

The True Story of Barbara Ubryk

By Rev. Sydney F. Smith, S.J.

London Catholic Truth Society No.cts0029 (1897)

About three years ago I wrote for the Catholic Truth Society a slight examination of one or two of the slanderous charges against convents which, in the furtherance of their campaign for the persecution of Catholics, the Protestant Alliance people so industriously circulate. Among these slanderous charges was one relating to the strange story of Barbara Ubryk. This story was sprung upon the world in 1869, when it was so worked by the Masonic press that in the first instance it not unnaturally caused many excellent persons to lose their heads. But when the judicial inquiry to which it led had ascertained the true facts, it became apparent that the accused nuns, so far from having indulged in an almost fiendish cruelty, had been passing through a perfect martyrdom of patient and compassionate endurance. The Protestant Alliance people, however, according to their wont, in their many accounts of Barbara Ubryk suppress all mention of these later stages in the history of the discovery. They confine themselves to the task of disseminating widely, with the additional embellishment of purely imaginary pictures, the hideous version of the Vienna Free Press (of July 23, 1869), a paper notorious for its anti-Catholic and indeed anti-Christian bias. *Calumnies against Convents* met this misrepresentation by supplying the suppressed portion of the history, and it is a consolation to know that the exposure has been of some use. If it has likewise stirred up the Rev. Lancelot Holland — a gentleman whom the Protestant Alliance is proud to have on its managing committee — to write in highly seasoned language a species of reply, this too is cause for satisfaction, enabling one, as it does, to expose still more effectually the kind of evidence on which these people rely. As the primary object of the present tract is not so much to furnish more exhaustive particulars of the Barbara Ubryk case as to show up the methods of these anti-Catholic bigots, it will be best in the first place to transcribe the section from *Calumnies against Convents*, and then to examine the mode in which Mr. Lancelot Holland deals with it.

The Protestant Alliance Account

"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 20, 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 showed 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 movable 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 Free Press of July 23, 1869) breaks off in the pamphlet before us, but in the Free Press 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 Liberal Governments on the Continent were wont to set about 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 employee (*Civiltà 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*, August 2nd). It was likewise suggestive of prearrangement 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 Lemberg, 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*, August 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 (*Civiltà 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?

The Truth Emerges

"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 *Civiltà Cattolica*, each of which journals took pains to obtain information from persons living at the time at Cracow, whose trustworthiness they guaranteed. 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 were adjudged to stand a special trial accordingly' (*Tablet*, August 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 mountain! After this comparative acquittal they could not be detained in prison, and on August 28th they were allowed to return home. In its *Cronaca* for February 12, 1870, the *Civiltà* 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 Wenzkyk, 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 recognizing 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 shown 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.

The True Facts

"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 Free Press 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 August 21, 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 confirm the statement. Also that she exhibits no trace of personal violence. 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* 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."

Mr. Holland's Fraudulent "Evidence"

Such is the account given in *Calumnies against Convents*. Now let us see what Mr. Holland has to say to it. The daily papers, not finding the further stages of the history to be of sufficient interest, and therefore passing them over in silence, in the Catholic Truth Society's tract, as the above transcript shows, I had been compelled to seek information as to these further stages from Catholic papers only; but I had ventured to hope that their authority would be accepted by all sensible

readers. Mr. Holland, however, naturally objects to this anticipation, but forgets that I had not been so rash as to expect credence from the "hopelessly credulous people who gather round the Protestant Alliance." He feels himself, however, to be now in the possession of evidence against me so conclusive that he can say confidently, perhaps over-confidently, "I give him [that is, the writer of the C.T.S. tract] my word for it that, if I do not convince him, I will convince nearly every reader of this book [his *Walled-up Nuns*] who has not made the Pope a present of his reason, that the authorities which he gives are worthless." I, too, am now in the possession of further evidence, and it enables me to anticipate that I shall be able to convince every reader who has not made the Protestant Alliance a present of his reason that Mr. Holland's new authorities are not only false, but, it is to be feared, fraudulent. Here, then, is matter for a comparison.

