

The Protestant Platform

By G. Elliot Anstruther

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Prefatory Note

The following twenty examples give us a view of the Protestant platform under what is perhaps the most widely advertised and vaunted of its aspects — the recruits from Rome. Here are a score of men and women who have either made public use of their apostasy or else have laid false claim to the notoriety of apostates. The collection is a mixed one in several respects: what links these people together into an unenviable unity is the common purpose they have achieved in attacking the Catholic Church on the ground of personal experience. How far such attacks are worthy of credence by sensible folk is best estimated by considering the careers and characters of the majority of these lecturers. It would be unjust, of course, to measure the best among them by standards applicable only to the worst. What the reader must do, in order to be quite fair, is to let the graver offenders draw whatever mitigating leaven can be supplied by the others, and then strike an average. That average will supply the moral quality of the "ex-Romanist" as Protestant lecturer — and what an average it is! G. E. A.

Giovanni Achilli

Mention of Achilli's name takes us back to the year 1850, a year in which Protestant prejudice throughout England was excited by the "No Popery" agitation which followed the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy. In May of that year a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, at Birmingham, was addressed by one Dr. Achilli, minister of an Italian Protestant church in London, an apostate who had been a friar at Viterbo. His moral character was thoroughly bad; he had been a profligate, deprived of his lectureship for grave misconduct and suspended from all priestly offices, and he was described by the Neapolitan police as "known for habitual incontinency." Achilli's immoralities were alluded to by Dr. Newman in a lecture to the Brothers of the Little Oratory at Birmingham, in October 1851, and as a result the ex-priest brought an action for libel against the future Cardinal, which was heard in the Queen's Bench in the following year. The evidence as to Achilli's character was such that it would be conclusive to any modern jury; but those were the days of strong anti-Catholic bias, with which even the judge (Lord Campbell) showed himself to be affected, and a verdict was returned against Newman. The Times, in a strong leading article, protested against this miscarriage of justice, and the Morning Chronicle took Lord Campbell severely to task. On appeal the verdict was quashed, and offerings from every part of the country flowed in to defray the costs on the Catholic side. Newman's exposure of Achilli was timely and thorough, and resulted in discrediting the latter with all respectable Protestants.

Brother Ansgar

Among the accessions to the Protestant lecture platform within the past few years is a native of Denmark named Ericksen, an apostate who was for a time a member of the community of Marist Brothers at Dumfries. Needless to say, he was taken up by the Protestant Alliance after his "conversion," and addressed meetings under the auspices of that body. His lectures included the customary charges — drunkenness, cruelty, etc. — which Catholics have by now grown accustomed to from lecturers of this stamp; and he continued, as a Protestant lecturer, to wear an imitation of the Marist habit, to which, of course, he was no longer entitled. Ericksen (or Brother Ansgar, to give him his name in religion) was dealt with severely in a local Catholic magazine at Barnet, which resulted in his bringing an action for libel against the editor, Father Spink. To the great surprise not only of Catholics but of other people as well, the jury returned a verdict for the plaintiff, awarding him damages. There was no surprise, however, when on appeal the verdict was quashed by three judges, and the trial set aside. Nor need we be surprised at the further fact that Ansgar took no steps to have a new trial moved for within the time allowed by law, but abandoned further proceedings against the priest. His charges with regard to the Marist congregation have continued, so it may be useful to have the above particulars on record.

Pastor Chiniquy

There are doubtless many Protestants who still believe the charges brought against the Catholic Church by the late Pastor Chiniquy in his *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*. But a man does not remain associated for half a century with a communion which he afterwards discovers to have been full of corruption, without laying himself open to the charge of either telling lies or having been singularly complacent of evil! As a matter of fact, the volume in question, published in 1885, introduces charges which find no place in Chiniquy's earlier work, *Why I Left the Church of Rome*; while if we go further back to his autobiography, published by the Religious Tract Society in 1861, we there find his conversion to Protestantism stated as solely due to doctrinal considerations. It was not until he had been many years out of the Church that Chiniquy tickled the anti-Catholic palate with the more serious charges which give his *Fifty Years* its special spice. An examination of this book by Father Sydney Smith, S.J. (*Pastor Chiniquy*, C.T.S., 1d.) reveals its manifold inconsistencies and manifest libels. Of Chiniquy himself, as Father Smith shows, the evidence of letters and other documents relates a history that is by no means commendable. His uncle, a M. Dionne, had reason to doubt of him as early as 1825, when he ceased paying for Chiniquy's education and forbade him his house. In September 1851, eighteen years after his ordination, Bishop Bourget of Montreal had occasion to withdraw all priestly powers from him, in connection with a charge affecting his morality. Chiniquy wrote to the Bishop in the following month, saying: "I shall go and hide the disgrace of my position in the obscurest and least known corner of the United States." He went to America, but not into obscurity. Readmitted to priestly duty, he worked until 1856, when Bishop O'Regan suspended and afterwards excommunicated him on further charges of immorality. Details of these events, leading up to Chiniquy's apostasy in 1858, are given in the C.T.S. pamphlet, together with the text of letters from the ex-priest himself, and other persons, which effectually repel the statements in *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*.

