my essence, an emanation of my very being.’ * * * *

Here the father lost himself in a labyrinth of metaphysics. After some time he proceeded.

‘It seems to be an immutable law of nature that atoms can effect nothing separately ; they must exist and act in masses. In a universe of unconnected particles, no one particle could possess any thing except its own existence. In an army of self-governed, self-acting soldiers, no one would achieve a victory—all would be defeated. Each atom shares the good of its mass ; each soldier reaps the glory of his army. I must be content to lose my individuality ; ’tis hard, but it is fate ! The church allows license enough to its priests in pleasure, if not in profit : few delights save that of liberty are withheld from us.

‘Yet why am I, with this burning soul within me, kept by the tyrant laboring in obscurity ? I will demand a higher mission—to the salons of Paris—to the courts of princes ; life I *must*, I *will* enjoy. Let those who have souls, labour for their good ; mine it shall be to live while I live,—or Rome, I abjure thee !

‘Fool ! might not I have wooed this heiress for myself, instead of for the church ? Ah ! Padre Carlo ;

wouldst thou have succeeded? Couldst thou have borne defeat? No; let me *will* only that in which my will shall triumph. A world subjugated to my order is the end I have set before me. It is a glorious end, and it shall be accomplished. Padre Carlo—thy will shall triumph!’

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ARRIVAL.

“Speak you this in praise, Master?”

“In thy condign praise.”

“I will praise an eel with the same praise.”

Love's Labor Lost.

ONE day Mary received an invitation to spend the evening in the room of the Mother Superior. Sister Theresa brought her the message. ‘There is to be company,’ she said, ‘a grand Lady somebody, her sister, and a niece, who is to be placed here while they are on the continent. You and I, being particularly fine ladies, are to be of the party, to help mother to entertain them. You will please to put your pretty mouth into a smile, that they may see how happy you are.’

Mary involuntarily smiled. ‘There, darlin’, that’ll do; now give me a kiss.’

Mary put her arms round the neck of the nun, whose kindness ever since her arrival had won her

heart, and kissed her; she was repaid by a hearty squeeze, but could not comprehend the half-quizzical, half-sad expression of her countenance. She found the room of the mother a little ornamented by flowers and nick-nacks, and enlivened by a cheerful fire; the look of comfort raised her spirits.

'Allow me to introduce this young lady to your Ladyship,' said the Superior, skilfully avoiding the mention of her real name. 'Miss Agnes has not yet professed, though she wishes to do so soon. Your niece will find a companion in her. Sister Theresa,' she added, presenting the nun.

We must here observe, that the real name of a nun is usually unknown in a convent. Miss Percy was to receive, on her profession, that of sister Agnes, and she was now called 'Miss Agnes.' The young lady who was to be a boarder, had not, of course, hers changed at present.

Lively conversation soon prevailed in the little party. 'Now tell me the truth,' said Lady S. to the nun. 'Don't you young ladies often wish to run away, and go to balls and plays, and get married?'

Theresa crossed her hands upon her breast, and smiled; 'No, no, my lady, I assure you, we so love our convent, that if you were to set the doors open in the middle of the night, we should all run and bolt them again.'

'To be sure you would, for fear of robbers,' said

her ladyship. 'But if I were to throw them open in the middle of the day, and give invitation for a picnic; or in the evening, with dresses and carriages for a ball, how you would all jump!'

'So we should—out of your ladyship's way;,' said the sister, archly.

Lady S. laughed. 'Well, now, suppose I bring my eldest son, and diamonds, and white veils, and orange flowers, and bid him bring the prettiest of you out of this prison of yours to his own Hall, there *will* be a strife!'

'Yes, my lady, and so there will be how to get rid of your ladyship, and his lordship, with the greatest possible speed. We don't care for diamonds; we have done with our *white* veils, orange flowers we would not despise, they would strew the floor beautifully—have they any other use?' she inquired, with much simplicity.

'You are a strange girl, indeed,' said Lady S. 'Don't you know that brides wear orange flowers?'

Sister Theresa suddenly became grave, crossed her hands again over her breast, and looked upward. 'We are the brides of heaven,' she said, 'we know nothing of earthly bridals.'

'Then you *are* happy?' inquired Lady S.

'Happy, most happy,' replied the nun.

'Why,' said Lady S., 'I am almost afraid to leave

my niece among you, lest she should be enticed by your happiness to become a nun.'

'I shall not allow her to be so persuaded, I assure you,' said the Mother Superior. 'I am very jealous of any influence being used with young persons.'

'You are right, madam,' said Lady S. 'Young persons ought not to be influenced in such matters.'

'Except,' remarked the mother, 'in so far as to hold them back from taking vows until they fully appreciate their nature.'

'With such sentiments,' said Lady S., 'I feel that my niece is safe with you; happy, I am sure, she will be.'

'Nothing shall be wanting on my part to secure both her safety and her happiness,' said the Mother Superior.

'Of that I can assure your ladyship,' added sister Theresa. 'Our dearest mother is adored by all of us, and we shall love Miss S. exceedingly. I will tell you a secret,' she said, speaking low, and slily to Miss S. 'It is my firm belief that when we get penance, our mother goes to her room to cry. Tell the truth, now, mother, don't you?' she inquired kissing her hand, and laughing.*

'If I weep, it is for your sin,' said the Lady Superior. Then, addressing Lady S., she added, 'This

* See Appendix I.

is a wild Irish girl—too wild to be a nun. I fear I do not tame her as I ought. The fact is, I like too well to make my girls happy.'

'I could almost wish to be an inmate of your convent myself,' said Lady S.

As sister Theresa and Agnes retired, the latter remarked, 'How amiable the Mother Superior appears to be—how she allows you to fondle her! You seem to love her much!'

'And it is love her I do—do I?' said Theresa, relapsing into broad Irish. 'Och! but she's an ould angel!' And the nun screwed up her face into an expression so comical, that in spite of her astonishment, Agnes could not forbear laughing.

'Be discreet, or it's penance ye'll get, darlin';' said Theresa. 'Laughing's a sin, do ye know?'

Agnes was puzzled. Had sister Theresa been merely acting in the parlour, or was this but another ebullition of her wild Irish blood? She was unable to answer the question—it caused her some perplexity.

The strangers passed the night in the convent; next morning, they examined the chapel, the cloisters, the refectory, and a cell or two which were untenanted. 'You did not suppose a nun's cell to be so comfortable a place, I dare say,' observed the mother. She did not add that those were kept for exhibition, or for visitors, not for the sisters.

Miss S. wept, as she parted with her aunts. She would rather have been left in a fashionable boarding-school, although too far advanced for that. She was a considerable heiress, however, was engaged to a young man in India, and a convent was considered the safest place for her. The aunts were to be a year and a half on the continent, after which they and her lover were to return, and she was to be married. She was provided with a small library, was to have liberty of seeing her friends, and receiving female visitors; only the convent was to be her home.

She was pleased, however, with what she saw of the Mother Superior, the nun, and Miss Agnes, and thought that she might contrive to be tolerably happy, especially as her aunts had promised to write her a journal of their tour, and letters from India would often arrive. She had a passion for music and fancy-work, both of which she hoped to pursue in connection with the nuns. The ordinary religious services she was to attend as she pleased.

CHAPTER XV.

ENTRANCE ON A CONVENT-LIFE.

"Lasciate agni Speranza, voi ch' entrate."

DANTE.

It was not thought desirable that the commencement of Mary's noviciate should be attended by a great public spectacle; for although far from her native place, it was yet possible that she might be recognized by some chance visitor; the intimations, therefore, that a young lady was about to assume the white veil, were limited to the immediate vicinity.

Yet there was much pomp displayed on the occasion. The entrance to the chapel was strewed with flowers; mass celebrated at the side-altar, the high-altar was decorated with wreaths and bouquets of flowers, and before it was seated the bishop, gorgeously appareled.

Sister Agnes—as the destined bride was to be named, had passed a sleepless night. Visions of expected bliss had alternated with remembrances of

home; tears of hope had mingled with tears of regret; heaven had struggled with earth; but like a boat which had entered a current, she passively proceeded. They dressed her in white, arrayed her with all her jewels, and threw over her shoulders her rich ringlets. She entered the chapel leaning on the arm of the Mother Superior, and knelt at the side-altar, bending her head, while her hair like a veil concealed her features.

The Mother then conducted her to the bishop, and kneeled with her before him. Questions respecting her desire of a religious life were asked by him; she replied in a low musical voice, according to the prescribed form, and they then arose, and were seated at his right hand—the bride in her white robe, her glittering jewels, and crown of roses; the Superioress in her linen hood, her black dress, and rosary; while the bishop sat in lordly state, to complete the imposing trio.

The confessor next advanced, and delivered an address to the youthful candidate, on the vanities and dangers and sins of the world, and the blessedness of a conventual life. Safety and purity, you might have inferred from his discourse, were to be found only in the cloister; the holiest of earthly ties were dangerous; the fairest of earthly joys were impure; religion outside the walls but a mockery.

The momentous question was then asked by the

bishop; the candidate signified her desire to leave the world; and then he arose, and with stately step led his victim down the aisle, and out of the chapel; the threshold was passed, the prison-house entered, and she bade farewell to liberty for ever.

In a little while a curtain was raised, and the inner chapel of the nuns disclosed, separated from the other by a grating. There was a sound of distant music, low and sweet; it swelled, and became louder and nearer, and there appeared a procession of nuns, chanting as they moved slowly forward, and bearing lighted candles. They ranged themselves along the sides of the chapel; the fresh novice approached the grating, before which she kneeled, and the bishop again exchanged a few words with her; he then cut off a lock of her hair, and the curtain fell for a few minutes. It was raised again, and the novice appeared in the white veil, with the crown of virginity upon her head, a tear in her eye, and a flush upon her cheek.

Loudly and triumphantly then an anthem pealed forth, and a short service was said; holy water was sprinkled, and a benediction pronounced.

During the latter part of the ceremony the nuns had stood motionless as statues, each with her lighted candle; they now filed off in retiring procession, taking with them their youthful captive. She had no relative present, and therefore the parting scene

was not enacted. The organ burst forth in a solemn swell of harmony, the spectators arose and walked away, and the nuns proceeded to the refectory, where a feast was spread in honour of the occasion; fruit, cakes, and even wine, were intermingled with flowers, and all hearts were lighter than usual, save that of the one who had expected this day to be the commencement of her happiness.

When she retired to her cell her heart was unchanged; it still throbbed with anxiety, and sank in depression. The magical ceremony had not, as she imagined, transformed her nature, or hushed her spirit into peace, and elevated it to holiness. Every feeling was the same as before; and she marvelled and was disappointed. Her father filled her dreams that night. She was seeking him in Avon House, amidst confusion inexpressible, and she learned that he was dead. She awoke weeping, and remembered that she was a novice, that she was to be a nun, and that 'nuns have no fathers.'

Next morning, the bishop having remained, she went to confession, and he told her that the peace and spirituality she sought, would not be obtained without determined conflict with her earthly affections.

'I thought I should have found it here at once, my lord,' she remarked.

'No, my child,' replied the bishop, 'this is only a place where the conflict may be more strenuously

maintained, and the victory more easily achieved than in the world. The blessed St. Anthony had to his life's end encounters with demons, and St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, and all the saints, grew strong by fighting. By fighting comes courage, by courage comes victory, and after victory comes peace.'

That morning Mary was permitted to write to her father, but was told that no letter from either novice or nun was allowed to leave the convent without the inspection of the Mother Superior. Upon carrying her letter to this lady, she was told, 'My child, this savours too much of carnal affection. She who aspires to be the bride of heaven must moderate her attachment to earthly friends.'

'Is it wrong to love a father?' asked the young novice.

'He that loveth father or mother more than Christ is not worthy of Him,' replied the mother. 'The bride in the Psalter is exhorted to forget her father's house; and the blessed anchorite Paul had so weaned himself from earthly love, that he deemed the touch of his sister pollution. Moderate some of those expressions of attachment, my child, and moderate also your feelings. Meditate upon the love of the Virgin, when forbidden love would intrude into your heart.'

The deep heaving of the heart of the novice and the quiver of her pale lips, told how terrible the requirement was; but she summoned resolution to meet

it, and quietly proceeded to re-write her letter, and to smother in her breast the pure flame of filial love. The obedience was followed by a feeling of sadness and desolation, such as she had not before experienced. The mother approved of the colder epistle. The writing of it had been a discipline, and was intended as such; but this was its only use; it was never to meet the eye of the sorrowing father to whom it was addressed. Small intention had the hawks to part with their prey; small intention had the lady superior that the Habeas Corpus Act should ever force her to relinquish the richly-endowed heiress.

'How soon may I expect a reply?' inquired Mary timidly.

'In a week, perhaps,' replied the mother, as she retired with the letter to her own room, where she coolly destroyed the document in which was centered the sole remaining hope of a young and loving heart.

'Were your thoughts during the night much employed upon the probable reception of your letter?' asked Mary's confessor, when the week had elapsed.

'Alas! father, they were!' was the reply.

'Did the idea intrude during matins?'

'I grieve to say that it did.'

'And when the porter's bell announced strangers, did your heart beat wildly?'

The novice burst into an agony of tears.

'I see it, my child, I see it,' said Father O'Hooran.

'Your heart is still full of the world. The Virgin cannot accept of an alienated heart. You must recite twenty Aves and ten Paternosters, and for every one during which your mind wanders, you must say two more.'

'Alas! father, is there hope for me? Can I ever become worthy to be the Bride of Heaven?' asked the sobbing girl.

'You may, my child,' replied the confessor. 'By discipline and faith you may attain the sublime heights of calm contemplation;—the celestial blessedness of angelic communion, untroubled by thoughts of this low world. But the discipline is hard: would you evade it?'

'No, father,' she said determinedly, but chokingly.

'The discipline you require is of the affections,' said the father. 'It is thence that your temptations arise. I augur for you a high destiny if you persevere. It may be that you shall attain to sainthood.'

'Then spare not the means, father,' said the victim.

The holy father, the tall dark priest who had accompanied her to the convent, departed to absolve a ribbonman for murder successfully concealed.

Three days beyond the week passed. 'Reverend Mother,' said Mary, 'there's no letter yet.'

'Perhaps the Virgin has so ordered it, to test your

faith and obedience,' replied the lady superior; 'your father may be from home.'

'May be,' she admitted, 'but his letters are always forwarded to him. Another week will surely bring a reply.'

'You must consider, my child, the possibility of his not deigning to reply at all,' said the superior.

'Oh, Mother!' cried the poor girl, burying her face in her robe, and sobbing violently.

'This will not do,' said the mother, with more of sternness than before. 'Those tears must be stopped. Go to the kitchen, and assist in the preparation of dinner. Or stay; to prepare the refectory will do. Let it be properly swept, and the furniture dusted, and the table covered before the meal is ready.'

The daughter of luxury went to her menial task. The superior had judged rightly—it stopped the torrents of her tears; and the occupation partly disengaged her mind from oppressive thoughts, while it proved a discipline in obedience and self-control. But the sad girl pondered strangely upon so unthought-of a method of manufacturing saints as sweeping rooms and dusting furniture. She had dreamed of romantic acts of mortification, of elevating vigils, of—she knew not what transcendental achievements; and now to be reduced to the level of one of her father's housemaids puzzled her. However, as her mind was really much calmed by the process, she supposed it to be the right

one. 'To do a thing I like, would be no act of mortification or self-denial at all,' she inwardly argued. 'The convent rules are wise, doubtless.'

Melancholy, insufficient means of producing spirituality of heart! to strip it bare as a desert, to denude it of all the pure affections of humanity. No wonder that fiends so often enter the empty dwelling; no wonder that low sensuality so often takes the place of holy love rudely torn away. It is possible to love too well father and mother, and brother and sister, to put them in the place of God; but it is *not* possible to keep an empty heart pure. Very different is the sanctifying process of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The love of God introduced into the heart expels every unworthy affection. The soul filled with heavenly desires, has no room for those which are earthly; the mind feeding on spiritual food seeks not the husks of earth. By the power of the Spirit of Truth,—through the enlightenment of the Word of God, the balance of the affections is restored, all things fall into their proper places, the renewed creature renders unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's. It is a vile caricature of the law of God which Rome gives to torment her victim-votaries, and it is an equally vile mockery of gospel holiness with which she cheats, and where with she seeks to dazzle a gazing and ignorant world.

Mary was more cheerful at dinner.

'To reward your obedience,' said the mother, when the silent meal was finished, 'you may dress the shrine of our saint with flowers for the approaching festival.'

'Thank you, dearest mother,' replied Mary, her eyes sparkling. 'I love to look upon—to touch flowers.'

'To idolize them?' asked the superior smiling.

'I will try to repress idolatry,' she replied.

Alas, poor girl! the very act—that of dressing with flowers the shrine of the saint, was one of idolatry. The poor girl's passionate love of flowers might degenerate into such, even though God formed those exquisite products of his skill and tenderness to show forth his own glory: but to adore 'a saint' is to rob Him of his glory altogether, and to transfer it to a creature. Such a hypocrite is Rome.

A month of hope deferred had passed, and the heart of the novice was sick. Her father, she concluded, had banished her from his affections, or her flight had broken his heart, and he was dead. What if he *were* dead, he had died without a daughter's love to soothe his last agonies! Was not she guilty of filial disobedience—of impiety? Had she a right to forsake a parent's home, to leave desolate a parent's heart? Was she not his murderess? Such thoughts haunted her night and day. She became haggard, and could not eat; the coarse fare of the convent was

loathsome to her. Her nights were restless and fevered; a leaden weight was upon her spirits, and she mentally asked if this were the bliss she had been promised in a convent. This idea it was necessary to confess, and it brought down a penance. It was thought well to relieve her mind from anxiety, although by the certainty of separation from her father's affection.

One morning she was sent for to the room of the mother superior. As she entered, that lady was destroying a letter. Her heart beat violently.

'I have news for you,' said the mother; 'but sit down, you will faint.'

'My father!' said Mary, in a scarcely audible voice, clasping her hands, and pressing them upon her breast.

'Is implacable,' said the lady.

'No letter for *me*, mother?'

'None; and mine is too hard-hearted for you to read. You must never think of him more. He disowns you.'

The novice fell senseless to the ground.

The superioress of course had received no letter. The whole tale was a pure fiction.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONVENT LIFE.

"Cloistered cells,
 "And mansions unrelenting as the grave,
 "But void of quiet."

AKENSIDE.

It may be well to give a general sketch of the mode of life in the convent of —. It was very different from that which our heroine had imagined, and utterly astonished her. The nuns, she had been told by the superioress, were all women of rank and fortune, except two or three who performed the out-door work.

At five in the morning they rose, and at six went to matins; at seven, a very frugal breakfast was served, and at half-past seven they attended mass. They then set about their household duties; these *ladies* performing all the work of ordinary servants. During this time, and at dinner, absolute silence was imposed. At twelve, they assembled in the refectory for dinner; the sisters ranged themselves on each side of a long, narrow table, covered with a coarse

cloth, where broth, coarse bread, vegetables, and weak beer were placed. Three sisters waited on the rest, and one read aloud marvellous legends of saints, or lives of holy recluses. The nuns had a forbidding, spectral appearance, with their ugly hoods and serge gowns, and were, to Mary's surprise, absolutely dirty. Her mental picture of a nun was dressed in a very classical fashion, had an aquiline nose, and 'lips apart—a perfect monument of Grecian art.' For some of the ugly women who surrounded her, she would have almost desired the veil as a covering.

A few prayers, and a few attempts at meditation, alternated with washing, scrubbing, making serge gowns, vespers, silent tea, and lounging; except to those who had penances to perform, of which more hereafter. At half-past nine, the bell rang for 'obedience.' The whole community were then gathered to meet the lady superior, who seated herself in her chair of state; and each sister in succession, kneeling at her feet, recounted her deeds of the past day, and received commands for the day following. A virtue was then given to each sister to practise during the next twenty-four hours, which virtue was often pretty severely tried, to test the adherence of the nun to her vow of obedience.

The nuns then retired to their cells—small, white-washed chambers, with narrow beds, sufficiently hard to prevent all danger of luxurious rest; a small table,

a stool, a crucifix, a scourge, a skull, and an image of the Virgin.

We have said that the mode of life utterly astonished the new inmate; but there was no help for it, the die was cast; she had left her home; her father was implacably offended; she was absolutely imprisoned. But indeed she did not, even yet, wish to escape; although unhappy, she thought that the fault lay with herself. She had indulged in what she now considered carnal visions of processions, music, ecstasies, contemplations, vigils, spiritual converse, holy communings; and her eyes were opened, as she supposed, to see that such things would have been but self-gratification, instead of meritorious mortification. She therefore determined to dismiss them from her mind, and address herself to the work of sanctification by real self-denial—by doing the very things which were most distasteful to her. Yet nature sometimes rebelled.

One evening the reverend mother informed her that as to-morrow was washing-day, she would be expected to rise at half-past three, and go to the washing-house at four.

'The washing-house! reverend mother,' she exclaimed, in surprise.

'Yes;' replied the superior. 'You will take your turn with the rest.'

'Is the linen washed by the nuns—by *ladies*?' she involuntarily cried.

'That is part of their duty,' said the lady; 'a humble nun is ready to perform the most menial office for the good of her soul!'

'Reverend mother,' said the novice, sadly, 'I once imagined that sanctification was to be attained by mental discipline.'

'You imagined rightly,' replied the superioress; 'but where would be mental discipline without bodily mortification? Is not this a discipline of the will, a lesson of self-denial and obedience? Were I to desire you to go and gather a bouquet of roses, and meditate the while on the gardens of heaven, would that subdue any corrupt fleshly propensity?'

'True,' responded the poor girl; but the thought struck her that to meditate on the glories of heaven might *perhaps* attract her affection thither, more than to labor at a washing-tub. Yet the Gnostic doctrine revived in the Church of Rome, of the inherent evil of matter, and the consequent necessity of mortifying the flesh, had been so carefully instilled into her mind, that she assented to the sophism of the Lady Superior. She did not perceive the difference between mortifying what was *sinful* in the flesh, and inflicting upon its *lawful* desires of enjoyment a needless denial. Nor did she perceive that holiness lay in obedience to God's revealed will rather than in disobedience to the instincts which he has implanted. Rome has in perfection this mark of Antichrist, the

inculcation of 'voluntary humility.' Brahminism rivals her in it.

'I fear, mother,' said the novice, 'that I shall perform my task badly; I do not know how to wash.'

'Sister Theresa will be your teacher,' was the reply.

The virtue given that evening for the novice to practise was *self-denial*.

'Rise, Madam Laziness, and is it asleep you are! and the clock has struck the blessed half-past three two whole minutes ago,' cried Sister Theresa, as with a lamp in her hand, she entered the cell of the novice. Then lifting the scourge which lay at the foot of the bed, she playfully inflicted a stripe or two upon the yawning girl. 'It's a frosty morning, darlin',' she said, 'so you will please to come in half an hour to the washing-house to warm your fingers in comfortable soap-suds.'

'Really, Theresa, it is very strange,' said Sister Agnes, as she was now called.

'No grumbling,' said the nun, shaking the scourge, 'it is the most charming thing in the world on a cold winter day, is a tub of good warm water. I wonder, by the Virgin, why they don't make us wash in ice; it's a penance *that* would be! Father Dennis told us once about a saint somebody who lived in the burning African desert, who plunged up to his neck

every morning in a pond covered with ice to say his prayers.'

'How did the ice get there?' inquired the novice.

'Don't you know, darlin',' said Theresa, 'we never ask *how* a thing was done, if a priest says it *was* done. That would be heresy downright. Maybe they carried it from purgatory every morning; they did queer things, these old saints.'

'Is not that a little profane?' asked Sister Agnes.

'Profane to laugh when they tell you things to make you expire!' cried the nun. 'But I must be off; you'll come in half an hour,' she added, closing the door.

Sister Agnes performed her private devotions, and proceeded to the washing-house, where she found Sister Theresa and another nun arranging dirty clothes in the midst of steam from the boiler.

'Oh! it's cold your nose is, and your fingers! Here's your warm tub, darlin', and here's your work,' cried the sister, plunging into the water some disgusting habiliments. 'You do so, and so, and so,' she said, rubbing on soap, and plunging, and rubbing again. 'Lady-like work, it is for white hands,' she added, laughing.

The novice set boldly to her wash, though rather too delicately.

'Up to the elbows!' cried Theresa; 'the things won't be clean unless you plunge them to the bottom of the tub. Get bracelets like mine,' she added, drawing up her own arm covered with soap-suds. 'Diamonds and pearls bigger than the Queen's, and holy water it is below, having washed the clothes of a holy and reverend mother.'

So saying, she made the sign of the cross, and sprinkled the face of the novice in a fashion that made her start back, laughing. 'Sister Theresa,' said the other nun, in a cross voice, 'I wish we were not allowed to speak on washing-days; you always waste time with nonsense, and bring penance upon us. I don't want semi-prostration again, for laughing at work.'

'No, beauty,' said sister Theresa, 'it spoiled your figure, you could not walk straight for a week; and Father Dennis did not look at you.'

'What is semi-prostration?' inquired Agnes.

'This,' replied Theresa, suddenly throwing herself upon her hands and knees, and daubing the floor with soap-bubbles. 'This, before the image of the Virgin for a quarter, half, or a whole hour.'

'Not a very hard penance I should think,' said Sister Agnes.

Sister Theresa sprang up to her tub. 'Before you have been a quarter of an hour in that position,' she said, 'your back begins to ache; in half an hour

it is breaking; your arms wish to fall off, and your head seems full to bursting. If you continue an hour you are nearly mad—back, limbs, arms, wrists, and especially head, are in perfect torture; and when you rise you almost faint. Don't risk that penance, I advise you.'

'Why do they give such?' asked Agnes.

'It's a novice you are called, and a novice you are,' said Theresa. 'Don't you see that if a penance were not a penance, it would not be a penance. It's to sit in an aisy chair in a flower-garden and weep rose-water, would be the penance for you—would not it? Wonderful good it would do to your soul.'

The latter word was pronounced in a tone so extraordinary, that Sister Agnes could scarcely forbear laughing; although now, as sometimes before, she felt that a scoff, rather profane, was distinguishable in the manner of the nun!

'I do confess,' she said, 'that I expected a different style of life here—how shockingly dirty these clothes are!'

'The holier a woman's soul is, the dirtier is her corporeal part;' observed the nun. 'We are not saints here at all at all. The reverend mother says that in some truly sanctified convents, the woollen clothes, which alone they wear, are never changed till they drop away in rags; and by that time they

are in a proper state for the mortification of the flesh.'*

'A truly holy nun,' said the cross-voiced sister Monica, 'is too mindful of her soul to think of bodily discomfort.'

'She had need,' replied Theresa, satirically.

'I declare,' rejoined sister Monica, 'you scoff like a heretic. I wonder what the reverend mother means by putting you forward as she does; others perform their duties better, and conduct themselves with more propriety.'

'Especially when father Dennis is present,' said Theresa.

Sister Monica reddened. 'It was yourself who talked nonsense to him at his last visit, and prevented his speaking to another human being, though there were others he wanted to speak to,' said she, tossing her head.

'Or who wanted to speak to *him*,' retorted Theresa, laughing.

'It is his only comfort in this world, to talk to me,' said Monica.

The novice started, paused in her rubbing, and looked up from her tub in bewildered astonishment. Had she heard aright—was she in a *convent*, or among novel-reading school-girls? She became

* See Appendix J.

silent and dejected, and her reflections were scarcely disturbed by either the merry jests of sister Theresa, or the cross tones of sister Monica. Her arms, too, soon became weary of their unusual exercise, so that the call to breakfast was truly a relief.

Ere long they returned to their labours, 'There's blood upon your hand,' said sister Theresa to Agnes, as they proceeded. 'It's a little sore that same must be, and you working like penance.'

'Yes, indeed; rubbing that coarse stuff has brought the skin off my hand;' replied the novice.

'It always does that to a new help,' said Theresa; 'but it's not to the torture we'll put you. The mother will be satisfied with your day's work, I think. Your hands will be harder next time.'

'The soap makes it smart very much,' said Agnes, 'and I am tired, and rather faint.'

'A glass of whiskey, and a stout breakfast you would have had, if you had been a hired washer-woman, besides horns on your hands; but being a nun, sworn to mortify the flesh, the sooner it faints the better,' said sister Theresa, bitterly.

'Do you think I may go and lie down?' asked the novice.

'I think you may go and try, at least,' said Theresa.

Sister Agnes retired to her cell, threw herself upon her pallet, and wept. Her spirit was wounded,

she was miserable. They did not disturb her, so she lay until the dinner-bell rang. No one noticed her, she ate her meal in silence, but she either did not hear or did not understand the marvellous legend of St. Francis de Salis, which was read aloud. She almost wept as, at night, she gave to the reverend mother her account of the day; but the lady spoke soothingly to her, and she was comforted, and tried to resolve to bear her trials with more fortitude.

Next day she assisted in drying and folding the clothes, and at this work too the restraint of silence was removed. Sister Monica was not there, and Theresa chattered in peace. 'I'll tell you a good joke,' she said, 'Sister Monica is in love with father Dennis.'

'A nun in love!' exclaimed the novice in astonishment.

'True it is,' replied Theresa; 'maybe she thinks that as ould Luther turned heretic to marry a nun, so he'll help her to escape, and break his vows for her. At all events she is wildly in love, though it began only in flirtation and vanity, and desire of admiration; and wishing the honour of his breaking his heart because she is a nun, and he can't get her. So by trying to make him fall in love with her, she fell in love with him.'

'I am shocked!' exclaimed sister Agnes; 'flirtation in a convent! One excellency of a nunnery I

had supposed to be, the absence of all temptation to vanity.'

'And is it a woman you are,' said sister Theresa, 'and don't know that a woman's a woman wherever she is, and has a foolish, vain little heart in her, till it moulders away in the grave; a heart that likes to be admired, though it be but by a fat old priest? Why, the temptation is double here, for we have nothing else to amuse us but the visits of these same priests, —no balls, no pic-nics, no milliners' shops; in *this* convent we do not even act plays, as we used to do within the blessed walls of dear St. —'s.* It is positively for lack of something better to think about, that sister Monica and sister Mary de Salis come almost to blows, in determining which of them father Dennis looks most at, and speaks most to, when he comes to visit.'

'Watch Monica, it is amusing to observe her choose the most conspicuous seat when the father is there, shuffle next him in a procession, and then boast of his attentions. One morning when he was going from home, he left a book for her edification during his absence; and she took care to whisper the intelligence to a sister, so loudly, that all the rest might hear. Now she honestly supposes him to be dying in love with her; for what began in vanity has ended in be-

* See Appendix K.

lief; and if she could get prussic acid, depend upon it she'd take it some day and fall dead at his feet, just that he might weep out his little red eyes, and pine away his fat face, till it's nothing but a death's head at all, at all.'

Shocked as she was, sister Agnes could not but laugh, as she exclaimed, 'Theresa, you are the oddest girl, and this is the strangest nunnery—'

'You ever saw;' interrupted Theresa, finishing the sentence for her. 'How many convents have you been in, darlin'?''

'This is the first, I confess.'

'But not the first for me; and I can tell you that none of them can make any thing but a woman out of a woman, or a girl out of a girl. Even though the glorious St. Patrick should drive us with the frogs into the bogs, the very croaking we'd take for a note of admiration, and pop our pretty faces above the mud to be looked at. And more than that, wherever a lot of women get together, they will quarrel, and gossip, and talk scandal, unless, like an old saint father O'Horan speaks about, they get their hearts cut out, and the drop of black blood wrung out of them; that drop of black blood will have the mastery of them till they die, in spite of penances, and rosaries, and vigils, and what you please.'

'According to your opinion, then,' said sister Agnes, 'nothing but purgatory will sanctify us.'

'Or the wringing out of the black blood, which the angel did to Saint—what *was* her name?'

'Mahomet, I think,' said the novice.

'Well, *that* might do; but purgatory wouldn't. There are old gentlemen there, you know, and the fire will give a bloom to Monica's yellow face, which will make her doubly fascinating.'

Sister Agnes groaned. 'Is this then,' she thought, 'the end of all I have suffered, to be thrown into the midst of this despicable folly; and to find sin reigning every where?'

'You'll have *your* turn with the holy father's attentions,' Theresa rattled on. 'It's fine amusement for him to pass his time with young girls. *But that is all* he means. He'll not be like Luther, to run away with a nun, turn heretic, and marry her.'

'I think this gown is dry,' said sister Agnes, faintly, for she was sick at heart.

'Dry enough to give rheumatism to those who wish that by way of penance,' said sister Theresa.

Agnes proceeded with her work for a few minutes in silence, and Theresa's quick eye perceived that her rattle had distressed the novice. In the warmth of her Irish heart she ran up and kissed her, 'Never mind,' she said, 'A saint *you'll* be, at any rate.'

'Theresa,' said Agnes, 'tell me—do you join in these absurdities?'

'For fun,' replied Theresa, 'I joke and banter with

the old man, and make Monica jealous ; and as soon as he is gone, I laugh and mimic him, and maybe get penance for my pains.'

'Sisters,' cried the Lady Superior, suddenly appearing, 'there is too much speaking this morning. You will be silent for the rest of the day, except that Sister Theresa, in as few words as possible, may give any direction about the work which is absolutely necessary. Sister Mary shall keep watch. One needless word shall be punished by a day in your cell upon bread and water.'

Never was Sister Agnes more thankful than for this restriction. Although the warmth and kindness of the nun had won her heart, she was weary of all this folly ; and bitter, most bitter was the disappointment it gave her. To pursue her work in silence was an immense relief.

CHAPTER XVII.

CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

"O night and shades,
"How are ye joined with hell in triple knot ;
"Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin !"—MILTON.

"Plead
"Expedience as a warrant for the deed."—COWPER.

THE evening was dark and stormy, when the porter's bell rang violently, and next minute a carriage drove into the court, and up to one of the side-doors. A faint scream proceeded from it, and then the voice of Father Dennis inquired for the Superioress. That lady went to the door, Father Dennis jumped out of the carriage, and Father O'Hooran lifted into his arms a struggling girl about fifteen years of age, whose cries, however, were silenced by the threat of instant death if she dared to resist. She was taken along a narrow passage to a distant cell ; Sister Theresa was summoned to attend her, receiving sundry instructions from the holy fathers, as to the treatment

she was to receive. Theresa, by-the-bye, observed her vow of obedience very much as it suited her fancy.

When she entered the cell the girl threw herself upon her knees. 'It's pity ye'll have in ye're heart, my lady,' she exclaimed: 'tell me if I'm to be murdered intirely?'

'Murdered, avourneen! No; well-lodged and fed you'll be, and safe from all harm, and nothing but the heresy taken out o' ye; so keep yourself aisy, machree!'

'But isn't the prison they've put me in?' asked the girl.

'No, never a prison, but the blessed convent, where they're all angels,' replied the nun.

'The convent! and as bad as a prison is that same,' said the girl, her look of terror changing to one of depression. 'And my mother, my poor widdy mother! they've kilt her wid de big stick.'

'No, avourneen! they wouldn't take the life out of her—quite,' said the nun; 'she'll be sound and well again when she repents. Sit down now, and don't cry; and I'll be back with your supper in half an hour,' she added, as she left the cell and locked it behind her.

But the girl did cry; she threw herself upon her knees and prayed, not to the Virgin nor the saints, but to God through Jesus Christ, for strength to suf-

fer for His sake; for protection and the presence of her Saviour in that strange place; and she prayed fervently for her poor mother, who had been cruelly beaten by the priests for reading the word of God, and attending a Protestant meeting.