Mr. Holland's convincing authority purports to be the report of "the Commission appointed by the Austrian Government to investigate the frightful discovery," a Commission which, he tells us, "consisted of the most respected citizens of Cracow — the Bishop himself taking part in the inquiry — all being Roman Catholics." Mr. Holland's account reads as though it were a condensation of this report, and it has sentences and passages interspersed which, being placed within quotation marks, one naturally takes to be the very words of the Commissioners. On the faith of authority apparently so good he gives us the evidence of Johannes Egriek, a woodcutter, and of Sister Mary, one of the nuns, of whom the latter owned to be the writer and the former the bearer of the anonymous letter which first called public attention to the scandal. On the faith of the same authority he further gives us a long and elaborate deposition from Barbara herself — detailing immoral proposals made to her and cruelties inflicted on her for repelling them — which purports to have been made and signed by her in the presence of the "presiding Judge of the Court of Correction, Austria"; and he likewise gives "the decision of the Commissioners" with their signatures appended — a decision which treats the charges against the nun and the confessor as fully established, and recommends the condign punishment of the Mother Superior.

If all this were really certified by a judicial commission duly appointed by the Austrian authorities, no doubt it would be evidence of great weight. What, however, is the case?

To readers who might wish to inquire further into the character of so important a document, the sole reference granted is to "the American edition of the True Story of Barbara Ubryk, C.J. Thynne, London"; and this American edition on being consulted is found, although headed "The Convent Horror — a Sworn Statement" (possibly a misprint for "foresworn statement"), to be nothing better than a romance absolutely unsupported by any reference whatever. Yet it is from this romance that Mr. Holland's entire account is derived, and from it, not from any authentic document, in spite of his express declaration to the contrary, that his quotations within inverted commas are extracted.

Barbara's Alleged "Deposition"

That this American account is not supported by any reference, and that it has not the character of evidence taken before a judicial commission, can be seen at once on inspection of its text; that although purporting to be a "sworn statement" it is in reality pure fiction, shall now be shown. I have before me:

1. A brochure entitled *Barbara Ubryk*, published at Cracow by the firm of Ladislaus Jaworski whilst the judicial proceedings were still pending

2. A copy — legally authenticated before the notary Stephan Muskowski under dates January 25 and 27, 1896 — of "the Report of the Proceedings in the Cracow High Court of Justice for Criminal Cases — in re the Prosecutor General versus Mary Wezyk, Theresa Kozierekiewicz, and Mary Xavera Jozaf, in the affair of the nun Barbara Ubryk, March 8, 1870"

3. A copy of the entry in the Hospital Register made on the day (July 23, 1869) when Barbara was first brought there

4. A certificate of her death which took place on April 29, 1891

I have before me also a French tract entitled *Guerre aux Convents*, published at Paris in 1869, contemporaneously with the events at Cracow, and written, as its name ("War against the Convents") implies, by an anti-Christian writer (M. Cayla), with whose sentiments Mr. Holland will doubtless find himself in the fullest sympathy; some extracts from well-known German papers; and some notes of inquiries kindly made for me by a friend who visited Cracow last year. With the help of these materials let us endeavour to test the account which Mr. Holland's American friend calls "a sworn statement," and which Mr. Holland himself elevates to the higher dignity of a report of "the Commission appointed by the Austrian Government."

Barbara was removed from the convent to the Hospital of the Holy Ghost on July 23, 1869, and even Mr. Holland does not deny that she was then mad. But he tells us that "with care and kind treatment she soon improved both mentally and physically, insomuch that on the 16th August, shortly after her release, she was able to give the particulars of her experience, which she signed herself before Kironski, the presiding judge of the Court of Correction." The American authority even goes so far as to give the text of Kironski's attestation: "The foregoing statement has been duly and legally made to affirmation by the nun, Barbara Ubryk, of the Carmelite Convent, as being in every whit true. Done before me officially this sixteenth day of August, eighteen hundred and sixty-nine, A.D., Kironski, presiding judge of the Court of Correction, Austria."

