

Calumnies Against Convents

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From time to time, though less often now than formerly, readers of the daily papers are regaled with a thrilling story of cruelty in a Catholic convent, happily brought to light through the successful or attempted escape of the victim. Generally the scene of these stories is laid in a distant country — in Spain, or Brazil; most commonly the names and the dates are so far suppressed as to render inquiry hopeless; and if, with a view to inquiry, further information is demanded, the answer is invariably the same. Names and dates cannot be given without exposing the victim to the wrath of her pursuers; but the informant can vouch for the complete accuracy of the facts, which, after all, are in keeping with what has been brought home to hundreds of similar Romish institutions. Occasionally, however, the story ventures within reach of investigation, and then is wont to be followed in the same journal, either by a flat contradiction, or by an explanation, supported by evidence of a convincing character, and putting the facts in a very different and more reasonable light. In that case the assailant's purpose is thwarted for the moment, but he has an ulterior purpose in view which he can still hope to accomplish. He puts carefully away the copy of the paper in which the charge is made, and waits till a new generation has sprung up. Then he reproduces it as a fact, publicly told and recognized at the time as authentic, taking care not to whisper a syllable of the opposing evidence with which its first appearance was met, and which then divested it of public credence.

Few Catholics are aware of the extent to which in this way exploded charges against our convents are treasured up and perpetuated through the agency of the various periodicals and pamphlets which circulate under the auspices of the Protestant Alliance, emanating either directly from their press, or else from publishers who live on their encouragement. And yet it is by these, mainly, that the intense prejudice against the Catholic Church is kept alive amongst large masses of our fellow-countrymen, and these are the instruments mainly employed for the persecution of our young Catholics in their places of business. For these reasons it must not be deemed superfluous if we devote a pamphlet to the exposure of a few of these false charges.

Four typical instances of misrepresentation have been selected for examination. In the present tract, each of which when it first came before the world excited a considerable amount of public attention. Three of these refer to well-known convents at home, and one to a convent abroad; and they have lately been revived in certain Protestant publications.

1. The Charge against the Convent at Colwich

English Convents, What are they? is a popular collection of these cock-and-bull stories, issued by Mr. John Kensit. And in it may be read the following paragraph under the heading "Attempted escape and recapture of a nun from Colwich Nunnery" (p. 18):

Mr. Charles Mander, J.P., of the Mount, Wolverhampton, furnishes, from affidavits in his possession, authentic details of the above case, which caused great excitement some years ago. Mr. Mander writes in the Times (April, 1870) [day of month not stated]:

I can prove the following so that the case is removed from the vague and uncertain: That on the afternoon of the 30th of December 1856, a nun escaped from the Convent of Colwich, on the Trent Valley Railway; that she escaped over the garden wall nine feet high by means of some overhanging branches (the next morning men were engaged to cut down the ivy, and top the overhanging trees) and fell to the field below; that she was seen and conversed with by the station-master and porters at the station adjoining; that she was wretchedly clad for the weather, and evinced great fear and trepidation; that after waiting in the ladies' room she went to Stafford by the 2-13 train (Dr. Ullathorne followed by the 3-12 train), that at Stafford station she was seen by several, especially by Mr. Thomas Taylor, of Rugeley, a retired officer, who was just leaving by train, but he particularly remarked her appearance and distress; that she afterwards went by the same train to Birmingham as did Dr. Ullathorne; that from there he telegraphed to the convent at Colwich that he would return with her the same night, and that they did so return; that the name was C—; that she was 42 years of age, was born in Middlesex, and was a member of a Roman Catholic family. So far as to the escape. I wish further to state that by the instructions of Mr. Justice Wightman I went, July 20, 1858, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, to the convent at Staplehill (sic), near Wimborne in Dorsetshire, and had a private interview with Miss S—. I informed her that if she desired to leave the convent the law would offer her ample protection, and that she could leave if she wished. I shall never forget the scene... her emotion was great, and she sat for some time with her face buried in her hands; at last she exclaimed; "No, I cannot leave now; I have no wish to leave now; since I came here I have been very kindly treated." Upon being again pressed, she said, "No; I cannot, I must not leave now; I embraced the convent life at the early age of 18, with the earnest desire of devoting my best years to God, and serving Him in a way I then considered most for His glory, and I cannot now turn my back upon Him." Her resolution being taken, the conversation changed; she informed us somewhat of her family, and then said: "What could I do if I left? All my friends and relations are Roman Catholics, and they would turn their backs upon me; and what do I know of life?"

In another part of the same tract (p. 11), an extract taken from the "Daily Telegraph in 1865" (month and day not stated), a letter from "Anglicanus," gives us the testimony of a "girl, named C. B., who had been a scholar in the Convent," "intended to become a lay-sister," and "had in consequence liberty of access to many parts of the nunnery." This "girl" is alleged to have declared on oath that the nuns "often complained of the hardships and penances to which they were compelled to submit;" that "they used to be locked up in their own rooms and in the cellars underneath the said nunnery;" that "on such occasions very small quantities of food were taken to the nun so locked up;" that when thus imprisoned and starved "the nuns often said to me they wished they had never come to the said nunnery;" also that "coffins were made on the premises with a view to the secret interment of nuns done to death by the aforesaid cruel penances."

Of course if such were the mode of life in the convent it was no matter of surprise that a nun should attempt to escape. This is all in reference to the history in question which this tract has thought it necessary to preserve; and nothing further is found in another similar tract, delusively entitled *Parliamentary Evidence*. But let us see if there is nothing further to add.