When Sister Theresa returned, she was calm, ate her supper, and quietly prepared to go to bed as she was desired.

'That's a good girleen,' said Theresa, 'you are not frightened now.'

'No,' she replied, 'for *He* hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."'

'Who said that, machree?' asked the nun.

'Jesus Christ, my own Saviour,' answered the girl.

'And how said He that to you—did you see Him?'

'He spoke it in his blessed word, and He spoke it again in my heart by His Spirit, and so I know it's thrue,' she said.

'Well, machree, but ye'd better not speak heresy here, d'ye see,' said the nun kindly.

'Och! but it's not heresy to spake about Him that died for me, and gives me strength to suffer for His name; and if He protects me, the whole world cannot harm me.'

'Very well,' said Sister Theresa, somewhat astonished; 'but go to bed now, and here's a blessed cru-

cifix to set before ye when you say your prayers—the Ave first, and the Paternoster after, ye know. Look up, there, when ye say the Ave,' she added, pointing to a daub of a Madonna, which hung upon the wall.

'No,' replied the girl, resolutely; 'for it is written, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."'

The nun put her hand over the girl's mouth: 'I tell you,' she said, 'if you *will* talk heresy I cannot protect you—your life's not safe.'

'There's one *there* who *can* purtect me,' said the girl, rising and pointing upwards; 'and if it be His blessed will that I die for His sake—Amen! *He died for me.*'

Sister Theresa was, for once, awed. There was sublimity in the voice, and manner, and in the words of the young untutored girl. 'What care I for heresy?' she said to herself, 'she's more like a saint than any in the convent, and I'll save her if I can.' So she saw the child to bed, locked the door, and proceeded to the refectory.

Father Dennis and Father O'Hooran were there; Miss S. had been invited to join the party at tea, and the rule of silence had been relaxed in honour

of the priests, so there was an animated chattering when Sister Theresa appeared.

'Have you put the young heretic to the torture, my daughter?' asked Father Dennis, laughing.

'To be sure; it's famous torture to be locked up there in the dark, not knowing but her head will be off to-morrow morning,' replied the nun.

'But perhaps,' said Father O'Hooran, 'she may console herself by thinking that in that case, like St. Dennis the *first*'—glancing at the fat priest—'she will astonish the world by carrying it under her arm across the sea to get it stuck on again.'

Father Dennis laughed.

'The reverend father, St. Dennis the second, will walk *lightly* over the sea when *he* is martyred,' said Sister Theresa.

'The broader the surface,' said Father O'Hooran, 'the less liable a body is to sink; so Father Dennis would have the best chance of any of us.' But here his smile relaxed, and he added, 'Forget not, my daughters, that this case was a miracle, a most blessed miracle, for the conversion of unbelievers, and confirmation of the faithful. St. Dennis was truly a glorious saint, a fit subject for your reverential meditation.'

'Maybe,' said Father Dennis, 'it would be edifying for the sisters to hear of the glorious triumph of the holy church in the case of the young heretic in

their keeping, and the tribe of soupers and jumpers that infest this poor persecuted village. They have had the impudence to set up one of their heretic mission-schools—confound them! under our own blessed noses; and what with stir-about and lace-work, and what with the devil's help, it's aisy work they make to *convert* the poor craythurs, as they call it.*

'Well, Paddy O'Flannigan gave them a room to meet in, ill luck to him! and we cursed him from the altar; and the *dacent* people that respected the church took their childer from the school, and gave up attending Satan's meeting-house for three or four weeks, but some ten or a dozen that had sold their souls for stir-about, hung on; and when, through the clemency of the blessed Virgin, no evil came, they took courage, and back the deluded craythurs went, and the mass was forsaken, and the dues got low, and the bibles that we thought were in the fire, began to shew their heretic faces; so iv we hadn't put it down, it would have been as bad as Luther and John Knox entirely.

'Then we got a crowd ov throe-hearted boys to-night, wid cudgels wud have comforted your hearts to see; an' they shouted, "The church is in danger," and "Down wid the devils," and "ill luck to the

* We owe an apology to our readers for this vulgarity. Father Dennis is *above* the average of a Maynooth priest.

soupers;" and Paddy O'Flannigan shut the door, for he was afeared for himself and the congregation. But the boys battered in the door, and oh! the yelling. When they saw me, their lawful priest, and Father O'Hooran—them that are not made apostates entirely—they cowered down, an' I bade the boys seize them, and give them a little wholesome discipline, but not to take the breath out o' them,—the church is merciful. Then Paddy O'Flannigan stood up to spake,—the bould beggar, to me the parish priest,—he would have spoken to *me* and Father O'Hooran, but the boys set up a howl, such as it was glorious to hear; and they howled for ten minutes or more.

'And when the discipline was done, and I had broken my silver-mounted whip over Biddy Doherty's back, and given the widdy Keegan to the hands ov the tormenters, and sazed her dochter, Phemy Keegan, that had been made a monitor or teacher among them,—then I tould the boys to let them go, and they might run to save their lives if they liked. But every Catholic boy was to run after them to their own homes by way ov convoy, ye see, and give them a few cuffs by the way, not to bate the life out o' them; because, as I said before, the Church is merciful!

'Well, Phemy Keegan remained in my hands by the hair ov her head, crying, because her mother had

got the discipline that was good for her; and I called Father O'Hooran to see what would be done to keep her from taching lace-work and heresy in *my* parish; so we brought her off to your care; only, don't be too tender over the young she-wolf, for all her sheep's clothing. See ye bate the heresy out ov her, and don't let her out to devour the lambs again. I'll have no wolves among *my* sheep.'

'I thought *we* were your sheep, father,' said Sister Theresa, 'and yet you have put her here to devour us.'

'Ill look to *you* if you let her out to devour,' said the priest.

'Maybe she'll eat *me*,' said the nun.

'She'll have a wide mouth then,' remarked the father.

'She has that, as Saint Red Ridinghood said,' retorted the nun.

Sister Agnes sat listening to all this with a mixture of wonder and shame. She was shocked at the violence of the priest, whom she had previously considered vulgar, but good-natured. The dignified Father O'Hooran seemed to have participated in the outrage. She began to think that if the Church were infallible, her priests were certainly not so; and she hoped that such doings were not sanctioned by authority. She ventured timidly to ask Father O'Hooran, whether such a mode of settling heresy were *right*.

'Undoubtedly, my daughter,' replied the priest, 'our ordination vow binds us to *persecute* all heretics. Whatever may rid the world of their pestiferous breath is an acceptable service.'

'Father Spencer, whom I sometimes met, used to say that persecution was foreign to the genius of the holy Catholic faith,' said Sister Agnes.

'Father Spencer's mission was pacific, to bring in opponents,' said the priest. 'Reserve was requisite in his case; to have avowed the truth among unbelievers would have been to cast pearls before swine. They would have trampled them under their feet and turned again to rend him. Being now secure within the bosom of the church, there is no danger in initiating *you* into its blessed doctrines. You may enter the secret recesses, the penetralia of its mysteries hidden from scoffers.'

'But why were things taught me which I have to unlearn?' asked Agnes.

'Why is the young leaf wrapped up in a covering during winter, which when the juices of spring swell it, must burst and fall off? Answer me that, and you will see by analogy why the young convert needs protection. Many things in nature are done that have to be undone.'

'True, father,' said the sister, rather puzzled than convinced. Her *moral* nature, her respect for truth

was not quite quenched yet, though she had learned to practise deception herself.

Miss S. rather enjoyed the evening; her love of society overcame her horror of vulgarity. She joined heartily in the conversation, which was animated—though some of the nuns sat stupidly silent.

Father O'Hooran related a story of a young heiress who, weary of the vanities of the world, of its treachery and hollowness, sought refuge in a convent. He described the peace that settled upon her soul—the rapture of her devotion—the spirituality of her mind—the beatific visions with which she was favoured—her death in the odour of sanctity—the strains of celestial music that floated around her corpse, and the radiance which played over her features. And then he related how, after death, she appeared to a youthful bride, disclosing a pitfall under her feet! depths of disappointment and slighted love, and bitter neglect which awaited her; how she urged her to flee to a convent, but the spell-bound bride refused; and how one year after, the bright young creature, become a skeleton with woe—cast herself off a rock into the sea!

Miss S. listened attentively. Her spirits sank, and she withdrew. The father saw that he had made some impression.

Sister Agnes smiled sadly, almost derisively.

To account for the difference between father Den-

nis and O'Hooran, we may mention that the former was a *Maynooth* priest, educated in all the vulgarity, and tyranny, and disloyalty, and *ignorance*—if we may speak of education in ignorance—which the suicidal policy of Britain expends so much annually to maintain. Yet he was naturally good-humoured, and possessed the love of fun characteristic of his nation; and these qualities prevented his humanity from sinking so low as is the case with some of the Irish priesthood.

Father O'Hooran had been educated in a continental college, where *gentlemen* and literary men are to be found; he had thus acquired a degree of polish unknown in Maynooth, the low ruffianism of whose sons he despised, not because it was ruffianism, but because it was vulgarity. But beneath these different surfaces, both possessed the *morals* of their mother Rome. Fraud, tyranny, falsehood, sensuality, fitted them for the work to which she called them. But upon these things, with all the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," the infallible church bestows widely different titles. We protestants give unhappy names to the qualities which distinguish her saints.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CONSPIRACY.

"He's no swaggerer, hostess; a tame creature.

"You may stroke him as gently as a puppy-greyhound."

K. FLINN.

THE Lady Superior sat pensively at a little table in the window which commanded a view of the courtyard, leaning her head upon her hand. The porter's bell rang, the great gate was unbarred and unlocked, and Father O'Hooran, with stately step, walked up to the centre of the court to the principal door. The Superioress rose to meet him, and when he was seated beside her, 'Father,' she said, 'I want counsel with respect to Miss S. I am afraid of her slipping through our fingers. It was an unwise promise that she should have liberty to visit her friends; she takes advantage of it rather too freely.'

'If the promise be found to be unwise, my child, it may be broken,' said the Father. 'Along with a promise there is usually some intention or condition

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in the mind of the promiser, which intention or condition—if it be unfulfilled—renders the promise null. As a good daughter of the church, you doubtless attached to your promise the condition (mentally) that the thing promised should turn out beneficial to us. I may put it in other words: If it be for her good, and the good of the church, she shall have liberty to visit her friends. Now, should it be proved, that to visit her friends be neither for her good nor the good of the church, then the promise annexed to the condition ought not to be fulfilled. The condition is principal—the promise is but accessory.

'There would be danger of scandal, father, in breaking this promise,' said the lady.

'That must be avoided,' said the priest. 'Scandal is a real evil, the fear of it a valid reason for keeping your promise, even at some risk; but what is the true state of the case?'

'Miss S.,' replied the lady, 'has an engagement to spend a week with those cousins of hers; there is to be a ball, and the poor child's head will be turned,' she said, sighing, and lifting up her eyes. 'She will never imbibe a relish for the religious life.'

'Poor little worldly thing,' remarked the father. 'Pity if she has to enter it without a relish.'

'Do you mean that she must be compelled, if she does not willingly take the veil?' inquired the Superior.

'Undoubtedly,' replied the priest, 'when it is for the good of her soul and of the church: it would be false charity to defer to her wishes. By-and-bye—if forced now—she may be willing afterwards.' The blessed Saint Liguori tells of Sister Mary Bonaventura, who entered the Convent of the Torre Dei Speechi against her will; but after a life of tepidity and dissipation, she went, during the first meditation of the spiritual exercises, and threw herself at the feet of Father Lancizio of the Society of Jesus, and courageously said to him, "Father, I want to be a saint, and a great saint, and to be one immediately."

'Is the compulsion to be used now, or shall I allow her to pay this visit?' asked the Superior.

'We must copy expert anglers,' replied the father, 'and give her the length of the line, lest it break before she is drawn in; this visit could not be prevented without troublesome inquiries, and such a tugging at the line as to break it, perhaps. Besides, there would be scandal in detaining her now.'

'But what if she should never return?'

'Have you any reason to fear such a result?'

'No, not particularly. I do not think she has the smallest suspicion of our intentions,' said the Superior, 'but she told Sister Monica that she would never be a nun.'

'Has she associated much with the sisters?' inquired the priest.

'Not so as to be well acquainted with our habits,' replied the Superior. 'Sister Theresa, who is so lively, is often with her in her own room, and so is Sister Agnes; she is so refined.'

'Sister Theresa is very amusing,' replied the father; 'but I am not quite sure of her sincerity. Sister Agnes is too melancholy; but after all they are the best you could have selected.'

'Well, about the ball,' said the reverend mother:

'Of course she must go; but let it be the last. She can catch cold at it; do you understand me?' asked the priest.

'Perfectly,' replied the lady.

'Letters to or from India?' asked the father.

'None since *the* letter,' replied the Superior, who smiled as she added—'The imitation of her writing was really admirable. The poor youth will suppose his beloved most safely kept for him.'

'Send for me the instant one arrives from him,' said the priest. 'You have the draft of what he will write to her.'

'Ready for immediate use, as soon as we get his hand to copy,' said the Superior; 'but really the envelope,—they get so characteristically soiled in coming from India,—and the post-marks will be difficult.'

'Oh! leave all that to me,' said the ghostly father.

The envelope may do again, and if not, we shall manage it.'

'Poor little dear!' sighed the Superior, 'she will break her little foolish heart!'

'The order of piety,' said the priest, 'puts the interest of the church before that of private individuals; and infinitely before their feelings. A reverend mother has need of Spartan or saintly courage to enable her to triumph over the writhings of corrupt human nature under the sacrifices the church demands.'

'Those sacrifices will be amply compensated in the world to come,' said the mother.

'Surely, my daughter, if made willingly, as in the case of Sister Agnes,' said the father; 'but in that of a worldly girl like Miss S., who is only compelled to them; she has no merit in the matter. The church must serve itself of her as the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians, and leave her to her fate. It may please the Virgin to induce her afterwards to turn necessity into virtue, and become willing when she can't help it. But that must not be our first object.'

'Like Sister Mary Bonaventura,' said the Superior.

'And hundreds besides,' replied the priest. 'You know Saint Liguori, in his "Nun Sanctified," makes frequent mention of such cases. It is a most blessed

service in which you are engaged, my daughter: doubly blessed, first, you nobly enrich your convent; then you compel a thoughtless girl from a life of dissipation and vanity, into one of holy discipline, in which she may become a saint.'

'Then her catching cold, father,' said the Superior, 'is to prevent her from going abroad again.'

'Just so, my daughter; you must impress upon her mind that it results from the exposure of this visit; see that she writes this account to her friends, and if any of them come to see her, they must not be allowed. She herself must send a message declining to see them. She must then be ordered to keep one room, at an equal temperature all winter. You will tell them that this is quite necessary; and indeed it is necessary *for our purposes*, if not for her health; so that in making this statement you only use the most holy amphibology or equivocation recommended by Liguori, when he says, "To swear,"—observe, even to *swear*,—'with equivocation or amphibology, when there is a good reason; and equivocation without an oath is lawful—is not wrong—is no harm; for where there is a right to hide the truth, and it is done without a lie, no irreverence is done the oath.'

'Yes, father, and if lawful to swear, much more lawful to equivocate without an oath.'

'Just so, my daughter,' replied the father, 'only don't allow the aunts to take fright and come home; let them be told of the precautions, but assure them there is no danger.'

'I think they are too much engrossed with Parisian gaieties to return, unless they supposed her to be dying,' said the Superior.

'All is promising—plans are well laid,' said Father O'Hooran, rising. 'Benedicite! The saints and holy angels prosper you.'

'Amen!' replied the Superior.

'You had better say three Hail Marys every day for success,' said the priest, looking back.

Miss S. accordingly paid her visit to her cousins, went to the ball, and felt some disinclination to return to her lodgings. Every attention, she said, was paid her by the mother Superior; and the two sisters with whom she chiefly associated, were most kindly attentive; and she had music to her heart's content. Nothing could be finer than to listen to the choir, while walking in the cloisters; her own small room was fitted up with her own things in the best possible taste: in short, nothing was wanting to make her satisfied but liberty and society. 'Liberty, dear!' remarked her cousin, '*you* are under no restraint—*you* are not a nun. As to society, we shall always be glad to have you when you tire; I shall send for you whenever

there is to be any thing charming in the way of dinners or balls.'

'Thank you, dearest,' replied Miss S., 'that is something to look forward to. I am sure I am so fond of pleasure, I'll not be a nun.'

'Suppose you *should* turn nun, and break poor Charles's heart, how romantic that would be!' retorted the cousin.

'Horror of horrors! I should break my own first,' replied Miss S. 'Oh! such frights as they are! Bald heads—not a bit of hair over their poor foreheads; a dirty white cloth wrapped round their faces; as if William had twisted his towel about the housemaid's head, after drying the glasses upon it; a black woollen gown, almost dirty and almost ragged; then there are pug-noses, and yellow skins, and angular bones, and cross countenances; only two or three of them you could ever imagine to have been ladies. I wish my heart may not really break before the weary months get over. I declare I would have extended my visit to a fortnight, had it not been that the India mails are due the day after to-morrow, and all my letters are to be sent to the convent.'

'Oh! do stop!' cried her cousin, 'and write to the post-office to forward them here.'

'No, dear, that would lose a post at least. I am dying for letters,—even more than for your society,' she added playfully.

'Then take this for your impudence,' replied the merry girl, pinching her cheek. 'Here's penance for you, Madam nun! Papa! papa!' she cried, as her father entered the room; 'here's a young lady who wishes a novel made of her history. She intends to take the veil in order to kill poor Charles.'

'I'll answer for it she won't *take* it,' said the Major, 'if ever she wears it, it will be put upon her perforce.'

'Mind, she's an heiress, papa,' said his daughter. 'They may entrap her; such things, they say, are done.'

'That is one of the calumnies against our church,' replied the Major. 'The priests and the superior of the convent of — at least, are too disinterested and liberal to dream of false play. I don't believe they would even persuade.'

'They have never done so yet,' replied Miss S. 'I am at liberty even to attend vespers and matins or not as I please.'

'That's what you would not be in the house of our Protestant rector,' said her cousin. 'Every soul in the house must attend prayers night and morning, they say.'

'La! how tiresome!' exclaimed Miss S.

Miss S. returned to the convent. It was twenty miles off, and no railroad, yet she pleased herself with the idea of being sent for whenever there was to be

any extraordinary gaiety in Callaghan House; but, to do her justice, her thoughts dwelt still more upon her expected letter from India.

She was affectionately received by the Mother Superior and sister Agnes; a bright fire was burning in her room; her nic-nacks were in beautiful order; a nosegay of lauristinas, and arbutus, and monthly roses, was upon the table, and in fact, her despised home looked better than she expected to find it. She requested a fire in her bed-room; but during the night she awoke shivering, completely chilled; she would have asserted her window to be wide open, and her door also, had she not seen that the former was fastened when she had been standing at it looking at the new moon, and wondering if Charles' eyes were fixed upon it too. She thought the temperature had suddenly changed, and that she had caught cold, wrapped the bed-clothes tight about her, and finally fell asleep again.

In the morning she felt symptoms of cold, and pulled her bell to order breakfast in bed; but the wire was broken, and she could not ring it. She threw on her dressing-gown, and ran along the corridor to the room of the Superior, but the windows and doors of all the cells were open, the draft was terrible, and not a human being answered to her call. She dressed herself in anger, and felt shockingly chilled when her toilette was done—shivering all

over. She descended, in no pleasant humour, to her sitting-room. She thought there was a conspiracy against her, for there was air enough in the lobbies to turn a windmill. Her own fire burned brightly, however, and she crouched before it, ringing rather impatiently for breakfast. She felt decidedly unwell, and sent for the reverend mother, who heard her story with concern, and expressed her conviction that she had caught cold after dancing, otherwise she could not have experienced the sensation of shivering in the night, and reminded her that the doors and windows were always opened after the sisters left their sleeping apartments.

She had gruel for dinner, brought by the hands of the mother herself, but felt squeamish after it, although it was flavoured with the fine raspberry vinegar made by the nuns. Then she was fevered by the impatience with which she waited for the post, which was much later than usual—unaccountably late.

At length a bell rang, and she rushed out into the court. It was not the postman, but father O'Hooran, who had, however, the convent-bag in his hand.

'The poor post is behind his time,' said the father, 'so as I was coming this way, I relieved him of the duty of turning up the lane.'

'Letters for me, father?' inquired Miss S., with beating heart.

'I cannot tell till the bag is opened,' said father

O'Hooran. 'The reverend mother always does that herself.'

'Here she comes. Oh! madam, do look quickly! Any for me?' cried Miss S.

The Superioress held up a foreign letter. 'Against the rules to give it you before I have read it,' she said, smiling.

'Ah! but I am not under rule,' cried Miss S., as she ran off to her own room with her treasure, feeling neither drafts nor the damp evening air, nor anything else in the world, than the letter she held in her hand. She sat down to read it, but as she proceeded, her colour faded, her heart beat violently, she became sick, and it fell from her hand. So changed was the style of her lover, so cool, so formal, she sat a while bewildered, and then burst into tears. She looked at the diamond ring upon her finger, and recalled his manner when at parting he gave it to her, saying, 'These stones are not more imperishable than my affection for you.' Again she read the letter, and again its strange coldness struck a sensation of faintness to her heart. She thought of the mighty waters that rolled between them, of the length of time required for a communication to cross them, and she owned that before her request for explanation could reach him, his hand might be given to another. 'He has met some one gayer and more lovely than I,' she said to herself; 'and perhaps even

now, in a gorgeous eastern hall, he has claimed another bride.'

She wept agonizingly, and a fire of resentment was kindled in her bosom. Her first impulse was to rush to her cousins, and confide her misery; but female pride soon negatived this. No one should know that she had been slighted; the pang should be hid in her own breast. A change might come over her lover, and if not, she would revenge herself—she would marry some one higher than he,—or—she would take the veil, and leave her riches to the convent!

By-and-bye sister Agnes came to inquire for her cold. She had hastily dried her tears, and now mechanically answered the question put to her. After a little desultory talk, she suddenly inquired, 'Agnes, did you ever love?'

'Not as you do,' replied the novice, smiling—but—and here her lip quivered, and her voice faltered, 'I loved my father, and I almost adored my mother's memory.'

'Why did you leave your home?' inquired Miss S. 'I am sure you were brought up in refined society—among all the elegancies of life. What could induce you to come to this horrid place?'

'I found the world hollow and unsatisfactory; I sighed for holiness and devotion, for the service of the Mother of God, and for the companionship of

pure, simple beings. I wanted to be a saint,' said Agnes.

'But you have not found those things here, I am sure; and saints are such horrid melancholy things,—how *could* you want to be one?'

'Holiness is happiness,' said the novice. 'I have too much corruption to subdue, to be satisfied yet.'

'Well, I don't understand about saints,' said Miss S., 'but I am sure you are far more like one, than people who change their feelings towards those who love them, and break their hearts.' Here Miss S. threw her arms round the neck of the novice, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

Sister Agnes could not comprehend her; but her words caused a terrible pang to shoot through her own heart. She thought of her father's wounded love; but the pang was a *bitter* one; she felt not that soft grief which melts, nor that gushing sorrow which breaks forth into tears. It was a hard, freezing, crushing woe that had settled upon her, and locked up the tender emotions.

'Will prayer and penance bring back lost love?' asked Miss S.

'I don't know,' replied Agnes.

'I must see a priest,' said Miss S. 'To whom do you confess? is it to merry Father Dennis?'

'No,' replied the novice, 'Father O'Horan is my confessor.'

'Well, he is not vulgar like Father Dennis, but his eye frightens me, and he is so terribly austere; yet he is a gentleman. Father Dennis is not. Was it for that you chose him?' said Miss S.

'Oh! never mind my reasons, choose for yourself,' replied Sister Agnes. 'Father O'Hooran is the more dignified, but Father Dennis, I dare say, will be the more indulgent.'

'And will understand such matters as mine best,' said Miss S.; 'but no, gravity is the thing when one is in distress. Will you, dear, request the reverend mother to send for Father O'Hooran immediately.'

'Immediately, dear?' asked Agnes in surprise.

'Yes, immediately; my heart is breaking, and I *must* confess.'

Sister Agnes did as she was requested, and to her surprise the Superior made no objection, but instantly despatched a messenger for Father O'Hooran.

The secret was duly confided to his ear, and received with becoming concern. 'There is considerable cruelty, my daughter,' he said, 'in treating you so. I do fear all is not right with him. For the sake of your own peace, you had better withdraw your thoughts as much as possible from one who seems to have so little appreciation of your value. It is ever so with earthly love, my daughter; the

being upon whom it is bestowed, values it little, or proves unworthy of it. Whatever may be the issue, it is well that he shows his neglect before the matter is irremediable. You may thus be saved the pang which hundreds feel, of being slighted after marriage.'

'Is that a common case, father?' inquired Miss S.

'I must not betray the secrets of the confessional,' said the father, 'but I may say that all young women ought to mark the first appearance of coolness on the part of those to whom they entrust their happiness. I believe that nineteen out of twenty married persons wish themselves loosed again.'

'Then, father,' said Miss S., 'you *do* think the letter cool?'

'Distressingly so,' replied the father.

'What shall I do?' inquired the poor girl.

'If after his treatment, you think him worth the trouble,' said the confessor, 'you may say ten aves and perform five stations every day on bare knees, from the chapel-door to the image of the Virgin. It may be she will reconcile him to you, if for the good of your soul.'

'Endure such humiliation for a man who neglects me!' cried Miss S. 'No, father, if he cares not for me, I care not for him.'

'Becoming spirit, my daughter,' said the priest.

CHAPTER XIX.

STRIVINGS AFTER SANCTITY.

"Israel, which followed after righteousness, hath not attained unto the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."—ROMANS IX. 31.

A GARDEN was attached to the convent, the coarse work of which was done by the poor sisters who had brought no dowry. The other nuns wrought at the lighter parts of the cultivation. To some of them, and especially to sister Agnes, this was a delight; others regarded it as a cruel task, for indolence was one of their characteristics. Vegetables and flowers grew luxuriantly, and the commoner kinds of fruit; the finer sorts were not allowed, although, during summer fruit with bread formed a frequent meal. No restriction was placed upon the cultivation of flowers; they were wanted to adorn the chapel at festivals; and in the rich and balmy air of the south of Ireland many rare and beautiful varieties flourished in perfection. Mary anticipated much pleasure in tending

them in summer, and in making wreaths and bouquets for the altar. During winter, these had been formed of the rich evergreens, the laurustinus with its snowy blossoms, the arbutus with its crimson fruit, the polished holly rich with coral berries, and in some sheltered nook, a delicate china-rose, or a few spring flowers that had blossomed too soon, were found to vary the adornment.

But spring was come—early spring, and she daily longed for the garden, where she sowed the seeds of annuals she loved, and trimmed the earliest flowers. But she could not run out when she pleased. The sisters were so many machines, all their motions were controlled; 'restraint,' obedience, these were watch-words of the convent. A nun must have no will; she acts but by the will of her superiors; in fact she is scarcely allowed to think; her very thoughts are controlled by her confessor; so perfect is the tyranny of Rome.

Usually novices are kept during the year of probation considerably apart from the nuns, at least in cases where they need to have concealed from them the mode of life in the convent—that is, when they require to be deceived. But in the case of our heroine, there was no such necessity; she was a secure prey, cut off from communication with the outer world, beyond the power of friend or relative. She was at once admitted among the rest, at once initiated into

the mode of life: it mattered not whether she liked or disliked it, she could not help herself. Still she was treated with rather more consideration than those who had taken the veil.

On this day she had finished her allotted task, and strolled out into the garden. An inexpressibly soft breeze came over the lofty spiked walls, and sighed through the inclosure, kissing her pale cheek. The touch, like that of some magic wand, awoke a host of slumbering recollections; it was like the breeze that used to pass down the glen, before the leaves were unfolded, when the primroses were peeping from their mossy nooks, the breeze she should never feel again.

Her childhood, her mother, her father passed before the eyes of her mind,—with the home she had left for ever. Her father—in what state might she picture him, if he still lived,—if her flight had not killed him? Oh! that he had written her one word, if it had been but of anger! For what had she left her home? For many an airy vision that had vanished in mist. Not one idea had been realized; disappointment, misery, depression were all she had gained. Had she not been cruelly deceived—or was it her own fault that she was no holier, no more self-denied, that duty was still as irksome, that mortification was still as hard, that those strange, irrepressible longings after something unrealized still haunted her?

What was the end she had in view? To be a saint—to be free from sin, to utter no murmur, to have self subdued, to lose herself in extatic contemplation, to rise by a royal road of suffering to a throne in heaven, to an immortal crown. Was she one whit nearer this consummation than when she entered the monastery? Alas! no. She had more disquietude, more rebellion of the will, was more frequently tempted to evil passions, could indulge less in spiritual visions,—was altogether much farther removed from saintship than when dwelling quietly in her father's house, and dreaming among woods and fields, and by the side of pleasant streams.

But again she thought that in her early dreams she had mistaken the nature of saintship—that while imagining her mind to be full of *holy* ideas, it had been filled only with images of natural beauty. *Her* saints had always been fair creatures, radiant with glory, reclining among flowers, rapt in elysium. But the saints she heard of now had disfigured and marred their persons, tortured their flesh, endured conflicts with demons, trampled upon their affections, become stern, unlovely, morose, filthy; her heart recoiled from the picture, the delicacy of her feminine nature shrank from the idea.

Then she began to question with herself what she should gain by becoming a saint. A radiant crown in heaven, a ready passage thither undetained in pur-

gatory. Well; that was worth suffering for now; therefore she would persevere, she would set before her this end to inspirit her failing heart, to quicken her lingering footsteps. But such a load of earthliness and sin hung around her—how was she to get rid of it? Only by suffering—by voluntary suffering. It should be done. She had given up all her worldly happiness, and it would be folly to lose both that and eternal life; therefore a saint she *would* be, a saint according to the true, orthodox idea, revolting as that might be to all her natural feelings.

'I must have discipline, father,' she said to her confessor, 'I am still so worldly, have so much regret for the past, so much recoiling from the present.'

'Recite the psalm Miserere,' he said, 'and between each verse receive four lashes from the hands of two of the sisters; then pass half-an-hour prostrate before the Virgin, in meditation upon her merits. If there are any of the sisters who you think have a grudge at you, select them to give you the discipline.'

Sisters Monica and Angelica were selected, the penitent kneeled down, her shoulders were bared; the women, each with a scourge in her hand, took their places beside her; she chanted the first verse, and then sharp and heavily the strokes fell. The psalm numbers twenty verses in the Vulgate, so that eighty stripes were inflicted; the habit was then



"The penitent kneeled down, her shoulders were bared."

drawn over the excoriated shoulders, and the victim crawled to the image of the Virgin, where she lay prostrate half-an-hour.* Imagine the effort of rising, with the dress here and there adhering to the wounded flesh, and the exhaustion which had been induced; and wonder not that as she lay, her meditation was a mockery; that holy thoughts and blessed feelings refused to come, and that all her heroism was requisite to repress visible impatience and audible cries of pain.

Was she holier that night than before? Alas! no. But she almost thought she had a conflict with a demon. This was a privilege of saintship.

Sister Agnes was next directed to fast for a week, taking only once a day a little water and bread sprinkled with ashes; and twice each day to proceed round the cloisters on naked knees; then retire to her cell, and spend the remaining hours in meditation on the sufferings of Christ in unison with her own. No one will be surprised that she fainted several times while performing the stations, and no Protestant will wonder that her *own* sufferings occupied her mind more than those of the Saviour. This she deeply deplored. The spiritual exercises of Loyola were next resorted to. Physical weakness had now induced mental languor, for she was enfeebled by

* This is no exaggerated picture of convent penance.

fasting and pain; she could not control her thoughts. Eagerly she commenced the first sacred subject, and yet with all the tangible assistance which knowledge of human nature, and ignorance of God's grace had suggested, she could not continue. In ten minutes there was a vacuum in her mind, or it was listlessly roaming among images of the past, or occupied with some petty detail of daily life. She wept, she fasted, she disciplined herself; she could force the body to obey, but that restless, roving, uncontrollable thing, the mind—what cords could bind it—what sufferings could subdue it? Day after day, it seemed to become more rebellious. Often she lost the thread of her subject, and had to return after an interval of vacuity; and oftener still, no emotion was excited by the thrilling theme upon which she tried to meditate.

Well does the true Christian know the bitterness of such a conflict; but in *his* case, it is maintained in a strength beyond his own, and *he* is made more than a conqueror through Him who loved him.

Poor sister Agnes knew of no such Almighty helper. She struggled with corruption *alone*.

She almost resolved to give up the contest, for despair seized her, as the enmity of her natural heart to divine things unfolded itself. She should never be a *saint*; then let her be a *daughter* again. She was only a novice; she need not become a nun. She

would return to her forsaken home. But, ah! would she be received? Her father did not deign to notice her now; she could not hold up her head in society; and *her soul would be irrecoverably lost*. Her destiny was fixed—fixed in this breathing tomb for life!

Such thoughts tormented her.

CHAPTER XX.

SISTERLY LOVE AND MOTHERLY DISCIPLINE.

"You have a noble and a true conceit
Of godlike amity."

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

WE have, as yet, introduced our readers to only two of the nuns of this convent—sister Monica and sister Theresa. Some of the others had really so little to distinguish them, that it is not worth while to describe them. Sister Mary de Sales was rather young and rather fair, and had it not been for her dress, might have been considered pretty; but even she had the clayey complexion which want of fresh air and exercise, and mental occupation, induces upon the lightest blonde. She was always trifling, usually languid, but sometimes passionate, especially when bickering with sister Monica, who had pleasure in teasing her. Sister Marie was dark-eyed and pensive; she might be about twenty-two. A deep melancholy seemed to envelope her, but she was the most amiable of all the

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nuns, ever ready to assist the others, and to perform such little good offices as the habits of the convent allowed. But she went about her daily tasks, whether secular or religious, quite mechanically, and took little advantage of the permission to speak, which was accorded at certain hours, and on certain occasions.

If there was one feature of character which chiefly prevailed in the establishment, we may term it sullenness. The inmates had nothing to make them think, little to make them feel, scarcely anything to arouse them from their machine-like state, but the visits of the priests, and an occasional festival, when the church was to be adorned for display, and the choir to practise, likewise for display. The monotonous prayers, the equally monotonous chanting, the vulgar housework, performed in silence, (the washing-day was a charming exception,) the silent meals, the soulless obedience, were chiefly varied by petty quarrels, low jealousies, small acts of revenge, and heavy penances.

When a new sister was admitted, it was usual for her for a while to fret at her chains, to wince at her work, and perhaps to weep over her misery; but in process of time she sank into a moving statue like the rest—without mind, without will, without emotion, save of the meanest nature; or she pined away with a blight in her heart and a mist on her eye, till a hectic spot arose on her cheek, and a hollow cough denoted

the disease which, ere long, carried her to the tomb; or reason fled its outraged habitation, and idiocy or madness reigned in its stead.

Yet sometimes the monotony was broken by a strong burst of passion called forth by an incident, at which a school-girl might smile, to be followed by the infliction of as much pain as ignorance of the true nature of sin and the one sufficient atonement, supposed might cancel the crime.