"The Rev. T. H. Clifford, B.D."

This adventurer, an ex-soldier who posed as a Wesleyan minister, lectured for the Scottish Protestant Association at Ayr, N.B., where he carried on evangelistic meetings in the High Street and on the Low Green. We give him the name by which he called himself at that time, but it is not clear what his name really is. Clifford's police record is a bad one. In 1904, under the name of Smith, he received three months' imprisonment, with hard labour, for fraud in London. He had pretended in the City to be a paralytic cripple, but went nimbly home to the suburbs each evening, after his business day was done, living well on the charity he received. Later, he was imprisoned for six months for falsely representing himself to be an undergraduate of Trinity College and a nephew of the Rev. Dr. Clifford. His wife secured a separation order in 1907, with maintenance; on two occasions Clifford went to prison for failing to pay this. He afterwards proceeded to Scotland with a woman named Ethel Brown, with whom he went through a bigamous form of marriage. In 1909 he was giving anti-Catholic lectures at Ayr, for the Association mentioned above; but after a time he left that body, pretended that he was a clergyman, and started the Free Gardeners' Hall Mission. On August 27, 1910, he was arrested on charges of falsely celebrating marriages and contravening the Registration of Births Act by causing false entries to be made in the birth register (in connection with his irregular life with Ethel Brown). In sentencing Clifford to eighteen months' imprisonment with hard labour, the Sheriff said the case was one of the worst he had recollected. Details of the trial are to be found in the Ayrshire Post for October 14, 1910.

Ellen Golding

Among the Protestant pamphlets issued by Mr. Kensit is one on "Convent Life, by Sister Mary Raymond." Although there is no mention of the fact, the story related is really that put forward by the late Miss Ellen Golding some years ago, after she had left the convent of La Sainte Union at Highgate, London. Her story, in brief, is that she was attracted to the Catholic Church by the glamour of its music and its ceremonies, that she entered the Order of the Sainte Union, and that her subsequent disillusion as to the virtues of the conventual life included the knowledge that poison was administered to the nuns in their food, from which deaths had taken place in various convents in France to which she was from time to time attached. She had been in the Order about twenty-five years when, in August 1891, she made up her mind to leave. Her vows were only annual ones; she could have left the Order with full regularity and sanction in the month following; but instead of doing this she wrote a secret letter to a Protestant solicitor, who went to the convent and brought her away, after a "scene." The story got into the papers, and within a comparatively short time Miss Golding was secured for the Protestant platform. A visit to Bournemouth proved her undoing, as she was there taken in hand by a local priest, Father Cooney, S.J., and closely cross-examined, a professional shorthand writer being present to take down the questions and answers. The effect of the Catholic action was so entirely to discredit the "Rescued Nun" that after a short time her campaign was brought to an end. The full story, with many important details for which there is no space here, will be found in the C.T.S. pamphlet *Ellen Golding, the "Rescued Nun,"* by the Rev. S. F. Smith, S.J. (1d.).