The subject came before the public principally in 1865, when Mr. Newdegate was speaking in Parliament to his motion (on March 3) for the inspection of convents. On that occasion he brought forward other cases also, but laid the principal stress on this of the Colwich Convent. It was, as he took care several times to impress upon the House of Commons, supported by nine affidavits and twenty-seven witnesses, and had engaged the serious attention of Mr. Justice Wightman. The affidavits were those of the girl above mentioned and of some of the working people in the neighbourhood of the Convent, on whom Mr. Mander and his friends had been practising with great diligence through the agency of a private detective. It turned out, however, that these affidavits and testimonies had never been tested in court. Mr. Justice Wightman inspected them when they were brought before his tribunal, but returned them with the remark that the applicants did not seem to have taken the obvious step of calling at the Convent and asking for an interview with the lady. This, therefore, they had to do, not "by the instructions of Mr. Justice Wightman" as the quotation above given states, but as a necessary preliminary before they could induce him to entertain their application for a habeas corpus.

Compelled thus at last to adopt the straightforward course, they took it only to discover that the lady had no desire for their interposition. She knew doubtless that if she wished to leave the convent she could leave it by an easier method. The account given by Mr. Mander of his interview with her implies indeed that she was unhappy in her life, but we shall presently hear from Bishop Ullathorne that she wrote in a very different strain to her former superior at Colwich, and even Mr. Newdegate in Parliament, on May 3rd, incautiously admitted that "she expressed herself (to her interviewers) much astonished and amused at the information that so many affidavits had been collected on her behalf." All this was brought out in Parliament, but Mr. Newdegate's troubles did not end there.

The House of Commons refusing to pass his motion, the Bishop of Birmingham (Dr. Ullathorne) wrote him a letter (see *Morning Post*, March 11, 1865) giving the authentic version of the facts, and offering him an opportunity, in company with the Earls of Lichfield and Harrowby, two representative Protestants, and Lord Edward Howard, a representative Catholic, of free entry into the convent, with leave to explore it from top to bottom, and to examine every one of the nuns. Mr. Charles Langdale wrote at the same time (*Times*, March 20) saying that he had a sister in the Convent who must therefore "have been cognisant of, or possibly a victim to, the atrocities alleged," and challenging Mr. Newdegate to "come out of his privileged position (as a member of Parliament) and make the charges in such a way as would permit the nuns charged and their friends to test the truths of the statements" of his twenty-seven witnesses. To both invitations the honourable member replied with a refusal; he could not consent to transfer the investigation from the tribunal of the House of Commons to a court of private inquiry. It did not seem to occur to him that he had been engaged in a private inquiry during the past eight years, and that he was now invited not to a mere private inquiry, but to a singularly advantageous opportunity of collecting evidence with a view to its investigation in a court of justice. This however, was obviously the pretext, not the cause, of his refusal. The cause was a consciousness that his affidavits were of no value at all, and that his case would not stand the test of an investigation. For, as the Home Secretary (Sir George Grey) observed in the House in reference to his motion:

If affidavits were made disclosing proceedings as to the illegality or criminality of which there could not be a moment's question, showing that there were in any conventual establishment dungeons into which women were forced, and from which they were not allowed to come out alive — circumstances which would justify a magistrate in ordering the police to enter the establishment

and make a thorough examination — the honourable gentleman would be the last man to put such affidavits into his pocket until he had an opportunity of bringing them before the House of Commons. (*Times*, Mar. 4, 1865.)

And, indeed, we can gather the value of these precious affidavits from the contents of the only one they ventured to make public, that of the girl "C.B." Mr. Langdale, in the correspondence mentioned, tells us that the girl was a Protestant, and therefore certainly not a candidate for the religious life, nor at all likely to be admitted, in defiance of the laws of the Church, within the enclosed portions of the house; and the last person in the world to be allowed to see sights, which, supposing them to exist, were, even according to the theory of Protestant Alliance controversialists, sedulously concealed from the outside public. Mr. Charles Langdale also assures us on his honour, since Mr. Newdegate would not give him the chance of proving it by witnesses in court, that "there neither are, nor ever were, any underground cells, that the cells that do exist are filled with wood, oil, coke, roots, and bottles," that "no nun or other inmate of the Convent was ever imprisoned or kept without food, or subjected to any ill-usage whatever," and "no death ever occurred which was not duly registered, and no one was ever buried except in a coffin of the ordinary shape."

But what about the fugitive nun herself? Bishop Ullathorne's letter to Mr. Newdegate tells us that "she had been for many years a voluntary and contented member of the community" (at Colwich), but had in 1856 conceived the desire of passing to the Cistercian Convent of Stapehill, for the sake of the austerer life there. On the Bishop's visit to Colwich on December 30th, 1856, she asked his permission to make the change. On grounds of health and of character he recommended her to remain under the milder observance of her present life, and at the time she seemed to acquiesce. But, after his departure, unknown to the community, she left the Convent (not over the wall but through the front door) and followed the Bishop to Birmingham, there to urge her petition once more. Of course she should not have gone to him in this way; still the fact that she was able to do it proves at least that she stood in no need of the aid of the law. On seeing her insistency the Bishop promised to arrange for her transfer to Stapehill, but as the obvious course was for her to remain pending the arrangements at Colwich, and, as the hour was late, he escorted her back to the Convent, having first sent a telegram to say they were coming. In due time the lady passed to Stapehill (the place where she was seen by her interviewers,) and Bishop Ullathorne testifies that she wrote thence to her former superior, thanking her for previous kindness and speaking of herself as quite happy in her new abode; and that though she afterwards left Stapehill also, tried several convents abroad, and was at length on her own application dispensed altogether from her vows, she continued on excellent terms with the community at Colwich.