Sister Angelica—the name seemed to have been given in mockery—and sister Constantia were each about forty: the one tall, lean, and yellow, with large features and sunken eyes; the other, sharp, short, pug-nosed, prominent-eyed and shrill-voiced. Although personal property was forbidden, yet some little infringements of the rule were tolerated, and sister Constance had caught a linnet in the garden, had with some ingenuity constructed a cage for it, and lavished upon it all the affection that still existed in her seared and withered heart; but the jealousy with which she guarded it was the occasion of many quarrels with the other nuns; for she evidently had not enough of human kindness left within her to serve both for her bird and her sisters.

In a little corner of the garden she had formed a bed of groundsel and plaintain for her pet, and these were guarded as carefully as if they had been the finest exotics. "I declare, sister Constance," said sis-

ter Angelica, 'that bird of yours is a perfect pest. I wonder the mother allows you to have that bed of nasty weeds: there they are shedding their seed, the whole garden will be covered, and our weary backs will be broken with weeding. There's neither law nor justice here, or one old maid would not be allowed to molest a whole household.'

'Old maid, upon my word!' cried Constance. 'Old maid, indeed! By the Virgin! but you're insolent. Which is the oldest, I wonder; with your great nose, and bony hands, and not a bit of a heart to give to any living thing! The poor innocent creature of a bird, it's starve it would for your tender mercies. I abominate such selfish, unfeeling ways! Old maid, indeed! Well is it for you that your hair is all shaved off, or grey it would be;—white as snow, if I'm not mistaken.*

'Upon—my—word! madam!' cried sister Angelica; 'If my hair had been grey—which it's not—if it *had* been grey, sorrow will turn the hair grey, but what makes wrinkles like yours, pray? Look at your chin, and your forehead, and your pug-nose. Well for you that you are in a blessed convent, or they would burn you for a witch, and your bird for an evil spirit.'

'It's a long nose and chin nearly meeting, and a

* We omit many of the expressions of the nuns. The habit of using profane expletives prevails in too many monasteries.

yellow, lean face that a witch has ; and the dickens a witch was ever more like one than your precious self,' screamed sister Constance. 'My innocent bird an evil spirit! If you were not worse than Saul of Tarsus, the music of it would drive the evil spirit out of ye. But you're worse than Saul, and the witch of Endor too, that murdered him.'

Sharper and sharper grew the contention, keener and keener became the wits of the sisters, retort upon retort rattled off, the original subject was forgotten in torrents of personal abuse; the one screamed, the other croaked with passion, until the noise attracted the Mother Superior. 'What is all this?' she inquired, suddenly opening the door, behind which she had been listening. 'You are sinning with your tongues, your tongues shall be punished—Each of you shall lick the sign of the cross upon the floor of the refectory.'

The viragoes were in a moment quieted. One scowl at each other was given, and they went their ways with heavy hearts, to their cells, as they were bidden, till dinner.

At table it was announced to the sisterhood that the penance we have mentioned was to be performed by sisters Angelica and Constance; and the others were required to arrange themselves, at half past two, on each side of the refectory, to witness its performance. When they had done so, the culprit nuns were

led in, each having on a tall, white paper cap, on the front of which a great tongue of red cloth was pinned. Their crime and its punishment were then stated by the Superioress; and they were ordered to commence their work, the one at the one end, the other at the reverse of the hall, and at opposite sides, that the arms of the cross might not interfere with each other. The figures were to extend the whole length of the hall—fifty feet—The floor was of wood, upon which it was required to leave a distinct trace with the tongue. The attitude in which the feat was performed may be imagined; we cannot describe it; the continuance in it was a penance of itself.

The tongues of the poor creatures were applied to the floor. We have wondered to see a dog lick, without tiring, his master's hand, or his own velvet paws, even when his head was in a position of comfort; but imagine in a human being, the lowering of the head; the distension of the jaws; the motion of the tongue along the ground! For a little while the saliva flows, and the track is easily made; but soon the moisture is expended, the member becomes hot, its surface dry. On, on must the operation go; scarcely the centre of the floor has been reached; the half of the shaft and the arms of the cross remain yet to be done. The nun pauses a minute or two to rest her weary neck, to close her aching jaws, and to draw in her burning tongue. But it seems as

if drawn into a furnace. No longer delay, she must proceed; and now the skin breaks, bit after bit is peeled off; sore after sore is formed. The track is finished in blood, and in agony almost insufferable; but finished it must be, even though the victim should faint. She does not faint, however; she is in greater danger of apoplexy. She cannot ask for water, but it is brought to her when her task is done, and she can scarcely swallow it; the muscles almost refuse to perform their office, and the cold water seems to scald the raw flesh. Days and nights of suffering ensue; to take food is torture; there is little disposition now to speak. Her neck and back also ache, and the whole frame has a stretched, uneasy feeling.

The sisters have truly suffered for their sins of the tongue; but has the torture cancelled their guilt; has it allayed their burning animosity; has it brought peace to brood dove-like over their stormy hearts? Alas! no. Their sin is not atoned for, their evil passions are not stilled. Satan has but tormented them before their time. He triumphs in their sufferings, which gratify his malice, and keep them back from that "blood which cleanseth from all sin."

Each of these miserable women regarded the other as her tormentor, an idea of revenge passed through her mind, and was *confessed*. The thought

was probed by the priest, examined, dwelt upon, sifted, until, like many a sin at the confessional, it assumed a tangible shape, and acquired an immovable lodging-place in the imagination of the *absolved* penitent.

Very different is confession when made to the Searcher of hearts. The spirit feels that an omniscient eye is fixed upon the inmost depths of its secret consciousness. No questioning is needed to bring before Him the true state of the penitent; no examination suggestive of one thought of sin is required to ascertain the iniquity really there. What exists is laid bare and deplored; but what does not exist is not called into being. Then as to the remedy, God gives the precious blood of his own Son to atone for the guilt, the strength of his Almighty Spirit to conquer the corruption; the priest gives a few lashes, a little of the worthless blood of the sinner himself as atonement, and the finite strength, which is perfect weakness, aided by vigils, and fasts, and mortifications wherewith to fight against the powers of evil.

We shall give a specimen of the suggestions of the confessional. 'Father,' said sister Angelica, 'after suffering so much, in consequence of sister Constance's nasty bird, I had a thought of revenge.'

'Revenge!' said the priest, 'upon the bird, or upon the sister herself?'

'I am not quite sure, father, it was an idea, not a definite purpose.'

'But you know the idea must be defined, in order to ascertain its nature and the degree of its sinfulness. What was the precise thought in your mind?'

'Simply, father, to inflict some pain in return for my penance.'

'Your penance was in consequence of the sin of your own tongue.'

'True, father; but if she had not had that nasty bird, I should not have been provoked.'

'Then, the *precise* idea was that her having the bird, which she had in contravention of her vow of poverty, was the cause of your sin, and that your sin was the cause of your penance; therefore sister Constance was the cause of your sufferings; and you wished to inflict upon her some compensatory suffering.'

'Just so, father,' replied sister Angelica, in whose mind her fugitive idea had now assumed a fixed and determined shape.

'Now tell me, my daughter, was it upon the bird, or upon the sister that you intended to retaliate?'

'I do not exactly know.'

'You must be exact—think a little, probe your own heart, and reply.'

'I think it was upon both, father,' replied the nun, looking at the image of her idea as it grew

clearer and clearer. 'Probably it was upon the bird as the cause, and upon her as having brought in the bird.'

'Then it is true,' said the father, 'that the bird was the cause of your sin; but was not the wilful cause. It was put in that position against its will; therefore revenge against it would add injury to injury. If the bird, therefore, was the object of your intention, that intention was venially sinful, in a low degree, requiring ten aves for three days to atone for it.'

'But if against sister Constance, father?'

'There is then more to be said on your behalf, my daughter. It was in contravention of her vow of poverty, that she possessed the bird, which occasioned your fault; therefore it may be said to be because of her fault that you sinned; consequently she is in some degree responsible for your sin and its punishment. But it would be difficult to punish her in a regular way in a community of women where logic is so little understood; therefore, my daughter, it is competent for you to take some satisfaction with your own hand, provided it be moderate, within the limits of the offence.'*

'I did not think of anything in particular, father, what *would* be moderate satisfaction? May I kill the bird?'

* See Appendix L.

'The saints forbid! my daughter; and the bird as innocent as a babe; that would be unjust to it, though just to her.'

'Opening the cage and allowing the cat to kill it, father? You once told me of the difference between doing a thing, and permitting it to be done.' *

'Right;—according to Liguori, and other learned doctors,' said the confessor, 'even to *tempt* the doing of a deed by another may be lawful, while it is unlawful to do it oneself. But can you get rid of the bird in no other way?'

'I can set it at liberty, father.'

'Bless you, my daughter! a very tender-hearted mode of action. The poor bird will regain its freedom; the cause of your sin will be removed.'

Sister Angelica felt a malignant satisfaction; though it would have been greater had she been permitted to destroy the bird. She gloated in imagination over the distress of Constance, whom she now regarded as a deadly foe. She pictured Constance lamenting over her bird; and blessed Saint Liguori who made it so easy for one to gratify all one's passions.

She watched her opportunity. The morning was cold and stormy when she was left alone with the object of her malignity. She took the cage to the win-

* See Appendix M.

dow, opened it, and the linnet flew out; but the tenderly-nursed bird was dismayed at the storm, and returned to its shelter. The cat was lying asleep in the room. Her eye glanced upon it, and she remembered the distinction between doing a thing and tempting another to do it; she would have but a slight penance. She placed the linnet in the cage, called the cat, and set it down before her with the door open; and then hurried to the chapel to say the aves for her intention; but as she mechanically repeated them, she almost laughed at the mental picture she drew of the consternation and anger of sister Constance.

She was safe in the chapel when sisters Constance and Monica entered the room where puss was leisurely devouring the remains of the linnet, the cage lying beside her, just where it might be supposed to have fallen from its nail. Sister Constance screamed, flew to the spot, and perceiving what was done, seized a wooden stool and hurled it at the head of the poor cat, who gave one piteous mew, and then lay gasping in death. She gathered up the feathers of her beloved bird, placed them in her bosom, bestowed a vehement kick upon the expiring cat, and sat down to weep. Sister Monica ran for the Mother Superior.

'Did you dare to kill my cat?' she inquired furiously, as she entered the room.

'She deserved it for killing my bird,' replied the

nun, sobbing; 'and sister Angelica deserves the same for giving it to her.'

'Who told you that sister Angelica gave it to her?' inquired the Superior.

'I know she did, out of hatred to me,' said Constance, 'and if there's law or justice in the monastery, she'll be imprisoned.'

'Take this for speaking to me so,' cried the Superior, bestowing upon the nun a tremendous box on the ear; 'but nobody shall say that I'm partial; where is sister Angelica?'

She was found in the chapel, upon her knees, brought in, and interrogated.

'How could I do it when I was in the chapel?' she asked.

'Did you not give the bird to the cat?' inquired the Superioress.

The nun boldly replied 'No.' Her confessor had long ago instructed her in the noble arts of 'equivocation,' 'amphibology,' 'reservation,' &c., and she thought within herself, I did not give the bird to the cat—I gave the cage in which the bird was.

'Will you swear that you did not give the bird to the cat?' asked sister Constance.

'I will swear,' replied the nun.

'But *what* will you swear?' inquired the mother, herself an adept in equivocation.

'I will swear that I did not give the bird to the cat,' replied Angelica.

'Do you know who did it,' was the next query.

'I do not,' was the unblushing reply. 'Probably the cat has taken it; it is her nature.'

Sister Angelica had the authority of the most learned doctors for those lies. 'Even when you are legitimately and juridically interrogated, you are under no obligation to give evidence (to speak truth) if you have what you know under natural secresy.*' But the Superioress knew all this too, and as usual, she relied upon neither assertion nor oath; in fact, in the convent all was uncertainty; no one believed another, for each one knew that all the rest had the same rules for disguising truth that she herself practised. So they lived in mutual, universal distrust.

This affair became so grave that the priests were called in to settle it; penance upon penance was awarded; and it was the commencement of a feud as deadly as those of old between rival chieftains, in which each act of indignity was followed by revenge, and that again by reprisals in interminable succession.

* St. Thomas.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FINAL VOW.

"Is this the path of sanctity? Is this

"To stand a way-mark in the road to bliss?

"Are domestic comforts dead?

"Are all the nameless sweets of friendship fled?"—COWPER.

"I know not why, except to get the land."—K. JOHN.

THE year of her noviciate having expired, it was now time for our heroine to take the veil. She had been bitterly disappointed in conventual life, and had sometimes thought of declining the fatal step, at least for a time; but there seemed no evasion for her. Her destiny appeared so perfectly taken for granted, that she was impelled by a sort of fatalism. The Superior, the priests, and even the sisters spoke of it as a thing quite in the course of nature, about which there could be no doubt; and while nominally free to choose, she felt absolutely shut up to this one event; the time was even fixed without consulting her.

She had utterly renounced her own will as a sinful thing; how then could she so exercise it as to refuse what was thus presented to her? She was equally afraid to proceed and to retreat. On the one hand, to take the irrevocable vows, to bind herself for life to an existence so dreary as that of the convent, was terrible; on the other, to incur the anathema of her spiritual directors—in whose eyes she knew the greatest of all crimes was that of retreating from a religious life—to return to a heartless world, to an implacable parent, to scoffing or indignant friends, to a lowered place in society—the latter things were even more terrible than the former. Then she had learned that bolts and bars and high walls were not useless appendages to a nunnery; she felt herself a prisoner with scarcely the vestige of hope of escape. It would be best, she thought, to submit to inevitable fate without attempt at opposition.

Indeed she was fast becoming languid and powerless, incapable of using that will which it was forbidden her to exercise; the habit of soulless obedience was gaining upon her, that of pensive unresisting submission to arrogant superiors and inexorable fate. It was not the obedience of childlike confidence, it was the submission of despair. Hope and joy alike were fled.

Sometimes the desire of saintship was faintly revived within her, and then she would resort to vigils,

and penances and mortifications ; and at such times she fancied that perhaps the final step might bring something like peace. She would kneel before the Madonna, who had ever been the goddess of her idolatry, and feebly implore her to shed light and joy into her sad heart ; and then tears would flow, and she would gaze upon the placid countenance of her idol, till a feeling almost sweet in its sadness glided into her bosom. Then she would resign herself to the soothing influence of music, or of the solemn shade of the cloisters ; but these pleasures were but transient gleams of moonlight upon a deep unfathomable gloom. Her eagle-eyed spiritual guides perceived her state of feeling, but it caused them no uneasiness—she was quite in their power. Her conscience and will were under their entire control, and, what was still more to the purpose, her person was perfectly secured. The jailers cared little whether their ward were happy or miserable, except as that rendered their charge easy or difficult.

The day was fixed ; the day of—as they blasphemously termed it—her espousals to Christ. How different were her feelings in looking forward to it now from what they had been when, free and happy—oh, she had little known then *how* happy!—she longed to clasp the phantom clothed in golden mist. But she was passive ; emotion was fast leaving her, as power and will had left. A leaden weight pressed

constantly upon her heart, and that heart had now almost ceased to struggle under it. The novice resigned herself *to be made* a nun.

In the evening of the previous day, the bishop having come to the convent, she met him alone, to be inquired of concerning her purpose, her life and conscience. She had *once* been modest ; she now started not at questions which we dare not even read.

Her vestments, veil, and jewels were then placed on the epistle side of the altar, and solemnly blessed by the bishop, and her bridesmaids were appointed.

There was a bustle in the convent—singing, —an almost joyous bustle, and the novices were allowed to speak even during the ordinary silence. Flowers and evergreens were brought, and bouquets were composed ; tapers were set, vestments were carried to the robing-room ; altars, windows, statues were decorated, and when the chapel was gorgeously adorned, fruit, flowers, cakes and confections were spread in the refectory, and there was practising in the choir. Oh ! to be busy about something that interests us, what pleasure is in this ! It was seldom enjoyed by the nuns, and so they were the more excited to-day. They flitted from place to place ; now gathering in groups for consultation, now dispersing each to her separate work ; and anon, it must be confessed, sharply contending about a disputed point of taste, or angrily upbraiding each other.

Sister Agnes moved like a ghost among them, until it was time to dress her; then she resigned herself to be made as fine as the altar or the pulpit,—to be robed, as if in mockery, in bridal attire. She had been previously instructed in the part she was required to act, and her graceful figure and sweetly-modulated voice assured her teachers that she would act it well, though to the spectators it would be but pantomime; the words, of such terrible import to the victim, being inaudible to them.

The hour struck; the doors were thrown open, and the church filled,—the noble and the plebeian, the Protestant and the Papist—in one promiscuous rush. But the chapel itself was gained, heads were bowed, footsteps silenced, and many kneeled on the pavement, while low, soft music seemed to hush every discordant sound. It swelled to magnificence, and sank again; and then mass was said, gorgeously-attired priests officiating, white-robed boys flinging censers to and fro, while a cloud of frankincense ascended.

A special collect was next repeated, and this antiphon was chanted—

"Ye wise virgins, make ready your lamps; behold the bridegroom cometh! go ye forth to meet him."

The novice lighted a large wax taper, which she carried in her hand, and, accompanied by her brides-

maid, advanced to the foot of the bishop, where both kneeled.

The confessor then approached, and said, 'Right Reverend Father, the Holy Catholic Church demands that you vouchsafe to hallow and consecrate this present virgin, and espouse her to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God.' The novice, in white robe, and crowned with flowers, still kneeled.

Then the bishop asked, 'Dost thou know her to be worthy?' which question being answered in the affirmative, he said to those standing around—

'The Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ helping, we elect this virgin to bless her, and consecrate and espouse her to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God.'

He then chanted 'Come!'

She answered in chant, 'And now I follow!' And, rising, she advanced with her attendant to the entrance of the choir, and kneeling outside, was called more loudly by the bishop, 'Come!'

A peal of the organ first responded, and then she answered, 'And now I follow with my whole heart!' and rising again, proceeded to the centre of the choir, where she kneeled. Then the bishop the third time, in a tone still more loud—

'Come, my daughter, I will teach you the fear of the Lord!'

A low dreamy swell of the organ followed, and, rising, she answered—

‘And now I follow with my whole heart; I fear thee, I seek thy face: O Lord, confound me not, but do unto me according to thy loving-kindness, and according to thy tender mercy.’

And so chanting, they entered the private chapel of the nuns, which was separated from the other by a grating, behind which hung a curtain; the curtain was raised, and the nuns were seen ranged in rows. In the midst of them, kneeling before the bishop, was the white-robed novice, who chanted—

‘Bring me up, O Lord, according to thy word, that iniquity have dominion over me.’

The superior then raised her up, and placed her before the bishop, who interrogated her publicly concerning her proposed vow of virginity, and on receiving the assurance of her purpose to persevere, she kneeled again before him, when, taking her hands between his own, he said—

‘Dost thou promise ever to keep thy virginity?’

She answered, ‘I promise.’

He responded, ‘Thanks be to God!’

The shrill voices of the nuns joined in thanksgiving; the boys added their notes in chorus; the organ swelled forth a triumphant peal; the litany and the ‘Veni Creator’ were chanted; while the bishop retired a few paces, and then stationed himself close to

the grating. The novice slowly walked back amidst the assembled nuns in the background, where she stood in her white robe, and sparkling jewels, and crown of flowers, beside the superior—tall, and thin, and dark, they seemed the priestess and the sacrifice.

When the music had died away, slowly and unsteadily she advanced to meet the bishop. Her countenance wore the paleness of death. He chanted a few melancholy notes and blessed her; and then the superioress stepped forward, and took off her veil and crown of flowers. Her dark glossy hair fell on her shoulders; her jewels were taken off and laid aside, for the use of the convent. Her beautiful ringlets were cut off and strewed on the floor, and as the barbarous spoliation proceeded, another triumphant peal of the organ seemed to celebrate its perpetration. She folded her hands upon her breast, and bowed her head like a humiliated captive gracing a spectacle. Symbolical was her appearance, of her stripped, denuded heart.

The priest led her from whence her hair was lying to the centre of the chapel, where she kneeled upon the ground; and lifting up a black velvet pall embroidered with golden crosses, he threw it over her, and the nuns sang a dirge. Then was performed the service of the burial of the dead over the breathing corpse, soon to be consigned to a living tomb.

The pall was then removed, and the curtain fell. Quickly her bridal dress was taken off; she was clothed with the fatal veil; the curtain was raised again; she was standing in her transformation beside the superior, who proclaimed in a clear musical voice—

‘The bride of Christ!’

She then chanted, ‘The kingdom of this world and all secular adorning I have despised for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

Response—‘Whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, in whom I have delighted.’

‘My heart hath uttered a good word; I speak of my works to the King.’*

Much of the service is, we believe, untranslatable; but the bishop continued—

‘Come, my beloved, to be wedded; the winter is past, the turtle is singing, and the flourishing vines give a good smell.’

‘I espouse thee to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Supreme Father, who keep thee undefiled. Therefore receive thou the ring of faith, the seal of the Holy Ghost, so that thou be called the Spouse of God, and if thou serve him faithfully, be crowned everlastingly. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.’

* Papist perversion of 45th Psalm.

Still kneeling, she sang:

‘I am espoused to Him whom angels serve, and at whose beauty the sun and moon do marvel.’

‘With his own ring hath he wedded me, my Lord Jesus Christ, and hath adorned me with a crown as his spouse.’

Next followed the ceremony of crowning, an ancient part of the marriage service.

After this, rising, she chanted the antiphon.

‘Behold what I longed for I now enjoy,’ etc.

After which succeeded benedictions, of which we give a fragment.

‘God . . . make you strong when frail, strengthen you when weak, relieve and govern your mind with piety, that . . . that when the tremendous day of the repayment of the just, and retribution of the bad shall come, avenging fire may find in you *nothing to burn*, but divine goodness *what to crown*; as being those whom a *religious life has already cleansed in this world*; so when about to ascend the tribunal of the eternal King, and the palaces on high, you may *merit* to have protection with those who follow the Lamb, and sing the new song without ceasing; there to receive the reward after labour, and remain for ever in the region of the living.’

The benedictions ended, the bishop sat down, the trembling girl still kneeling before him, and he then

pronounced that fearful curse, so potent to deter the sincere papist from the imaginary sin described.

'By the authority of Almighty God, and his holy Apostles Peter and Paul, we solemnly forbid, under pain of anathema, that any one draw away this present virgin or holy nun, from the Divine service, to which she has devoted herself under the banner of chastity; or that any one purloin her goods, or hinder her possessing them unmolested; but, if any one shall dare to attempt such a thing, let him be accursed at home and abroad; accursed in the city, and in the field; accursed in waking and sleeping; accursed in eating and drinking; accursed in walking and sitting; cursed be his flesh and his bones, and, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, let him have no soundness. Let come upon him the malediction, which, by Moses in the law, the Lord hath laid on the sons of iniquity. Let his name be blotted out from the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. Let his portion and inheritance be with Cain the fratricide, with Dathan and Abiram, with Ananias and Sapphira, with Simon the sorcerer, and with Judas the traitor; and with those who have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. *Let him perish in the day of judgment, and let everlasting fire devour him, with the devil and his angels*—unless he make restitution, and come to amendment. Fiat! Fiat!'

She then presented a lighted candle to the bishop, had the breviary delivered to her, and was ordained to the faculty of beginning the canonical hours, and reading the office in the church.

Last of all, she was led out of the chapel to the entrance of the monastery, where kneeling before the bishop, he presented her to the Superior, saying, 'Take care how thou keepest this virgin, who is consecrated to God, that thou again present her to him immaculate; as thou shalt render account for her before the tribunal of her husband, the Judge that is to come.'

Immediately the hallelujah chorus burst from the deep organ, and the united voices of priests, nuns, and boys. The lofty roof seemed to shake with the torrent of harmony.

The doom was sealed. The sun of a young and loving girl had set for ever. She had been consecrated to an impossibility, the hopeless task of "meriting eternal life;" but the vista of hypocrisy and blasphemy opened upon the dark mountains of despair and death.

The bishop and the priests remained to dine with the lady Superior; while the nuns really enjoyed themselves in the refectory to celebrate the accession of a new daughter to the convent. In the evening sister Agnes was summoned to the parlour, to the presence of the right reverend and reverend gen-

tleman and lady, when the bishop thus addressed her:

'My daughter, by the blessed act you have this day had grace given you to perform, you have renounced the world in all its forms and possessions. You have spurned your carnal goods as snares of the soul, that you may be enriched with the divine treasure of poverty; in imitation of your spouse Jesus Christ, "who though he was rich, yet became poor." Those carnal goods therefore belong now to his most holy church; but the laws of this heretic and infidel land might deprive our mother of that which Christ conferred upon her; it is meet therefore that with your own hand you endow her with those her rightful possessions, so that the sacrilegious shall have no power to spoil. Sign this document, my daughter.'

This authoritative command was not to be disputed, she advanced, but as she took the pen, observed:

'Right reverend father, being much under age, I fear that my will may not be binding in law.'

'Trouble not yourself about that, my daughter, simply do your own duty, and God and the church will accept your *intention*.'

She signed the paper without reading it, and without being aware that it had *no date*. It was laid up ready for use as soon as her twenty-first birth-day should arrive. Even in the case of her

death, before that period, her £80,000 were secured to the convent, for who could pierce its seclusion to tell that those fingers were mouldered in the dust which should be represented as having signed the document "yesterday,"—that those letters were forged which should intimate to astonished friends her residence, her purpose and her happiness.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNWILLING NUN.

"How now? moody?
"What is't thou canst demand?
"My liberty."

TEMPEST.

"Nature's dying echo lingers,
"O'er affection's broken strings."

M. P. AIRD.

THE case of Miss S. required tactics different from that of sister Agnes; it was less difficult to secure the former than the latter; for the relatives of Miss S. being Romanists, were under the control of priests.

Major O'Callaghan and his daughters wished to see Miss S. in her sickness, which was duly reported to them, as cold caught by a chill after dancing; but were told that she had been ordered to be kept perfectly quiet. Their *director** went on a visit to father O'Hooran, and on his return reported that the young lady was recovering. The journey away two or three months. Men.

* The *director* confided in by the Romanist, and has an office separate from the superior.

knows so well how to use, she was persuaded to assume the habit of a novice in revenge upon her faithless lover; and was assured that at the termination of her noviciate, she would be as free to return to the world as if no such step had been taken.

At length her relatives received intelligence *from her* that, enamoured of the happiness of a conventual life, she had decided upon taking the veil. The family at Callaghan House were astounded. The major immediately went to the convent and demanded an interview; but was civilly told that she declined to see any of her relatives, who might attempt to disturb her purpose.

'It was against my desire,' said the Superior, 'that Miss S. assumed the habit of a novice, without seeing and consulting with her friends; but her mind was determined, and it would have been a breach of duty on my part violently to turn her aside from a conventual life, which I believe to be the safest and happiest for a young woman. You must be aware that I never tried to influence her towards it.'

'I *am* aware,' said the major; 'she told me so herself, on her last visit; but her mind must have wonderfully changed since that time.'

'Sickness, and the prospect of death, sir, make wonderful changes,' said the Superior.

'An interview of ten minutes would relieve me of much disquietude,' said the major.

'Well, sir, I will try to persuade Miss S. to grant it,' replied the Superior, leaving the room.

The lady went for a little to her *own cell*, and then returned. 'Miss S. quite declines an interview,' she said. 'It would be painful to her, and could not alter her decision.'

The major took his leave, baffled by the coolness and politeness of the Lady Superior. He had felt angry, but her manner effectually checked any demonstration of his feeling; he saw that he had stone and ice to deal with; in fact there was something about the lady which paralyzed him.

He went to his director, and there received a homily upon the sinfulness of endeavouring to turn aside a young person from the religious life; and was warned, on peril of his salvation, not to attempt it. Moreover, he was assured that the matter must have been of her own spontaneous choice; for the Reverend Mother was even too scrupulous about receiving accessions to the number of her inmates; he knew that it had required many tears and entreaties on the part of Miss S. to overcome her delicacy.

The major fumed, but submitted; he cared little for religion, but did not like the idea of hazarding his salvation. The girl must be a fool, he thought, absolutely destitute of common sense; besides, what behaviour was it to her betrothed—absolutely dishonourable! He must write to India. Could Charles

possibly come home in time to prevent the catastrophe? No; he could not, unless her profession should be delayed.

The girls pitied, laughed, cried, stormed; declared that they *would* see their cousin, and carry her off to the great ball at the castle; and finally beat upon the piano, and sang,—

"I won't be a nun,

"No! I won't be a nun,

"I'm so fond of pleasure that

"I'll never be a nun."

'I protest it is abominable,' said the major, 'it must be that the poor child's money has tempted the harpies of the convent.'

'My dear sir,' exclaimed the director, drawing himself up, and looking grave. 'You must not allow natural feeling to betray you into the sin of reviling those who ought to be honoured. More upright, conscientious, straight-forward persons do not exist, than the Mother Superior, and fathers Dennis and O'Hoo-ran. Surely you have been getting a lesson from some heretic!'

'I own I am easily provoked.'

'That is a sin, sir, when the objects of your anger are of the body of the Holy Church.'

'Cannot *you* procure me an interview with my relative?'

'I believe I *could*, but it would be worse than use-

less; assuredly it would not change her mind, and it would distress both you and her.'

'I want to question her as to her free choice.'

'Has not she written to you?'

'Yes; but letters might be influenced.'

'Major O'Callaghan,' said the director, with dignity; 'I will not permit this. To impugn the honour of the church is most irreverent, most sinful. Three days upon bread and water will be required to blot out the guilt of this conversation. I stake my honour, sir, upon the perfect integrity of all concerned. Let me hear no more of this, or I shall pronounce you to be no true son of the church.'

The soldier succumbed before the priest.

Aunts and cousins called at the convent, but in vain. Entreaties and reproaches were alike met by cool, immoveable, polite refusal.

'I force nothing upon my daughters, not even the visits of their friends,' said the statue-like superior.

'They admit or repel as they please.'

* * * * *

'Rev. Mother, I *insist* upon a carriage being ordered for me. If my relatives will neither write to me nor visit me, I *will* go to inquire the meaning of such behaviour,' exclaimed Miss S. one morning.

'Go whither, my child?'

'To Callaghan House this very day.'

'I sent yesterday a special messenger to relieve your anxiety; he brought word that the family had gone to travel in Wales.'

Miss S. bit her lip and stamped her small foot upon the ground. 'Unfeeling!' she exclaimed.

She was at length made to feel that she was a prisoner for life, and *must* take the veil, or be lost for ever. No absolution, no spiritual consolations could she have without consenting to this. Despair seized her; she wept and laughed alternately; tore at the bars of her window, only to sink down under a sense of her utter feebleness, and finally fell into fever.

A document was brought her, her hand was guided to sign it, and her fortune belonged to the Church.

Long she raved in delirium, and then sank into stupor. Sister Agnes was her nurse, conjointly with Sister Theresa, and under their care she at length began to revive, but reason was gone. Miss S. was a feeble maniac.

* * * * *

'If you are really to be my bridesmaid, Agnes, put off that ugly hood. When will Charles come? Ah! they tried to stop him, but could not—he came—he brought lotus flowers to mingle with the orange-blossoms—lotus flowers from beneath the walls of an Indian temple; it was moonlight upon Gunga when he gathered them. Charles! Where is he now?—'

has he seen my wreath of lotus flowers and orange blossoms? ha! New; beautiful! What a robe! aerial muslin from the looms of Delhi! Smooth my hair, Agnes. Where is my hair? Where are my ringlets? Am I a nun?—did they shave my head? Ah! but Charles saved me!—singing,

“Brave his heart and strong his arm
“For the lady of his love.”

“Singing from Palestine, hither I come,
“Lady love, lady love, welcome me home.”

So ran on poor Miss S. until exhausted she fell back upon her pillow. Sister Agnes wept. The captive looked up—‘Tears, Agnes, tears! Tears are not for the bridesmaid, they are for the bride—tears of joy.’ Then she murmured—‘It is an Indian palace—my home—the fountain sparkles—I go to the gorgeous East. Charles! Charles! I dreamed you were dead! they said unfaithful—that letter—no; you did not write it—they wanted me to be a nun, but—

“I won’t be a nun,
“No! I won’t be a nun.”

‘Hush! dear, you must be quiet; sleep, or you will be pale when Charles comes,’ said sister Agnes softly, patting her cheek.

‘Yes, I will sleep; I will not be pale: poor Charles, that would distress him.’

She *did* sleep, poor child, for she was weary; but her sleep was disturbed, and she started, often opened her eyes and closed them again.

After many weeks, she could creep out to the garden, leaning upon her two nurses.

‘I am weak—the wind is cold—take me to India; the time will soon come. When will the carriage be here? Do open that great ugly gate, and let me go to Callaghan House: Charles will lead off the ball to-morrow. Bring my India shawl, dear; I like it best. It is the colour the princesses wear. Gather me flowers—a sweet bouquet—lotus flowers and orange blossoms.’ Thus she feebly chattered.

For two or three years she lived—her intellect quite gone. The other nuns pitied her, and she was allowed to wander about the house and garden as she pleased, except when strangers were expected.

A letter purporting to be from herself was sent to her betrothed, informing him that the irrevocable step was taken—that she had become a nun, and would never see him more. He wept first, and then stormed at the fickleness of woman, and the manoeuvres of priests and abbesses, and finally married in revenge a gay girl with Indian habits, and lived most unhappily.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RELIC WORSHIP.

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."—*Second Commandment.*

"They received not the love of the truth. . . . For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie."—2 Thessa. ii. 10, 11.

THE nuns were seated at breakfast in the refectory; not a voice was heard, for they ate in silence. Their scanty meal was only begun, when the superior commanded them to pause.

'My daughters,' she said, 'a great privilege awaits you to-day. A holy man from a distant land is expected to arrive soon after noon with a most precious relic, which he will exhibit to you; it is a fragment of the sword which, on the day of her Son's crucifixion, pierced the heart of the blessed Virgin: as it is written, "Yea, a sword shall pierce thine own soul also." You must adorn the chapel for its reception; especially the high altar, on which it will be laid. You will be permitted to kiss the shrine in which it is encased, and for this act you will receive an indul-

gence of fourteen days. As each sister advances to adore the relic, she will invoke the Holy Mother; and if any of you specially desire to be dedicated to her Heavenly Majesty, she may use the form prepared for the purpose. Now, my daughters, as a sign of your appreciation of this honour, stay your carnal appetites, leave off this meal, and by abstinence prepare your souls for the Divine food to be given you. You may perform a "Te Deum" after you have received the blessed privilege.'

The hungry nuns arose from table, and one of them collected the remains of the meal which, if finished, would have been quite insufficient for their healthful sustenance. Considerable merit attached to this abstinence; and several of their number considered it well repaid by the wonderful sight which awaited them.

'Sisters Agnes and Monica will repair to the kitchen to prepare a suitable collation for the holy man,' continued the superior; 'Sister Theresa will adorn the refectory; and the rest of you will go to the garden to gather flowers; will prepare the candles, and decorate the chapel for the ceremony.'

A chill of disappointment fell upon the heart of sister Agnes. She loved to gather flowers and adorn the chapel, she hated cookery, and disliked her assistant in the work. The superior knew all this, and it was the very reason of her order. By small acts

of similar tyranny she was able to embitter the lives of any of the nuns towards whom she happened to feel unkindly. She called it "teaching them obedience and self-denial."

Agnes strove to be happy in her work by thinking of the great enjoyment she hoped to have in surveying the relic, and in dedicating herself to the blessed Virgin more formally than before; but Monica was cross and contradictory, and sometimes contrived to spoil an elegant device which she had executed, and she was hot, and hungry, and faint, and altogether depressed ere her work was accomplished.