William Jefferys

Calumnies against convents and monasteries are among the things that age cannot wither nor custom stale. It is getting on for seventy years since an impostor named William Jefferys produced his *Narrative of Six Years' Captivity and Suffering* at the hands of the monks at Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, Leicestershire, and although the story was publicly knocked on the head, and its author sent to gaol for three months as a rogue and a vagabond, the *Vanguard*, a Protestant paper largely subsidized by the Hope Trust, reprinted it as recently as 1913, — for which the editor was forced to make an apology. Jefferys's lying Narrative so excited the neighbourhood of the Abbey in 1849 that threats were made to burn down the monastery. As a matter of fact, he had never been in the monastery, except to enjoy its hospitality as a guest. The Prior called for a magisterial inquiry into the charges, so that the case might be fully investigated. This was done, and the wretched Jefferys, after vainly endeavouring, on the spot, to locate the scenes of his sufferings, completely broke down, threw himself on his knees before the Superior, and confessed that the whole story was false. Although the community forgave him, the Protestants whom he had duped, including the printer of the Narrative, were not so lenient; Jefferys was taken to Wednesbury and lodged in prison, and received his sentence at the Handsworth Petty Sessions. A full summary of the facts of the case is supplied by James Britten, K.S.G., in the C.T.S. pamphlet on *An "Escaped Monk"* (1d.).

Sarah M'Cormack, the "White Nun"

"Now, Sarah, I want you to study these books, and you must get things out of them for to-night." The speaker was one Evans, "General" of a Salvation Army in Scotland with which the organization founded by General Booth had nothing to do and must not be confounded. The books were those of Maria Monk and Edith O'Gorman (see pp. 11, 16). "Sarah" was Sarah M'Cormack, a Glasgow servant-girl, who under Evans's direction was to read up these narratives and pose as an "escaped nun" from the convent at Lanark, a place in which she had never set foot, as she afterwards confessed. This was in 1894. The lecturing career of the "White Nun," as she was called, came to an end after brief visits to Leith and Edinburgh; the police arrested her on a charge of "falsehood, fraud, and wilful imposition," and she received seven days' imprisonment. Evans, charged with abetting, got off on the Scottish verdict of "not proven" — a lucky escape, for, as the prosecutor said in Court, though the girl was foolish and wicked, the man charged with her was worse; he was a direct participator in the fraud. It turned out that Evans had taken the proceeds of the lectures, giving his dupe ten shillings a week and finding her in material for her revelations. A full account of the M'Cormack case was given in the Glasgow Observer for March and April 1894; a summary of it, from which this note has been written, will be found in a useful pamphlet on *The Truth about Convents*, by James Britten, K.S.G. (C.T.S., 1d.).

"Pastor" M'Donald

Several towns in Scotland — Motherwell, Campbeltown, and Hawick among them — have been lectured to by "Pastor" James M'Donald, also known as "the Kilwinning Martyr." This man started a Protestant Guild at Hawick, the members of which were drawn from sympathizers with his campaign. The Scottish field, however, proved less fruitful than he had hoped, so in November 1913 M'Donald purchased a ticket for New Zealand. The Protestant Guild subscribed a testimonial; but their interest and also the Pastor's movements were diverted when the police arrested him on the

charge of deserting his family. M'Donald pleaded not guilty, but on advice withdrew that plea and admitted the offence. The Sheriff said it was sad that a man should go about working in the name of religion and forget the primary Christian duty of maintaining his wife and children; he emphasized this view by fining the Kilwinning Martyr five pounds, or thirty days' imprisonment (Glasgow Herald, November 26, 1913). Two Protestant ministers at Hawick, the Rev. W. A. Ashby and the Rev. W. J. Ainslie, had previously (November 13) issued a leaflet to the public in which various unpleasant things are said about the "Pastor," who, it was stated, "is absolutely unworthy of support in any self-respecting community. . . . The sooner he is gone the better it will be for Hawick, and every good cause in it." In February 1914 M'Donald was in Edinburgh, where he was sentenced to ten days' imprisonment at the City Police Court for having obtained board and lodging without paying or intending to pay for them. The following May found him again at Hawick, where he was fined for attempting to enter a public-house while under the influence of drink.

Maria Monk

Who has not heard of the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*? The book came out about eighty years ago, and continued for several generations to be a staple of Protestant literature; this is no longer the case, as respectable Protestants will have nothing to do with it, and for the most part it is stocked by purveyors of pornographic books and pictures, although it has still a certain vogue with anti-Catholic firebrands of the baser sort. Maria Monk's story related to events which she alleged had taken place in the Hotel Dieu Convent at Montreal. Cruelty, immorality, murder — all were included in the indictment. From the first her statements were disbelieved by the authorities, and it was not long before a complete investigation, by Protestants themselves, demonstrated the utter falsity of the narrative. A Protestant gentleman of New York, Colonel W. L. Stone, accompanied by others, went to Montreal and probed the matter to the bottom; the visitors examined every part of the convent, and tested every detail advanced by Maria Monk, and the Colonel's signed verdict was that "Maria Monk is an arrant impostor, and her book, in all its essential features, a tissue of calumnies." Mr. John Ostell, an architect, proved that an alleged plan of the convent, printed with the Disclosures, could by no possibility be true. Protestant ministers, magistrates, and others visited the Hotel Dieu and vindicated it by letters and affidavits. As a matter of fact, Maria Monk was a girl of bad character, who so far from having been a nun was instead an inmate of the Magdalen Asylum for fallen women, from which institution she drew the characters introduced into the Disclosures. Her end was as follows: in 1849 she was arrested for stealing from a paramour, and sent to prison, where she died. See *The True History of Maria Monk* (C.T.S., 1d.).