From another letter written by the Bishop five years later in answer to Mr. Mander (*Times*, April 23rd, 1870) we learn that as late as the previous year she had begged earnestly, though in vain, to be re-admitted at Colwich. The Protestant Alliance people will of course claim to put any statement of a Catholic bishop out of court. But Bishop Ullathorne's personal character is far too widely known and appreciated to permit of any attempt thus to discredit him. Among Catholics he was called the friend of the nuns, and when Englishmen hear him charged with inhumanity towards them, they will not forget how powerfully and influentially in his earlier days his voice was raised to stop the inhumanity of our penal system in Australia.

2. The Charge against the Norwood Convent

In the year 1852 an action was brought by a young girl named Henrietta Griffiths against the Convent of the Faithful Virgin at Norwood. She had been one of the orphans at the Convent for two years, and, having been removed from it as unsatisfactory, she fell apparently into the hands of some society like the Protestant Alliance who thought to make capital out of her. She proved a willing instrument in their hands, and repaid the debt of gratitude she owed her former superiors by charging them with a cruelty towards her so gross that it had resulted in depriving her of the sight of one eye. The case is a favourite one with the class of literature with which we are concerned, and appears in the same tract, *English Convents*, which contains the false charge against the Colwich Convent. Here we find it in the form of the two following newspaper extracts:

I was kept in the closet for three weeks from four in the morning till nine at night, and I was not allowed to go out for any purpose. My food was brought to me. The closet was only large enough to contain a chair and a table, but neither the one nor the other was in it, and I was obliged to lie on the floor. No light was allowed me. There was a window but it was closed and I was in darkness all the time. Upon one occasion I was kept in the closet all night, and the next morning they told me they had forgotten me. They also forgot to give me any food that day. (*Morning Advertiser*, August 7, 1852.)

Then follows a paragraph from the *Daily Telegraph*:

That poor creature shut up in the Norwood Convent, lost one eye, became distorted in body, and brought an action, through her friends, against her superiors. It was then admitted that children were seated with their faces to the wall for days together from half-past four in the morning until nine at night, meal hours excepted; that the punishment of "prostration" was inflicted; that to kiss the floor was one penalty exacted from the refractory, and that red gowns were put over the scholars' dresses as marks of ignominy. What was this but downright inhumanity, when a poor, sickly, half-blind, and broken-spirited girl was concerned? But the most disgraceful aspects of conventual rigour were concealed from the public eye. We have to tell the reader who may be incredulous concerning these Roman Catholic severities, that Henrietta Griffiths herself made affidavit that nunnery pupils after being prostrated, laid face downwards on the ground, with the arms extended, were flogged thus.

The reference for this second quotation is given thus "Daily Telegraph, March, 1859" — the day of the month being suppressed according to the practice of these writers, with the manifest purpose of rendering difficult any attempt to put the story to the test. What strikes us first of all is that it should have been found necessary to go for a portion of the narrative to a paragraph written seven years after the date of the occurrence. Could it not, we ask, like the other portion, be more conclusively certified from contemporary sources? But the reason for deserting the contemporary accounts is obvious; the latter do not contain the narrative so highly seasoned. Whether the girl ever did "make affidavit that nunnery pupils after being prostrated were flogged" it is impossible to say, but at all events she did not venture to suggest such a thing in the witness-box, a plain proof that the charge is untrue. As to the other charges which were made at the trial in 1852, a reference to the *Times* for August 7th and 9th, 1852, where the trial is reported in extenso, shows (1) that the nuns in the witness-box contradicted the girl on every material point; (2) that their testimony was confirmed by the testimony of the two Protestant doctors who had attended the girl during her stay in the orphanage; (3) that it was likewise confirmed by the testimony of some of the orphans, past and present; (4) that the jury, with the evident approval of the judge, believed them and disbelieved the

girl; and (5) that the *Times* of August 9th, in an article manifesting the strongest antipathy to the nuns and reluctance to admit anything in their favour, could not refrain from acknowledging that the girl's story was quite incredible.

As to the details of the charges, the following facts were demonstrated at the trial, as may be seen by referring to the report. The loss of sight was due to a scrofulous habit of body, of more ancient date than the girl's arrival in the convent, and in no sense to any want of care on the part of the nuns. The latter had called in medical advice as soon as the affection of the eyes began to show itself, and had faithfully followed all that the doctor, or rather doctors, prescribed. The darkening of the room which had been alleged as an act of cruelty was, in fact, one of these prescriptions, and so far as the accommodation of the house permitted, the girl had been moved from room to room with express view to her greater benefit and convenience. She had never been left in a room without a chair, or forgotten for a whole day and night, or left without food at the proper times. She received whatever food the physician ordered, and had only been denied the visits of her companions whilst she had a skin disease. No prostration of any kind had ever been inflicted upon her, and there was no such custom in the orphanage, although, even if the custom had existed, it would not have been injurious to health. To subdue her persistent disobedience she had been placed for some days in the "trial class," that is, in a room apart, with her face turned in the direction of the wall. But she was not so placed in order that she might stare, or so that she need or did stare, continuously at the whitewash, but to prevent her looking about or talking. She was engaged with her lessons and her work, and would have been mainly looking at them, nor did this last continuously throughout the day, but only during certain hours of it.