Such is the allegation, but what are the facts? The friend who made inquiries for me at the Cracow Hospital spoke with a doctor who had seen and the nurse who had attended Barbara from the first. Both report that she never ceased to be mad, and was never in a state to make any deposition at all, much less to write the long and elaborate composition with which she is credited. And this statement of the doctor and the nurse is confirmed:

- By the anti-religious M. Cayla, who says: "Since July 23rd Barbara Ubryk has been at the Hospital. By assiduous care it has been possible to save for some time the debris of this poor body... but her reason has been extinguished for ever in the darkness of her prison... She will always remain mad."
- By the Austrian correspondent of the anti-Catholic *Allgemeine Zeitung* (November 25, 1869), which says, "There is no longer any hope that the mad nun, Barbara Ubryk, can ever recover her reason sufficiently to give evidence"
- By the decision of the Cracow Court of Justice (the Court of First Instance) of November 25, 1869, which says that, "According to the final report of the doctors appointed to make a thorough examination of Barbara Ubryk, now confined in the lunatic asylum, the woman's reason and mental faculties are utterly disordered; she is passing into a state of idiotcy, her disease is incurable, and is of many years' standing."

Here are four independent sources of evidence, one Catholic (the nursing sister and possibly the doctor), two rabidly anti-Catholic (M. Cayla of Paris and the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Berlin), and one

judicial (the Report of the Court of First Instance, in November, 1869, confirmed by the Court of Appeal, in March, 1870). All concur in testifying to facts which prove that Barbara Ubryk could not possibly have made the alleged deposition either on August 16, 1869, or on any other date previous or subsequent.

The Alleged "Decision of the Commissioners"

The alleged decision is given by the American edition thus:

We, the duly appointed Commissioners in the case of the nun, Barbara Ubryk, lately an inmate of the Carmelite Convent of Cracow, having fully examined all the witnesses in the matter, do hereby render the following decision, to wit — that the said Barbara Ubryk has been for twenty-one years unlawfully imprisoned in a loathsome underground dungeon of the Carmelite Convent and most cruelly and barbarously oppressed and maltreated by Mother Josepha, the Abbess thereof, and Father Calenski, the confessor thereof. We also find that the said Barbara Ubryk was not of unsound mind, and therefore that it was entirely unnecessary to deprive her of her liberty.

We recommend, that as Father Calenski has, by suicide, placed himself beyond reach of the law, an example should be made of the surviving partner of his wickedness, Mother Josepha, as a wholesome warning to others in like positions of trust, that such deeds cannot and shall not go unpunished.

Signed: ELM Franski, J. Trellings, Louis Breverrich, J. P. Heilingski. Commissioners of Examination.

Now in this alleged decision there are at least seven misstatements — a plain proof that it is spurious:

1. The signatures appear to be made-up names. The only Commission which was appointed in connection with the case was the Commission of Inquiry deputed, after the manner of foreign judicial procedure, to collect the evidence and prepare the case for trial. First on this Commission was the Judge of Inquiry, Dr. Gebhardt, whose name must therefore have stood first among the signatures to any genuine report of the Commission, whereas in Mr. Holland's document it does not appear at all.
2. The confessor's name is given wrong. It was not Calenski, but Piatkewicz, as is testified by the Polish tract ("the terrified nuns and their chaplain, Piatkewicz"), the Agence Havas ("the confessor, Piantkewicz, an old priest"), and the *Wiener Zeitung* ("the bishop suspended the chaplain and confessor who was present, the Carmelite Father Pietkewicz").
3. Father Piatkewicz did not commit suicide. He lived on till 1881, when he died, after a long illness, at the ripe age of seventy-five, in the Carmelite monastery of Czarna. This has been ascertained from the Directory of the diocese of Cracow.
4. The cell was not "an underground dungeon," but was at the end of a gallery on the first floor, and was the last of a series of cells occupied by other nuns.
5. It is not conceivable that the Commission of Inquiry should have reported Barbara as "not of unsound mind," for had it done so the subsequent report of the Court would not have neglected to mention so important a fact, whilst referring to several witnesses as having established the origin, duration, and virulence of her madness.