Margaret Mary Moul

In February 1909 the English Press gave wide publicity to an "escape" from the well-known Benedictine convent at East Bergholt, Suffolk. The facts of the case, separated from its fictions, related to a Miss Margaret Moul, in religion Dame Maurus, who made a secret departure from the convent and was for a brief period an "escaped nun" lecturer on the Protestant platform. It is due to her to say that her narrative, both on the platform and in a book which appeared in her name, was happily free from the kind of suggestions and innuendoes that one so often finds in attacks on the conventual life; and as Miss Moul has since married and given up lecturing, it might seem a charitable duty to omit all reference to her case. But this cannot be done, first of all because the omission would be misunderstood as a desire to suppress unpleasant facts, and next because her

book is still in circulation. All that need be said here, however, is that an investigation of the matter was undertaken by three local gentlemen of position, all of them non-Catholics: Mr. Thomas Robertson, a magistrate, Mr. W. S. Calvert, Lord of the Manor, and the Rev. E. A. Ley, Vicar of Manningtree. These gentlemen visited the convent without any previous intimation: "We were allowed," they reported, "to converse freely with any of the nuns apart from the presence of the Superiors, and were struck with the expressions of contentment and happiness used by all whom we addressed in talking of their daily life." The report concludes: "In fine, after a lengthened investigation we could find no foundation for the charges made in the book published under the title of *The Escaped Nun*." Those who desire a full statement of the case are referred to the C.T.S. pamphlet by Father Sydney Smith, S.J., on *The Escaped Nun from East Bergholt* (1d.).

Minnie Murphy

Minnie Murphy is not an important person, but her case, besides the fact that it is a fairly recent one, supplies a typical instance of the readiness with which a certain section of the English Press will lay hold of any "escaped nun" story, however wildly improbable, and give it currency without either suspicion or inquiry. On May 25, 1912, the Sheffield Independent printed a startling story, with no less startling headlines: "SAVE ME FROM THIS PRISON! Dramatic Story of Convent Life. Sheffield Plot. Escaped Nun who Slept in HER COFFIN" It appeared that "a bright-eyed, bonny girl, of frank, open countenance," had spoken in a train about her intention of entering a convent. "A shrewd little woman" tried to dissuade her, and gave the girl her visiting-card. So much for the prologue; the story opens with the receipt of a letter by the shrewd little woman aforesaid: "Will you try to get me from this prison of misery," it ran, "or I shall die." Posing as the girl's aunt, the benefactress went to the address, St. Vincent's Home, Ancoats, Manchester, and took Minnie away. Speedily a narrative was forthcoming, of scourgings, and drudgery, and a dark punishment cell, and sleeping in one's own coffin — a story palpably absurd; yet it was accepted without question, without any investigation, by the editor of the Independent, and was copied into the Weekly Dispatch in London, and, needless to say, also into the Protestant Press. Exposure was not long in coming. Dean Dolan of Sheffield showed the impossibility of the details given, and the Sheffield Telegraph, a rival organ, made first-hand inquiries at Ancoats, by which the whole story collapsed like a house of cards. Minnie Murphy herself fled from her Protestant friends, leaving a note behind her in which she confessed to having deceived them. The truth was that she had never been in a convent at all. At the home at Ancoats she was a laundry girl; her previous history included residence in two Catholic institutions in Dublin, and work, as a servant, in a home at Preston. For the full story, see *Minnie Murphy's Mendacities* (C.T.S., 1d.).