It is easy to see why our candid pamphleteer did not think fit to include these facts in the account of the Norwood case; for when they are added it ceases to cast any reproach upon the good nuns which could impair their well-established reputation for devoted charity towards the young. Refractory children must be subdued somehow or other, and if the methods employed in the convent for this purpose, forty years ago, should not be to the taste of some English readers, the nuns at least might claim that long experience had shown them to be not unsuccessful, and not incompatible with the health and happiness of their young charges. Probably Henrietta Griffiths herself would never have felt outraged by them, had not her childish misconceptions and untruthfulness been practised upon by the wickedness of agents of the Ultra-Protestantism.

3. The Charge against Carlisle Place Orphanage

In a tract entitled *Convents: Accumulative Evidence*, written by Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge, and "published by the Conventual Enquiry Society consisting of General Sir Robert Phayre, Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge, the Rev. Lancelot Holland, M.A., and Benjamin Nicholson Esq.," the following paragraph may be read:

Books and pictures by the thousand have been written and painted to prejudice people in favour of Convents; and even on the hoardings of London are to be seen at this moment nuns of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul posing as ministering angels in the interest of Mason's fluid beef, &c. This is the Order of Nuns which came before the public in 1876 as the guardian angels of little children in the Carlisle Place Orphanage, Westminster, who through their utter ignorance and cruel neglect — scandal! caused the death of 98 per cent of the children (see Report of the Local Government Board, published in the *Times*, January 11th, 1877.)

Let us note well the nature of this charge. Not only is it stated that an extremely large percentage of the children (not infants) died in the Orphanage, but that their deaths were directly attributable to the "utter ignorance" and "gross neglect" of the Sisters, and that the accuracy of both these statements was certified by the report, following on investigation, of no less an authority than the Local Government Board — surely a charge which, if it is not true in both particulars, is perfectly heartless in its cruelty.

Now let us see what the true facts are. In the summer of 1876, an application was made to the Guardians of St. George's, Hanover Square, that a Catholic pauper child might be sent to the Carlisle Place Orphanage. These Guardians were at the time notorious for their anti-Catholic bigotry, and accordingly, led by Mr. Fleming, one of their number, they voted an inquiry into the case. Mr. Barnard Holt was commissioned to make it, and reported that 27 infants had died during the first half of 1876. The Guardians then invited the interposition of the Home Office, and so far there is no occasion to blame them. The Home Office referring the case to the Local Government Board, the latter directed an inquiry to be made on its behalf by its own Inspector, Mr. Edward Ballard. Mr. Ballard's report, which is that to which Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge refers us, appeared in the *Times* for January 11th, 1877, and is to the following effect:

This establishment was opened in June 1859, and is I am given to understand maintained principally at the expense of the ladies who conduct it. Destitute children of all ages, from birth to 12 or 14 years, are received, clothed, boarded, and educated, and finally put to appropriate situations. Arrangements are made for the reception of five or six infants. At the date of my visit, on Nov. 20th, there were in the institution 119 girls of various ages above one year; some of them had been in the institution from their infancy. They were all clean, healthy looking, and evidently well cared for. There were in addition four infants under 12 months of age. They looked weakly and ill nourished. Since the opening of the establishment 1528 children have been admitted; of these 489 were received at ages varying from one day to twelve months. 503 of these 1528 children have died; 402 of these deaths occurred among infants under 12 months of age. It is this high mortality (402 out of 489 infants received) which is the subject of my inquiry.

Mr. Ballard goes on to tell us he found that during the twenty-three months previous to his visit 53 infants had been received, and out of these 44 had since died. He also gives the causes of their death as follow: two from hooping cough, one from measles, one from bronchitis, one from congenital malformation, two from diarrhoea, one from convulsions, two from struma and debility, while the remaining 33 are certified as having died of marasmus, due in the opinion of the medical attendant, Dr. MacDonald, to deprivation of breast milk.

Already we find a striking discrepancy between the statement of Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge and the document on which he professes to rely. According to the former the percentage of deaths was 98 per cent among the children generally. According to the latter (1) the mortality among the children, as distinguished from the infants, was only 101 out of 1039 in 16½ years, or some 3 per cent per annum, and all were "clean, healthy-looking, and evidently well cared for." (2) The mortality among the infants under one year of age, although extremely high, was not 98 per cent, but 82½ per cent for the 16½ years of the existence of the Orphanage, and 80 per cent for the 23 months covered by Mr. Ballard's inquiry.

Mr. Ballard next reports on the cause of the high mortality, and traces it to three causes. (1) To the "unfavourable condition in which the children are for the most part received." They are children "on

account of the illness or death of their mothers or from some other cause deprived of their natural nourishment and of maternal care for a longer or a shorter period," "are almost invariably brought in debilitated from this cause and more or less emaciated," so that "from the first the chances of rearing them are few, and would be so, even if the appliances in the establishment were better than they are." (2) To "the almost insuperable difficulty attending the rearing of such infants on the ordinary substitutes for breast milk." Dr. MacDonald, he says, "informs me that the feeding of the infants has been a constant cause of anxiety to him. At the present they are fed upon cows' milk, with the addition of lime water when necessary." (3) To "the inappropriateness of the room used as a nursery. It is so situated and arranged as to be incapable of due ventilation. Dr. MacDonald agrees with me in this opinion, and says that it has more than once occurred to him that it would be better to abstain from receiving any more infants until a more fitting nursery could be provided."