At twelve the nuns formed into procession to receive their venerated visitor, whom they met in the cloisters and accompanied to the chapel, which was tastefully decorated, *almost* as tastefully as if sister Agnes herself had presided over the flowers.

The holy man was short and thick, with piercing though small black eyes. He carried a small box in an oil-skin cover, which, when the nuns had retired to the cloisters again, he removed, placed the box upon the high altar, and stood beside it. Fathers Dennis and O'Hooran had entered with him; the former said mass at the side-altar, and when he had finished, the latter said in a loud voice, 'Venite!'

Chanting, the nuns approached two and two, and then halted, while the organ pealed forth a triumph-

ant strain, and a cloud of incense arose. The first couple then drew close to the altar, and kneeling, said, 'O Refuge of sinners! O Morning star! O Divine Mercy! O Gate of heaven! O Most holy! O Most pure! O Most benignant Virgin, Queen of Heaven! I adore thy celestial Majesty. Vouchsafe me a sight of this most holy relic in thine infinite mercy, and transfuse through it virtue into my soul!'

The keeper of the treasure then held to their lips the golden box, and afterwards, removing the lid, exhibited a small bit of broken rusty iron. The nuns adored it in these words, 'O most holy! O most affecting! O most glorious fragment! relic of the passion of Mary! We bless thee; we thank thee; we adore thee!' They then arose and departed, and other two went through the same ceremony.

With beating heart sister Agnes approached, accompanied by another sister, who had resolved with her to dedicate herself to the 'Most Blessed Virgin.' They repeated this form, 'Most holy Virgin! Mother of God! Mary! I, although most unworthy to be your servant, moved notwithstanding by your wonderful mercy, and by the desire to serve you, choose you this day, in the presence of your Son, of my guardian angel, of all the heavenly court, and of these priests and sisters, for my peculiar Lady, Advocate, and Mother, and I firmly purpose, with your aid, ever to serve you.'

'I humbly beseech you, therefore, most merciful Mother, to receive me into the number of your worshippers, as your perpetual servant; favour me in my actions, and obtain for me grace, that I may wholly so comport myself in all my thoughts, words, and works, that I may never offend your Son Jesus. Remember me, and forsake me not now and in the hour of death; and vouchsafe me to be edified by the sight of this most blessed relic of your sufferings!'

When all in succession had seen and adored, the sisters retired to the choir, and the Te Deum was sung.

They were then allowed a slight repast, but the devout among them had feasted their souls.

Alas! on what husks had they fed, while despising Him who is the Bread of Life!

CHAPTER XXIV.

HERESY IN THE CONVENT.

"The Cross,
"There, and there only is the power to save."

COWPER.

WE have mentioned sister Marie as a remarkably amiable, though pensive girl; along with sister Theresa, she had charge of the young prisoner, Phemie Keegan. The strong piety of the child made a deep impression upon the mind of the nun, and she treasured up in her heart many expressions which fell from her ward. The Spirit of God carried them with saving power to her heart. She had had early exercises of mind somewhat similar to those of Luther, although less intense; she had been convinced of sin, and had fled to the usual popish arts to quiet her conscience,—to atone for her guilt. But the more she laboured, the more unhappy she became; all her efforts after sanctity issued only in stronger and more fearful convictions of guilt. So far, there was a similarity between her

case and that of sister Agnes ; but there was one important difference, it consisted in perception of the intrinsic evil of sin, and of its desert. Sister Marie felt herself to be *condemned* by the righteous law of God—she laboured under the apprehension of his wrath, for the breach of that law ;—Sister Agnes merely groaned under her *inability* to reach a standard of perfection which she had set up for herself ; the one sighed to escape judgment, the other to attain merit ; the one was convinced of the law as a transgressor, the other was downcast because of weakness. It is much to feel the want of *strength* ; but strength cannot be reached till *pardon* be attained—and pardon sister Agnes sought not at all, sister Marie sought it long, but in a way in which it never can be found.

But the grace and wisdom of God are wonderful. He made the wrath of man to praise him ; and when by that wrath a simple peasant-girl was imprisoned, he rendered her the means of conveying to her forced abode, the light and glory of the gospel.

Sister Marie soon perceived that Phemie had found that which she had so long sought in vain, peace with God ; and timidly and warily she strove to elicit from her the means by which she had attained it, undeterred by the dread of heresy. Phemie had the spirit of the apostles of old ; she had been forbidden, under pain of all that was dreadful, to breathe 'heresy' to one of the holy sisterhood, and they were commanded,

by their obedience, to divulge any attempt she might make to pervert them ; but she feared not man when duty to God lay before her, and she courageously unfolded to sister Marie, the simple plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, made known in the Gospel. The nun sought no *proof* of the superior claim of that doctrine upon her faith ; she *felt* its adaptation to her spiritual wants ; she saw that what fasts and vigils, and prayers and tortures, could not do, Christ had done ; she accepted him as her Saviour, with simple, child-like confidence, and the burden of her soul fell off at the foot of the cross. Fain would she have spent hour after hour with her instructress, who repeated to her as time permitted, portions of the word of God ; but this could not be. To excite the jealousy of her Superior, would have been to cut herself off entirely from intercourse with her young friend, and to subject both of them to the greatest danger. But she had an efficient teacher. The Holy Ghost can enlighten the soul through the most imperfect medium ; and He conveyed saving truth to the mind of the nun, as it fell in scraps and short sentences from the lips of his suffering child. Marie soon grasped all that was requisite for salvation and joy, and became a humble believer—a heretic if you will.

Very sweet were the light and peace which entered her soul after its long darkness and conflict ; she truly *rejoiced* in God through Jesus Christ her Lord ; and

that joy strengthened her for a fiery trial which was to try her. Her youthful instructress had sought only to convey to her mind the *truths* of the Gospel; but these necessarily overthrew some of the *errors* of Rome. The doctrine of justification by Christ alone of course shook to its foundations that of the merit of saints, and of penances, and of good works; the doctrine of One Mediator, struck at the root of adoration of the Virgin; and forgiveness of sins by God himself, rendered useless absolution by a priest. Marie's change of feeling, therefore, could not long remain unknown; but meanwhile her faith wrought in her some of the graces which are its fruits. She became still more amiable than before; and sister Agnes in particular, who had always loved her, now clung to her more closely.

She ventured one day to say to her, 'Sister Marie, I begin to despair of ever becoming a saint. You cannot think what evil feelings spring up in my heart. You are so meek, and gentle, and calm, and amiable, that I think you must have attained to much sanctity. Tell me what penances and mortifications you secretly practise; help me, Marie, if you can.'

'I practise no secret mortifications at all,' replied Marie.

'None!' exclaimed Agnes, in surprise.

'None; I have found One who bore all the penalty of my sins for me.'

'What great saint was that?'

'Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God!'

'Oh! of course, but then;—'

'Listen, dear, while we are alone, and I will tell you all. I long strove to work out a righteousness of my own. God showed me that I had an evil heart, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." I sought to atone for my sin and to purify my heart, but the more I wrought, the more I felt I deserved the wrath of God, because all I could do was so imperfect, so vile. In my childhood I knew portions of the Scriptures, and now God sent one with power to my soul. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength;" and again, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." A horror of great darkness fell upon me; I became conscious of a fearful sin I had never seen before—the absence of love to God and Christ; and while I tried to *love* I felt I *hated*. Then I was anathema, maranatha.

'I had thought of God as a very dreadful being, to be appeased only by her whom we call his mother—it seemed impossible to love him—and if I loved him not I was accursed. I was in great agony. I went to my confessor, and he exhorted me to meditation, to flagellations, to fastings, to vigils; but the gloom continued. I was weary of life.

'It pleased God to send me light through one of

his dear servants. She told me of Christ's love to me, of his bearing my ——'

'A sweet conversation, sisters, apparently,' cried the lady Superior, suddenly appearing, 'you will please to inform me what is the subject.'

'We were speaking,' replied sister Agnes, 'of our sins, of the difficulty of resisting them, and of the penances which were ordered sister Marie for her great sin of not loving God.'

'Sister Marie had better think a little more of the sin of neglecting the *Mother* of God,' retorted the Superior, '*she* is the Gate of Heaven, the Queen of Angels, the Sinner's Refuge; and sister Marie's prayers, I begin to fear, are all pater-nosters without aves. I forbid you to speak together again.'

Agnes was astonished, and still more so when the reverend mother commanded Marie to retire to her cell, where she was to have nothing but bread and water for three days. She forbade sister Agnes to mention the subject of their conversation to the rest, and remarked, 'There is too much reason to believe that that girl is touched with heresy.'

'She!' exclaimed Agnes, 'who is so gentle and obedient.'

'Little know you of obedience,' said the Superior, snappishly, 'if you consider sister Marie obedient, she deserves to be made an example, a warning to the community. Come to my room.'

Sister Agnes followed the lady, and then was desired to lace her boots. As she stooped to *obey*, and commenced the lacing of one boot, the Superior placed her other foot upon the head of the nun, who attempted to look up in mingled astonishment and indignation; but her head was firmly pressed down, and she was commanded to be still.

'I make a footstool of your head,' said the Superior, 'to test *your* obedience, and your humility. It is good for you. You will please not to stir till I remove my foot? Lower your head.'

The poor girl repressed, by a sudden effort, her rising anger; resting upon her knees and hands, with her face nearly touching the ground, she remained until the blood suffused her brow, her head palpitated, and she gasped for breath. The Superior at length released her, satisfied with her "obedience."

She felt insulted, but she *tried* to acquiesce in the scale of her merits—a scale light enough, she knew.

She never saw Marie again; the nun was heard of no more; no one in the convent seemed to know what had become of her. Agnes felt that she had lost a friend, and her heart was withered more and more. She strove to dismiss from her mind the words which the Superior had stigmatised as heresy; but a portion of them stuck fast, like an arrow in her conscience;—they were the same which had wrought conviction in Marie, "If any man love not the Lord

Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." She felt that the curse applied to herself, and henceforth she strove to work up her heart to the love of Christ. Alas! the Saviour must be *known* before he can be *loved*, and sister Agnes knew him not. It was true she looked upon pictures and symbols of his passion, and besought the Virgin to show to her her Son. But it was in vain. The Holy Spirit alone can infuse this blessed grace; and to Him she applied not. Cold and wandering still were her thoughts, almost quenched her affections; but a new perception, a new conviction had sprung up within her, and henceforth she was more dissatisfied, more unhappy than ever.

A terrible suspicion, too, haunted her as to the fate of the being who, of all in the convent, had most interested her. It was vague indeed, but sufficient to add much to her mental disquiet. The problem was insoluble, and she tried to forget it; but her suspicion was strengthened by the questions put to herself in the confessional respecting her conversations with sister Marie.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HERETIC EXAMINED.

"The sense of mercy kindles into praise.

"He that finds

"One drop of heaven's sweet mercy in his cup,

"Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content." COWPER.

WE must now conduct our readers to a subterranean apartment, damp and chill, where the Lady Superior and the two priests, wrapt in their warmest envelopes, were seated at a small table, on which were a crucifix, a missal, and a lamp; and before which, pale and faint with abstinence, and shivering with cold, but resolute and courageous in spirit, stood sister Marie.

She had been accused of heresy; and she stood there to give an account of her faith,—a simple, untutored maiden, unskilled in controversy, unacquainted with the Scriptures, except in the few passages which had guided her into the way of salvation through the working of the Spirit of Truth.

'You have ceased to venerate the most holy Virgin,' said Father Dennis.

'I venerate her as a holy woman, and as the mother of my Lord,' replied the nun, 'but God has said, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me," and has forbidden me to worship a graven image.'

'But the church has commanded her to be adored.'

'I must obey God rather than man,' was the response.

'God has commanded his church to be obeyed.'

The nun was silent; she *felt* that God could not have enjoined obedience to any contradiction of his own word; but she knew not what to answer.

'Do you deny the merit of alms and prayers and penances?'

'I believe that all good works ought to be done, because God loves holiness; but I *know* that I can never perform any which are good enough to merit his favor. I long tried to do so, but I could not.'

'Heresy!' said Father O'Hooran.

'Do you expect to go to heaven through the merits of the saints?' asked father Dennis.

'Through the merits of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ *alone*,' she replied, clasping her hands and looking upward. 'He bore my punishment; he died for me; and I shall live for ever with Him.'

'More heresy! horrid heresy! Then you deny the

merits of all the blessed saints, who laid up stores of grace for poor sinners!'

'There is in Christ *all* I need—*all* grace, all salvation, all glory. I will seek it in none else.'

'A damnable heretic! But you surely seek the intercessions of the saints, if not their merits,' said father O'Hooran.

'There is one God, and *one* Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. He does *all* for me.'

'What say you to infallibility?' asked father Dennis.

'*God* is infallible, and his word is infallible.'

'But to Peter was given the keys of heaven.'

'Perhaps so; but he will open the gate only as Christ bids him.'

'The holy Mother softens her Son when he is stern.'

'Can He who bled and died for me be stern? oh! no; he is *all* love, *all* mercy, *all* compassion! I know his love; I feel it in my heart. His name is Love; his nature is Love. I want none but Him. If Christ were stern, what tempted him to be crucified? It was love that took him to the cross.'

'Do you believe in Purgatory?'

'Why should I, when Jesus *did all*? He paid *all* my debt; he left nothing for me to suffer.'

'Are you so pure that you need no fire to cleanse you?'

'No, I am not pure; I am a vile sinner; but it is the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify. If *He* cannot do it, I am sure the devils cannot.'

'But if you die before you are sanctified?'

'I shall fare as the thief did to whom Jesus said, "*To-day* shalt thou be with me in paradise."

'Damnable heresy again! It were a good deed to send thee to purgatory forthwith to cure it.'

'If you kill me, Jesus will take my soul into his everlasting arms. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil," for he will be with me.'

'What say you of transubstantiation? Christ said, "This is my body."

'All that Christ said must be true.'

'What say you of confession?'

'I care less about confession to a priest since I learned to confess to God; but I do not know that He has forbidden it.'

'Absolution?'

'I do not need it from man when God has absolved me; and the priest often mistakes in pronouncing it. I have received absolution from man when God had not forgiven me. But I think it could do me no harm.'

'Do you believe in the mass?'

'I do *not* believe that Christ has been offered more than *once*. He was "*once* offered to bear the sins of many;" and, "The worshippers *once* purged need no more offering for sin." He is ascended into heaven, and "there sitteth for ever at the right hand of God." "He needeth not daily be offered for sin;" because his one sacrifice was *perfect*.'

'Will you adore the sacrament?'

'I will not.'

'What! not adore Christ's body!'

'I adore Christ my God; not a wafer.'

'Then you *do* deny transubstantiation.'

'I do not know: I do not understand.'

'How dare you then pronounce upon such sacred mysteries?'

'I *know* the love of Jesus: I *know* his perfect salvation: I *know* that he has done all things for me; that he hath saved me by his blood, hath changed my heart by his Spirit; that he will receive me to his glory. This is all I desire to know. This has given me safety and happiness such as I never felt before, and joy which must be something like heaven.'

'By all the saints! a heretic worthy of dying by fire, and living in fire for ever!'

'Jesus died for me. I refuse not to die for him. It would be sweet so to prove my love to him.'

'The accursed death of a heretic is not the martyrdom that confers merit.'

'I want no merit but that of Christ.'

'Will you pray to the saints?'

'No; for "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."'

'Will you confess?'

'I have no objection.'

'Will you abjure your errors?'

'I do not wish to retain error, I only wish to retain Christ, my sole hope.'

'If you persist in heresy you will be damned!'

'I will cling to Christ alone, and nothing can separate me from his love.'

'He loves none who despise his mother.'

'God forbid that I should despise her; but I will not worship her.'

'Well, we shall give you three days to repent. If you continue an obstinate heretic, we must send you to hell-fire!'

This young convert had *little* knowledge, but what she had was *saving*. She had *much* love, strong faith, and grace was given her to be constant. In that dark damp cell she had the presence of her Saviour.

We leave the sequel of her story to imaginations enlightened by the knowledge of Rome's atrocities. She feared not those who can kill the body, but can-

not kill the soul. Whether she died by violence, or wasted away in hunger and thirst and cold, we reveal not. We know who has promised, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ESCAPE.

"I will kiss thy royal finger and take my leave."

Love's Labour Lost.

A PROSECUTION had been commenced against father Dennis for disturbing the Protestant meeting in the village of ———, and two or three indictments for assault were laid against him. The Romanists were set to work, and right hard they laboured to procure a verdict in their favour. The witnesses who were summoned for the prosecution were threatened, cajoled, and duly instructed in all the discoveries of Popish doctors with respect to amphibology, equivocation, reserve, and confirmation of these things by oath. The priests thought they had the trial in their own hands.

On the night before it was to take place, the two fathers, with a priest from a distance, paid a visit to the convent. They, as usual, went to the cell of Phemie Keegan, and endeavoured to argue or terrify

her out of her heresy; but in vain. The girl had received strength from on high, and wisdom to confound the priests of Rome. Deprived of her Bible, she yet was able from memory to refute by scripture all the arguments of her assailants; and the *naïveté* of her replies provoked a smile from the English priest who this evening accompanied them. She asserted, that if there were a Pope at all, there must have been two from the beginning, for St. Paul once said distinctly, "So ordain *I* in all the churches." And when no mention was made of Peter being at Rome, Paul was managing the affairs of the church there, and in all his letters never once alluded to Peter.

'You, a woman!' said the English priest, 'and don't worship the Virgin! Is not it an honour to have one of your own sex Queen of heaven?'

'Arrah! but that's a reason why I should not worship her,' said the girl; 'for don't I know how ill she would rule. Our own Queen Victoria, God bless her! cannot rule Great Britain without men to help her, and how could a woman rule in heaven, pray? And if she's up there all de way, how can she hear me pray to her, and hundreds and thousands more? —why the noise of our tongues would dhrive a woman stupid, your riverence.'

'How can God hear, then?' asked the priest, flipantly.

'God is everywhere,' said the girl, solemnly and reverently looking up and around her.

There was a pause, even with the priests.

'You have sacrilegiously denied the holy doctrine of transubstantiation,' said the English priest.

'I have,' said the girl, 'and I do!'

'Then you deny scripture, and the words of Christ himself.'

'How?'

'Quite plain to any but a heretic. He said, "This is my body,"—you say this is *not* his body. Fie! fie! to contradict Christ.'

'Do you remember where it is said, "This Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia?" asked the girl.

'To be sure,' replied the priest.

'So then, according to your interpretation, the big mountain was Abraham's servant-maid in the kitchen, minding the stirabout, and boiling the praties,' said Phemie Keegan.*

'By all the saints, but you are a confirmed heretic!' cried the priest, bouncing out of the cell. 'If your own priests do right, they will have you scourged for an hour.'

'They cannot without my Saviour's leave,' said the girl calmly.

'Leave or no leave,' said father O'Hooran, 'you shall be done for to-morrow.'

* The real answer of a poor convert to a priest.

'It is in His hand,' repeated the girl.

The priests went off to the parlour and soon were engaged in conversation with the Superioress on the approaching trial.

'It is well that girl is out of the way,' said father Dennis; 'Confound her! she would swear anything, and stand to it, and tell the truth in spite of all obligations to the contrary.'

Sister Theresa was busied with some work in her own cell. She had heard the priests cursing Phemie Keegan; and half in mischief, half in compassion, she set her wits to work to disappoint them. 'They are safe at their gossip for best part of an hour,' she said to herself. 'Look to your prisoner, holy fathers.'

She entered the cell where Phemie was quietly pursuing her task. Her cell was not kept locked now, she was found so quiet and obedient, and did not attempt to talk to the sisters when she met them in the passages.

'Listen, child,' said the nun, shutting the door. 'Should you like to get out of this place?'

'And is it you that can ask me when ye see me crying for my mother and my home, wid a heart that 'ud break, if the love of Christ didn't hold it together. Yes; if *He* will, it's what I would like intirely,' said the girl.

'Then, make haste, and be quiet,' said sister Theresa.

'An' is it liberty they mane to give me?' cried the girl, starting, her eyes flashing, and her whole countenance sparkling. 'Didn't I tell them they could do nothing widout *His* permission? It's He put it into their hearts, and blessed be his holy name!' and she clasped her hands in ecstasy.

'Just be quiet,' said the nun. 'D'ye see it's in no heart but mine to let ye out; and don't ye go and tell who did it, or they'll kill me; but if ye be discreet, outside the gate ye'll be in ten minutes, and then run—run, as if the Queen and all her soldiers were at your heels to catch you.'

'But how?' asked the girl, who now began to tremble.

'Don't you shake there like an aspen leaf, or yer legs will fail ye, Machree; hold still, and wait one minute.'

So saying, the nun left the cell, and the girl fell on her knees. Theresa re-entered with the hat and cloak of Father Dennis in her hand. 'Put these on,' she said.

'Och! och!' cried the girl, laughing now, 'and isn't a priest I'm to be? me a priest! But they'll know I'm not Father Dennis, by the hat.'

'No, they won't. There's a small one in the parlor—ye'll pass for him—the night's pitch dark, and the lamp's broke. Slouch the hat so—knock at the porter's door, then turn your back; and when ye get

out—run—fly, not till the gate's shut though, unless they find ye out. Don't say a word, mind. Do what ye like with the hat and cloak. Where will ye go this dark night?'

'Och! straight to dear Mr. M'Murphy's; he's the man to take me in.'

'Well, then, haste!' So saying, the nun put the cloak and hat properly upon the girl, and laughed. 'Don't you be saying mass to-morrow,' she added.

'Go with me,' said the girl, clinging to her. 'Get another cloak, and escape too. Yarra, yarra! do!'

'No, child,' replied Theresa, despondingly; 'there's no Mr. M'Murphy to take *me* in—quick, or they'll catch you.'

'He *will* take —,' the girl was beginning.

'Out with ye! I've oiled the bolt of the front door; draw it quietly.'

'Jesus, help me, and tache *her* to love thee!' ejaculated Phemie, looking upwards, then gliding swiftly along the passage, she drew the bolt; it creaked, and a servant nun looked out. The passage was dimly lighted—she saw only the priest, cloak, and hat. 'I'll open for your Riverence,' she said; but before she could reach the door, his Riverence was off, passing rapidly to the porter's lodge. How the heart under the cloak beat, as the knocker was lifted! The girl raised her eyes to heaven, and the unexpressed prayer was heard. The portress opened the door with a

large lamp in her hand; but as she lifted the keys, a sudden gust blew out the light. 'This way, if ye please, father,' she said. 'I'll not stop yer riverence to get another light. Shame that the gate-lamp's not mended yet, an' gintlemen havin' to go out in the dark, or the lamp blown out.'

She opened the gate, and the figure silently passed through.

'The dickens is in the holy father, an' niver a benedicite this blessed night—ould surly sides! the manners is left ye entirely! Has the riverend mother sent ye off supperless? See iv I don't keep ye standing there the next time when the storm bates, till the red nose is white on ye!' cried the woman. So saying, she flounced into the lodge, and banged to the door.

The conference in the parlor being ended, the priests rose to depart. The Superioress, having rung the bell, desired their outer garments to be brought. Sister Theresa carried in two cloaks and two hats.

'Did your reverences put them all in one place?' she inquired.

'All together in the lobby,' replied Father Dennis.

'No more than these were in the lobby,' said the nun; 'maybe the holy father was confessing some one in her cell, and left his there.'

'I've given no absolution to-night, child,' said the

father, laughing; 'I'll go and seek my own things:—have you stolen them, machree?'

'I'm not saint enough to wear your reverence's cloak,' said sister Theresa; 'maybe St. Benedict came down and made a mistake.'

'From their mortified appearance,' said Father O'Hooran, with a grim smile.

Now Father Dennis was a true Irish clerical dandy; fat and greasy-looking, with broad cheeks, large mouth, and small eyes. His unbrushed clothes were made of the finest possible cloth, tinted with dust and daubs. How much this cloak had cost I am quite unable to tell; but its clasp was of massive gold, and its lining of the richest silk, torn here and there, while the mire through which he had ridden had not been brushed off it for a month; it used to wear gradually off when the weather was dry.

'The cloak seems to have vanished,' said the Lady Superior, when the lobby had been searched in vain.

'Oh!' cried Theresa, 'by the Virgin! this will be it; they have fun up stairs—some one is dressing up; if your reverence will come and see, we'll find it on some sweet sister.'

The priest laughed, and followed the nun, as she led the way up stairs; but she ran so fast, that the stout friar had fairly lost his breath before he was half way up the staircase. He had to stand panting, to recover.

'Beg your pardon, father,' said Theresa; 'I'm so light with fasting I never touch the ground at all, at all.'

The nuns were quite grave; no cloak was among them, and they all turned out to search, but in vain.

A light seemed to flash upon O'Hooran, and he suddenly inquired, 'Are your daughters all safe, reverend mother? Can any one have fled in disguise?'

The bell was rung, all the nuns assembled; no one was missing. Miss S. and the heretic girl were then sought; the latter was not to be found; and the servant nun now mentioned a priest having let himself out at the front-door. Father O'Hooran darted to the lodge, and inquired if the outer gate had been opened since he came in.

'Only for his reverence,' replied the woman.

'Whose reverence?' inquired the priest, fiercely.

'The short father that went out in the huffs, and said niver a benedicite to a poor sinner that opened for him,' said she.

'It was a girl in priest's clothes; how dared you let her out?' thundered Father O'Hooran, seizing the portress by the shoulder, and shaking her. The woman shrank back.

'An' plase your riverence,' she said, 'how was any livin' woman to think that there was a girleen under a holy priest's cloak, when Satan himself

puffed out the lamp, that I couldn't see; and for tinder respect to his riverence, I did not keep him in the cowl till I lighted it?'

'You'll keep a different gate to-morrow,' cried the priest.

'And now,' said Father Dennis, his sense of the ludicrous softening his anger, 'now that the girleen's off with my habiliments, how am I to get home in the cold and the rain, barrin' the scandal of their being found upon a woman?'

'Turn it to the account of charity, father,' said sister Theresa, 'the whole parish will hear of your benevolence to-morrow, and praise your alms, to the honour and glory of the holy Catholic Church.'

'And who will get another cloak for me?' asked the priest: 'How am I to get home?'

'Since we never go out, we have nothing wherewith to supply this want,' said the Superioress, looking puzzled.

'The night is dark,' said sister Theresa. 'If the holy father should go home in some of our garments, no one will see. The reverend mother has warm hoods; and a shawl or two may be found in the convent.'

With some difficulty and much laughter, the holy father was arrayed in hood and shawl, and took his departure along with his brethren. Three young fellows, half-tipsy, were going merrily home in the

same direction. As they approached the village, the gleam of a lamp fell upon the hood.

'Och! and by troth! what's this?' shouted one; 'a runaway nun—saze her!' No sooner said than done; six brawny arms were forthwith around Father Dennis, who struggled violently.

'By the Vargin! but she hasn't fasted at all at all,' cried one; 'she's as fat as Father Dennis.'

'Let go! you scoundrels!' cried father O'Hooran, seizing one by the collar, and dragging him off. The man vigorously used his fists, and then a regular wrestling ensued; the English priest stood aloof, and father Dennis, rather roughly handled, shouted, 'It's never a nun I am, but your own priest, ye graceless gorsoons! Let me go, and ill luck to you!'

The fellows sprang off, and making very low bows, one of them exclaimed, 'Bedad, ye'r riverence, it's niver a mother's son would ha' thought ov ye takin' the veil!'

'I ax ye'r riverence's pardon,' said the other; 'but the honor an' glory o' the holy Church was so strong in me, that I couldn't let a blessed nun escape widout bringing her back.'

By this time father O'Hooran had finished his conflict, having got his handsome eyes a little blackened, to render him the more interesting at the trial on the morrow. Some explanations ensued, and really for once the priests considered it politic to tell the

truth, and nothing but the truth; although the *whole* truth—that is, how Phemie Keegan got into the convent—they did not consider it requisite to relate.

Great was the astonishment of father Dennis to find his cloak at home before him. Poor Phemie's conscience would not allow her to deprive the father of his goods; 'that would be staling,' she said; so when about half-way from the nunnery, she took it off, folded it up, and, before going to Mr. McMurphy's, she knocked at the priest's door and silently handed in the parcel, to the great astonishment of the poor housekeeper, who concluded that her master had been murdered, and forthwith raised a commotion in the village.

The people were proceeding with lights to search for their priest, when the trio appeared; father O'Hooran and the Englishman properly arrayed, and father Dennis in a nun's hood and shawl. Many, loud and varied were the exclamations of astonishment and commiseration, and not a little was the suppressed laughter which his appearance excited. With the ready wit of an Irishman, skilled in 'equivocation,' he told them he had been robbed of his garments, and father O'Hooran added the conjecture, that the robber had been so plagued with evil spirits as to be obliged to disgorge his booty.

'Sacrilege is a fearful crime,' said he; 'and to rob

a holy priest is sacrilege of the deepest dye. Three groans for the thief, and let him be anathema !'

Groans, hisses, and yells—such as Irish Papists alone can utter, followed this amiable exhortation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLERICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR A TRIAL BY JURY.

"Detection, her taper shall quench to a spark."—GOLDSMITH.

' AH ! Mick Donelly, and wasn't it the cow that grew sick and died when the gossoon was following the soupers, and goin' to sell his soul entirely ? The blessed St. Pathrick wouldn't permit the sin without givin' ye notice of the consequences. Well, when we get out ov this danger, by the help ov yer ividence, maybe the cow may come back to ye from the dead. Not by way of *payment*, ye understand, that would be perjury ; but to show that the Church—glory be to her !—is a grateful Church to her obedient boys. You know the way the riot happened ; we havin' refreshed yer memory in the things which had escaped it.'

' Yes, yer riverence,' said Mick, pulling a lock of his shaggy hair, and performing an indescribable movement, intended for a bow.

'Then, Mick, go over the ividence, that we may be assured of yer maning to tell the thruth, and the whole thruth, and nothin' but the thruth.'

Mick rehearsed his part to admiration, and was duly cautioned to put in nothing else, lest he should tell what was not the truth. 'For how,' said the priest, 'can an ignorant boy like you discern the thruth from falsehood, except by the help ov our wisdom.'

'Thru for you, yer riverence,' said Mick—'an' about the cow?'

'Iv ye do right, see iv the blessed saints do not send her alive by miracle; though maybe not quite like her former self, twice as fat she'll be, havin' got all the sickness off her.'

The hair was again pulled, the exquisitely graceful bob repeated, and Mick departed, rejoicing in the prospect of having a cow again.

'A cow for a few lies, and they for the glory of the holy mother church!' he said to himself.

'Paddy O'Keefe, ye rascal out of purgatory! do ye now remimber all about it; or has the whiskey taken away your sinses intirely? Was it yer parish priest, or the heretic jumper that used the shillelah!'

'It was the jumper, yer riverence.'

'How was it done? Spake the words as ye mane to spake them before his honor.'

Paddy obeyed; he spoke the words, giving a ver-

sion of the story to the full contentment of the heart of his riverence.

'Now all ye have told is the blessed thruth; will ye swear to it?'

'Sure I will, yer riverence.'

'Well, iv ye tell any other story thin than that blessed thruth ye have rehearsed to me, look to the sick bed, and the absolution; and'—here he fixed his small dark twinkling eye on the now trembling sinner, and lowered his voice—'remember the gap in the hedge—and the shot—and the blood—and the corpse!'

'Och, yer riverence! but it's remember I do; and yer riverence gave me absolution intirely.'

'For another world, Mick; but not for the court ov justice, or the gallows, ye dog.'

'Sure yer riverence does not mane to peach on me!'

'By St. Dominick, no! if ye behave yerself discreetly in this matter; but iv any ov the heretics make ye tell another word than this blessed thruth, yer life's not worth *that*,' said the priest, snapping his fingers.

'St. Pathrick help me!' ejaculated the man.

'To tell the truth as I have brought it to yer remembrance, do ye mane?'

'Intirely, yer riverence.'

'Aye; Mary, machree! it's a good girleen ye are, now that ye have left the Jumpers' school. What

was it, again, they promised ye, an' ye would go to their heretic matings, and tell lies of the priests; and bring into disrepute the holy Catholic church?'

'It was, ye'r riverence, as much lace-work and knitting and good pay, as would keep my widdy mother; and two mails a-day for myself, and a warm cloak.'

'Thin, when you had told the lies, and forsaken the chapel, and put your soul in danger, did ye get it all?'

'No; ye'r riverence.'

'Was it *that* brought ye back, like a stray lamb, to the fold of ye'r own blessed church?'

'*That*, an' ye'r riverence promising me twice as much.'

'Mind what ye'r saying, machree! What *I* promised ye has nothing to do with the matter at all, at all. It is not about *me* they need ividence, it's about the soupers, ye understand. To say anything about *my* promises will spoil ye'r character, machree, and damage ye'r widdy mother.'

'Very well, ye'r riverence.'

'There's a boy that likes you, Mary, machree! he'll be at the thrial to see how discreet ye are. *Say nothing to set him again ye.*'

Mary held down her head, blushed scarlet, and wondered how the priest knew every thing.

While father Dennis thus practised upon the wit-

nesses, father O'Hooran busied himself with the jury—those of them who were his clients; the rest, from other parishes, were managed, each by his own priest. This class being a little higher in the social scale, required to be rather differently dealt with. Rome adapts herself to all grades of society.

These men required to be enlightened on various points of morality, as these are laid down by renowned Catholic doctors, especially St. Liguori;—the duty of a juror, to consider first the honour of the church;—the measure of faith to be kept with heretics;—the power of the church to dispense with oaths, &c.

'Guilty,' said the reverend father, 'may have various meanings;—it may mean guilty of the things whereof a man is accused, or it may mean guilty in respect of crime. When a man is proved to have committed the actions ascribed to him, he may yet be pronounced "*not guilty*," if those things be not crimes in the eye of the church. If the evidence, in this case, should prove that the priests did *not* do the things charged upon them, then *of course* the verdict must be "*not guilty*," but if the contrary seem to be proved by successful malice, still you have it in your power to return us *not guilty*;—meaning *not guilty of any crime*; seeing that it is our duty to persecute heretics and glorify the church; and instead of *guilt*, it is *merit* so to do.'*

* See Liguori, iv. 151.

The father then proceeded to inflame the minds of the jurymen against the soupers who had brought so much dissension and trouble into the quiet village. English jurymen, proud and independent, need not startle at this. *They* are free;—they have no lords over their consciences. The sons of poor Ireland; aye, and her daughters too, are bound hand and foot by tyrannical priests; they are slaves in body and soul, in judgment and conscience, in speech and in action. The man who depends upon a priest for his salvation, *must* be the slave of the priest; to disobey him is to risk everlasting fire.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN IRISH TRIAL BY JURY.

"Lawless force from confidence will grow." GRAY.

"When lawless mobs insult the court

"That man shall be my toast,

"If breaking windows be the sport

"Who bravely breaks the most." COWPER.

On the day of trial the court was crowded to suffocation. Father Dennis and one of his flock stood charged with inciting riot, and with assaulting various individuals; father O'Hooran with abetting and encouraging the same. They had been fully committed for trial, and liberated on bail; and now the excitement of the parish was wound up to the highest possible pitch, and the country for miles round was stirred.