Titus Oates

In point of time Titus Oates, going back as he does to the seventeenth century, heads the list of the various anti-Catholics who are pilloried in this pamphlet. His character is aptly expressed in the first three words of the notice about him in the Dictionary of National Biography: "Oates, Titus, perjurer"; it is a qualification making him the father-in-kind of many who have come after him. This scoundrel belongs to English history, and is so well and unenviably known that his inclusion here is more for the sake of suitability than of necessity. Oates contrived to get admitted to orders in the Established Church, but soon gave signs of his later vocation by bringing a trumped-up charge against a schoolmaster, the failure of which led to his being thrown into prison. He escaped and

joined the Navy as a chaplain, from which office he was expelled. It was about 1677 that Oates began his campaign of calumny against Catholics. Pretending to be reconciled as a Catholic himself, he was actually received into the college at Valladolid, but after a few months was ignominiously expelled. Later on he fabricated his story of a "Popish plot," on the strength of which — sustained by the perjured testimony of a second scoundrel named Bedloe — wholesale arrests were made and innocent men, one after another, put to death. Oates was well paid and lodged by the Government, and feted and fed, until the tide of his fortunes turned in 1681. Popular credulity was now largely exhausted as to the supposed plot, but not until between thirty and forty Catholics had been judicially murdered, among them the Venerable Oliver Plunket. Titus Oates fell from his pinnacle, and when James II. came to the throne he was tried for perjury, and ordered to be imprisoned and whipped. Financial and other relief came to him with the Orange regime, but he remained hopelessly discredited until his death in 1705 — "a most consummate cheat, blasphemous, vicious, perjured, impudent, and saucy, foul-mouth'd wretch" (Roger North).

Edith O'Gorman

One of the very few survivors in the ex-nun business, Mrs. O'Gorman Auffray, the "Escaped Nun," is still (1915) prepared in her old age to tell English Protestant audiences about her sufferings, her escape, and her subsequent persecution by Catholics. It is an old story — how she joined the Sisters of Charity in New Jersey, witnessed various cruelties to children who were under the Sisters' care, was annoyed and almost drugged by a priest, fled from the convent, went through divers adventures, and finally received the light of Protestant conviction. Her statement, frequently made, that Catholics have not attempted any reply to her charges, no longer holds good: there is a C.T.S. pamphlet, *Edith O'Gorman and her Book* (1d.), which sufficiently refutes Mrs. Auffray's story out of her own mouth; for it compares very closely two editions of her narrative, divided by an interval of thirty years, and exposes flaws which are vital. For example, the story of the alleged escape is differently related, in the two editions, in regard both to the place and circumstances: in one edition (1871) the "escape" takes the very mild form of leaving a school-house in the city of Newark, New Jersey; while in the later version (1901) the scene is shifted to the convent at Jersey City, where she "softly unlocked the doors and gates" and so departed. She is proved to have kept up communication with, and written in defence of, the priest who comes into her story, and it is shown that the text of letters and newspaper reports has been altered to suit the purposes of the book. Edith O'Gorman's charges, tested in this way, break down in every important particular.

Ex-Priest Roche

Described by Truth (December 8, 1909) as "an utterly unprincipled scoundrel," ex-priest Roche supplies one of a number of instances where moral unworthiness has proved to be no bar to the anti-Catholic lecture platform. The Lanarkshire Protestant Crusade and Evangelical Mission of Scotland engaged Roche among its lecturers some years ago; an inquiry beforehand, in the proper quarter, would have elicited the following facts about him. Roche was for several years attached to the Catholic mission at Selkirk, where his conduct gave rise to continual scandals: he was intemperate, and a lady who passed as his sister had in reality been married to him many years previously. On one occasion he exhibited a tradesman's bill with a stamped receipt at foot; the tradesman repudiated the signature as a forgery, and the handwriting was clearly that of Roche himself. Deprived of his priestly office in 1906, Roche left Selkirk and went to Edinburgh, leaving behind

him various unpaid debts, among them his liquor bills. On June 10 of that year he was admitted to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, suffering from acute alcoholism, and remained there for ten days. Subsequently he took to writing begging-letters. Utterly unscrupulous, he offered to say mass in return for help, well knowing that his deprivation made him no longer capable of doing so; and while appealing to the Superior of a Catholic convent for assistance, he was actually appearing in public and denouncing the Catholic Faith. The editor of Truth says, referring again to Roche as "a dissolute hypocrite," that "if these are the sort of champions on whom Protestantism depends, the cause is truly in a parlous state."