Mr. Ballard, after making these censures, or rather criticisms, hastens to say, "I am bound, however, to add that the infants are kindly and tenderly nursed. Each has a nice cot, everything about the infants is very clean, and an experienced nurse has been engaged to attend them. She receives assistance from the Sisters themselves and from the elder children." He then concludes by "making the following suggestions to the Superioress and to Dr. MacDonald": "(1) A suggestion as to the use of a more appropriate food than cows' milk. (2) That no more infants should be received, until an appropriate room to be used as a nursery can be provided."

Such is the verdict of the Inspector to the Local Government Board, which Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge has deemed himself justified in describing as a verdict of "utter ignorance and cruel neglect" against the sisters.

From a man who can misrepresent to this extent, one ought not perhaps to expect the mention of other points material to a right understanding of this case. For the sake of our readers, however, we will add them. At a meeting of the St. George's Guardians, on Jan. 17th, (*Times*, Jan. 18th), when Mr. Ballard's Report was under consideration, a Dr. Brewer, after exonerating the nuns from blame and laying it on parental neglect, stated that at the Foundling Hospital "children received as infants scarcely ever lived beyond the first year," and that in consequence, "the practice had been adopted of not taking them in unless there was some one to act as far as possible the part of a mother." He also said that "he had made enquiries in the parish of St. Giles, and found that hardly one of the children received at the workhouse there under one year lived any length of time. But such was the state of things, not only in St. Giles's, but all over Europe where infants were neglected in the same way by their parents, for it was very rarely indeed that above five or six per cent of them survived."

There was also another doctor called in to investigate the facts, Dr. Bartlett, Ph.D., F.C.S., and he, while testifying in almost the same terms as Mr. Ballard to "the cleanliness, kindness and solicitude witnessed there," fully accepts Dr. Brewer's statistics as to the infant mortality and adds others to the same effect (*Times*, Jan. 22):

In the first place, the statistics of death-rate among infants of the same class at other institutions of the highest reputation enable a tardy justice to be rendered to the sisters of that Home in exonerating them from the stigma rightly or wrongly attaching to exceptional misfortune in rearing such wretched outcasts. Dr. Brewer called attention to the failure of day nursing at our own Foundling Hospital, the mortality being 98.58 per cent per annum. Dr. Lewis Smith of New York, states that during the last year nearly 100 per cent of the foundlings hand-tended in that city died before reaching the age of one year. Older statistics of Vienna foundlings give a death-rate of 92 per cent,

and at Brussels the annual percentage was 79. ... At the Children's Clinique, St. Petersburg, the constant mortality induced Dr. Korowin to attempt to ascertain the proximate causes of death in the majority of cases by post-mortem examinations.

From these statistics it appears that the percentage of infant mortality at Carlisle Place was not over but well under the average of "institutions of the highest reputation." But was there anything blameable about the nursing?

If there was, the responsibility must lie at the door, not of the Sisters, but of their medical adviser, Dr. MacDonald. The Sisters had clearly followed his directions in all respects. The food was according to his prescriptions, the nursery had his sanction as a temporary nursery until funds were in hand to provide one more suitable, and his sanction had likewise been given for the number of infants who had been received. Dr. MacDonald did not shrink from the responsibility (*Times*, Jan. 23), nor had he any need to shrink from it. The question of the proper food for infants of this class was clearly one of much obscurity and one on which much difference of medical opinion prevailed. Dr. MacDonald's prescription was cows' milk with an occasional admixture of lime water, and, although Mr. Ballard disapproves of it, he clearly does not find his colleague's use of it unintelligible. Mr. Ballard does not mention what his own recommendation was, but from his second report (*Times*, Mar. 23.) we learn that it had been tried and found not to agree with the infants, so that a return to the cows' milk and lime water had been necessary. Mr. Bartlett's recommendation was (*Times*, Jan. 30.) that the water should be more completely filtered and that the milk should be less heavily diluted with water, but he reveals to us the difficulty of the subject when he informs us that, "according to Dr. MacDonald, even an admixture of two-thirds water had proved too rich for some of the more delicate of those taken in almost dying into the orphanage." Another medical authority, writing under the signature of "F.R.S and F.R.C.S.," to the *Times* (Feb. 2.) instructs us magisterially that "The best food for delicate infants deprived of mother's milk is good cows' milk slightly diluted with pure filtered water, and strengthened with sugar of milk." This is Dr. MacDonald's recipe with an addition which had not occurred to any one of his other advisers.

In the same way there was difference of medical opinion as to the fitness of the room. Mr. Ballard thought the present accommodation insufficient, and Dr. MacDonald inclined to the same view. Dr. Bartlett, on the contrary, thought the cubic contents "more than ample for the six or seven usually sleeping therein," a judgment which must be taken in connexion with Dr. MacDonald's testimony that "the room seldom contains more than four infants, though it has occasionally had as many as six." The dimensions of the room, according to Dr. MacDonald, were 23ft long, by 10ft. 6in. broad, and 12ft. 4in. high.

The one point on which there seems to have been general agreement, was that the sisters should discontinue to take in the infants brought to them until a nursery large enough to satisfy the most exacting could be provided. This counsel was faithfully followed by the Sisters, as we learn from Mr. Ballard. (*Times*, Mar. 23). But perhaps it occurred to their kind hearts, although it does not seem to have occurred to the scientific imaginations of their advisers, to consider the alternative for the unfortunate infants whom they were compelled to refuse. Would their lot be happier in a workhouse like St. Giles's, or in the ample ventilation of an open street, or in a baby farm, or perhaps in the cold waters of the Thames?

It seems superfluous to add anything further; still it is worth notice that Mr. Barnard Holt, the inspector originally appointed by the St. George's Guardians themselves to make an inquiry on their

behalf, made a further inquiry in the January following, and reported in favour of the nuns even more completely than any of his colleagues; approving of the size, the cleanliness, and the ventilation of the nursery, and describes himself as unable to "speak too highly of the devotedness" of the Sisters.