The Acquittal of the Nuns

The prosecution set on foot against the nuns never got so far as the trial stage at all, the evidence by which it was supported having broken down in the preliminary stages. The evidence collected by the Commission of Inquiry was first laid before the Land Court, to whose judges at that stage it belonged to decide the question of *prima facie* sufficiency. This Court decided on November 25, 1869, that the evidence was not sufficient to justify a prosecution; that the nuns had indeed performed an action which was in itself criminal by locking the door upon a free person, but that they had not acted with criminal intent, or shown cruelty or want of proper consideration for Barbara, or, in fact, done anything save what they could hardly have avoided doing; that the charge against them must therefore be dismissed, and they themselves at once set at liberty.

The result of an appeal made by the Imperial Procurator was a further judicial testimony to the innocence of the nuns. On March 8, 1870, the High Court confirmed the judgment of the Land Court in every particular. The report begins: "In a report of December 13, 1869, No. 22065, in the appeal presented by the Imperial Procurator, and referring to the criminal prosecution against Mary Wesyk, Theresa Kosierkiewicz, and Mary Xavera Josaf, charged with the crime of public violence." It goes on to say that "the Imperial Royal Higher Court of Justice, approving the decree of the Cracow Court of Justice of November 25, 1869... which decided that the prosecution of the above-named three persons for violence committed against the life and security of Barbara Ubryk must be abandoned" orders that certain fees be paid to the advocates and doctors, and also that copies of the decree of November 25, 1869, be delivered to the said defendants.

The True Story

From the court documents we learn that Barbara had previously been in another convent, and had been dismissed because signs of mental derangement appeared. By 1839, when she joined the Carmelites, these symptoms had ceased, and the Carmelites do not seem even to have known of their previous existence. In this second convent she kept her health and gave satisfaction to everyone till 1845. "Her behaviour then became extraordinary. She would cry out in the choir, throw about the breviaries, dance and sing worldly songs, until one day, escaping or running away from the choir, she locked herself up in a cell and refused to open the door. When it was at length forced open, she was found entirely naked, gesticulating most unbecomingly." She had, in fact, contracted that well-known but most distressing species of madness called erotomania.

The witnesses whose testimony the Court deemed sufficient to establish these initial facts, as likewise their sequel during the twenty-one years of Barbara's madness whilst in the convent, were several of the nuns and two convent workmen — the sacristan, Casimir Gregorczyk, and the gardener, Adalbert Jarom. These two men likewise testified that as soon as her madness broke out in the manner described, no less than three doctors were called in to see her — Dr. Sawiczewski, Dr. Wroblewski, and another not named — and that for a time "these visited her daily and sometimes twice a day."

Dr. Wroblewski came forward himself as a witness, and confirmed what had been said by the two workmen. He stated that she was undoubtedly incurably and dangerously mad when he was first called in, and that he had warned the nuns to take care lest she should kill either herself or others. Dr. Wroblewski, besides his testimony before the Court, wrote a letter to the *Tygodnik Katolicki*, dated September 3, 1869, in which he says: "Barbara was no victim of conventional or monastic

persecution, for she was neither hidden away nor walled in. She was known to everyone who wished to come near her, known to all the inmates of the convent, to priests, to other convents, and to many laymen."

It was proved also, by production of the original correspondence, that the nuns had, as far back as 1852, communicated with their superiors at Rome and begged for leave to have Barbara transferred either to a hospital or to the care of her relations; and that this leave having been refused, on the ground that a sick nun should not be cast out among strangers but nursed by her own religious sisters, they had regularly reported her state to the Carmelite fathers, who were their superiors at Cracow, and to the predecessors of Bishop Galecki.

Moreover, Father Zielinski, the former confessor, "shows by his sworn deposition, that the case of the insane Barbara was known even to Counsellor Vukasovich, the political Director of the government of Cracow, at that time a free city (and therefore before 1846), he himself having requested that Barbara might be transferred to a hospital at the Government expense." All this shows that there was no attempt whatever at concealment from those who by their office and position were entitled to know, and whose knowledge would be the most effectual safeguard against such persecution as has been imputed.