"Ex-Priest Ruthven"

The above is the name assumed by Michael Riordan, an apostate who came to England from the United States about 1899, and began to deliver the customary lectures, a compound of invention and indecency, which one looks for, and gets, in men of this class. The Catholic Truth Society secured his American record, which supplied the reason why "Ruthven" should prefer to try the English Protestant field. The testimony against him was largely that of Presbyterian newspapers and clergymen. Riordan had been expelled from the Baptist Church as a fraud; he had been in gaol for misappropriation of funds, which he had been collecting in the name of the Rev. Dr. Paton, the well-known missionary, who described the affair in his autobiography and supported it on oath at the trial of a libel action brought by Riordan against Father De Bom, the priest at Shanklin, Isle of Wight. Besides the C.T.S., Truth took the matter up, and printed a number of exposures of Riordan's past. It was in 1901 that the libel action against Father De Bom took place, which resulted in a verdict for the defendant on one count and for the plaintiff on another. When, in the course of the proceedings, extracts from Riordan's lectures were read, Mr. Justice Ridley ordered all women and boys out of court. The Judge's summing-up (since printed by the C.T.S. as a pamphlet, *The Judge and the Ex-Priest*) is one of the most scathing pronouncements regarding anti-Catholic lectures of this kind that have ever issued from the Bench. That Riordan left hotel bills unpaid, and was charged with using threats with a revolver, are among the records of his minor offences.

Margaret Shepherd

Among the many impostors who have posed as convent victims it would not be easy to find an example at once so fraudulent and so depraved as the late Margaret L. Shepherd, anti-Catholic lecturer, writer, and creator of a Protestant women's society in America. She was never a nun: her only association with the conventual life was derived from institutions, under the care of nuns, for incorrigible girls or fallen women. She was for a time at Arno's Vale Convent, Bristol, not as a nun but among the penitent prostitutes whom that community looks after. In many respects Margaret Shepherd is to be classed with Maria Monk, — certainly she was no better, and on the whole was rather worse. Her entire life, almost from childhood, was one of criminality and deceit. She passed under various names. As "Miss Douglas" she was arrested for forging Lord Archibald Douglas's name. At Bodmin, Cornwall, and in London, she was imprisoned at different times on criminal charges, in the names of Parkyn and Edgerton. At another time she was "Margaret Herbert," and claimed relationship to Lady Herbert. It was after she ran away from Arno's Vale that Margaret Shepherd began her career of imposture and deception against the Church. She was befriended by the Salvation Army, and went to America under its auspices; there she betrayed the trust reposed in her, and subsequently Florence Booth wrote: "I have no doubt at all but this woman is a fraud." She

deceived the late Mr. W. T. Stead, whose disillusion found expression in the advice to an inquirer about her: "The less you have to do with the lady you mention the better it will be for your peace of mind and the security of the contents of your pockets." Mrs. Shepherd supported her vile lectures with obscene books, on account of which the authorities at Brooklyn issued a warrant against her in 1901. She victimized people right and left, among them several Nonconformist clergymen, who wrote letters warning the public of her true character. She died in 1903, leaving behind her about as bad a record as it is possible for this sort of person to accumulate.

Pastor Silva

In the spring of 1914 the Protestant lecture platform in England received another recruit in the person of "Pastor Silva," an Italian apostate priest whose alleged story has been circulated by the Waldensian Church Mission Society under the title of "Father Frederick." This man is an ex-Capuchin friar, who apostatized and married and was afterwards connected with a Waldensian mission near Genoa. The story of his conversion to Protestantism is a variant of the well-worn legend of Luther's discovery of a Bible. Pastor Silva also discovered one among "prohibited and dangerous" works in the library of the friary at Bergamo, to which his appointment as librarian had given him access; took it to his cell, read it, and was "converted" as the result! At a meeting held in St. Paul's Church Room, South Kensington, on April 30, 1914, Pastor Silva was tackled by Mr. A. Hilliard Atteridge, the Secretary of the C.T.S. Catholic Defence Sub-committee. Mr. Atteridge was able to demonstrate the falsity of the Pastor's statement by reading extracts from the Capuchin Rule itself, in which the reading and study of Holy Scripture is specially enjoined. Pastor Silva's rejoinder was that such a rule belonged to the thirteenth century, and was now obsolete; but his shot failed signally to hit the mark, for the edition from which Mr. Atteridge read was issued in 1905. This single instance will serve to show the character and worthlessness of this ex-priest's statements; other particulars will be found in Catholic Book Notes for August 1914 (p. 289).