The *Morning Post* of Feb. 13th, 1877, whilst printing this report of Mr. Holt's, as "only an act of bare justice" to the sisters who had been so unaccountably "exposed to the attacks of a portion of the public," concludes its paragraph with the following sentence:

We need only add one significant fact to this statement: that when the small pox epidemic broke out in London a few weeks ago, the workhouse authorities could find none but these very Sisters of Charity to undertake the nursery of their small pox hospital.

Perhaps a fact like this may help Deputy Surgeon-General Partridge to solve the mystery which so much perplexes him, the mystery why a London patentee, desiring to depict on his advertisement the best recognized type of an earthly ministering angel, should have found it in the Sister of Charity. There is, however, a still more perplexing mystery which remains unsolved. How is it that a member of the medical profession can display such "utter ignorance" of the significance of medical statistics, and how is it that the bearer of Her Majesty's commission can display such "utter ignorance" of the usages of honourable men?

4. The Charge against the Cracow Convent

In one of the Monthly Letters of the Protestant Alliance entitled *Convents* may be found the following:

On Tuesday, the 20th instant (i.e. July 20th, 1869), an anonymous notice, apparently written by a female hand, reached the Criminal Court at Cracow, to the effect that, in the Convent of the Carmelite barefooted nuns, one of the order, named Barbara Ubryk, had been forcibly kept in close confinement in a dark cell for a long number of years. The Vice-President of the Criminal Court, Ritter von Antoniewicz, immediately laid this information before a judge of inquiry who, in company with the public prosecutor, repaired to the Bishop von Galecki, with the request to permit them to enter the convent. The Bishop declared he would grant the request as Papal Delegate, and subdelegated the Papal prelate Spital, a very intelligent and worthy priest. The convent was first entered by Father Spital, followed by the members of the judicial commission, to whom the portress attempted to refuse admittance, and she allowed their entrance only when Dr. Gebhardt, with the confirmation on the part of Father Spital, referred to the permission he had received from the Bishop. The judge then informed the portress that he had come to see and speak to Nun Barbara Ubryk, which information made a terrible impression upon the portress. The commission thereupon went to the upper corridor, followed by the nuns, one of whom shewed the judge the cell of Sister Barbara. The cell, which was situated at the extreme end of the corridor, between the pantry, close to the dung-hole, had a walled-up window, and a double wooden door, in which there was a moveable grating, through which very probably food was handed in. Through a very small open window niche some rays of light could now and then penetrate into this dismal dungeon. The cell seven paces long by six paces wide, was opened, but it is almost impossible to describe the view this piece of inquisition of the nineteenth century presented. In a dark infected hole adjoining the sewer sat, or rather cowered, on a heap of straw, an entirely naked, totally neglected, half-insane woman, who, at the unaccustomed view of light, the outer world, and human beings, folded her

hands, and pitifully implored: "I am hungry, have pity on me; give me meat and I shall be obedient." This hole, for it could hardly be called a chamber, besides containing all kinds of dirt and filth and a dish of rotten potatoes, was deficient of the slightest decent accommodation. There was nothing — no stove, no bed, no table, no chair, it was neither warmed by a fire nor by the rays of the sun. This den the inhuman sisters who call themselves women, spiritual wives, the brides of heaven, had selected as a habitation for one of their own sex, and kept her therein in close confinement for twenty-one years — since 1848. For twenty-one years the grey sisters daily passed this cell, and not one of them ever thought of taking compassion on this poor outcast prisoner. The judge instantly ordered the nun to be clothed, and went himself for Bishop Galecki.

Here the narrative (which is an extract through the *Morning Post* from the *Vienna Presse* of July 23rd 1869) breaks off in the pamphlet before us, but in the *Presse* it goes on to say that the Bishop on arriving was horrified like the rest, and cried out to the nuns, "You are furies, not women."

This ghastly story was repeated by the journals of nearly every country at the time, and was received on every side with a chorus of indignation. Those, however, who understood the methods by which the Masonic Governments on the Continent were in the habit of arousing a popular feeling in favour of the measures they were projecting against the Church, asked themselves what sort of Ministry were at the head of affairs in Austria, and what projects they had in contemplation. Nor were their suspicions allayed when they learnt that Herr Giskra, the masonic Minister for Home Affairs, was bent on the suppression of the religious orders and the confiscation of their goods. A convent scandal like this was the very thing for him, and many circumstances pointed to the conclusion that it had been got up designedly. The anonymous letter, in a feigned female hand, proved to have been written by a retired Government employé (*Civiltá Cattolica* vii. p. 737).

At once on the affair becoming public, a mob gathered in the streets, broke the windows of the convent, and tried to force an entrance into it; from the convent it passed on to the Jesuit College (only just opened in the town, and clearly not responsible for Barbara's twenty years' detention), invaded it, drove out the inmates, and murdered the aged Rector; it attacked also and destroyed several other convents and monasteries, raging in this manner for three days before the authorities found it convenient to stop its course (*Times*, Aug. 2). It was likewise suggestive of pre-arrangement, that whereas the discovery was made on July 21st, Barbara was removed to the asylum on the 22nd, and the prioress and sub-prioress of the convent were taken to prison on the 25th, Herr Giskra without awaiting the result of the trial, proceeded at once to utilize the opportunity. On the 29th, he wrote to the Governor of Lemburg, asking if there could be any possible reason why he should not at once proceed to withhold the annual pension on which the convent depended for its subsistence, and even suppress the convent altogether (*Morning Post*, Aug. 7th). Also, on the 27th, the municipality of Vienna, a body in full sympathy with the aims of the Minister, met together, and petitioned him for the instant suppression of the enclosed orders and the expulsion of the Jesuits (*Civiltá Cattolica* viii. p. 240). Various other municipalities throughout the country met at once in a similar manner to frame similar petitions. Why this indecent haste, save because all had been arranged beforehand, and they were anxious to use the opportunity before it was destroyed by the detection of the fraud?