The Treatment of Barbara

The cell was "seven paces long and five broad," not therefore so excessively small, and besides of the same size and character as those of the other nuns. The furniture, too, which was in it when she was first put there, was similar to that in the other cells — in particular there was a bed with proper bedding, and a stove — nor was the window closed up. But Barbara destroyed everything — tore up the bedclothes, pulled the stove to pieces, and used the pieces as missiles to throw at the heads of her visitors. For very safety's sake, therefore, it was necessary to remove all her furniture, as for decency's sake it was necessary partially to wall up and partially to board up the window.

One would be glad not to refer to the loathsome habits of the afflicted woman, which drove the nuns at last to the well-meant if ill-advised expedient of making a direct communication between her cell and the closet pipe, in the hopes that she might be induced to use it. On the other hand, from the report of the Court and from the Polish tract we learn that the nuns, though they found it impossible to keep the cell always clean, were indefatigable in cleansing it from time to time, and that when the paroxysms were over for the while (for these were periodical, not continuous), they at once made things straight, reclothed their unfortunate sister, and visited her regularly in parties of twos and threes. Indeed, that these interludes of tranquillity rather than the times of paroxysm predominated, seems proved by the state in which she was found on transfer to the hospital.

Dr. Wroblewski remarks well: "She could not have been neglected, ill-fed, deprived of light and clothing for the period of twenty-one years, since she lost neither sight, nor hearing, nor was covered with skin eruptions and abscesses, nor had poisoned blood — in fact, showed none of the signs and symptoms inseparable from long neglect or attention to the needs of the body."

Dr. Spital's Testimony

Still further evidence in defence of the nuns might be adduced, but Dr. Spital's letter to the Dutch *Maasbode*, written in August, 1869, cannot be entirely passed over. Dr. Spital was present as the

Bishop's representative at the "discovery" of Barbara, and the purport of his letter to the *Maasbode* was to retract the unfavourable judgment he had at first passed, and to testify to the innocence of the nuns. "I am ashamed now," he writes, "of my short-sighted credulity, and I deplore its consequences. The nuns were accused of concealment, and hence suspected of criminality; but they have now been completely exonerated, proofs being to hand that, ten years ago, they sought advice in Rome and elsewhere, but were instructed to regard their misfortune with resignation — which they had to do in the end. The present Vicar-Apostolic, however, had no knowledge of the case, and I had only entered on my office six months ago. The Imperial Court of Justice has opened a strict inquiry into the matter, and will certainly not shield anyone from justice or from the public if guilt should be brought home to him, but up to the present the only witnesses that have come forward testify in favour of the nuns. Even the public, which at first was so filled with indignation, even the physicians and lawyers, yea, and the Jews themselves, now speak aloud in praise of the nuns, whom they have come to recognize, not as guilty persons, but as fearfully afflicted sufferers."

Conclusion

Here, then, this tract must end, but in concluding one may be permitted to express agreement with Mr. Holland at least to this extent, that, in view of the injurious charges against convents which he and other Protestant Alliance people are so constantly bringing, some fresh legislation in reference to convents is imperatively needed. Not indeed that there is any need of a law subjecting them to State inspection, for the existing laws are strong enough to put down any convent cruelties or infringements of personal liberty, so soon as Mr. Holland or his friends can show to the police officers *prima facie* evidence of their existence. But there is need of such a remodelling of the law of libel as shall enable the innocent and peaceful inhabitants of English convents to protect themselves against slanderers cowardly enough to attack them, not openly and by name, but covertly under the guise of charges against other convents in distant lands. It ought to be possible for the nuns, without undue expense, to bring such persons into Court, and there say to them: "It is us you are seeking to injure by your loathsome stories; you shall therefore at least demonstrate their truth by evidence satisfactory to an English Court of Justice, or else you shall expiate your cruel offence either in prison or in the lunatic asylum."

[The Documents designated I., II., III., IV., with an English translation, are kept at the office of the Catholic Truth Society, 11 Westminster Bridge Road.]