The fanatic "Catholic boys," wrought up to frenzy by the exhortations and denunciations of the priests, looked forward to a signal revenge upon the "soupers and jumpers;" and the humble band of Protestants, who had a clear case to present, hoped

for a decision which would in future protect them in the free exercise of their religious, and the enjoyment of their civil rights. They supposed that, as Britons they had a right to change their religion upon conviction, so long as that which they embraced did not impair the exercise of their duties as men and subjects of the state. Toleration, they understood to be the law of the land; and why a few fanatic priests should overturn that law, they could not comprehend. In fact this day's trial was to prove whether the statutes of this realm, or those of Rome, were to be paramount in this portion of the domains of Queen Victoria.

The priests, fully justified by the dogmas of their church in using all kinds of means, supposed that they had secured abundant *evidence* in their favour; about its *truthfulness* they troubled not themselves. Liguori had quite settled that matter for them.

The evidence for the prosecution was clearly laid. Patrick O'Flannigan, sworn, deposed that he had become a convert from Romanism to the Protestant faith, that the Protestant school was held in his house, and that there were also meetings for worship on Sabbath evenings; that on the evening of Sabbath the — of — he had heard a report of an intended riot and dispersion of the congregation by the Roman Catholics; and in consequence, when all were assembled, the doors were shut. But during prayer by

the Rev. James Sullivan, there was a noise as of a number of men surrounding the house, then a knock at the door. Witness inquired who was there, when the voice of Father Dennis demanded admittance. Witness said that if the Father were alone, he would admit him; but he would not open his door to a riotous mob. The priest persisted, and on being steadily refused, was heard to shout, "Do your duty, boys." Whereupon showers of large stones burst through the windows, the door was broken open, and Fathers Dennis and O'Hooran, and a number of men armed with sticks, stones, and life-preservers, rushed in. The priests commanded the congregation to disperse; Father Dennis using very abusive language, swearing, and saying that he was the parish priest, and would allow no heretic meetings in his jurisdiction. Witness told him that the *Rector* was over the parish by law, and that but for the *toleration* of the British government, the Roman Catholics would not be even allowed; when there commenced a most horrible shouting and howling—and the priest beat the individual named in the indictment first with his whip, and when that was broken, with a stout stick; that the widow Keegan was so beaten as to be unable to stand, and her daughter Phemie was dragged out of the house by the hair, after which she disappeared, and was not again seen, until last night when she suddenly arrived at his house, and

stated herself to have been forcibly carried off, and placed in confinement in the convent of —, whence she had escaped.

At this stage Father O'Hooran was seen whispering to his solicitor, by whom a messenger was despatched with a letter to the convent.

The cross-examination elicited a few particulars relative to the mission, the time it had been in existence; the number and faultless character of the converts, and the persecutions they had to endure.

Witness believed the opposition of the priests to arise from the diminution of their fees and their influence consequent upon the conversions. A Mission School, he stated to have been formed, with a female teacher; girls were taught reading and writing, plain sewing and knitting, lace-work and embroidery. The lace and embroidery were purchased by a mercantile house in England; and thus many of the girls earned a subsistence, scanty indeed, but still a subsistence. The Bible was read daily in the school, and Protestant catechisms used. No inducements were held out to scholars to attend, further than the benefits flowing from instruction and ability to earn their own living. The few clothes which some of the most needy girls had received, were absolutely requisite for even decency; they were *cast-off clothes* sent by friends of the mission. They were supplied, during the dearth,

with one meal of stirabout in the day; but this was now discontinued.

Other witnesses corroborated this testimony in every particular.

Phemie Keegan was then called.—Was a monitor in the mission-school. Was in Patrick O'Flannigan's house on the evening of Sabbath, and gave testimony as to the riot and assault, similar to the other witnesses. Was dragged out of the house by her hair by Father Dennis, who was cursing awfully; and, committed to the care of two men, who detained her in a field for about half-an-hour. Then a carriage drove up; she was forced in, and taken to the convent, where she was told she must remain until she abjured heresy, and promised to teach no more in Protestant schools. She was on the whole pretty well treated; had as much food as at home. In answer to a question, stated *that* to be two meals of stirabout per day. Had to work hard, but was accustomed to *that*. Was sometimes beaten after an argument with the priests, who frequently visited and threatened her; but her chief distress arose from ignorance of the state of her infirm and widowed mother, who had been cruelly beaten by Father Dennis, and whose chief support she had been. *Sometimes* she felt terrified by the threats of the priests; but was usually able to trust in God without fear, and to rejoice in suffering for Christ. She escaped under

cover of night, by putting on the hat and cloak of Father Dennis.

She was closely cross-questioned, and excited some laughter by her description of her disguise, of slipping through the house-door, and escaping detection by the blowing out of the lamp of the portress; but a murmur of admiration arose, when she simply stated her conscientious scruples about depriving the priest of his cloak; and her determination to brave the danger of carrying it to his house rather than 'be a thief.'

She very dexterously parried some questions as to whether she had any assistance in escaping; and her testimony left a most favourable impression on the minds of the audience.

The widow Keegan was next called; and her appearance excited general sympathy. With Irish eloquence she described her distress at the disappearance of her daughter, the fruitless search that had been made for her, and the conclusion come to, that she had been murdered and concealed. She had not yet recovered, she said, from the effects of Father Dennis's chastisement; and she would have been starved during her daughter's absence, but for the charity of the rector's lady, who had heard of her case, and of some other Protestants and friends of the mission. She and her daughter had been cursed from the altar, therefore no Roman Catholic would

hold communication with her. This closed the case for the prosecution.

Witnesses for the defence were then called. Fathers Dennis and O'Hooran were first examined. Their statement of the case was this: Had been much annoyed by the agents of the mission-school bribing away the children of their flock, by food, and clothes, and money, and instilling into their minds contempt of their religion and of their parents. Several of the more ignorant and vicious of the parishioners had been induced to attend the Protestant meetings, and to abjure the Roman Catholic faith, chiefly through bribery. The morality of the parish was much impaired. The Protestants had frequently invited discussion on the articles of faith; and on the evening of the riot the two priests, accompanied by a few members of their flock, went to the place of meeting to accept the challenge. They found the doors bolted, and, on knocking, were assailed by a storm of abuse. But at length they were admitted, when, upon attempting to speak, they were silenced by hootings and howlings, and finally sticks were resorted to, to drive them out. In self-defence they used their own, but not until their lives were in danger. As to Phemie Keegan, she had in terror fled to the monastery, and requested to be admitted. But the Reverend Mother herself would be called upon to reply to her testimony.

The Mother Superior of the convent was then brought into court. She stated that Phemie Keegan had arrived early in the morning of the —, and solicited admission into the convent; that she was hungry and cold, and was fed and warmed. That she begged to be taken as an inmate, with the view of renouncing Protestantism, of the errors of which she professed to be convinced; but after being kindly treated for some time, she was found to be hopelessly depraved and intractable, and was consequently expelled from the convent, from which she found means to abstract several valuable articles along with the cloak of Father Dennis. The danger of detection, arising from the possession of the latter article, had, it was presumed, induced her to return it. Cross-questioned—The other articles were a gold crucifix and a few similar valuables.

Sister Monica was then examined.—Is a nun in the convent of —; remembers the 'night' when Phemie Keegan was 'brought in,' half-dead with cold and hunger.

Question. 'What time of *night* was she brought in?'

Answer. 'Five o'clock in the morning.'

Q. 'Why did you say *night*?'

A. 'It was a mistake.'

Q. 'Who brought her in?'

A. 'Father Dennis and Father O'Hooran.' (*Sensation in court.*)

Q. 'Why did she go to the convent?'

A. 'For fear of being torn to pieces by the Protestants because she wished to renounce heresy.'

Q. 'Did she renounce heresy in the convent?'

A. 'She pretended to do so.'

Q. 'Now, tell me again who brought her to the convent?'

A. 'She came of her own accord.'

Q. 'Did not you say Fathers Dennis and O'Hooran brought her?'

A. 'It was a mistake.' (*Sensation.*)

Q. 'What character did she bear in the convent?'

A. 'Extremely bad.'

Q. 'In what respect?'

A. 'She was a noted liar and thief; it was impossible to believe a word she said, and nothing was safe that lay in her power.'

Q. 'What did she do with the articles she stole?'

A. 'Hid them in her cell.'

Q. 'How?'

A. 'Beneath her bed. Many things were lost while she was in the house, and never found again.'

Q. 'How do you know that she hid articles under her bed?'

A. 'Because they were found there.'

Q. 'I thought you said they never could be found?'

A. 'Some of the things were found, and some were not.'

Q. 'Did she carry away any thing, when she escaped?'

A. 'Oh yes! many things.'

Q. 'What things?'

A. 'A carved ivory rosary and crucifix.'

Q. 'Was the crucifix gold?'

A. 'No, ivory.'

Q. 'Was not a *gold* crucifix lost?'

A. (Looking puzzled)—'No, it was ivory.' (*Sensation.*)

Q. 'How did she carry them away?'

A. 'Folded in Father Dennis's cloak.'

Q. 'How do you know?'

A. 'I suppose so.' (*Sensation.*)

Q. 'Do you *swear* she carried off these things?'

A. 'I do.'

Q. 'Do you know what perjury is?'—The witness turned suddenly pale, and was silent.

Q. 'How did she *escape*?'

A. 'In Father Dennis's hat and cloak.'

Q. 'Did you see her, then?'

A. 'No; it was reported in the convent.' (*Hisses in court, and counter cheers.*)

Q. 'Was not she expelled from the convent?'

A. 'Yes; for bad behaviour.'

Q. 'Why then did you say she *escaped*?'

A. 'It was a mistake.'

Further questioning elicited further contradictions, and the witness was dismissed with an admonition to speak truth, especially when on oath.

Mick Conolly called:—

Had a small piece of potato ground, and a cow last year; when his son went to the Mission school. The boy was promised plenty of work, food, and a suit of new clothes, if he would renounce his faith; and was nearly persuaded, when the cow fell sick and died, and seeing it to be a judgment, the boy left the school. Being desirous of hearing the discussion between the priests and Mr. Sullivan, he went to the door on Sunday evening. He then repeated the same story as the priests; but on being cross-questioned, involved himself in so many contradictions, as to draw down also an admonition against false swearing.

— next appeared. His squalid, ruffian-like countenance, drew many suspicious eyes. Like the former witness, his first evidence was clear and correct; but cross-questioning proved its hollowness, and upon having the contradictions pointed out to him, his look of savage defiance caused a general shudder. He was evidently a person of the worst character.

Nothing further of importance transpired. The other witnesses were evidently unworthy of credit.

We need not allude to the speeches of counsel on either side, except to state, that that for the prisoners was somewhat inflammatory and abusive of Protestants. The learned Judge, in summing up, pointed out the distinctness of the evidence for the prosecution; and the transparent perjury of the witnesses for the defence; and called for a verdict of guilty against the defendants, who had evidently committed the crimes for which they were indicted.

The jury retired; and in about thirty minutes returned a verdict of "*Not Guilty*."

A look of speechless surprise passed round the court; and then a deafening cheer arose from the lower papists, mingled with hisses and sounds of indignation.

Bowings, smilings, and congratulations took place among the priests; and even a Member of Parliament shared in the triumph of falsehood and perjury.*

That night the house of Patrick O'Flannigan was set on fire in four places;—a mob collected round it, not one of whom would lift a bucket of water to quench the flames, nor save an article of furniture. The family, on escaping from the burning, were hissed and hooted, and assailed with all opprobrious epithets, mingled with curses. Phemie Keegan and her mo-

* See Appendix N.

ther had been taken to the Rector's for safety; and although three miles distant from the village, a rick of hay in his yard was set on fire. It was discovered in time to prevent a general conflagration. But the aim of the papists evidently was to terrify the peasantry from again giving evidence against priests, by marking out for vengeance every one who had done so.

Another of the witnesses narrowly escaped death. A shot being fired into his window; which lodged in the wall, within a few inches of the place where he was sitting.

Who can doubt the instigators of all these outrages? The priests had, at least, the power of quelling them.

Next day there were great rejoicings in the convent, commencing with a *Te Deum* for the 'escape of the reverend fathers from the hands of their persecutors.' There was a grand collation in the refectory, at which a number of priests were collected, and much merriment resounded through the usually dreary hall. Sister Theresa told with infinite humour the story of dressing Father Dennis in the garments of the reverend mother, and Father Dennis related that of being mistaken and nearly captured for a nun. It cannot be said that the language and the jokes of the company were very refined; but they were at least loud, and highly spiced with broad Irish humour.

For one day, tasks and penances were forgotten, and silence was unobserved. The cross sister Monica, however, sat gloomily in the midst of the fun. She remembered with bitterness the observations of the court upon *perjury*, and the hisses which followed her evidence. Besides this, Father Dennis had not even thanked her for the part she had taken in procuring his justification; and now he sat joking and laughing with sister Theresa, while nobody noticed *her*. Envy, jealousy, hatred, chagrin, rankled in her heart; she feigned sickness, and retired to her cell, to weep bitter tears of mortification, and to plan petty acts of revenge.

Sister Agnes was still sad. An occasional laugh escaped her at the wit of Theresa, or the coarse humour of Father Dennis; but the load which had gathered upon her heart was not to be dissipated by one day's merriment.

The youthful maniac moved about bewildered.

'My bridal feast was beautiful when arranged, as beautiful as the church and the altar; but where was the cake?—why is my dress black?—whither has Charles fled so soon? Why are there such vulgar men and ugly women at *my* marriage?' asked the youthful maniac, as with vacant countenance she looked up in the face of sister Agnes, to whose arm she clung. 'Speak, Agnes—tell me what has happened?'

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEPORTATION.

"To the land where the myrtle and orange bloom,
 "To the land of the cloudless sky,
 "Where soft winds borrow a rich perfume
 "From flowers of glorious dye." S. E. P.

ONE morning sister Theresa and Agnes were summoned to the room of the Lady Superior, and informed that they must prepare to go abroad the next day, as they were to be sent to an affiliated convent in Italy.*

'May I inquire the reason of this, reverend mother,' said Agnes.

'No,' replied the lady, decidedly; and then gave a few directions as to some articles which were to be packed up as their wardrobe, adding, 'you will have a proper escort, will go by way of Bristol and Dover to Paris. To secure you from intrusion, separate places in the steamers, and separate carriages on the

* See Appendix O.

English railways will be engaged for you. You will closely veil yourselves in passing to the vehicles, lest unhallowed eyes look upon you in the land of heretics. When you enter the countries of the Catholic faith, you will be safe from insult. Remember, in foreign convents not one word must be breathed of any thing done here.'

The nuns bowed their acquiescence. The heart of Agnes leaped with a sensation of pleasure long unknown to her; she was at length to leave this melancholy prison, to leave it for a journey and a voyage; for the bright plains of France and the cloudless skies of Italy; for the romantic beauty of a southern monastery—of the land where her beloved Virgin is worshipped as the morning star. When alone with Theresa, she expressed somewhat of her feelings.

'Don't suppose that it is liberty we shall find, poor caged bird,' said Theresa. 'The wires will be round you still.'

'Ah! but they will be golden wires, not wires of iron, and perhaps we shall have myrtles and orange-flowers in the garden, or looking into our cells.'

Theresa smiled, but her smile was very sad.

'Oh! Theresa; we shall see the sea, the dear, dark blue sea; we shall sail upon it—how I long to feel the breezes—and we *must* see green fields from the railway carriage.'

'Perhaps.'

'What can have put it into the imagination of the good old mother to send us to Italy?'

'She has some deep reason, doubtless.'

'Well, we must get ready.'

On the morrow a chaise awaited the travellers, and they bade farewell to the nuns and the Lady Superior. The latter pronounced over them a benediction, after having given them sundry directions. The heart of Agnes beat with varied emotions as the massive gate of her prison opened, and she stepped out from the dreary court into the green lane, for the carriage had not, as usual, been driven in—it had stopped outside. Fathers Dennis and O'Hooran were in it—the same who had guarded her to the spot when she was conveyed, full of hope and romance, to the place where she had suffered so much. The nuns, closely veiled, were assisted into the carriage, and it drove off at a rapid pace.

'I wager my cassock,' said Father Dennis, 'that these ungrateful girls are glad to leave their palace, and us their blessed priests, to go to the sunny south, as the romances call it.'

'If I accept your wager, father, and win, shall I preach when I get it?' asked sister Theresa.

'If you can,' replied the priest.

'I bet my hood, then, that I *am* glad,'—she rejoined.

The travellers reached Cork just in time to embark in the steamer for Bristol. The nuns were permitted to remain on deck until sunset; a source of intense delight to sister Agnes, whose love of nature had been so long ungratified. Yet the delight was of a very pensive nature, quite unlike that she used to feel, when, an untrammelled, happy girl, she roved at will among its beauties. Now she felt as a prisoner. A priest was always at her side—usually both priests were there; the jealousy shown in guarding her now was much greater than that displayed by Padre Carlo, when she fled with him to the convent. Ah! she went by her own choice *then*; now she was transported, like a slave, at the will of others, she knew not *why*, she scarcely knew *whither*. She gazed on the sea and sky, and the retreating land, with affection, as upon old and choice friends from whom she had long been separated; but then she sighed to think how soon she might be separated from them again. She had a considerable journey before her, however, and she resolved to enjoy it to the uttermost. After a noble sunset, they went below, and presently the nuns were conducted to a state room, which had been prepared for them. 'We shall be close by your room, and shall leave our door open,' said Father O'Hooran, significantly.

'To show us that we cannot escape if we would,'

whispered sister Theresa to sister Agnes. 'They won't let us even drown ourselves.'

A heavy swell came on—sea-sickness invaded the sisters, and the delights of nature *shut out*, they were *shut in* to misery.

The morning was calmer, and they slept a little. They were not permitted to breakfast in the saloon, their meal was carried to their own cabin; they requested that it might be taken on deck, and father O'Hooran had his also removed thither. The fresh morning breezes revived them; but the presence of the intolerable priest destroyed all the enjoyment of sister Agnes; she perceived that it was possible even to feel the cool unfettered breath of heaven on her cheek and yet be sad. Her heart was very heavy.

No incident of consequence occurred on the voyage; but they felt themselves the objects of considerable attention to the passengers, one of whom, an elegant, middle-aged widow, gazed upon them often—once with tears in her eyes.

Sister Agnes was almost charmed out of her deep-seated grief by the beautiful scenery on the Bristol channel. She looked upon it with admiration—almost with adoration—yet the load on her heart—ah! nothing would remove that!

Two priests met them, on landing at Bristol; one accompanied them and father Dennis into a coach; the other walked with father O'Hooran. They

were conducted to the railway, put into a private carriage, where a slight repast was brought to them; and they were requested to keep from the windows, as their costume would attract observation. The priests themselves sat at the sides of the carriage, the nuns occupied the centre seats. Sister Theresa composed herself to sleep. Sister Agnes, for awhile after they started, leaned forward to look at the glimpses of scenery, but her eyes became weary, and she too fell fast asleep, the priests conversing in an under tone, each to the opposite one.

Their stay in London was to be but for a night. It was evidently to the house of a priest that they were conducted—a dignitary of the church, they thought. It was an elegant residence in the west end; a boudoir and bedroom opening into each other, were assigned them, with every comfort.

'This cannot be the house of a priest—ladies *must* live here!' said sister Agnes. 'Every thing is arranged for a lady. Oh! it is like home;—dear, dear home!'

She threw herself upon a green damask sofa, kissed it like a child, and wept.

'Maybe the reverend father has a niece,' said Theresa, curling her lip. 'You a nun, and to care for these vanities! But what a sobbing! foolish child! Now cry again if you dare, after I have kissed you. Shall I ask his reverence to take you as a

boarder, that you may recline on a damask sofa all your life, and look upon carved rose-wood, and ormolu?'

She darted to the door.

'Theresa!' cried Agnes, in alarm.

'You need not recal me so vehemently,' said Theresa, returning. 'We are locked in!'

'Locked in!'

'Yes; to keep us from doing, or *seeing* mischief, or running away.'

'Prisoners for life!' said sister Agnes.

'But not *for ever*!' replied Theresa. 'Death cuts chains.'

'But purgatory comes after him.'

'Poor little fool!' said Theresa, pityingly.

'Theresa, I do *not* understand you.'

'Agnes, I do *not* understand myself. But about this locking in, I will tell you a story to show that nuns *must* be guarded when travelling; a reverend father was bringing two poor unwilling girls to the convent of B—, my former residence; they concocted a pretty plan of escape, and at a railway station they darted forward and claimed the protection of the station-master, asserting that they were being *forced* into a convent. The priest—not habited as a priest, declared them to be his daughters; they had passed under this designation all along their journey. The girls were under age, he said, and he dared any

one to interfere with them. Their tears and entreaties, however, so moved the officials, that they were taken before a magistrate. The man coolly reiterated that they were his daughters; and they were admonished to be obedient to their father, and dismissed. The tiger kept his prey safely; and bitter were the consequent sufferings of the poor children.'

'I know the case to be hopeless,' said Agnes. 'The eye of father O'Hooran is bolt and lock enough. Do you know, Theresa, I quail under it.'

'Stouter hearts than yours have quailed under it,' said Theresa.

The door opened, and a lady walked in; '*Miss Percy*,' she said.

Sister Agnes started; a deadly paleness overspread her countenance; then a scarlet flush, and, rushing forward, she threw herself into the arms of *Mademoiselle Dupin*.

'You will faint, my child,' said *Mademoiselle*, as she led her back to her sofa. 'Compose yourself for a little.'

A flood of tears came to the relief of the nun; she buried her face in the bosom of her governess, and sobbed, 'My father?'

'Be calm, and I will tell you.'

'Now; now; or my heart will break.'

'He is at rest.'

She raised her head, looked steadily through

her tears, clenched her hands, and said firmly—
'Dead?'

'Yes; gone where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

'I am his murderess; O God, take me too!' said the nun. Her features were like stone; her voice calm and hollow, as if issuing from a sepulchre; her figure became rigid and statue-like, she sat upright, and looked fixedly in the face of her governess.

'No;,' said the Jesuitess; 'Death waits not for sorrow to bring him. He is a friend when other friends are gone.'

'It needed but this,' said sister Agnes, in the same hollow tone of unnatural calmness; 'It needed but this to complete my misery. *Mademoiselle*, we have been cruelly deceived. Do not *you* be enticed to a convent.'

'I believe the church has other work for me to do,' replied *Mademoiselle*, 'but if a young woman be not happy in a convent, it must be the fault of her own spirit.'

'I have *tried* to think so;,' said Agnes. 'But it cannot last long. My heart is turned to stone; my brain is following.'

'The Madonna forgive you!' exclaimed the Jesuitess.

'Amen!' ejaculated the sister.

'My time is limited,' said Mademoiselle. 'I have important business with you—your fortune—'

'Is already settled upon the convent, of course,' replied Agnes.

'Well! But it is your duty to provide against any danger of alienation. Owing to your father's death, others may seize it. It will be necessary for you to sign some documents, and make some declarations before a lawyer and competent witnesses, before you leave the country.'

'I care not what I do.'

'Your dinner will be brought in a few minutes; after that you will be visited by two professional gentlemen.'

'Can they not wait till to-morrow?—Cannot I have this evening alone?'

'Impossible.'

'Well; if my brain *does* turn, it is no matter.'

CHAPTER XXX.

REASONS FOR DEPORTATION.

"We have the right and might alone;
"Where is the power to reach us?"

Luther's Hymns.

WE must now detail the circumstances which led to the deportation of Sister Agnes. Immediately upon commencing her noviciate, she was required to sign a document handing over her property to the convent. This document could not be available until she had attained the age of twenty-one; but that was of no consequence. Even should she die before that time, a false date could be inserted, and the witnesses were ready to swear anything that might be required. She was also ordered to write a letter to her father, mentioning the reasons for her flight, and her determination to persevere in a religious life. To herself this letter was stated to be supplementary to the first she wrote, and to which she had received no answer; but in reality, it was the only one which was intended ever

to be delivered. It too was kept in readiness for future use. Until she had assumed the habit of a nun, it was not deemed advisable to inform her friends of her situation, lest they should so persevere in attempts to see her, as to render her concealment scandalous.

No communication had been made to her friends, when her father's death occurred. Mr. Courtenay strongly suspected the truth; but having not the shadow of proof, had never hinted his suspicion to Mr. Percy. But it was now requisite to take decisive steps in order to secure her fortune to the convent; and her letter was despatched to her father as if in ignorance of his death; but really in the certainty of its falling into the hands of his executors, Colonel Hayward and Mr. Courtenay. They lost no time in proceeding to the convent, where they were most politely received by the Superioress, who promised to bring Miss Percy to the parlour to speak with them alone.

'This is contrary to our rules,' she said, as she left the room, 'but the circumstances are so peculiar, that I am anxious to afford you every satisfaction.'

'She is candid, at least,' remarked Colonel Hayward when she had disappeared.

In a few minutes she returned: 'I regret exceedingly,' she said 'that Miss Percy quite declines to see her friends; her determination is so immovable, and

her contentment so perfect, that she feels it would give her pain to meet those who might question her decision. I think she is wrong, and have told her so; but in those matters my nuns are left at perfect liberty to do as they please.'

The gentlemen insisted; and the Superior went again to endeavour, as she said, to persuade the young lady to grant an interview.

She was unsuccessful, however; protested her extreme sorrow, and the utter impossibility of interfering—seeing that she never compelled her nuns to do any thing disagreeable to themselves; and finally bowed out her visitors with the greatest suavity, and the most intense protestations of regret.

Of course she had never communicated to Miss Percy their presence in the convent; the poor girl would have been but too glad to find deliverers; and well the Superior knew this.

Returning from what they both felt to be a fool's errand, baffled and outwitted by a woman, whose politeness even restrained in her presence the outburst of their indignation, they had no sooner got outside the convent than they stormed to their hearts' content; and vowed, that if there was law in the land, they would see the infatuated girl. It was all in vain; there *was* no law in the land to meet their case, so long as she stedfastly refused to see them, and

wrote, which she (apparently,) did afterwards, declining an interview.

While they were consulting lawyers, and pressing in vain to see her, the period of Miss Percy's majority arrived; and finding the affair becoming troublesome, the Superiress and the priests determined to send her out of the country, as soon as her fortune should be legally secured to the church. Therefore she was first conveyed to the priest's house in London, where two Roman Catholic lawyers attended to prepare a fresh deed of gift. This being duly signed, witnessed and sealed, her forty thousand pounds were safe; and it mattered not what should become of *her*, if she were only sufficiently concealed from prying inquiries. A letter, apparently in her hand-writing was then sent to her uncle, stating that, distressed by his pertinacious endeavours to see her, she had gone abroad; and in a few months afterwards, a duly attested notice of her death was forwarded to him, dated from a convent in Paris where she had stayed on her way to Italy. He visited the abbess there, and received very interesting particulars of the event, which had *not* taken place.

"The Church" had gained her object, and she calmly folded her arms and smiled at the impotent denunciations of those who felt her villainy.

'I believe that governess to have been at the bot-

tom of all,' said Mr. Courtenay, 'she was a Jesuit, if one ever existed.'

'The thing was disgraceful, abominable!' echoed Colonel Hayward, violently stamping his foot, with a soldierlike expression which we shall not repeat.

'Charity, gentlemen, charity!' said the member for — shire, who was present, 'you must make allowance for conscientious convictions of duty. These worthy people thought they were saving Miss Percy's soul by converting her. We cannot interfere with liberty of conscience.'

'Liberty of murder and robbery!' cried the impetuous Colonel. 'Liberty such as the devil has.'

'It won't do to interfere, my dear sir,' said the M. P. 'This liberty is guaranteed by the British constitution.'

The colonel left the room, slamming the door behind him, ordered his horse, and galloped into the country, as if he had intended to vent his passion upon his innocent and noble favourite.

Nothing more could be done; the money went to the convent; Miss Percy's relatives put on mourning; there was a good deal of talking—and that was all.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TRAVEL.

"These blithe notes
"Strike the *deserted* to the heart."

WORDSWORTH.

"We have found a change, we have found a pall,
"And a gloom o'ershadowing the banquet hall."

MRS. HEMANS.

THE *professional* business was speedily transacted. Sister Agnes declared what she was bid to declare, and signed what she was desired to sign. She cared for nothing in the world now. Tea was brought, and placed on a small table between her and Sister Theresa. Two hours previously, this appearance of home comfort would have charmed her; but all charms were now broken. She had said truly that her heart was *turned* to stone, and her brain was *turning*. Sister Theresa poured out the tea, and kissed her as she put the cup into her hand. She swallowed the liquid, because she was desired so to do; she offered cake she put aside with loathing.

She retired to a luxurious bed, and—slept with

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sorrow. She had been stunned, her faculties were benumbed, and the sense of sorrow was not *acute*; it was that of a dull depressing weight; its very heaviness had blunted its edge. She could not see Mademoiselle again—could gain no particulars of her father's death.

Next morning they started for Dover. Agnes again looked upon her darling sea, and a few tears came to her relief. It was sparkling in the sunshine as if tens of thousands of diamonds had been scattered over it. She almost wished it had been dark and stormy; it would have harmonized better with the state of her heart. But in spite of herself, its beauty soothed her, and she thought that misery might be borne if it could be borne among the beauties of nature. But perhaps within the boundaries of an Italian convent there might be beauties; perhaps some glorious prospect of hill and forest and sky, might be visible from its towers; perhaps among soft Italian maids there might be more gentleness and elegance, and less waste-work to occupy the time which she would fain spend in retirement and meditation.

The bustle of embarkation was very annoying to her wounded spirit. Sister Theresa seemed to enjoy it, but she was scarcely sorry to obey the command to retire to the small cabin provided for the nuns. Sister Theresa said it was very provoking.

When fairly under weigh, however, the steamer had begun to plough the clear green waves, the sisters were permitted to go on deck, and were escorted by the priests to a retired station where they could watch the retreating castle and chalk cliffs of Dover, and look upon the sea, as from the shallow emerald they passed on to the deep sapphire. Sister Agnes, after surveying the prospect around, fixed her eyes upon the foam into which the waves were lashed by the paddles; contrasted with the blue of the ocean, its snowy whiteness was beautiful. She fell into a sort of trance, in which her father's image was the only definite object,—and an occasional thrill of pain, the only definite feeling.

A fancy stole over her—a wish;—it would be pleasant to float on that beautiful sea; lave her arms and her heavy brow in that liquid element; to go down to the caves of the mermaid; to the haunts of the pearl-muscle and the nautilus; to explore the groves of the algae—the rocky gardens—where the flowers of the sea bloom—to find a quiet grave deep down beneath the region of storms, amid the sparkling sand shaded by the cypress of the sea. She looked around her,—it was *possible*, she thought; she looked down again, a fresh breeze swept the surface of the water, crisping the blue, and fanning her cheek. Its feeling was delicious—still more delicious seemed the sea. She slowly arose from her seat,

slowly lifted her foot towards the bench against the bulwark, and was about to spring up, when Father O'Hooran's firm hand quietly grasped her gown, and pinned her to her seat. He smiled; 'You are becoming a child again,' he said. 'The station *there* is not safe; you must be content with looking from a less exalted place.'

Sister Agnes *felt* that he knew her intention; and she was abashed.

We need not describe the landing at Calais, nor the journey to Paris—these are so well known. The sisters were conveyed by the priests to a Parisian convent, where they remained a few days, and whence Father Dennis took his leave of them to return to Ireland. Here everything was magnificent, except the cells of the nuns. Had not the spirits of Sister Agnes been so depressed, she would have revelled in noble architecture, stained glass, pictures, statues, music; and as it was, the sense of misery was lightened by the gorgeous beauties presented to the eye, and the rich melody that fell upon the ear. But the mode of life she perceived to be the same as in the Irish convent. There was the same heartless monotony of prayers and chanting, silent meals and house-work; and the countenances of the nuns were even more vacant than in Ireland. And poor Father Dennis, if his vulgarity were absent, so was his racy humour. The convent of St. ——— was truly a very dull place.

One evening, when the silent time had expired, the sisters were gathered in groups, when a few exclamations arose from a corner in which sister Theresa was seated with a French nun. They were conversing in an animated manner, although the French of sister Theresa was somewhat defective. She was expatiating on the glories of St. Patrick, recounting the wonders he had performed in Ireland, and illustrating by acting the dismay of the venomous reptiles from which he cleared the country. The frogs, she asserted, he put in his cloak, and towed them across to France. Sister Frances responded by marvellous tales of the patron saint of her own convent, and presently miracles became the current talk of the evening. They recounted some of modern times—*certainly* very wonderful, but sister Frances said,—

‘Our priests tell us that the reason of the rarity of miracles *now*, is the prevalence of infidelity. Your country, it seems, except where converted to the Catholic faith, is wholly infidel; and the most frightful crimes are openly practised.’

‘That picture is rather overdrawn,’ said sister Agnes.

‘They mean Ireland,’ observed sister Theresa; ‘there they burn houses wholesale, and the people in them; those who try to get out they beat back into the flames.’

‘Is it the heretics who do that?’ inquired a

French nun, grimacing after the peculiar style of her country.

‘Of course,’ replied sister T., ‘it cannot be the sons of the true faith; but heretics get even into the convents, and steal the priests’ clothes, and the revenues; others have to go home drest as nuns, and get put into the pillory for running away.’

‘Holy Virgin! what a country!’ ejaculated sister Madelaine.

‘It is a country of heretics,’ said sister Theresa, shaking her head. ‘They infect even the faithful. Do you know, sometimes a nun falls in love with a priest, and frets to death.’

‘Pooh! they do that here—*peut-être*, or go mad,’ cried sister Frances.

‘Well;’ said sister Theresa, ‘when a peasant dies his neighbours dance and drink whisky all night, beside the corpse.’

‘St. Anthony, defend us from heretics,’ said sister Madelaine.

‘Then a ruffian will station himself behind a hedge, and when he sees a man go past—boh! he shoots him.’

‘Ah! *ma chere sœur*, how happy to live in a Catholic land! Notre Dame forbid I should ever be sent to England!’

‘That is in Ireland,’ said sister Agnes.

‘Then of course, it is worse in England,’ remarked

sister Frances, 'for they say there are more true Catholics in Ireland. We had a novena last for the conversion of England. Father Spencer is very cunning; he did not tell us of all these horrors of his country.'

'Do *you* tell him when he returns,' said sister Theresa, 'and ask if he expects England soon to be as happy as even Ireland. To make her like France will take a thousand years.'

'Ah! what a happiness to be a Catholic!' sighed sister Madelaine.

'It is the faith that makes the country,' said sister Theresa, oracularly.

'I will tell father Spencer all that,' said sister Frances. 'How glad I am, *ma chere sœur*, that you have come to tell us all these things.'

A French priest was to accompany the party to Italy; and a nun from another Parisian convent, was to be added to it. In a few days they departed, after many adieus, and kissings, and benedictions, for Marseilles. Sister Agnes had hoped for, at least, a drive in the Boulevards—she had ventured to conjecture the possibility of a visit to some of the celebrated churches; but she had not been carried thither for sight-seeing, and she left Paris little better acquainted with it than she was on her entrance. But in passing to the south of France, her mournful spirit was often soothed by the sweet scenery through

which they travelled, and amused by the liveliness of the Italian peasantry. The air, too, was finer than in England. The dryness and elasticity tends much to elevate the spirits, and it *did* partially relieve the oppression of hers.

There is a feeling, too, in contemplating the death of a friend from whom we had been previously separated for ever, very different from that with which we regard that of one with whom we have constant intercourse, with whom we had hoped to spend our lives. In the one case, death has deprived *us* of nothing, has rendered our situation no worse than it was before, we mourn the mere isolated fact, *that he is dead*, and if we believe him to be happy, we know not why we mourn it. But in the other—in the case of one, communion with whom was the happiness of our life, we weep the *change*, which forces itself upon our daily, hourly notice; we feel a continual *want*; we lose a continual presence; we miss perpetually the guide, the counsellor, the companion, whose image and love are entwined with all our actions, our hopes and our emotions. The one is a sentiment; the other a sense.