After indulging in excited telegrams for a few days the Austrian correspondents of the English papers suddenly lost interest in the subject. It did not seem to occur to them that English readers might wish to hear the result of the trial of the incriminated nuns, and for this reason we must seek elsewhere for this very important information. This is unfortunate, as we have endeavoured

wherever possible to refer for our proofs to non-Catholic authorities; still it would be outrageous to refuse credence to respectable Catholic witnesses when they pledge their good faith for facts of a public character, nor do we anticipate that it will be denied them by any save the hopelessly credulous people who gather round the Protestant Alliance. We shall rely therefore on accounts given of the further proceedings by the *Tablet* and the *Civiltá Cattolica*, each of which journals took pains to obtain information from persons living at the time at Cracow, whose trustworthiness they guarantee. Unfortunately we are unable to refer to the *Univers* (of Paris), which took a leading part in ascertaining the details of the history.

When, then, the two nuns had been a month in prison, the preliminary proceedings against them were instituted, the result being that they were declared "guilty of the objective, not the subjective, offence of overtly violating the rights of personal freedom, and are adjudged to stand a special trial accordingly" (*Tablet*, Aug. 21, 1877): that is in English, it was judged that they had unwittingly been guilty of a legal offence, in locking the door on a mad woman without having first gone through the legal formalities. Surely a ridiculous mouse out of the labouring mountains! After this comparative acquittal, they could not of course be detained in prison, and on May 28th they were allowed to return home. In its *Cronaca* for February 12th, 1870, the *Civiltá* tells us what the final result was.

Slowly and incompletely but still in some degree justice has been rendered to the innocent Carmelites of Cracow. Ever since August 28th, after more than a month of most cruel imprisonment the Prioress Sister Maria Wenzyk and the Sub-prioress Sister Teresa Kosierkiewicz were reconducted to their monastery, and restored to liberty; but the process against them was by a piece of craft left suspended without a definite sentence being passed — probably because either they desired to avoid the shame of having, by recognising the manifest innocence of these persecuted ladies, to acknowledge at once the iniquity that had been perpetrated; or, which is worse, because they wished to let the fruits of their calumny grow to maturity, and accomplish the projected abolition of the religious orders and confiscation of their goods. But this manoeuvred delay could not last for ever, and the conscience of the judicial authorities was opposed to it. Hence Giskra and his fellow-conspirators had to put up with the passing of a verdict in good form to the effect that Barbara Ubryk had in no way been shewn to have undergone any cruelty to which her madness could be imputed, and that throughout its course she had been treated as well as possible according to the only method consistent with her deplorable state, and had received every attention which the most tender Christian charity could inspire.

What then is the true version of the facts which since it extorted this verdict of complete acquittal must have differed widely from the horrible version to which the *Vienna Presse* gave publicity? The answer is given by a Polish correspondent of the *Tablet*, for whose accuracy it vouches, and whose communication appeared in its columns on May 21st, 1869. On account of its length we will not transcribe this document, but give instead the *Tablet's* shorter summary of its contents.

We undertook to lay before our readers such additional information as we might be able to obtain. We now do so and the details which will be found in another column may be relied upon as accurate. In the first place, the whole accusation respecting the punishment of Barbara Ubryk for an offence against her vows falls to the ground. It is a case of simple madness and the treatment of a lunatic. Secondly, with regard to the accusation of inhumanity, it is proved that she was fed more abundantly than the other inhabitants of the convent, and that her health and appearance confirms the statement. Also that she exhibits no trace of personal ill-usage. Thirdly, that the absence of

clothes and of a proper bed and other chamber furniture was owing to the fact that she invariably destroyed all the articles with which she was repeatedly supplied. Since the removal to the hospital it has been equally impossible to prevent her from destroying her clothes without the use of the strait waistcoat which has been accordingly employed. Fourthly, that her cell was kept as clean as was possible consistently with her habits. Fifthly, that about half the window was walled up to prevent her being visible to the passers by, and causing grievous scandal. Sixthly, that the cell itself instead of being a dungeon was in all respects similar to those inhabited by the other Sisters. Seventhly, that her insanity was known to her relatives. The Bishop has therefore very properly retracted the expressions which he used with respect to the religious, who can reasonably be accused of nothing but a certain want of prudence in not getting rid of so terrible a patient by consigning her to a lunatic asylum.

On the authority of another Cracow correspondent, the *Tablet* (ibid.) learns that the state of Barbara Ubryk had been well known to many others besides her relations. At the trial of the nuns it was deposed by a witness who had been sacristan to the nuns for thirty years, that, when she first went mad, numerous physicians paid her professional visits, and that the two administrators of the diocese previous to Bishop von Galecki, who had quite recently succeeded, knew well about it, having received frequent applications from the sisters for leave to send her away to an asylum — applications which had been refused on the ground that it was the duty of the nuns to take care of a mad sister, not send her to a lunatic asylum.