The Slatterys

In 1897-98 an ex-priest named Joseph Slattery, accompanied by Mrs. Slattery, a sham nun, were giving anti-Catholic lectures in various parts of England, particularly in the north. The Slatterys, like Ruthven (see p. 18), were an American importation; they came to this country bearing "the highest testimonials from well-known gentlemen in America," and were launched upon the English public by the Protestant Alliance. It was not long before Catholics over here were in possession of the facts, mainly due to a pamphlet issued by the C.T.S. of America. Joseph Slattery was a priest of the Dublin archdiocese who gave way to drink. He had been warned by Cardinal M'Cabe and Archbishop Walsh, but to no good end, and the Archbishop was obliged to give him up. Slattery left Ireland, and was next heard of as a student for the Baptist ministry at Hamilton, New York, where he posed as having abandoned the priesthood from "conscientious scruples." Exposure of the truth led to his expulsion, and he then went to the Baptists at Philadelphia, but there also he was expelled. He and the woman took to the lecture platform in America before coming to England and Scotland. At Edinburgh they were prosecuted for selling "an indecent and obscene book," for publishing which Slattery had been imprisoned at Pittsburg. His "testimonials," when examined, are found to be either bogus or worthless. As to Mrs. Slattery, who lectured, and produced a book, as an "ex-nun," it need only be said that her whole story is a string of fictions, as to her convent life and all

connected with it. See *The Slatterys*, by James Britten, K.S.G. (C.T.S., 1d.), for a complete exposure of this couple.

Theodore Von Husen

It was in the summer of 1912 that this person first came under notice as an anti-Catholic lecturer. Under the auspices of Mr. Kensit's crusade he was introduced to audiences at Teddington as an ex-priest; in support of this claim Von Husen put forward various particulars, e.g. the date of his ordination, and that he was known at Cologne Cathedral and Archbishop's House, Westminster. Inquiry at both places elicited, as was expected, the reply in each case that nothing whatever was known there about him. At one time he would pose as an ex-Jesuit, at another as an ex-Franciscan. The details he gave of his life would make him a sub-deacon when less than fourteen years of age, and a priest before he was eighteen. Challenged at one of his meetings as to the words of consecration, he hazarded "Corpus Christum meum factum tuum"! Von Husen fell into the hands of the police in September 1913, and in the following month was convicted at the Central Criminal Court and sentenced to gaol for three months for indecent conduct, the jury finding him guilty without leaving the box. At the hearing various facts about him transpired. He had been married twenty years previously. For two years he had worked in London as a painter and decorator, changing into semi-clerical garb in the evenings and thus becoming "Father Von Husen" of the Protestant lecture platform. Mr. A. Hilliard Atteridge, who had already exposed Von Husen at a public meeting, has done so in fuller detail in the C.T.S. pamphlet entitled *The Record of an Impostor* (1d.).

Francis George Widdows

"Ex-Monk Widdows," as he likes to call himself, is another of the "Pastors" of the anti-Catholic platform; he has filled that office at the Martin Luther Church at Hackney, London, but his spiritual ministry has been interrupted by enforced retirement — in other words, Widdows has more than once been imprisoned for a serious offence, and at present (1915) is serving yet another sentence. This man, whose name is properly Nobbs, was never a Catholic. He is not an ex-monk; his only association with a religious community is in the fact that he was befriended by the late Father Ignatius, the Anglican monk, then at Norwich, afterwards at Llanthony. In 1888 Widdows was tried at the Central Criminal Court and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude; it transpired at the trial that he had been previously convicted of indecency in 1875, at Toronto, and imprisoned for five months. The autobiographical details which this ex-convict supplies, in proof of his claim to be also an ex-Franciscan, make interesting reading. He states that he was taken by a Capuchin priest to France, entered a Franciscan novitiate in Paris, and took his vows at Lyons in 1869, afterwards going to Rome. But according to the Daily Telegraph for February 18, 1869, Widdows was at that time in London, and not only in London but also in the dock at Marylebone Police Court, charged as a result of a quarrel with a man named Hughes, the two of them being partners in a general shop. Truth (June 4, 1896) says that "the most rabid Protestant, unless he is destitute of all sense of decency and self-respect, should be ashamed to give his countenance and support to a lecturer of Widdows' character and antecedents."

In 1902 he was again found guilty, in London, of an indecent offence, and sentenced to two years' hard labour.