So to sister Agnes, the loss of her father produced no real difference in the tone of her life, though it filled her with emotions of deep sorrow, and *over loaded*, a heart *loaded* already. Yet it left room in some

degree for the influences of natural beauty, and healthful climate to operate upon her.

The journey was performed partly by moonlight, and the sweet sadness of which agreed with the tone of her mind. But she regretted every day that passed, for it brought her a day nearer to her imprisonment again. She sometimes wondered whether escape was not possible, whether she might not suddenly dive into the depth of a forest and elude her keepers; but that eye of father O'Hooran—oh! it haunted her like some evil spirit. She felt that she was continually under its inspection; and if for a quarter of an hour *he* was away, the French priest mounted guard, and the *eye* seemed transferred to him. The smallest auberge at which they rested, was always secured in some manner against liberty.

At Marseilles they embarked for Genoa.

'Genoa la superba!' said sister Theresa. 'You romantic little nun, does not your heart beat to see it?'

'It would if I were at *liberty*.'

'Pooh! a mere fancy; cannot your eyes see what they look at without liberty?'

'See, but not enjoy!'

'Well, you *shall* enjoy Genoa. This French priest is very polite; I will coax him to take us round it, and set your eyes at liberty.'

Agnes smiled, but sighed.

'Fathers,' said sister Theresa, to the priests, 'we are somewhat sad on leaving our own country, and this sister of mine has another sorrow. May nuns for once have recreation?'

'What recreation do you wish?' inquired the French priest.

'To see the beauties of Genoa. We could not be seen in a heretic land, but in the realms of the true faith, we should not be hooted at. We would learn to love the land of our adoption.'

'I think we may give our fair wards this enjoyment,' said father Bourienne to father O'Hooran.

'Surely,' replied the latter.

Ah! reverend fathers, you have your prisoners now, where, if they attempted to escape, they will be hunted down by the police. They are safe at length.

The view of Genoa from the sea is truly "superb." Skirting, like a vast amphitheatre, a noble bay, it rises tier above tier, on the side of the Appenines; fortifications, churches, villas, adorn it, and orange trees on flat roofs of the houses add to its picturesque effect.

The streets through which they passed to the hotel were narrow, but some magnificent churches were greatly admired by the travellers. They visited the cathedral, and joined in the evening service, and next morning drove to the sea shore at the earnest request of sister Agnes, who deeply longed once more

to walk by the waves before being shut up for ever. It seemed to renew the days of her childhood, and she stood gazing fixedly upon the long, pale-blue waves rolling slowly in, their crests broken into snowy foam upon the smooth sand; the exquisite shading of blue and white and sand colour; the fresh, yet gentle breeze; the pure soft sky; the line of green behind the beach, and farther back, the noble forms of the Appenines, combined to weave a spell almost overpowering to the heart of the long-imprisoned nun. She was not permitted to remain long; the priests had business in Genoa; and the girls were to be shut up again till it was transacted. They were taken to the convent of St. ———, and indulged by the abbess with sauntering in the spacious garden kept in order by the nuns. Here were fountains, orange-trees, and all manner of paradisaical things; and if nature *could* have made her adorers happy, sister Agnes had been happy that day. She reclined beside a fountain under a shade of myrtles and orange-trees;—and yet *she wept*.

Sister Theresa chatted merrily with the French nun who accompanied them. She was unacquainted with Italian, and therefore could converse with none of the sisters of the convent. The superioress alone spoke French.

Next day they set off for Florence, through a magnificent country. Ascending a steep road that

skirts the bay, they enjoyed the prospect of the vast expanse of sea on the one hand, and of hills on the other, hills at whose feet, and along whose sides, were scattered villas, and vineyards, and orchards. All the way to Florence it was one continued luxury; and the environs of that city, different as it is from Genoa, presented new beauties to their eyes. Standing in an extensive and luxuriant plain, girdled by the Appenines, adorned with noble architecture—with churches and palaces, and bridges and convents, Florence seemed to the enthusiastic sister Agnes, a city of bliss.

‘Is it in Florence we are to live?’ she inquired.

‘No, my daughter, not in a town. Important business brought us hither, but your home is further north, where the scenery is still more romantic, and the air more healthful. We shall remain in Florence a few days. Among the sisters of the convent there, you will be happy for awhile,’ said father O’Hooran.

Very magnificent was the exterior of the convent; very dismal and horribly filthy was its interior. Many of the nuns were vowed to perpetual silence, and they moved about like spectres. They were clothed in filthy rags. The establishment was one of the strictest of the clausura. No voice of father or mother, sister or friend, ever broke upon the death-like solitude, except once a year when *some* of the nuns were permitted for a few minutes to hear

from the other side of a strong double grating a few words from their relatives. 'My daughters, shun the parlatory as you would shun the mouth of hell,' was the exhortation of the confessor. Enfeebled by fasting, wounded by stripes, stupified by silence, the nuns of this convent looked scarcely like human beings, and the olfactory nerves of poor sister Agnes rebelled sadly against the odours of this "most sanctified" place. If the object of sanctification were the utter degradation of the human species, it had been truly attained here.

'Alas! sister,' she said to Theresa, 'What if *our* convent should be like this? we cannot exist.'

'We *need* not,' replied the sister with an expression of countenance that terrified the gentler nun.

'It may be like that at Genoa.'

'It may—I care little.'

The meal that day was of black bread, grapes, and sour wine; in the morning they had bread and water. Some of the nuns ate their bread sprinkled with ashes, others had their cup of water soiled. The silence at meals was unbroken, save by the tread of the sisters who waited upon the rest. Not even a legend of a saint was read at meals. The convent was seldom swept; the clothes of the sisters were never washed; the garden was uncultivated; so the nuns had nothing to do. They sat in listless indolence, or performed stations on bare knees, or flagel-

lated themselves or others, or kneeled before a picture telling their beads. The vacant countenance of more than one bespoke her an idiot; the wild snatches of song that proceeded from another, as she passed unheeded to and fro, told that she was a maniac. Agnes wondered how any one could retain reason for a twelvemonth there. Sister Theresa had managed to gain the intelligence that one third of the nuns died mad; that few of them lived more than five years.

Sister Agnes was horror-stricken!

'The abbess is a wonderful saint,' said father O'Hooran, when he had resumed his charge, and they proceeded northward, 'Her nuns usually die in the odour of sanctity; it is not uncommon for angels to be seen hovering over their beds, ready to carry their souls to heaven. It is a blessed place—the convent of Santa ——.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LIVING SAINT.

"Sieguausi i grandi esempi."

"Far greater part

"Will deal in outward rites and specious forms,

"Religion satisfied: truth shall retire."

MILTON.

THE spirits of sister Agnes had been miserably depressed ever since she had received the intelligence of her father's death. The beauties of nature, through which she had passed, had exercised a tranquillizing though not an elevating effect upon her mind; but the gloomy fanaticism of this convent sank her again into the depths of despondency. These cadaverous women, hunger-bitten, diseased, filthy, with countenances indicative of continual pain, she was told were great saints, and she trembled at the portals of that saintship which she had been so eager to have opened for herself. Purgatory could be scarcely worse, she thought, than so sad an existence in this world; and in her recoil she had almost said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

There is but a step from fanaticism to epicureanism, just as there is a very slight division between the credulity that accepts all things and the infidelity that believes nothing.

She remembered Genoa, and the luxurious rooms of the priest's house in London, and she became puzzled with her reflections.

One of the sisters of this convent had features so exquisitely chiselled, that in youth and health she must have been beautiful; but this sister had only one eye; and the one side of her face contrasted strongly with the other. Agnes was told that Saint Helena,—all the sisters here were denominated 'Saint,'—had been remarkable for her loveliness; but finding it a snare, and unwilling to be distinguished by any thing but her humility, she had, by the advice of her confessor, submitted to have her right eye burned out. When the abbess had finished the recital of this story to sister Agnes, she proceeded to speak of St. Rose of Lima, a virgin who, by austerities unsparingly practised, attained to sublime heights of sanctity.* 'Even from the cradle she shone with the presages of future holiness; her face being wondrously transfigured into the image of a rose, caused her to be called by this name, to which the Mother of God added her own surname. At the age of five, she

* See Romish Breviary, August 30.

made a vow of perpetual virginity. When older, she cut off her beautiful hair to avoid being compelled by her parents to marry. Having assumed the habit of the third order of St. Dominick, she doubled her former austerities. To her very sharp hair chemise she fastened everywhere little needles. Under her vest she wore, day and night, a crown armed in the inside with thick-set piercing points. Treading in the arduous steps of St. Catherine of Sienna, she girded her loins with an iron chain, going thrice round the body. Her bed was of knotty lumps of wood, with broken pottery filling up the interstices; she severely scourged herself; fasted, and kept many vigils.' 'She had wonderful intercourse with her guardian angel, with St. Catherine of Sienna, and with the Virgin Mother of God, and at length merited to hear these words from Christ—'Rose of my heart, be thou my spouse.' She was carried to the paradise of this her spouse, and glittering with very many miracles was canonized by Pope Clement X.'

'Is it in the footsteps of such saints that the sisters here aspire to tread?' asked sister Agnes.

'It is, my child,' replied the abbess; and opening the breast of her habit, she disclosed her own hair-cloth chemise, bound by a girdle of iron. She loosed the girdle, and taking it off, showed the nun that it was armed with many minute spikes, and pointing to the flesh beneath, the sister saw that it was raw and



"In it lay the semblance of human being."

partially ulcerated, so that every movement of the body must be attended with pain. 'All my nuns,' said the abbess, 'wear similar girdles, even after they have been scourged.'

A shudder passed through the frame of the youthful nun.

'Come with me,' continued the abbess, 'and I will show you a very holy penitent. She has expiated many sins, and the Madonna will not permit her to depart this life, until she has attained the crown of sanctity.' Sister Agnes was then led down a dim staircase, into a passage perfectly dark, and indescribably chill, being underground. The abbess struck a light, and desired the nun to follow her. Agnes trembled; she apprehended some trap for herself, but not daring to speak, she went forward after the abbess. They entered a cell dark as midnight; the walls were crusted over with mould, and a foul, damp odour filled the place.* A coffin was on the ground, and in it, amidst ashes, lay the semblance of a human being, attenuated and filthy to horror. The creature raised a bloody hand; it had been pierced through in blasphemous imitation of the Redeemer. 'Water,' whispered a weak voice—'yet no; I will endure still more! O, sin, sin, I will be revenged upon thee!'

* Suffering and filth are Rome's two most meritorious things.
—See Breviary.

'Yet thou *mayest* have water,' said the abbess, taking from the floor a pitcher of dirty liquid, and putting her hand under the shoulder of the creature to raise it up, while she held the pitcher to its lips. A scream of agony followed the touch.

'The scourging is yet fresh and unhealed,' said the abbess—'patience, my daughter!'

'For that scream I will drink no water,' said the victim; and the abbess replaced the pitcher upon the ground, and the agonized frame in the ashes.

'Not equal to St. Rose of Lima yet,' said the abbess—'ashes are softer than knots of wood and broken pottery.'

'I had a dream, mother,' said the penitent, in a low, hoarse voice. 'The enemy came, but the Virgin vanquished him.'

'Praise be to the celestial Mother, our help, our hope!' ejaculated the abbess.

Sister Agnes shivered with cold, and became sick. She had seen a living saint—a saint of the papacy.

Ah! Satan torments his victims before their time! The poor creature's blood could not atone for sin. She knew not the *infinite* guilt of transgression,—the infinite guilt of rejecting the true sacrifice for sin, and striving to work out a righteousness of her own. She had deprived herself of all the little joy an unpardoned sinner can have, the joy—such as it is—of earth; and yet she was going down into the grave

with her unexpiated sin upon her head. She had made hell for herself before she entered it.

But she served the purpose of Rome; tales were to be told of her marvellous sanctity; miracles were to be wrought at her death. The church had need of her sufferings; it mattered not to it, that "Christ came not to destroy men's lives, but to save."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CONVENT AMONG THE APPENINES.

"Where is the suffrage of eternal Truth,
"Or where the seal of undecitful good?"

"Down the stream,
"Look how the mountains with their double range,
"Embrace the vale * * * * * from each side,
"Ascending steep to heaven a rocky mound,
"Covered with ivy and the laurel-boughs."

AKENSIDE.

It was a relief to be told to prepare for the final journey on the morrow. This visiting of Italy, to which sister Agnes had looked forward with hope, had brought hitherto as little enjoyment as other portions of her life; and hope itself was nearly dead within her, she thought that nothing could awaken it into being again. Since she came from France, she had sometimes felt a strange foreboding as to the Appenine convent; she feared that it too might be a convent of *saints*; and her feelings were much changed towards saintship. She scarcely knew whether she rather wished to have her uncertainty ter-

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minated, or to linger yet a little amidst the glories of Italy in her mountain region.

'The convent of Santa Helena cannot be *worse* than this: the Madonna grant that it may be better,' said she to sister Theresa.

'No matter,' replied the nun with the same strange expression of countenance with which she had once before uttered the sentiment, 'No matter—death breaks chains.'

'Are you ill, dear Theresa?'

'No: how liked you the saint?'

'Don't ask me about *liking*; she must be a great saint indeed.'

'Fiddlestick!'

'Theresa! for the love of the Virgin do not scoff!'

'Fiddlestick!'

'I beseech you'——

'To tell this to your confessor to-morrow, and have me sent to the Inquisition.'

'You know I *must* confess all.'

'Little simpleton! Liguori says you need *not*. The dear man has a way of getting over every thing.'

'But do *not* say such things, dear Theresa; you will surely get into trouble.'

'Death breaks whips.'

'They will accuse you of heresy.'

'Death breaks racks.'

Sister Agnes threw her arms round the neck of

Theresa. 'If you love me,' she said, 'don't say such terrible words, and look so strange.'

'Little fool.'

Sister Agnes feared that sister Theresa was going mad, like so many nuns. It was not the case.

After a repast of black bread, grapes, sour wine and water, the travellers bade farewell to the abbess and nuns of the Florentine convent of S——. The abbess stretched out her arms, commended them to the protection of the Madonna, and with her unwashed face, imprinted a kiss on the cheeks of the nuns.

How tantalizing to be where travellers go to feast their eyes, and yet to be allowed but a rapid glance at beauties whose praise rings through the civilized world! The dome of the Duomo, which suggested to Michael Angelo the idea of that of St. Peter's; the Campanile, the Sasso di Dante, the sluggish Arno, the bridges, flashed before our once romantic heroine, and disappeared. Without regret she left the hill-embosomed Florence:—the world contained now no paradise for her. Paintings, statuary, even relics, were veiled to her. But the glorious hills! she was going up among their scenes of grandeur, and she might feast her eyes for a little while upon them.

The road ascended; they looked down upon Florence, and up to the everlasting hills; now they came to a shady dell, now to a sunny slope; and again the roar of a cataract attracted them; and down, down, in

a deep ravine, they espied the thundering waters. They often left their carriage to walk; and the spell of nature again was wound around the heart of the young enthusiast who had renounced it. Vineyards clothed the lower parts of the mountains in many places; and stretching far up towards the deep blue sky, pine-forests towered on the heights. They halted for a meal beside a rivulet that came trickling down a hill, and they drank of the sparkling water. A black wooden cross was erected by its side, and they prostrated themselves before it. Their conductor told them that a man had been murdered there by a bandit, who, after paying largely to the Church, and receiving absolution, erected the cross in memory of his fault. 'Ah! 'tis good to be a bandit, and gain money,' said the conductor, 'money procures all things—bread, grapes, and salvation.'

'Dishonest gains need to be atoned for,' said father O'Hooran.

'Ah! they atone for themselves,' rejoined the man. 'Divide them with the church, and the one half sanctifies the other. It is easier to get absolution for murder and robbery, than for eating mutton on Friday.'

A week or two afterwards, the conductor was snatched from his family and thrown into a Tuscan dungeon, for blaspheming the church.

To the great satisfaction of sister Agnes, it was necessary to discard the carriage, and alternately to

walk and ride on mules, the roads being now impassable for wheeled vehicles. There was therefore nothing to obstruct the view of the magnificent scenery, and the progress being slow, it could be leisurely inspected. But long confinement had diminished the power of walking in the nuns; and ere long they were greatly fatigued. They halted for the night at a poor convent among the mountains.

Nothing material occurred during the journey; sister Theresa was permitted a little to enjoy her love of rattle; and sister Agnes to sit sometimes upon a rock meditating upon the scene spread out before her, and indulging thoughts that brought tears into her eyes; the French nun usually preserved a gloomy silence; the French priest rattled with sister Theresa, or conversed in a low tone with father O'Hooran; the latter strode on as stately as ever, keeping watch over sister Agnes, whose upraised foot on the deck of the steamer he had not forgotten, although in confession she had declared what he perceived to be correct, that the impulse was but temporary, and had never returned.

But all pleasures must end, and those of a nun, mixed with sadness as they are, are peculiarly short-lived. Ere long a lovely river spread its silver waters before the travellers; and on its opposite bank stretched a fine pile of building. This, they were told, was the convent of Santa Helena. The situation was

most romantic, in front was the river; behind, the pine-clothed Appenines; varied beauties lay all around; groups of chestnut trees; green pastures on which cattle and sheep were browsing; peasants' huts, and elegant villas. Agnes looked on with melancholy pleasure. 'Beautiful,' she said to herself, 'beautiful; but I shall be shut out from nature; shut in among the walls, and perchance the dungeons there.'

'I have been told,' said father O'Hooran, as if he had read her thoughts, 'that the gardens are lovely, and the walls are overtopped by those grand mountains. You will find that convent a beautiful and peaceful home, my daughters.'

Sister Theresa looked fixedly upon the countenance of sister Agnes, into whose eyes tears were springing.

There was a bridge further down the river; but a little skiff waited for the party, and they crossed directly opposite to the convent. A smooth lawn extended to the edge of the water; a high and extensive wall ran along the bank, and in the centre, a noble gateway reared its massive columns. The bell was rung, and an ancient porter opened, admitted the party, and closed again the thick iron-studded doors.

'In prison again!' was the mental exclamation of sister Agnes. Yet the prison was a noble one. The monastery of the monks occupied one side and the

top of the quadrangle; that of the nuns the opposite side. In the centre was a fountain bordered by orange-trees; and myrtles were scattered up and down the court. Like the generality of Tuscan villas, the lower story of the convent was arched, and myrtles, and orange-trees, and flowering shrubs, grew here and there against it. The nuns were conducted to their own quarter, while the priests were received by the Abbot on the opposite side.

Sister Agnes felt a little relieved when the door opened and she was ushered into a spacious hall, arched and cool, and hung round with pictures. It was clean too, and she ventured to hope that something of comfort might be found there.

The abbess appeared—a little sprightly Italian, with regular features, and sparkling eyes. The hood was tastefully arranged, and somewhat of a coquetish air pervaded her monastic dress. She saluted each of the nuns with a kiss upon the cheek, conducted them to her own room, and set before them fruit, bread, and wine.

‘You are weary, my daughters,’ she said, ‘eat and refresh yourselves.’

The sisters rested till the vesper-bell summoned them to the chapel. It was very splendid, and the music very fine. A number of the friars attended, and their deep voices mingled finely with the treble of the nuns and novices. All the adjuncts of

devotion were here—of that sensuous worship which, with Rome, has taken the place of “worship in spirit and in truth.” Dead Hope has an easy resurrection; she readily revives when called; and this evening she opened her eyes and languidly raised her head, while sister Agnes listened to the rich Italian music, and gazed upon the noble architecture around her. She whispered, but her whisper was faint—that peace and holiness *might* after all be found on earth.

We shall see how long the echo of that whisper lasted.

On the following morning the new residents were taken to see the beauties of the monastery; for the abbess was very proud of her domains. They inspected the fine paintings in the church and in the cloisters, along with some statuary and other treasures which adorned them. Many of the pictures were really excellent—some by the best old masters. A Madonna by Guido, especially attracted the attention of sister Agnes, for she was a devoted idolater of the Virgin. Some precious relics too were kept in silver shrines; one of the many thousand nails of the true cross; a fragment of the Virgin’s petticoat; bones of two or three saints; a bottle of martyr’s blood; and a few hairs plucked from the garment of St. John the Baptist. These were most reverently exhibited. There was a fine sacristy also, designed by some eminent architect; and an edifying array of

cross bones and skulls. The nun's garden was truly beautiful, according to the Italian style of gardening. There was a fountain in a myrtle-shade, surrounded by rich velvet turf, which especially delighted our heroine; the flower parterres were very rich. A little rivulet murmured through the midst, and escaped through a grating under the wall to join the river, the banks were of turf mingled with flowers, and orange-trees; and here and there a chestnut drooped its branches to kiss the water. If sister Agnes had not known that human passion can transform paradise into pandemonium, she would have dreamed of paradise here. But she now knew what it is to be a *prisoner*, and she had discovered that *something* in her own heart which ever disturbs repose; and therefore her pleasure was mixed with sadness.

She was surprised by the announcement that a play was to be performed in the evening by several of the sisters, and that the Abbot, the confessors, and other dignitaries of the monastery, would witness its performance. There was a bustle of preparation. Dresses—not *convent-dresses*, gentle reader, but such as you see on the stage—well arranged; the *theatre*—a large room, temporarily appropriated to the purpose, was prepared and adorned, and the corps dramatique was occupied in rehearsal.*

* Acting plays is not unfrequent in Convents.

The washing-day in Ireland had not more greatly surprised sister Agnes than this evening's amusement. The play was well performed; the priests applauded vehemently, and remained to supper with the nuns.

When sister Agnes retired to her cell, she pondered wonderingly upon her varied experience of convent life—the vulgar Irish establishment, the luxurious Genoese; the wretched Florentine; and now this scene of beauty and gaiety; and ever and anon there flitted before her the priests' house in London, with the apparition of Mademoiselle Dupin. The whole formed a mystery which she could not unravel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A NEW CONFESSOR.

"He knows his need of an unerring guide."

"God's worship and the mountebank between." COWPER.

IN a day or two Father O'Hooran took his leave, after having recommended to the two nuns under his charge an Italian priest, father Francesco, as their confessor.

'You desire holiness, my daughter,' he said to sister Agnes; 'father Francesco will lead you in the right path. There seems to me a good deal of laxity among some of the inmates here; but under such a guide, you will be safe. The Virgin and all the saints bless you! Farewell!'

Although standing considerably in awe of Father O'Hooran, yet sister Agnes had a sincere regard for him. She believed him to be a true and earnest aspirant after holiness. He had been somewhat rigid with her, but this increased her respect. She did not

know the depth of villainy which lurked under the polished and dignified exterior of the priest; for with his acute perception of character, he had soon discovered, that with sister Agnes he must be a saint, if he would maintain influence over her; and that the infliction of a little painful discipline would but strengthen his ascendancy. He easily perceived that many of the monks of St. Helena were very irreligious; and he was glad to find a few young men of a different character: one—a priest, he perceived to be just the sort of person suitable to direct the conscience of sister Agnes. Not that he cared about conscience; he had none himself; but it is one of the instruments for making fast the chains of the Church, and, as such, requires to be judiciously handled. Sisters Agnes and Theresa were therefore introduced to father Francesco; the French nun found a confessor of a different stamp.*

Father Francesco was about thirty years of age, of a handsome but pensive Italian countenance, and the gentle bearing of nobility. Highly intellectual, his mind often rebelled against the absurdities of his faith, but with many a penance he had striven to check this deadly sin; and as often as reason asserted her sway, so often had he resolutely chained her down. He was constitutionally devout; his nature impelled

* See Appendix P.

him to worship, and, unconscious of the true object of adoration, he bowed before the gods which Rome has exalted; and if the qualities which she ascribes to them sometimes failed to awaken his veneration, he clothed them with others created by his own fancy. He dwelt among the romances of the past—the annals of martyrdom, and miracles, and transcendentalism; and he panted to emulate the Christian heroes of antiquity, who foiled demons in the desert; or the missionaries of more modern times, the Loyolas and Xaviers of world-wide fame.

Unlike his associates, he was not satisfied with bodily service. It was the mind which he sought to discipline through the sufferings of the body, and it was *sin* that he sought to subdue. For this purpose, though not a Jesuit, he ardently followed the course of meditation prescribed by Loyola, and had really attained to some height of what he considered spirituality. He loved nature: her beauties in his own romantic land sent a thrill of joy through his heart; and he peopled her solitudes with saints and angels, and made them vocal with Aves and Paternosters. It will be perceived that his character bore a considerable resemblance to that of sister Agnes; his desires and aspirations were the same as hers; but he had the vigour which springs from comparative *liberty*; while she had the languor and depression which fasten upon the *slave*. Father Francesco could refresh his spirit

with the beauties, and his frame with the breezes, of his much-loved Nature; sister Agnes pined for this, but pined in vain. The benevolence too, and human sympathy of the monk could find a sphere of action among the poor and the miserable; and this kept his heart alive: while the nun, sighing for affection and communion, dwelt apart in enforced loneliness and uselessness, and in bitter solitude of spirit. She was about to find a mind like her own—a mind to hold communion with hers: but, alas! it was but to increase her misery.

The account given by father O'Hooran to the confessor of his new penitent greatly interested him.

The establishment was a large one. There were the abbess; a vicar or assistant; a mistress of the novices—for here the novices were not permitted to have intercourse with the nuns, a very politic regulation;—a bursar, sacristan, portress, infirmarian, keeper of relics, &c. The nuns at this time were twenty-five, the novices six.

A few of the religious formed almost a separate community; they were those who desired to become saints. According to the directions of St. Liguori, they abstained from the opera, never indulged in the parlatory, ate very sparingly, and often fasted entirely; held no intercourse with the priests and monks who visited, except for confession; scourged themselves frequently, washed seldom, performed the most menial

and disgusting offices from which others were glad to escape; entirely avoided the bath; and preserved an almost continual silence. There were four who observed these rules in all their strictness.

For a few days all went on smoothly; the three sisters freshly arrived, were initiated into the ways of the monastery, had their work assigned them, and fell into the routine of life there. But sister Theresa's liveliness attracted the attention of some French brethren, with whom she could converse; their visits became too frequent, and the abbess frowned; in fact she used herself to hold a little harmless flirtation* with one of them, and she felt jealous of the new nun. With Italian vindictiveness she resolved to punish her, and sentenced her to be confined to her cell for a fortnight upon bread and water. She likewise told Sister Agnes that the instructions of an abbess were positive, to permit no peculiar friendships among the religious; that she perceived a dangerous attachment to have sprung up between her and sister Theresa, and therefore she must interdict them from speaking to each other at all for a month; and after that, from ever conversing longer than five minutes in one day. Sister Agnes bitterly felt this privation, but she sub-

* "A nun flirt, when she couldn't marry!" exclaims Miss——, "Yes, little coquette, did you never exult in the admiration of a poor wight whom you *wouldn't* marry? A nun may be as vain as you."

mitted quietly. When not employed, she used to go to the garden to enjoy its beauties; but a dreadful solitude of heart oppressed her. At these times her father's image haunted her, and her distress was aggravated by her utter ignorance of all the circumstances of his death. Nothing but the fact itself had been vouchsafed her. During her travels her mind had been sufficiently occupied to keep it comparatively calm, but now it preyed upon its own imaginings.

She went to confession, and discovered that father Francesco understood all her feelings. He soothed her; appointed some religious exercises appropriate to her case, and enjoined frequent prayer to the Madonna, and meditation upon her merits. Very gently he spoke of her father, and enjoined her to feel convinced of the salutary nature of the discipline by which she was kept in ignorance of the circumstances of his death. He would not permit her to reproach herself with being the cause of it. The act of devoting herself to a religious life was a right act, he said, and she was not answerable for the consequences. Alas! by what precept of the divine law did he find that act to be right? The truth is, a doubt arose in his mind even while he spoke; but that doubt was smothered, for the *Church* had given forth her infallible decree.

Never had Sister Agnes been so tranquillized by confession. It was not long before she returned.

She poured out all her sorrows, and especially her disappointment in a religious life; her fruitless struggles after holiness; her doubts and her depression. No other penitent had so deeply interested the priest; he saw the reflection of his own sentiments, heard the echo of his own thoughts. 'You are unhappy, my daughter,' he said, 'yet persevere; light will dawn, struggles will terminate. Come often to me, and I will pray the saints for wisdom to guide you.'

But the mode of life in this monastery was incomprehensible to her. Austerity alternated with levity: one day a comedy, the next a penance: one day laughing and talking with priests and monks, and the day following utter silence rigidly enforced. The abbess was lively and warm-hearted, but most capricious and occasionally tyrannical; there were two or three of the nuns whom she seemed to hold in utter abhorrence, and upon these she inflicted all manner of irksome duties, petty vexations, and painful penances. Sister Bonaventura would be confined to her cell for weeks, often upon bread and water, without any one knowing for what reason. The unfortunate religious had once rebelled against the rule of the superioress, and retorted haughtily to her rebuke; and ever afterwards the lady seemed to delight in humbling and mortifying her.

Sister Theresa too was now an object of her dis-

like; and it seemed as if she could not be satisfied till that spirited nun should be prostrate beneath her feet. Sister Theresa ventured one day to reply with Irish vivacity to a most arbitrary requirement. The dark eyes of the little abbess flashed fire; she stamped her small foot upon the ground, and going out of the room, desired the nun to follow her into another, where she commanded her to seat herself on a footstool. Taking her own station in a huge arm-chair, she stared full in the face of the nun for several minutes, then rising, she opened her mouth with her own fingers, and thrusting in her hand, she held it wide open until she was herself fatigued.

'Are you humbled now?' she inquired.

'Not *humbled*, though very uncomfortable,' was the reply.*

'Follow me again, then!'

They went to the refectory, and the other nuns were called. 'Bring scourges,' said the abbess. She was obeyed.

'Now prepare sister Theresa for discipline.'

She was stripped to the waist, compelled to kneel down, and scourged until the raw flesh quivered, and the blood streamed upon the ground. She fainted and was carried to her hard couch, where she lay several days in torture. Sister Agnes once begged

* The Abbess must have been in Devonshire, learning from Miss S—.

to be permitted to see her, but was peremptorily refused. Sister Theresa demanded to be sent to the infirmary; but this prayer was rejected.

Sister Agnes was one day attacked with feverish symptoms, and was immediately ordered to the infirmary. This presented a new scene of wonder to her. Two sisters were confined to bed extremely ill; but others with their nurses were amusing themselves in every possible way. Dominoes and other games were going on; one sister sang, another danced with all manner of grotesque gestures; order, decorum, there was none. A confessor left one of the sick beds and joined in a dance, and a nurse tickled her patient until she nearly expired with laughter.

'You are fortunate, mia sorella,' said a nun to sister Agnes—'very fortunate in being sent hither. This is the place for fun; we do as we please here.'

'Have you no rule, no penance here?'

'No, no, sickness and death are penance enough, and we care not for them; we enjoy ourselves.'

'Is it allowed?'

'Yes, to be sure! The little signora herself dances sometimes when she comes.'*

'Is this an exercise for sickness—a preparation for death?' mentally, inquired sister Agnes.

The infirmarian was skilful—the sister recovered

* See Appendix Q.

speedily, and was not sorry to descend from the extravagances of the infirmary to the despotisms beneath; for signora had never yet been tyrannical with her.

But her time was coming.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SUFFERING, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL.

"They who to believe refuse,
"Clinging to false opinion;
"Bound in the chains they love and choose,
"Descend to hell's dominion.

"Deep in its dark abyss they lie,
"Their good works unavailing;
"Their chains to break in vain they try,
"Their strength and efforts failing,
"Their doom eternal wailing."

Luther's Hymns.

It was one day announced that the spiritual visitor would make a formal examination of the convent on the following day, and the nuns were required to remember their offences.

The Reverend father was received with great pomp; he laid his hands on the heads of the nuns, and had presented to him the report of the abbess. In consequence of this report, he directed that sister Bonaventura should, for seven successive Fridays, undergo discipline at the hands of the community while singing the psalm, 'Miserere mei Deus;' and

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that after the performance of each discipline she should lie prostrate across the threshold of the choir whilst each sister stepped over her into the choir.

Sister Theresa was sentenced to be kept on bread and water for thirty-one days, and to perform the stations on naked knees twice each day during that time; and to receive discipline at the hands of a sister while performing the stations. There were fifteen stations; she was to go to them on naked knees twice each day, and to be flogged at each—Twenty-eight floggings a day for thirty-one days.

Sister Gertrude was ordered to weed in the garden *all day* for three successive days; after this, for other three days to perform stations on naked knees around the cloisters; and then for three days more to be confined to her cell upon bread and water, and to meditate upon the sufferings of our Lord in unison with her own.

Sister Marie, sister Anna, sister Mary Joseph, and sister Cecilia, were directed to observe a spiritual retreat for one fortnight, as follows:—'To rise at the first stroke of the bell after twelve at night, to be down in the choir ten minutes after, having arranged their habit, and made up their bed all in the time. On entering the choir, to prostrate themselves for one quarter of an hour before the blessed eucharist; all to rise up at the sound of the bell, and each to retire to her stall, here to kneel on bare knees for *two hours*

in meditation on the sufferings of Christ. At half-past two, to commence matins and lauds, recite matins, and sing lauds. At four—having said and sung an hour and half—to extinguish lights in the choir, light the lamp before the altar, and let each sister make bare her shoulders; and keeping Christ scourged at the pillar before her mind, let each inflict three lashes over her shoulders, at each verse, slowly recited, of the Miserere. After this discipline, meditation for half-an-hour. At five, recite prime, at half-past five, retire to the chapter-room, where each is to confess to the superioress the sins and omissions of rule since that same hour the morning before, and receive suitable penance to be performed in private. At six, assemble in choir, to recite Angelus; after which, semi-prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament for half-an-hour.

At a quarter to seven, walk, in profound silence and thought, in the cloisters (after nearly seven hours of exhausting and painful exertion!) and at seven, assemble in them to hear mass at the Sanctum; semi-prostrate to the elevation, at which prostrate fully (a welcome relief) and remain so to the communion, at which let each rise, approach and receive, return to her place beside her stall and semi-prostrate till mass is over, immediately after which, let each, at the sound of the bell, proceed in silence to the refectory, where partake of, standing as pilgrims, *a little bread*

sprinkled with ashes, and a cup of water. (Their first meal since midnight.) After collation proceed to choir, reciting one to the other the psalm "Miserere;" in choir, after grace, all kneel in stalls, and remain in meditation till ten o'clock, at which hour recite Tierce, Sex, and None; at twelve, the Angelus; after Angelus, let fall the curtains of the choir, and commence discipline ut supra facta. After discipline, meditation on bare knees and without cushion till two o'clock. At two, proceed one by one to the cloister; all kneeling on naked knees; commence stations, and then proceed on naked knees from station to station without rising, remembering that your Lord and Saviour had no relief from the time he entered Pilate's hall, until he finished his station on Calvary, (Blasphemer! that was to save his people from suffering). At three, dinner; at half-past three, return to choir, and recite vespers and complin; at four, meditation on Christ's passion till five; then adoration of the Blessed Sacrament till half-past five; from this to six, walk in profound meditation the cloisters; at six, assemble to recite the Angelus, after this, meditation till seven; then perform station as above; at eight, return to choir; meditation till nine, at this hour take discipline as before; at half-past nine, recite the rosary of fifteen decads, receive holy water at the hands of the abbess, and retire one by one, in profound silence, each to her bed cell.