Such being the true version of this distressing story we are not surprised to hear that whereas "the Catholic public at first took part with the non-Catholic public against the Cracow nuns, the facts now known have changed all this" (*Tablet*, Aug. 21) or that "the burgesses of Cracow, married men and fathers of families, have subscribed to replace the funds sequestrated by the government from the Carmelite Convent, and thus given a triumphant denial to the atheist and Jewish press and its Protestant dupes" (ibid. Oct. 16); or that "one of the most conspicuous ladies of that (Polish) nation, contemning the ease and luxuries of her own home, should have wished to shut herself up in one of the poor cells of the monastery which, through the episode of Barbara Ubryk had been so unmeritedly misdescribed. The Princess Maria Czartoryska turned her back upon the world and gave herself to God, embracing in that place the life of a Carmelite religious." (*Civiltá*, ix. 493).

The Conventual Inquiry Society

We shall leave our readers to judge for themselves what is to be thought of the people who industriously disseminate calumnies like the four which have been examined. As they are circulated in the interest of Convent Inspection, it may be well to call attention to the record for accuracy and candour of the four persons who compose the Conventual Inquiry Society (see p. 11).

What is to be thought of Deputy Surgeon General Partridge can be gathered from our examination into his charge against the Carlisle Place Orphanage.

The Rev. Lancelot Holland is a gentleman, now resident in Edinburgh, who, in the first week of September 1891, in the columns of the *Scotsman*, charged categorically some English nuns with having administered "drugs of the most noxious character" to one of their number. He stated that he had the highest authority for this allegation; but what value he himself attached to this "highest authority" was made manifest by his haste to repudiate it the very moment he became aware that legal proceedings were in contemplation. He then wrote forthwith (Sept. 12th) to the same paper

explaining that "he had only meant to say that some medicine" given to the person in question "had disagreed with her" and that the high authority "did not even hint that there was an attempt at poisoning nor did I imply it." What the high authority may have hinted we cannot say, but that Mr. Holland had not implied poisoning was a statement in such flagrant contradiction with his previous language that the *Scotsman* felt it necessary to rebuke him editorially in the following words:

"Mr. Holland does not seem to know the meaning of what he writes. More unmanly conduct than that of which he has been guilty it would be difficult to conceive."

Mr. Holland has not, however, even yet learnt to be careful about truth. Mr. Rider Haggard, as we all know, in his novel *Montezuma's Daughter*, states in a foot-note that he had himself seen in the Museum at Mexico the desiccated body of a nun, who was known to have been walled up alive. Father Thurston, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was able on the authority of the Curator of the Museum to contradict this statement so effectually that Mr. Haggard felt himself bound, though somewhat ungracefully, to withdraw it. Nothing daunted by this withdrawal, Mr. Lancelot had no scruple in repeating it, on Mr. Haggard's authority, in Edinburgh. By so doing, he drew down upon himself once more the censure of an honest man. Mr. Andrew Lang writes in *Longman's Magazine* for May, 1894, p. 104:

"In a journal called the *W. Rock* (March 9) I read that a Rev. W. Lancelot Holland lectured lately on immured nuns. He dwelt on Mr. Haggard's footnote. Now, Mr. Haggard had freely admitted that he was in error when he believed 'the evidence of history to prove that nuns who had broken their vows had been immured in the walls of convents. This opinion I arrived at too hastily,' he wrote; and he has come to the conclusion that 'there is no proof that so barbarous a punishment was ever enforced, at any rate in this country.' If Mr. Holland did not know this, he should have known it, and if he knew it.... it is needless to say more about Mr. Holland."

Quite recently, Mr Holland has given us a fuller illustration of his Christian charity. From the *English Churchman* of June 28, 1894, we find that at a recent Protestant demonstration against the Scottish Branch of the Catholic Truth Society, he said that "if they could have access to the forty convents in the country (i.e. in Scotland), to see all that was done within their walls, there would not be one stone left standing on another." Evidently Mr. Lancelot Holland's ambition is to tread in the footsteps of Lord George Gordon.

Mr. Benjamin Nicholson, another member of this Society, is the gentleman in whose immediate interest (as parliamentary candidate for North Sussex) the lecturing campaign of Miss Golding and her impresario, Mr. Edward Littleton, was undertaken. This is the pair of Ultra-Protestant champions whom their fellow lecturer Edith O'Gorman, in the *Surrey Mirror* for Feb. 17th and 27th, 1894, with the exquisite charity which binds these people together among themselves, charged with telling "deliberate falsehoods for pecuniary purposes," placing them in the same category with such other similar Ultra-Protestant champions as "Dr. Keating and F. G. Widdows, the last now serving his ten years in prison."

Mr. Benjamin Nicholson is at present somewhat hopelessly engaged in ascertaining whether the North Sussex constituency contains a sufficient number of gulls to return him to Parliament.

General Sir Robert Phayre has lately been made a G.C.B. Such a decoration is given in recognition of distinguished service, and it might seem surprising that he should wish to tarnish his military laurels by associating himself with persons whose sense of honour is, to say the least, not conspicuous. But the surprise ceases when we find that this gentleman has not shrunk from writing

such a pamphlet as *Monasticism Unveiled, Part ii. — The Climax* — a pamphlet which repeats the oft-refuted slanders of Maria Monk, of Colonel Lehmanowski, and of Dr. Hyde against Father Damien; and which tells, with unparalleled credulity, the "lengthy and veracious" story of a "persecuted nun," who was equally anxious that her story should be known, and that her name and whereabouts should be concealed.

See "*Ellen Golding the Rescued Nun*," *C.T.S.* 1d.