This leaves two hours of sleep upon a hard pallet—if the effects of discipline permit sleep.

What is the severest, longest factory labor to this?*

At the termination of the fourteen days, it was necessary to remove three of the nuns to the infirmary. Two recovered so far as to return to their usual occupations, though greatly weakened; the third died from exhaustion in a week. The director visited her at the time of death, absolved and anointed her, then ordered her to be taken out of bed and placed on the dying bier, on ashes and palm-tops, the Reverend tormentor singing, as he afterwards related, 'psalms and prayers for the dying, until she expired, and her happy spirit flew to heaven.'

A report was spread that a saint had died; and that our Lord was seen hanging on the cross over the bier as she expired. The Reverend director declared that he himself saw the apparition.

Three days silence and fasting on one meal per day of bread and water, were enjoined upon the whole community. They observed it most *meritoriously*, and then returned to their former habits.

Sister Agnes gladly availed herself of her confessor's invitation to go to him frequently. Formerly

* Should any one doubt the authenticity of all this, I beg to refer them to the journal of a Visitor of Convents, to be found in the pamphlet entitled "A Plea for the Rights and Liberties of Women Imprisoned for Life, under the power of the priests." By Henry Drummond, Esq. M. P.

confession had been to her a penance in itself. She had shrunk from the examinations of coarse-minded priests, now she felt the magic of sympathy, and deeply appreciated the delicacy and tenderness of father Francesco. She found what she had long lamented after, a kindred spirit, interested in her, a being to whom she could, without dread, unfold her heart, and who comprehended the nature of her griefs and sins. She seemed to have entered upon a new existence; she had something now to enjoy. She poured into his ear every feeling of her soul, and was conscious of its awakening a response in his; for he was toiling on in the same path with herself—the arduous path which they both imagined to lead to heaven. In the solitude of her cell she delighted to ponder the revelations she was to make to him; and to recall the words he had spoken to her. Had she been in *the world*, these feelings might have awakened some fear in her, she might have started at the frequency with which her thoughts reverted to one who had not sought her love; but here, in a convent, where love was forbidden, where marriage was impossible, she dreamed not of danger to her peace of mind; *friendship* was all that occurred to her as existing in her heart for her confessor. And so it might perhaps have continued to be; even the agony of separation might have seemed but the agony of parting with a *friend*; and with her very heart-strings torn and sev-

ered, sister Agnes might still have been ignorant that she had loved.

But there were those in the convent not so simple-minded as she. The keen eye of the abbess penetrated the secret, and she placed a restriction upon the times of her confession. Then she limited her to a quarter of an hour at each time, and began to treat both her and father Francesco with marked disrespect.

Then sister Agnes was subjected to many petty annoyances, which we have not space to enumerate; and finally, one forenoon, the Abbess directly charged her with entertaining a passion for her confessor.

The nun was horrified. In vain she protested her innocence. She was ordered to change her confessor,* and reminded that even particular friendships among the nuns themselves were forbidden.

'For this reason,' said the Abbess, 'I prohibited much intercourse with sister Theresa, as calculated to draw your affections from heaven. How much more am I called upon to interfere when the object of your attachment is a man! I command you to speak to him no more, and to be disciplined daily for fourteen days; spending the first two days in your cell upon bread and water.'

The Abbess had no special attachment; her affections wandered over a thousand vanities.

* See Appendix R.

Stunned, desolated, sister Agnes retired to her cell. The fibres of her heart would not unclasp; to set it free she must break them all. In one moment what agony had seized her! She could not think, she could only feel—feel herself enveloped by a horrible darkness. She threw herself on her knees to pray; but no prayer would come from her parched lips;—despair, utter, intolerable despair had seized her.

At length thought came. She was for ever separated from her only friend. It was too true; he was indeed the light of her existence; and this must be what is called love. Why had she not suspected it before? while it was yet possible to untie her heart-strings from him. Now she knew what *utter* wretchedness meant, for her confessor was entwined around every thought, every feeling of her soul. She feared she had sinned mortally—she who had vowed to be the bride of Christ alone. For the first time she realized the terrible nature of that vow; it had shut her out from joy, from hope for ever; it had consigned her to despair. Others might love and be happy; she had loved, but to be wretched. What was life to her now? A dreary, desolate existence. Her fevered brain conjured up two apparitions, that *vow* and father Francesco confronting one another. And the *curse* came and seemed to grin upon them.

Why had not her woman's heart been plucked out

when the veil of double blackness was cast over her? Why had she not been turned to stone? What now would deprive her of feeling?—bodily suffering; *that* she could bear—all penances—but the mind would remain the same. Madness!—perhaps that would do it; she remembered Miss S. and her visions. ‘Oh, come madness then!’ she exclaimed, ‘No; rather come the grave—the quiet grave, the resting-place for the weary!’

Ah! the grave is not a resting-place for the Papist. Purgatory breaks its repose; thousands of years in fire! Well; she could suffer them if only her *heart* were dead—if only this mental agony would cease. ‘Holy Virgin, take me to thyself,’ she cried, throwing herself on the floor of her cell, and writhing tearlessly there. ‘Holy Virgin! quench this miserable life! No; there is nought holy—Oh! that I could believe there is nothing after death! I must and do believe it!’

The command of the abbess was duly conveyed to father Francesco to abstain in future from all communication with sister Agnes. Astonished and wounded, he demanded the reason, and was informed. He now saw clearly that the interest he had felt in his penitent exceeded that which it was lawful for him to feel, and despondency seized him. He could not banish her image by all his whippings, and fastings, and vigils. He confessed to the bishop, and prayed to be sent

upon the Indian mission. His prayer was granted; and he departed, vowing all manner of austerities to drive from his heart, her, who but for his inhuman vow, might have been the joy of his life, and his companion to heaven, but who was now involuntarily his snare and torment.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TEMPTATION—SUICIDE.

"Do not believe
"Those rigid threats."

"Many shapes
"Of death, and many are the ways that lead,
"To his grim cave, all dismal."

MILTON.

THE morning was dark and cold when sister Theresa entered softly the cell of sister Agnes. A lamp was in her hand; she shut the door, and kneeled by the pallet of the sister.

'Agnes,' she whispered, 'do you believe the tales we hear of saints and purgatory and stuff?'

Agnes started. 'Theresa,' she said, 'that is heresy.'

'No,' replied Theresa, 'heresy is to believe what heretics tell us; I believe nothing, because I am told to believe too much.'

'Oh! hush! hush!'

'No, I won't. I am growing mad, as every one

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does in these places; I have not long to live, and I will speak before I die.'

'H-u-s-h!'

'No, do not interrupt me. You love, Agnes.'

Sister Agnes who was now sitting up in bed, crossed her hands upon her breast, and writhed.

'He loves you also,' proceeded the nun; and if you both knew as I do, that this religion is but a fable, you might be happy.'

'Oh, Theresa, spare me!'

'Your escape is quite possible,' continued Theresa. 'He can come into the convent at all hours; I know the way—flee together, and be happy. Luther married a nun.'

'Our vow! Theresa; do not torment me, my brain is on fire already. Besides, he never asked me to love him. And the vow—and the curse!'

'Pshaw! the vow—the curse: the puff of a foolish maiden's breath—the blast of a wicked priest's! Think you these words are registered in heaven? No, if there be a heaven, there is nothing so inhuman in it. But hear me. I am mad, but madness has made me wise,—loosed the chains of my mind. Popes and abbesses, and priests, are liars all of them; and you and I are *victims*, Agnes—victims of lies. I want to disenthral you, to make you happy before I die. I will confess to-morrow to father Francesco, and tell him to save you; his arm is as strong as his heart;

“flee with him, and be his bride, when I am in the grave.”

“I beseech you, Theresa, by the Virgin, and all the saints, that you speak not to father Francesco. I shall be degraded in his eyes for ever. And *I will not flee*; I will not risk my salvation for earthly happiness.”

“You are a fool!” exclaimed Theresa, passionately.

“Promise me, Theresa, that you will not.”

“I will *not* promise. You are the only person I ever loved, except *one*. I *must* save you.”

“Decidedly, Theresa, you *shall not*. I will never more utter a word to father Francesco. I would not flee with him; and he is too holy to ask it. Promise me that you will not speak, or I shall never be happy again.”

“No, poor child, you never *will* be happy again,” said sister Theresa, altering her tone. “Well, if you prefer your pride to your happiness, be it so; I will do as you wish. Good night.”

She glided from the cell. Agnes would fain have recalled her,—but she was gone.

Sister Agnes sat like one entranced; she pondered the fearful words she had heard, until her own faith gave way, and she questioned whether to inflict woe upon oneself could be acceptable service to the Creator. The Romish dogmas are not calculated to produce love to God; even the Saviour is often represented as im-

placable, until mollified by his Mother. She thought of her sufferings, and her spirit shrank from the God who took pleasure in them. Perhaps after all, she had been believing a delusion; perhaps religion *was* a fable. What if father Francesco thought so too—what if *he* believed the vow to be a nullity? But no; there was that about him which proved his sincerity and his holiness. Yet Sister Theresa was sincere also, sincere in her infidelity. Where lay the truth?

Thus, one moment she disbelieved—the next she prayed. Ah! had she but prayed to God, instead of invoking dumb idols who could not hear! The heart of woman was not made for solitude; she must love or die, or be utterly wretched. True, there are some, who, like sister Agnes, have been stript of every earthly stay—whose beloved ones have fallen by their side like autumn leaves, until their branches have been left bare,—who are happy still. But they are those who lifting up the eye to heaven can say, “Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength.” They are not *empty-hearted*; they have had the desolation of their souls retrieved by the “love of God shed abroad in them by the Holy Ghost;” they have looked

upon One "fairer than the children of men, even altogether lovely;" and the deep yearning of their spirit has been satisfied with *heavenly* sympathy—with *heavenly* communion. True, it is for this purpose, Rome pretends that she severs the heart from earthly love; but she begins at the wrong end. The heart may be very desolate and yet never turn to heaven; God's way is to establish Himself as Lord, and then the idols of the soul fall before his presence.

Sister Agnes knew not God as he is revealed in his word; she had no consolation when bereft of all human support.

The nuns assembled in the refectory for dinner, and as they ate, a Popish legend was, as usual, read to them. Sister Theresa ate little, and seemed lost in thought. When the meal was ended and the nuns arose to leave the table, she addressed the Abbess, and requested that all would remain a few minutes, then drawing herself up erect and haughtily, she said, 'Listen, Signora, I came hither to seek peace and holiness; I found violence and crime. I learned that the religious are hypocrites, that there is no God, no purgatory, no hell, no hereafter. You have tormented me till I am weary of life. I will be your prisoner no longer. I *demand* liberty.'

'And I demand obedience,' said the Abbess.

'I know,' continued Theresa, 'that I am your captive; we are barred and bolted into our dungeon,—

there is none to hear our cry for liberty—but—' and here she turned to sister Agnes—'death breaks bolts. This is my deliverer,' she added, seizing a knife and plunging it into her bosom. The blood spouted from the wound, and she fell. A simultaneous shriek burst from the nuns, some of whom rushed to stanch the wound. It was in vain, she had fainted; sister Agnes supported her head while water was poured on her face, and a napkin closely pressed upon her breast. But in a quarter of an hour she had ceased to exist.

Sister Theresa was a suicide; no mass was said, no candles were burned for her. Silently they laid her in unconsecrated ground as they would have laid a dog; and then the nuns were harangued upon her crime, *by an infidel and immoral priest*. They were exhorted to go to confession, to fast and pray; and a novena was appointed to clear the convent of the crime committed within its walls.

After this sister Agnes had a fever, a protracted fever. Her patience and submission endeared her to the infirmarian and nurses; and after her recovery, in the sadness of her broken spirit, she was so obedient and tractable, that she recovered the favour of the Abbess, and was sometimes even trusted to attend the novices in their garden walks. She was quite passive, because her heart was broken, and she had neither hope nor wish. In fact, she was sinking into

the grave; an occasional hollow cough, and a hectic spot upon her pale cheek unmistakeably told this tale. But sister Agnes was not destined to linger away in consumption; her fate approached more rapidly.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A NEW VICTIM.

"Whose highest praise is, that they live in vain."

COWPER.

THE grey light of a spring morning dawned on the convent of Santa Helena, as it stood, with the pine-clothed Appenines behind, and the silver Aristo in front, the very model of serenity and holiness. The beauty and seclusion of the place were enough to enamour one of convent-life—at least, so thought a bright-eyed girl who, with an attendant, had wandered from a villa at some distance, to listen to the matin music swelling triumphantly, and dying in soft cadence over the reaches of the river. With veil, and missal, and rosary, the nuns had issued from their cells, and walked in solemn procession to the chapel—no sound but that of their sandaled feet disturbing the silence of the cloisters as they passed. The light, cold and grey without, streamed in through the noble oriel in many-tinted radiance, as the sisters

took their places; and when the service commenced, the scene to a stranger would have been imposing. The magnificent architecture, the gorgeous altar-piece—the work of Titian—the images of saints, the dark, kneeling figures of the sisters, their sudden rising, and the bursting forth of the rich peal of music, formed a spell not easy to be resisted by the young and enthusiastic. Yet to many of the nuns themselves this daily routine was wearisome and monotonous; and this morning many thoughts were wandering to something which was to break the tedious dulness of their existence—a gorgeous ceremonial awaiting them.

Matins finished, a few lingered behind in the chapel, telling their beads; some went to the garden to gather flowers, and others proceeded to the confection-room to finish the preparation of some of those beautiful preserves for which Italian convents are remarkable, and which, by the bye, are like the lives of their makers, bright and tempting to the eye, but insipid in their cloying sweetness to the taste. The glittering frost-work sparkled upon the almost transparent fruits, and the triumph of their art was complete.

Our English nun, with one or two companions, walked slowly to the garden.

‘We are allowed to speak this morning,’ said she. ‘How I love those white roses, and orange-flowers, and that blue peaceful sky, and the high tops of those

lonely hills! Oh, Ursula! if that mountain of a wall were transparent, and we might look upon the river and the trees—how happy we should be! Do you never wish to get outside, to walk at large, and gather primroses in the woods?’

‘Primroses in the woods!’ replied Ursula; ‘I thought nothing was there but savage men and beasts of prey. All is danger outside, Agnes; bless the Virgin for those four walls that keep out evil things.’

‘Hark you,’ said Agnes, ‘beside my father’s house there was a glen’—

‘What is a glen?’

‘Ah! poor girl were you never in a glen?’

‘No; is it like the cloisters?’

‘No, Ursula; fancy this stream dashing over wild rocks almost as high as those walls; then running along sparkling, laughing’—

‘The *stream* laughing, Agnes?’

‘Why yes; looking merry and light-hearted; and green banks beside it, with primroses peeping up in tufts among the moss, and tall trees overhead arching—yes, like the cloisters; but green and living, and stirred by the wind and birds flitting about the branches. Then fancy yourself a merry child singing, and your mother sitting on a grey stone, and’—Agnes burst into tears.

‘Foolish child!’ said Ursula, drawing away the hands in which the face was buried, and wiping her

tears, 'who would wish to be in a glen, when the very thought of one makes you weep? I don't weep, Agnes, I never weep.'

Agnes looked at the marble countenance, so passionless, so vacant, yet so sad; true it was that no tears could fall from those quiet eyes, but no smile could play upon that rigid mouth; and from the midst of her grief, Agnes pitied Ursula, because she never wept.

'Poor child!' said Ursula, 'you have sorrow, you have lost something. I was bred here, brought up here; I have no sorrow, I never weep, I have lost nothing.' The melancholy tone of the sister betrayed a *vacant* heart.

'What flowers have you gathered?' cried the sharp voice of sister Genevieve. 'Are there sufficient for the chapel yet? Holy Virgin! what have you been doing? What will mother say to your idleness?' Take care that you don't get two dozen paternosters for your gossiping. My basket is full of superb things, and yours are both empty. Ah! chatter till breakfast, and get a fast-day for your pains.' So saying, she darted from the garden.

'We must work in earnest now,' said Ursula; 'or sister Genevieve will tell some tale to gain us penance.'

'I once supposed that all was love in a convent,' said Agnes, as she hastily dropped flowers into her basket.

'So it would be, if people were not malicious,' replied Ursula. 'We should all love each other—at least we should not hate, if it were not for a few wicked sisters, who keep the rest in a broil. For me, I seldom trouble myself with their broils; I take no interest in them.'

'Convents are not like the pictures drawn of them for the world,' said Agnes. 'But here are some lovely blossoms for the hair of the bride. She will have no hair to-morrow poor thing!'

'A deliverance! How can girls be troubled dressing hair?' inquired Monica.

'It is a trouble when there is no dear father to twist his fingers through one's ringlets,' sighed Agnes. 'Once it gave me no trouble to dress my hair.'

'I never knew a father,' said Ursula, 'so I am not sorrowful.'

'I wonder if you were ever glad?' thought Agnes; and then she said, 'See, Ursula, this little stream escapes under the wall, and flows into the sea. I will put this white rose upon its bosom; it will glide out, and then it will be free. There, go; happy rose!'

'To be tossed and torn, and drowned in the sea, beyond the peaceful wall,' observed Ursula quietly.

'No; sisters mine!' cried the sharp voice of Genevieve, who had returned; 'to be caught in the iron bars, and die there, like a nun trying to escape. Even a rose cannot get through the iron grating at

the foot of the wall. Holy Virgin! if the hole were not grated, some red-faced monk might get in, or some white-faced nun might get out. So neither you nor your rose will find liberty I assure you, miladi Agnes, however you may try.'

The nuns assembled in silence to their morning meal of black bread and grapes and water, during which not a word was spoken. When they had left the refectory—'You are to dress my hair, dear Agnes,' said a young novice, who was that day to take the veil, 'dress it like an English lady's.'

Agnes threw her arms round the neck of the love-girl; and as she kissed her, a tear fell upon her bosom, but one word of pity she dared not speak.

'Have you not been happy since you became the bride of heaven?' inquired the novice.

'Very happy,' was the reply, the words of which were contradicted by the tone.

'The world is so hollow!' said the novice. 'My father was the only being that loved me, and he is dead. My brother would have married me to an old count, whom I hated. I could not go to the opera, or to a ball, but that man was there. He whom I *could* have loved, but never did, became a rebel, and was shot.' Here she grew pale and shuddered, but ran on, 'What could I do but flee? Here I shall be at peace. The spectacles among these old columns are finer than those in the halls of Florence; the

music equals the opera. And you will love me, Agnes;—it is love I want. Yes;—I shall be happy.'

Another silent kiss strongly pressed upon the white shoulder; and another burning tear were the reply of the nun.

'Why weep, Agnes?—is it for joy?'

'Yes.'

'I wish I might tell you my name, my real name—my father's name; and the name of our villa—our beautiful villa up among the—the—I must not say what, or you will guess. Now dress me beautifully. Yes; the folds of the veil are perfect—pity it must never be worn again. Do you know I cannot quite like that—no, I must not say *dismal* dress—it would need a Madonna to become it. Move that ringlet half a hair's breadth. I shall have no hair to-morrow, ha! Pray don't look at my bald head—what *will* the gazing people think of it? Now the crown,—the bridal crown,—I knew your own dear hands would make it perfection—so light—so graceful—lovely roses—lovely orange-blossom!'

'*Must* I put on all those jewels? They could be given to the convent without my wearing them all to spoil me. The diamonds and pearls will do, but not those gaudy rubies, pray!'

'They must all be on, that it may be seen how rich a maid devotes herself to the Virgin.'

'Then fold them in my hair, and they will drop out

when it is cut off. Ah! my father loved these poor ringlets! Why must a nun be without hair?' 'She must part with all the vanities of the world, and that is one of them.'

'Yet God put it on our heads; but that was to try our self-denial in cutting it off. Don't you think so?'

'Yes.'

'Just as he made the world so beautiful, that we might have the greater merit in forsaking it.'

'Yes; but you found it hollow as well as beautiful.'

'True; but it was the men and women I found hollow; the world itself is beautiful, only we cannot have the one without the other.'

The mouth of Agnes was strongly compressed, and her countenance like that of one who by strong effort, is suppressing almost irresistible emotion.

Here Genevieve entered the apartment. 'You will sleep in a cell to-night, my pretty bride,' said she. 'I have put the finest ashes in the world into your coffin, and the skull which is to smile upon you as a lover for ever, has the most exquisite grin you can behold upon its jaws, which have only one front tooth out of them. There are a plenty of knots in your scourge. Here is your crucifix—your bosom-friend, love, what think you of it?'

It had sharp edges to wound the breast.

'I will welcome it when I have sinned,' said the novice.

'A glorious thing is a nun's trousseau,' cried Genevieve, with an expression of bitter irony. 'Why, you look as sentimental as if your betrothed were at your side. Imagine that he is, and that will do;—a tall, dark-eyed youth in uniform, with a golden-hilted sword by his side.'

A half-suppressed shriek burst from the lips of the bride.

'Genevieve,' said Agnes in a commanding tone, 'leave the room, and go to your own work, or the abbess shall know of this.'

'And of your tears and sighs for liberty, miladi,' answered the tormentor, as she walked away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A DISCOVERY.

"Prophetess! awake and say,
"What virgins these in speechless wo,
"That bend to earth their solemn brow?"

GRAY.

HAVING already described the ceremony of taking the veil, we shall not repeat the description here, although in this land of pageants it was far more imposing than in Ireland. All that magnificent architecture, exquisite music, gorgeous costume, and scenic arrangement could do, was done to complete the spell which a sensuous devotion casts around its votaries. The novice was not insensible to the admiration excited by her youth, beauty, and elegance as she kneeled gracefully before the cardinal vicar; she felt herself to be the centre of all the pageantry, and it was this, rather than a sense of the consequences of the step she was taking, which rendered her sweetly-modulated voice tremulous in its responses.

A gay company had collected from the villages

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and villas among the hills; the spectators were numerous, and among them stood an English gentleman with two or three friends. He was on a visit to Count Guarducci; and while some of the young men, who were at the same time guests of the Count, were with their host enjoying themselves at a boar-hunt, Colonel Hayward—for it was he—the uncle of sister Agnes—had wandered to the monastery, to be present at the more sober religious ceremonial.

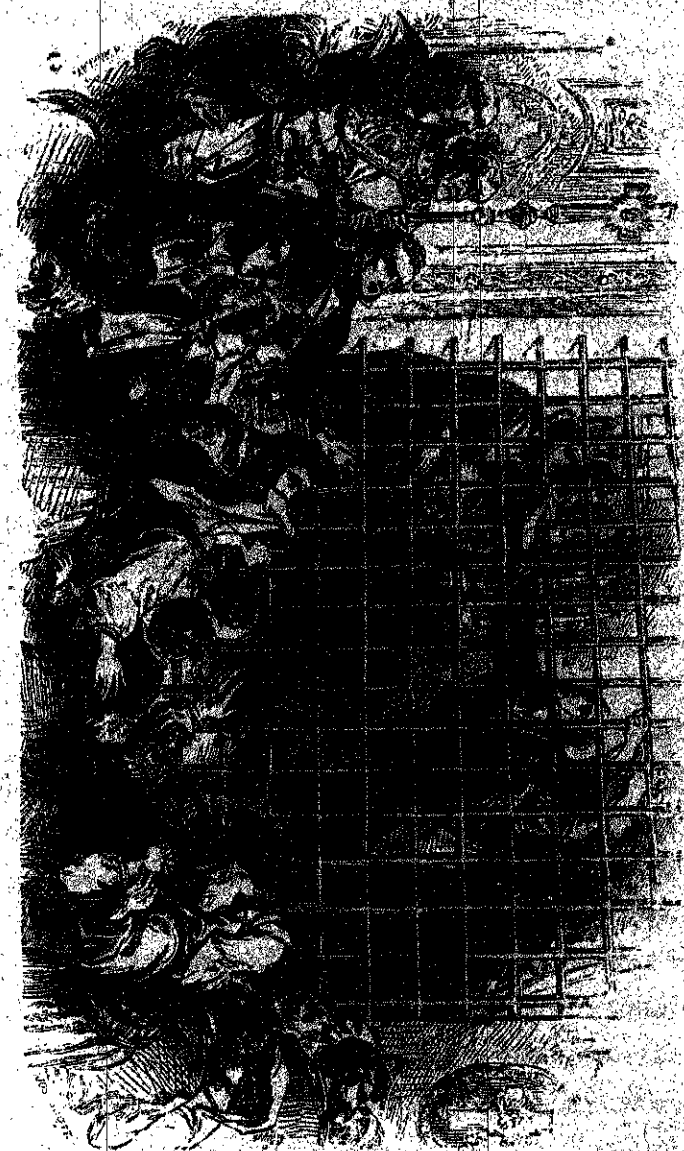
The novice, after performing her part in the chapel, was, amidst the swell of music, conducted to the door; and when she re-appeared behind the gilded grating of the nun's enclosure, the Colonel stationed himself so as to obtain a full view of all that passed within. His eye wandered from the kneeling novice in her bridal dress, to the retreating rows of dark-robed nuns. He marked their dull, faded countenances, and thought how soon the bright young girl would be a sad, breathing statue, like them. The indignant pity of the English soldier was stirred, and deeply musing, he moved not from the spot, even when the curtain was drawn down for the disrobing of the victim. It was raised, and she was seen kneeling to have a black pall thrown over her, and to have the burial service performed. For a while he gazed on the pall, and thought of the "buried alive" beneath it; but his eye was attracted by the figure of a youthful nun who, with her lighted taper, stood near the

grating. He fancied that her eye was fixed upon him, and as he scrutinized her countenance, so sad, yet so sweet, a strange feeling passed over his heart, and his eyes became riveted upon her.

Reader, have you ever seen, in the features of an unknown person, something that touched a chord in your spirit for which you could not account? You could not detect a resemblance to any one you loved, but a thrill as of some old affection passed through your inmost soul, and you could not but gaze. So felt Colonel Hayward; so was he attracted to watch the nun, while she stood immoveable as a statue, with her face turned towards him. He became almost unconscious of the service, and forgetful of his sympathy with the heroine of the day.

At length the loud burst of the hallelujah chorus awakened him from his trance. All was over, and the new recluse was about to be lost to the world for ever. A basket of fresh flowers was handed to her, and she advanced to the grating to distribute them to the bystanders. Colonel Hayward pressed forward among the rest, to receive a floweret from the fair but trembling hand; but, when he approached the grating, the nun he had been watching rushed forward to it; throwing up her arms, and dashing them against the bars, she screamed wildly, 'Uncle, save me!' In vain she clung to the grating; in a moment she was drawn back, and the curtain fell;

She screamed wildly, 'Uncle, save me.'



and a confused noise issued from the now invisible chapel.

'My niece!' exclaimed the Colonel, at once recognizing the voice; and, turning to a priest, he said, 'I wish, sir, to speak with that young lady.'

With the rapidity of Italian impulse, the scene had changed from solemnity to strange excitement. The priest addressed, stepped forward, and replied,

'I am sorry, sir, that gentlemen are not permitted to speak with the sisters.'

'What!' exclaimed the Colonel, 'An uncle not permitted to speak with his niece. I *demand*,' he added, impetuously, striking the grating with his cane; 'I *demand* to see my niece.'

'It is impossible, sir, that a niece of yours can be in this convent.'

'What, then, is the name of the young lady who called me "Uncle?"'

'I cannot tell.'

'I *insist* upon knowing.'

'If I were to do right, sir, I should give you into custody, as the cause of uproar in a religious assembly.'

'I am an Englishman,' said the Colonel, folding his arms, and planting one foot forward.

The priest smiled contemptuously. 'No one,' he said, 'has any right to profane a sacred place; but as your mind appears to be really disturbed, perhaps

an interview with the abbess might relieve you.' So saying, he retired, and in a little while the curtain was again raised, and the abbess stood before the grating—the rest of the nuns were gone.

'Will you oblige me, madam,' said the Colonel, by a strong effort composing himself; 'will you oblige me by mentioning the name of the young lady who called me "Uncle?"'

'Sister Agnes!' replied the abbess. 'She is the daughter of an English gentleman, long resident in Florence, and being of unsound mind, was placed under my protection.'

The abbess bowed, and once more the curtain fell; the priest re-appeared, and requested the Colonel to leave the church.

'If I have been mistaken,' said Colonel Hayward, an interview would remove my misapprehension.'

'The lady fainted, sir,' said the priest; 'and from her excitability, an interview might be fatal.'

'I am not satisfied, sir, I must apply to the proper authorities for power to demand an interview.'

The priest replied haughtily, 'No earthly power has authority within this sacred place. The privacy of the holy nun is not to be broken in upon. Thank God we are under the *protection of law*! We cannot be insulted with impunity.'

Two shirri now advanced, and, boiling with rage, the Englishman was compelled to retire.

In feverish impatience he returned to the villa, where he was a visitor to Count Guorducci; but the whole party, including his own son, were absent, the excitement of a boar-hunt having been preferred by them to the solemnity of a religious ceremony. Colonel Hayward paced impetuously about the lawn, then summoning an old and tried domestic, he related the circumstance. Old Carlo crossed himself. 'If it be she,' he said, 'she might as well be in the hands of the devil, as in those of the abbess and the priests. You will never see her more.'

'Is there *no* justice in Italy?'

'Holy Virgin, no!—nor law neither, since the Jesuits got the upper hand. Tell me where they do not rule, from the Sovereign's palace to the peasant's hut, and I will tell you where to find justice. No, no! *Mia cara Italia*! she is priest-ridden—oppressed to death.'

'But a British subject?'

'In a convent is a subject of the priests. Ah! my brother's only daughter!—a monk enticed her in—we never saw her more.'

'She was not British.'

'All the same. They will tell you she is dead, or make her write letters to say she does not wish to get out. You will as soon see her out of purgatory.'

'A good idea! Cannot we buy her out?—Money brings out of purgatory.'

'What was her dowry?'

'£80,000.'

'By the staff of Dominio! it is hopeless. Even though they have clutched the money, would they set her at liberty to tell how?'

Sadly and wearily the hours passed till the hunting party returned. Excitement having given way to depression, Colonel Hayward sat moodily revolving plans for the liberation of his niece; for such he believed the youthful nun to be. An appeal to the British ambassador, of course, was one;—another, personally to the government at home; but then he reflected that he had no *facts*, no legal evidence to rest upon; and he knew the difficulty of eliciting *truth* from Popish priests. At length the tramp of horses announced the return of the party. A boar's head was borne in triumph in front; voices of merriment fell jarringly upon the ear of the Colonel; and amidst the bustle of dismounting, he impatiently drew aside his son and his host, after the latter had given a few requisite orders to his maggiordomo.

Count Guarducci thought it possible that the tale of the monk might be correct, at least it would be impossible, he said, to disprove it.

'Could they not be forced to produce the nun?' the Colonel asked.

There was no means by which that could be effected, was the substance of the Italian's reply. What

ever might be transacted within the walls of a convent, it could not transpire; the system of concealment was so perfect. Vague rumors alone ever reached the public. The most solemn oaths and the most fearful punishments stood in the way of disclosure. The sisters were forbidden to communicate to each other even their real names; and once a year only, before the grating of a small window, and under the surveillance of the abbess were those who needed no secrecy, permitted for a few minutes to see their relatives. The institutions were sanctioned, and all their laws enforced by the government; and if, as could scarcely happen, a nun made her escape, she was hunted down by the police like a thief or a murderess; so that when once, a year or two ago, in Rome, an abbess herself darted through the open door, she rushed to the Tiber, and plunging in, was drowned—Her only liberty was liberty to die.*

Taking down a vellum-covered book, he continued, 'Listen to the curse pronounced upon a nun who shall attempt, and upon those who shall assist her to escape.' He then read the curse we have recorded as part of the ceremony of taking the veil.

'Horrible!' said the Colonel. 'Wretches!' he muttered, stamping on the ground with his foot.

* See Appendix S.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RESCUE CONTEMPLATED.

"O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!"—*Macbeth*.

AT night, Edward Hayward went to his father's room, where he found the Colonel, not undressing, but sitting gloomily at his toilette, resting his head upon his hand.

As his son entered he exclaimed, 'It is no wonder that this country is tormented with insurrections, when justice is unknown! Then rising, and stamping on the floor, he cried, 'I will move heaven and earth till I discover that girl! Why have we an embassy to those cursed Italian courts, if not to protect British subjects? Order the carriage; I will start for Florence this night.'

'But what will you *do*, sir?' inquired the young man.

'Simply demand of the ambassador to procure me an interview with this young woman, whom I believe to be my niece.'

'I have been talking with sagacious old Carlo

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about it,' said Edward, 'and he has convinced me of the hopelessness of any attempt to see her, if she be really my cousin. The Tuscan government will not interfere; you cannot make out a case sufficient to induce our own to move; and the least prospect of exposure would be the signal for her death.'

'A guerdon for old red-faced Oliver!' cried the Colonel. 'There was some spirit in those puritans after all. He would have blown the convent to atoms, as he threatened to treat the castle of St. Angelo for a prisoner's release. The pusillanimity of these days robs one of his entire stock of patience.'

'We are afraid of the Jesuits, my dear sir,' said the young man, with an expression of bitter sarcasm. 'The premier may have one for a lackey, and the Queen another for a lady of the bedchamber; who knows what might happen were we to offend them? But I have been with them learning intrigue; and since fair means are unavailing, I vow to bring my cousin out of their hands by foul.'

'What *do* you propose?' inquired the Colonel.

'Only a small bit of romance, to carry off a pretty young nun, in spite of their bolts and bars.'

'Saint Mercury himself, and the forty thieves help you!' cried the Colonel, suddenly laughing. 'That is a respectable youngster's prank. But boy, how do you mean to discover the lady—will you storm the convent?'

'Give me a few of the young fellows of your regiment, and I would not hesitate. But I will try a stratagem first.'

'What?'

'Years ago you used to delight in making us sing the Tyrolese Hymn together. Now I will go round the convent to-night, whistling the air. She will sleep but little after what has occurred, and if she hear it, she will connect it with the circumstance of the morning. Trust a girl's wits for conveying to me the knowledge of her situation.'

'By Jove!' cried the Colonel, 'you will be good for something in the world yet. But there's danger, boy, in your plan, both to yourself and to her.'

'As to myself,' said Edward with a contemptuous smile, laying his hand upon a pocket pistol, 'This good friend against any lazy monk. For her, they can but give her a little penance for echoing a vagabond's whistle.'

'This is a land of suspicion and dungeons, however,' said the Colonel. 'We must not compromise our host.'

'No; I mean to take leave of him to-night, by note, telling him I am going suddenly to England, which of course Mary and I will do as soon as she is released. He will suppose I mean to open up negotiations with government at home; and meanwhile I will go to my old acquaintance of the boar-hunt, telling

him I am on an affair where a signora is concerned. This is enough for an Italian. I have another wild comrade,' he added, laughing, 'who fears neither Pope nor Devil; on his assistance I can rely.'

'The Haywards were never famed for prudence,' said the Colonel; 'but you will need some for this adventure.'

'I have inhaled Jesuitism in this air. *They* are the most prudent men alive.'

'Confusion on their prudence!' muttered his father.

'Not on mine, though! My head against the general's that I save my cousin!'

'Ned, your spirits are carrying you away; you will require caution rather than impetuosity.'

'Good night, father. Go to bed and sleep, if you please; don't come prowling to hear my serenade, or you will spoil all.'

'Don't serenade yourself into one of those cursed Tuscan dungeons,' said the colonel.

'If I do, go to the ambassador then.'

'Scamp!' cried the colonel, laughing. 'English blood against Popish tricks at any time!'

Edward was in the act of leaving the room when the colonel suddenly asked, 'Ned, what if you should get out some girl who is not your cousin?'

'I thought you were sure of her, sir,' replied the young man. 'No one but she will understand, and

reply to my serenade. At all events, no one will come out who does not wish to escape—so *some* good must be done.'

'Take your own way,' said the colonel.

CHAPTER XL.

CATASTROPHE.

"Say
 "That death be not one stroke, as I supposed,
 "Bereaving sense, but endless misery, *
 "From this day onward, which I feel begun."

MILTON.

EQUIPPED as a young peasant, soon after midnight, Edward set forth upon his adventure.

There was a faint moonlight, sufficient to discover any danger, but not enough to make him conspicuous. On arriving at the convent, he proceeded first to examine the ground, which was already pretty familiar to him. He had not long been so employed, when the baying of a watch-dog brought the porter to the door.

'Silen-zio!' said Edward in a low voice.

'Who goes there?' inquired the man, levelling a pistol.

'Fra Francisco,' said Edward, in the same low tone, selecting at random a name which he had heard

as belonging to a friar of the neighboring monastery, and with lifted finger drawing near.

The man quietly put down the pistol. 'By all the saints! what do you here?' he whispered.

'Fun; don't spoil it,' said Edward also in a whisper, which served the double purpose of concealing his foreign accent,—although he spoke Italian admirably,—and preventing disturbance. 'Quiet the dog,' he added, slipping money into his hand; 'more afterwards if discreet.'

'No mischief, though?' inquired the man hesitatingly.

'None in the world!'

'Sister Genevieve?'

'Silen-zio!'

The man went in, and shut the door, and the baying of the dog ceased.

'What is it?' asked a boy who lived with him.

'The ghost of the old abbot.'

'I am glad I did not stir; I was half inclined to peep over your shoulder. How did he look?'

'His nose was redder than ever with the fire of purgatory, and a flame came out of each eye.'

'Holy Virgin! save us,' said the boy crossing himself, 'I will never look out at night again.'

'Better not,' replied the porter.

Edward completed his survey, selected the points for his music, and waited till he supposed that the

abbess, if the dog had aroused her, might be asleep again. Mary, he rightly judged, would spend a wakeful night. He little thought that for her indiscretion of the morning, she was now enduring one of those horrible penances not uncommon in nunneries,—that she was passing the night alone in a burial vault.

He concealed himself a little distance from some grated windows, and whistled low, but distinctly, the well-known air of the Tyrolese Hymn. 'An angel watches to-night,' said an enthusiastic novice to herself, as she finished a vigil which she had vowed. My vow is accepted, and a miracle attests it. Hark! the music is nearer! On her knees before a portrait of the Virgin, with clasped hands, and uplifted eyes, which strained through the dubious glimmer, she listened to the strain, and her rapt imagination converted it into an angelic song. The tale was told next morning in the convent, and many listeners were edified thereby.

But to Edward there was no response. He tried another position, and still another, but in vain. Once a light was struck in a cell. His heart beat violently, and he repeated the air, but when he ceased all was silent. He was about to retreat in despair, when, as a forlorn hope, he took up a station near the chapel, and once more went over the hymn. Before it was finished he thought he heard a low female voice tremulously joining him. He followed the sound, and

then repeated a bar or two. They were distinctly echoed, and now the direction of the response was more clearly indicated. Another bar, and another repetition of it, and he was sure whence the sound came. A simple echo it was not; it was a female voice. But the situation was passing strange. 'Mary!' he said, softly.

'Here, underground, look for a grating at the foot of the wall.'

At length, in unutterable excitement kneeling down, he spoke through the bars of a low iron grate, and was answered from within. The strange tale was told, she was doing penance for her exclamation of the morning, she said. She had cherished a faint hope of being sought for, but knew that to inquire at the convent would be hopeless; and she had given way to despair, when the faint sound of the distant hymn struck her ear. She recognised the air, and with beating heart guessed the musician and his errand; but it died away, and despair returned. She heard it again, and tried to shout; but so great was her agitation that the sound passed from her lips, like the cry of a dream. But when she found the attempt continued, hope gave her strength, and she repeated the air with her voice.

'Did you say you were to be three days and three nights here?' inquired Edward.

'Yes.'

'Thanks to their barbarity! how easy they make your deliverance. I knew not what implements I should need. I will go to the nearest hamlet and bring tools for forcing those bars—a file, a crow-bar, a—'

'How far off is the hamlet?'

'Three miles.'

'Then you could not possibly effect my escape before daybreak, and to make a partial opening would excite suspicion, and ensure my death.'

'Death! they dare not touch you!'

'Life is nothing here. But speak low.'

'By all the popes in purgatory! Mary, if they touch a hair of your head, I will blow the convent to atoms;' muttered the young man, in almost ungovernable fury.

'My life depends upon your discretion,' said the poor girl, trembling. 'Go, I beseech you.'

'Let me touch your hand, Mary.'

The trembling, damp, cold fingers, were thrust through the interstices of the grate; he threw himself on the ground and kissed them, while a burning tear fell upon them.

'It is enough to make one mad to leave you here,' said he.

'Dear Edward, it is long since I heard a voice of kindness,' said she, 'but oh! be prudent. Go; stay not a moment longer. People prowl about here at all hours. Farewell.'

She turned from the grating as he arose, and sitting down on the floor of the vault, she buried her head in her serge gown, and wept long and violently, whether from sorrow or from joy she would have been unable to tell. At length a strong ray of hope darted into her breast, and her heart beat high. To-morrow night she might be free. She started up and stood erect; her head struck against a low arch; but she felt no pain. A wild, delirious joy took possession of her, and she paced backwards and forwards in her excitement. Reptiles were crawling on the floor, and her naked feet trode upon them; a sepulchral, phosphoric light gleamed from a corpse; an odour inexpressibly horrible filled the place; but she saw not, nor felt what was around her. One idea possessed her, and that idea was liberty.

But how was her liberation to be achieved—what dangers would there not be in its accomplishment? Dangers to herself she heeded not; death would be welcome to her, if her dream of liberty should fail. She could not, she would not live if it should; for death was but a sleep, a negation—surely. At least religionists, who tell the contrary, are hypocrites or fools.

But Edward, generous Edward, that he should risk his life for her—oh! why had she permitted it?—that he should be entrapped by a merciless monk, or poignarded by a ruffian, or seized by the barbarian

police!—such thoughts were agony. Selfish that she had been to encourage him—oh! that he could now hear her warning cry! Poor Mary knew of no refuge from anxiety and fear. Of the falsity of the popish faith, she had been thoroughly convinced—of the inability of saints and the virgin to help; and God she had forgotten. She had no rock on which to lean; no pillow on which to rest her weary head; no ear into which to pour her sorrowful tale;—no arm outstretched to help her: her mind preyed upon itself: she was tossed on a tempestuous sea of mingled hope, anxiety, and dread; her blood boiled in her veins, and before morning brain-fever had commenced.

Edward had not passed round the convent unseen; nor had his music been unheard. The cell in which a light had been struck was that of the abbess. She had had him watched to the grating, and the spy left only after ascertaining that he had departed without attempting the liberation of the prisoner.

Before dawn the key was turned in the iron-door. It creaked, and two men entered, their faces covered with crape, and lanterns in their hands. Mary shrieked, and fled to a corner of the vault, where she crouched on the ground, and turning away her head, held up her hands as if to defend it. The men silently advanced, and seizing her arms, dragged her out of the vault. The delirious girl shrieked wildly,

so that the arches rang; but one of the savages gagged her mouth. She struggled, but her struggles were fruitless; firm and strong arms were around her. She was taken into a low dark room, where, upon a table, a single lamp was burning, and beside it sat the abbess, and the abbot of the neighbouring monastery, while a few nuns stood around them.

She was placed before them, and the gag was removed. 'Hold it in readiness, lest it should be again required,' said the abbess.

Despair now seized the nun, and it gave her strength. Hope had fled; she saw her doom, and summoned courage to meet it,—such courage as madness gives. She stood erect and haughtily. The abbess spoke. 'You are accused,' said she, 'in the first place, of disturbing profanely a holy solemnity, and secondly, of having wickedly, and in contravention of your solemn vows, concocted, in connection with another person, a plan for your escape from this religious seclusion. Have you any reply to make?'

'I object to the charge of profanity,' said the nun, 'because the ceremony was not religious but profane, and to disturb it was not profane, but religious; and she laughed hysterically.

The abbot and abbess looked wonderingly at each other, but the abbot in another second nodded knowingly; he saw that the girl was mad, and that was

nothing new, after a penance of night-watching in the burial-vault.

'Do you plead guilty of conspiring to escape?' asked the abbess.

'Innocent, innocent—it were an innocent act from a guilty place.'

'You see that instrument of torture,' said the abbot.

'I defy you;' said the nun.

'You are required,' pursued the abbot, 'to disclose the name of the man with whom you conspired to escape.'

'The abbot of the monastery of Santa Helena,' replied the sister. The attendant nuns started and smiled.

'By St. Benedict! you shall speak sense, or I will tear you limb from limb,' cried the abbot, furiously.

'Begin then,' said the victim, drawing herself up into a commanding attitude, and stretching out her arm towards him, 'Begin, I long for the operation; but know that every limb of this mangled body shall dance nightly before your eyes, awake or asleep, from sunset to sunrise; and my blood, and the blood of Theresa, and the blood of Marie, shall stain with a crimson hue every object you look upon. 'Abbot,' she continued, her form dilating, her eyes sparkling, and her tones deepening, 'Abbot, I summon you, with

"Stretching out her arm towards him."

my dying breath, to meet me to-morrow in the heart of purgatory. A commandment glares from the fiery walls there—"Thou shalt do no murder!"

'Peace! girl;' cried the abbess, 'or you shall be scourged to death. Answer the questions put to you.' She then read, 'Is it a guest of Count Guarducci who is your accomplice?'

'I know not Count Guarducci.'

'You know his guest?'

'I never heard his name.'

'Write,' said the abbot, to the clerk, 'that this young person declares her fellow conspirator to be a revolutionary guest of Count Guarducci.'

'And write,' retorted the nun, 'that this abbot reads daily from the chapel wall, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."'

'Does the Count give assistance as well as counsel?' was the next query.

'I know of neither. But *there*, abbot,' pointing to his head, 'there is assistance for you! There are fingers of a man's hand beside your head—they write in a circlet like a glory, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Ha! abbot; you are canonized!' she cried, laughing once more, and pointing still, 'A nimbus! a nimbus! but,' she added lowering her voice, and bending towards the abbess—'but—it was a *second* who did it—I saw his red-hot finger!'

The abbot instinctively looked up, and drew his head aside.

'Ha! he sees it!' cried the nun, elevating her finger again. 'He is modest; he shrinks from glory! Does it burn?'

The abbot gnashed his teeth with rage; and the more so as the sisters huddled close together, looking first at the wild form and dilated eyes of the maniac, and then at his own head with an expression of mingled fear and wonder; while amidst the gloom of the place, the solitary lamp threw a cadaverous hue over every countenance, whether really blanched or not.

'Murder me, abbot,' said the nun, in a deep sepulchral voice—'Murder me, and come to me to-morrow in purgatory. Here is your summons!' she exclaimed, suddenly snatching from the clerk the paper on which he had written, and flinging it across the table.

'Where is the gag—are the men bewildered?' exclaimed the abbess, and in another second the gag was thrust into her mouth.

'Bind her!' added the abbot. Gagged and bound, she was thrown flat on the floor.

'Fire to her feet;' said the merciless judge.

A pan of red-hot coals was put to her naked feet.*

* See Appendix T.

The horrible torture took effect; but it defeated the malice of her tormentors. Mad already, the agony rendered her furious, and her mouth distended, the desperation of her fruitless struggling choked her. Her face became black; her convulsive movements ceased; sister Agnes was dead.

'There is no more resistance,' said the strong man who had been holding her down.

The judge approached, stooped down, and examined the body, while the sisters held their breath.

'The Virgin has avenged herself,' said the hypocrite. 'Take her away.'

The men with crape over their faces laid hold of the scorched feet and the serge gown, and dragged her out of the apartment along a narrow passage, while a lantern was carried before them. The spring of a trap-door in the floor was touched—it flew open; but when a lantern was held over the hole, the eye could not fathom the black depth below. They lifted the dead nun, and threw her head-foremost down. A dull, heavy sound told when she had reached the bottom, and the door was shut. When day came, quick-lime was thrown down upon the corpse.

Fearfully the nuns retired, each to her cell, till matins. They had looked upon murder before; but the strange bearing and stranger words, of sister Agnes, had made an unwonted impression upon their minds; for usually the mode of destroying one who

was to be made away with, was by poison or opium. Even those who slept started wildly from frightful dreams. Circlets of glory, purgatorial fires, strange characters traced by fiends upon the walls, and gloomy chambers of torture, mingled in their visions.

As for the Abbot, the summons haunted him, and deep were his potations to drown the dreadful words. 'Am I a poltroon, to believe in purgatory?' he inwardly inquired. 'That girl's existence is quenched for ever; and so shall mine be, when this thickening breath is gone.' *

Then, lifting the wine-cup again to his lips, 'What care I for the raving of a maniac?' said he, 'You will be warm enough when the lime is over you, young lady—warmer than in purgatory I ween.' Thus he fortified himself for his *religious* duties, and then sang matins with most edifying devotion.

But at night the spectre returned. The wild form of the doomed nun arose again before him, and her still wilder words rang in his ears.

The wine-cup was resorted to once more, and once more the Abbot of the monastery of Santa Helena drank deeply. But the fiend followed him. Not

* "Forth from his dark and lonely hiding place,
Portentous sight! the owlet Atheism,
Drops his blue fringed lids and holds them close;
And hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
Cries out, Where is it!" Coleridge's *Fears in Solitude*.

merriment, but misery, now resulted from his potations. The curse of the nun seemed to have taken effect; purgatorial fires seemed kindled already in his heart, and he raged at his tormentor. Slowly and wearily the night passed on, and the monk became unconscious of aught but wretchedness. He arose, and staggered out into the dark corridor, where a glaring eye seemed fixed upon him, and the words, 'Meet me to-morrow in the heart of purgatory!' broke upon the silence of the night. The random summons fulfilled itself. He fled from the spectre—fled with the step of a drunken man, stumbled at the top of the stone staircase, and fell heavily to the bottom, dashing his head against step after step as he descended. When the body reached the bottom, it alone was there; the soul had passed to the tribunal of God; it had learned the dreadful secret; it knew whether or not there were a God—whether or not there were a life after death!

Not in purgatory, but at the still more fearful judgment-seat shall the soul of every murderer meet that other soul which, prematurely, it sent to the terrible account!

A lay-brother stumbled over the corpse in the dim twilight of the morning; and bells were tolled, and masses were said, and a magnificent funeral glorified the murderer; while tales were spread of a glory appearing round the head of the corpse, as if in

mockery of the ravings of the nun; and the common people pressed to touch the bier of the sainted dead; not from veneration of his life, but from the prodigies reported at his death.

In the convent, it was announced at breakfast, that sister Agnes was ill; that she was deeply penitent for her fault, and willing to endure any penance for the scandal she had occasioned. For a week there were daily reports of her expiatory sufferings, of her patience, and at length of her absolution. In a day or two afterwards she was related to have died in the odour of sanctity; and the whole of the inmates of the convent witnessed her funeral—the funeral of her whose corpse was consuming among quick-lime in the vault beneath the trap-door!

The few nuns who witnessed her real death and burial, felt that they had much merit in assisting so pious a fraud, by which the faith of so many had been strengthened. Masses were said for her soul, and the young novice of the vigil vowed another for her repose, fully trusting that she would hear heavenly music again.

CHAPTER XLI.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

"What call unknown, what charms presume,
"To break the quiet of the tomb?"

GRAY

TRUE to his appointment, Edward went next night with all needful implements for forcing the prison bars. He was accompanied by a young man whose acquaintance he had made in hunting, who had once been a bandit on the mountains, and who now lived by the chase. Bold and lawless enough for any adventure, hating the government and the priesthood, he was ever ready to do them a disservice, and his heart having been won towards Edward by witnessing an act of singular courage in despatching a wild boar, he was easily induced to assist in the project of delivering the captive nun.

'Saint Benedict send out the Abbot himself upon us,' exclaimed the bandit. 'He would be as fat a prey as that old tusker you finished so gallantly.'

'Ah! comrade! but it is not sport we want to-

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

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night, it is serious work—no shooting of an abbot—but to bring this young lady out of his clutches!'

'For this night I am your servant. I will forget that there is sport in the world. This signora shall be yours ere morning dawns, and I will conceal you where neither priest nor sbirro shall dare to come till you can embark for England.'

'Grazie, mio Amico!'

Their first act was, of course, to speak through the bars of the grating. There was no response. Again and again as distinctly as he dared, Edward pronounced the name of Mary, but Mary replied not, and he turned to his companion in a tumult of dread forebodings.

'Ah! mio Amico,' said the bandit, 'your design has been discovered. The signora is placed beyond your reach. The holy mother defend her! You must have been observed.'

'Speak, Mary!' cried the young man through the iron grating.

There was no answer.

'Cousin Mary, you are safe; all things are prepared for flight—only speak!' Still not a voice responded.

'I must see, at least,' said Edward, taking up a file and beginning to work at the grating. The bandit wrought on the other side of the bar, and then the crowbar was applied to the weakened iron. It

gave way; another and another was wrenched out, the lantern was lowered to the floor, and they entered. 'Demons, is this a place for a high-born English lady?' he muttered, almost sickened by the sight and odour.

'Mary, cousin Mary, speak if you are alive. Can she have been murdered?' he inquired, turning to his companion.

'It is possible,' returned the bandit, 'but if so, her body will surely be found here.' Strangely excited they stumbled on amidst the horrible contents of the vault.

'What's this—lime?' said Edward.

'Lime!' echoed his companion, 'then there *has* been murder.'

They put down the lantern, and its light glanced upon a hand protruding from the heap;—a white, stiff, female hand and arm. Edward fell fainting on the floor. He had been on a battle-field, and had ridden over heaps of slain without wincing; but this deed of death in darkness and solitude, was too much for him.

'A plague on English cowardice!' muttered the bandit. 'Could not you have fainted where our lives were safe? By the Virgin it were well done to leave you here. But this restores life as well as destroys it,' added he, drawing out his stiletto, and slightly wounding the finger of the young man in a

sensitive part. He instantly showed signs of restored animation, and in a little time was able to follow his guide to the grating. They had just emerged when a hoarse voice commanded them to stop and a pistol was fired, without however taking effect. The bandit returned the salute in an equally harmless manner, when the assaulting party fled towards the convent, and Edward and the bandit retreated as speedily as possible.

Much as he needed hospitality, Edward could not return to Count Guarducci; and he was in no mood to encounter the prying of the peasant with whom he had taken up his quarters on the previous night. He stretched himself upon the dried grass beneath the pure Italian sky, to rest, but not to sleep. We need not picture his feverish tossings, his wild imaginings, his horrified remembrances of the burial-vault. That the white hand and arm belonged to his murdered cousin, he doubted not, and his aim now was to pass on by the assistance of the bandit to Florence, to obtain a passport, and set out for England—having first written to acquaint Colonel Hayward with the sad and fruitless issue of his adventure. The bandit was faithful, and he liberally rewarded him.

Immediately upon the reception of his son's letter, Colonel Hayward set out also for Florence, and soon joined his son. He had on the day appointed by the priest, paid a visit to the convent, where he was in-

formed that the young lady whose exclamation had attracted his attention, was the daughter of an English nobleman who had been long resident in Florence—that a disappointment had preyed upon her mind until she had become unfit for society—that she had been placed in the convent as a secure and calm retreat, and being perfectly harmless, was always permitted to take part in religious ceremonies—that she still believed Colonel Hayward to be a relative, and that the excitement of the morning had thrown her into a dangerous illness. It was quite impossible that Colonel Hayward should see her; and the Colonel chafing with rage, but unable to make out any case for the interference of consul, ambassador, or Tuscan government, was bowed off in the most polite manner possible.

‘Horrid liars, your Italians!’ he exclaimed to his friend the Count.

‘Say rather, our priests,’ retorted Guarducci: ‘It is the Jesuits who have made us what we are.’

‘Hark you, Count!’ said Colonel Hayward; ‘before I came to Tuscany, I was the advocate of Catholic emancipation; payment of Irish priests by government; the grant to Maynooth; and what not. Now I have learned something! you may call me a fool for ever, if I don’t enter myself a member of a Protestant Association as soon as I reach England, and get up the “No Popery” cry at Grantishall, for

the next election. You’ll hear of me in parliament by and bye, making Protestant speeches without a doubt.’

Colonel Hayward had left but a few days, when Count Guarducci was arrested in his own house on a charge of conspiracy against the government; his goods forcibly taken possession of, and himself cast into prison, his servants dismissed, and his son *permitted* to flee a beggar to England.

The strange story was told in England, wondered at, whispered about, sneered at, magnified, doubted, derided, gossiped over in old ladies’ tea-parties, related on Protestant platforms, and finally discarded as totally wanting in the elements of credibility. The corpse that would have proved its truth was consumed by quick-lime in the burial-vault of the convent of Santa Helena; and a British minister of whom better things had once been expected, classed it, perhaps, among the anecdotes which, in terms equally correct and courtly, he stigmatized in parliament as “Cock and bull stories.”

APPENDIX.

WHERE startling statements have been made they will be shown to be quite consistent with the authorized tenets of the Romish Church. In doing so, it will be requisite frequently to quote from the writings of St. Alfonso Liguori. These have been by that Church stamped with infallibility. In 1803, the Sacred Congregation of Rites decreed, that "In all the writings of Alfonso Liguori, edited and inedited, there was *not one word* that could justly be found fault with." Four days afterwards Pope Pius VII, solemnly approved and ratified the decree.

On 5th June, 1831, another decree of the Sacred Chamber confirmed the former; and in 1839, Liguori was canonized.

The extracts here given from the writings of the latest saint of the *Holy* Church will be found to be authentic, although the author of this volume has not *personally* drawn the gems from that mine of morality. If a diamond be real, it matters not that the jeweller has not himself excavated it from the earth.

A.—page 25.

"It is not only lawful, but often it is more conducive to the honour of God, and the good of our neighbour,—to cover the faith than to confess it; as for instance, if *concealed among heretics* you can do more good."

Liguori, iii. 14.

B.—page 30.

"It is not a mortal sin; nor does it take away from the value of the sacrament, if in confession, you *lie a little* about matters that do not concern the sacrament."

Liguori, vi. 496.

C.—page 48.

"*To injure another's reputation* for any needful good, if due attention to circumstantialia be observed, is not sin, nor can it be called detraction."

Liguori, iv. 968.

D.—page 60.

"In the Catholic Church no one is ever allowed to trust himself in spiritual matters."

Preface to the Exercises of Loyola by Nicholas Wiseman.

"They who desire to be perfect in the way of God must submit themselves to a learned confessor, whom they obey as God. He who so acts is safe from rendering a reason for all his actions."

Liguori, i. 11.

E.—page 61.

"At an age when the heart is especially open to those impressions which may be called romantic or sentimental . . . she is beset with continual commendations of the heavenly state of a nun; she is told of innumerable dangers and difficulties which surround those who live in the world, and of the ease with which she can serve God in a cloister. The duties of a wife, the cares of a mother, are denounced as dangerous, and interfering with the soul's health."

Nuns and Nunneries, p. 17.

F.—page 62.

The light of the nineteenth century has not so shone upon Rome's "lying wonders" as to deter her from them. Nay, a *British Peer* has gravely and devoutly published in England stories of continental miracles; and the elegant pen of a clergyman has decorated with many graces, old tales which we had thought scarcely fit for the nursery.

G.—page 66.

"In those things in which the *jus divinum* has its origin in human will, *as in vows and oaths*, it is certain with all, that the Pope has the faculty of *dispensing with them*."

Liguori, vi. 1119.

H.—page 66.

"The Pontiff cannot *dispense with the law of God* without a just cause; but in any doubt about the validity of the dispensation, it is to be accounted *valid*."

Busembaum.

"Sanchez, and many others, say with great probability, that the Pope has the power . . . of *declaring that the law of God no longer binds*."

Liguori, vi. 1119.

I.—page 128.

Mr. Drummond relates the following with respect to a young lady, of whom he had been appointed guardian.

"After I had taken her out of the convent, I heard her one day speaking with dislike of Madame la Supérieure, at which I expressed my surprise, because whenever I had gone into the parlour to see her, she had always appeared so fond of her. To my horror I was informed, that all the girls, when their friends came to see them, were ordered to jump upon the knees of Madame la Supérieure, and kiss her all the time they remained, to make their friends believe how happy they were."

"Plea for the Rights and Liberties of Women," &c. In answer to Bishop Ullathorne. By Henry Drummond.

J.—page 150.

Filthiness of person and habitation has been from a very early period indispensable to saintship; and it is everywhere enjoined upon nuns. Contrast God's precepts to his ancient people, with the commands of priests to their votaries. Protestants imagine some connection between purity of body and purity of mind; poor unenlightened creatures!

K.—page 153.

Play-acting is not unfrequent in nunneries, from sacred (query, profane?) dramas to the lowest comedies. Often even secular dresses are then used, and priests are spectators.

L.—page 201.

See Liguori, iv. 381 and 968.

M.—page 202.

On this point Viva, Navarre, Elbal, Tamburine, &c. have decided that it is lawful for good reason to tempt to sin, and the canonized Liguori echoes their opinion in iii. 58.

N.—page 278.

"A dependant or a witness, *not legitimately interrogated by a judge*, may swear that he knows nothing of the accusation, though in truth he does know," &c.

Lig. iv. 154.

"If the fault charged be secret, then the witness may; nay, he is bound to swear that the accused is innocent."

Ibid. iv. 154.

All accusations in civil courts against priests must come under the first rule; Rome denying the right of any secular judge to try an ecclesiastic. On Monday, 6th February, 1854, the Chief Justice of Common Pleas, Dublin, had occasion to administer the following rebuke to a jury. "He never in his experience, heard so monstrous a verdict given by twelve men on their oaths. He was the last man in the world to interfere with the proper duty of a jury; but he could not, in the present case, refrain from saying that the verdict was contrary to evidence, and contrary to the obligation they had taken, to find according to evidence. * * * * If juries found such verdicts, he (the Chief Justice) thought the sooner they were abolished the better." No priest was concerned in this case; but instances in which they have, contrary to evidence, been acquitted of riot, must be familiar to many of our readers.

O.—page 281.

One of the chief dangers of British convents arises from their being affiliated with others on the continent; so that on the smallest risk of discovery by, or interference on the part of friends, the prisoner can be deported to a Popish country, where no law can reach her; where, even in case of escape, she would be hunted down by the police as a criminal; and where horrors unknown may be perpetrated. The moral and religious state of some Continental nunneries has been of late laid open; and a recent case, widely published, has proved that the mere caprice of an Abbess is sufficient to determine the destination of a captive, in spite of all remonstrance and opposition of friends; even when they are acquainted with that destination.

P.—page 327.

"They are not to be condemned who go from one confessor to another, until they find one favourable to their wishes."

Busembaum.

Q.—page 334.

In many convents the "infirmarium" is exempted from all rule and discipline; folly of every description, and even vice, prevail there unchecked.

R.—page 342.

The Abbess may, from caprice or jealousy, or sheer tyranny, limit the visits of a nun to her confessor, both as to number and duration; or she may forbid them altogether, obliging a change of person.

S.—page 369.

This story is related by the Rev. M. Hobart Seymour, in his "Pilgrimage to Rome," and was repeated by him in a lecture delivered in Bath, on the nunnery question. That lecture provoked an attempt at reply from Cardinal Wiseman, who called this fact in question, but only to have it, along with many others, reiterated and substantiated. We beg to refer to Mr. Seymour's speech, entitled, "Convents or Nunneries; a Lecture, in reply to Cardinal Wiseman."

T.—page 385.

Let it not be said that the torture was a resource of the dark ages, and that Rome, as well as secular governments, has left it in disuse. Rome was and is infallible. What she approved of in the dark ages, she must approve of now, or resign infallibility, which she will never do; but her saint of 1839 gives rules for the infliction of torture. See Liguori, v. 202, 203, 204.

Death is still recognized as the proper punishment of the incorrigible heretic; even though that heretic be a sovereign. In the latter case, public insurrection and private assassination are equally lauded.

Liberty of conscience and the liberty of the press—"the ever-to-be-execrated and detestable liberty of the press"—are denounced in Gregorii XVI. Epis. Encyclica ad omnes Patriarchas, Primates, Archiepiscopos, et Episcopos. Aug. 1839.

U.—page 392.

The correspondent in Rome of the *Daily News*, London journal, while avowing himself a Roman Catholic, thus wrote from that city, March 31, 1849,—

"I visited this morning the works going on in the subterranean vaults of the Holy Office, and was not a little horrified at what I saw with my own eyes, and held in my own hands. Though I have been familiar with everything in and about Rome for a quarter of a century, I confess I never had any curiosity to visit the Inquisition, taking it for granted that everything was carried on there fairly and honestly, as I was led to believe by people worthy in other respects of implicit trust. Besides, the place itself is out of the beaten track of all strangers, and

in a sort of *cul-de-sac* behind St. Peter's, where it naturally retired to perform its blushing operations, and 'do good by stealth.' I was struck with the outward appearance of civilization and comfort displayed by the building, which owes its erection to Pius V., author of the last creed; but on entering, the real character of the concern was no longer dissimulated. A range of strongly-barred prisons formed the ground-floor of a quadrangular court, and these dark and damp receptacles I found were only the preliminary stage of probation, intended for new-comers, as yet uninitiated into the Eleusinian mysteries of the establishment. Entering a passage to the left, you arrive at a smaller court-yard, where a triple row of small-barred dungeons rise from the soil upwards, somewhat after the outward look of a three-decker, 'accommodating' about sixty prisoners. These barred cages must have been often fully manned, for there is a supplementary row constructed at the back of the quadrangle on the ground-floor, which faces a large garden. All these cellular contrivances have strong iron rings let into the masonry, and in some there is a large stone firmly imbedded in the centre with a similar massive ring. Numerous inscriptions, dated centuries back, are dimly legible on the admission of light, the general tenor being assertion of innocence: '*Iddio ci liberi di lingua calumniatrice.*' '*Io domenico Gazzoli vissi qui anni 18,*' '*Calumi-*

atores mendaces exterminabuntur.' I read another somewhat longer, the drift of which is, 'The caprice or wickedness of man can't exclude me from thy Church, O Christ, my only hope.' The officer in charge led me down to where the men were digging in the vaults below; they had cleared a downward flight of steps, which was choked up with old rubbish, and had come to a series of dungeons under the vaults deeper still, and which immediately brought to my mind the prisons of the Doge under the canal of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, only that here there was a surpassing horror. I saw imbedded in old masonry, unsymmetrically arranged, five skeletons in various recesses, and the clearance had only just begun; the period of their insertion in this spot must have been more than a century and a-half. From another vault full of skulls and scattered human remains there was a shaft about four feet square, ascending perpendicularly to the first floor of the building, and ending in a passage off the hall of the chancery, where a trap-door lay between the Tribunal and the way into a suite of rooms destined for one of the officials. The object of this shaft could admit but of one surmise. The ground of the vault was made up of decayed animal matter, *a lump of which held embedded in it a long silken lock of hair*, as I found on personal examination, as it was shovelled up from below. Why or wherefore, with a large space of vacant ground,

lying outside the structure, this charnel-house should be contrived under the dwelling, passes my ken. But that is not all: there are two large subterranean lime-kilns, if I may so call them, shaped like a beehive, in masonry, *filled with layers of calcined bones*, forming the substratum of two other chambers on the ground-floor, in the immediate vicinity of the very mysterious shaft above mentioned. I know not what interest you may attach to what looks like a chapter from Mrs. Radcliffe, but had I not the evidence of my own senses, I would never have dreamt of such appearances in a prison of the Holy Office, being thoroughly sick of the nonsense that has for years been put forth on this topic by partizan pens."

Daily News, April, 1849.

The following address, by the Author of this volume, was extensively circulated, and promptly responded to. The females of Great Britain poured in their memorials to the Queen, and also to Parliament, and the subject was taken up by influential members of both Houses; and the bills of Mr. Chambers and Mr. Whiteside, for inspection and regulation of nunneries, have been submitted to the legislature. A Popish faction seemed sworn to defeat them: by fair means they cannot—they will not *long* do so by foul.

ADDRESS TO BRITISH PROTESTANT FEMALES.

WHILE Popish aggression has stirred the Protestantism of Britain to its profoundest depths, in the good providence of God circumstances have also occurred to call the attention of the country to some of the evils of Conventual Institutions. The women of England have long been plied with artful representations of the purity and happiness of Convent life; and in too many instances, the deception has succeeded. Many British females have been allured into Nunneries; and it is well known that some of these are detained there unwillingly, having been too late awakened from their dream of blessedness to the fearful reality of utter desolation. And shame on Protestant Britain, there is no arm to rescue the sufferers. Prisons, and hospitals, and schools are open to inspection; but there are, in our *free* country, dungeons which the light of

day cannot penetrate, dens of iniquity which British law cannot reach.

One, in the shining circle of England's nobility, has indeed been plucked from the melancholy seclusion; but there are few who have the Chancellor of the kingdom to break their chains. Let the women of Britain bestir themselves in behalf of their weeping sisters, whose very cries for liberty do but commit them to deeper dungeons. Let the case of the oppressed be carried to the foot of the throne. Let the Queen of England be petitioned to recommend to the consideration of Parliament a measure for the opening of the Convent cells; not to force out of them any who may wish to remain, but to give free egress to those who pine in the chains of the Priest and the Abbess. The genius of British liberty detests the underground mysteries of the Convent. If all be *right* which is enacted there, why is not all *open*? If the inhabitants stay willingly, why are they shut in with high walls and iron bars? Are they prisoners, or lunatics, or both? Both, we believe. Many a nun dies raving mad. Some try voluntarily to seek, as they vainly think, the ways to heaven. Let them stay. It is only the constrained, the oppressed, the wretched that we would liberate.

No mother in Britain can tell how soon her daughter may be allured into one of these bastiles. How can she bear to think that the voice which once

gladdened her fireside may cry for help, where the only reply shall be the echo of the dismal vault;—that the being over whose childhood she watched, may be enduring despair and degradation, and a lingering death, where all efforts shall be expended in vain to pierce the mystery in which she is enshrouded?

Rome's emissaries are working, concealed or openly, all around us. Their wives we do not know. They may be acting unseen in the most happy families, to convert them into scenes of weeping and desolation. Let them have no fastnesses whither to carry off their victims, and from which to defy the rescue. Let the holds of the robbers be thrown open; and if the prey remain, let it be *voluntarily*; unchained, unbarred, unbolted.

I propose that, before next session of Parliament, female petitions from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland be presented to the Queen, praying for the arrangement of an effective and constant system of supervision of all Nunneries, whether Popish or "Protestant," in the United Kingdom.

The work ought to be commenced in the metropolitan towns; but let not our country towns and rural parishes wait for the example of London, or Edinburgh, or Dublin. There are women in various places, who have time, and influence, and philanthropy enough to set on foot such petitions. Others will soon follow

them. There are noblemen in our land who will willingly convey these prayers to the foot of the throne. They will assuredly awaken a responsive chord in the heart of our beloved and benevolent Sovereign.

THE END.