

THE ROMAN QUESTION.

The papers tell us that on Tuesday, Aug. 25, sixteen young women were accepted as novices at the Convent of the Third Order of St. Francis, and that forty-three others took the black veil and entered irrevocably upon their lives as nuns. Of course it was an occasion of much triumph and not a little complacency on the part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, under whose auspices this consecration took place.

To us the announcement causes inexpressible sadness. The action seems to us entirely removed from the spirit of Scriptures. We find nothing in the examples of our Lord or his apostles, or their teachings, to commend any such course. The prayer of our Lord was, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." It is not by shutting ourselves out perpetually from men that we are able to influence them for good. The great moral power in the world is the power of Christian example, which is largely lost when Christians shut themselves out from the world.

The vows which are taken are based on a misconception of the will of God and the path of usefulness. By the vow of chastity, women shut themselves out forever from the most honorable office to which God calls women, the high, hallowed, divine priesthood of maternity. There is nothing in which woman comes more into sympathy with the divine, than in becoming the parent of a human being, and taking upon herself the cares and sacrifices which elevate, soften, refine, and purify her own nature, all of which are expressed in the single word "mother."

This use of the word "chastity" is an abuse of that honored name, and an affront to every pure wife and mother. Is it only the nuns who are chaste? Is not a woman chaste who has led a life of married purity, whom God has blessed with children, whom she has trained for earth and for heaven? Has not all history honored as a miracle of chasteness, Lucretia, a wife and mother, who could not endure even involuntary bodily contamination, and died in an honorable and divine agony of grief and shame?

In the vow of obedience, these misguided women put themselves absolutely under the control of their official religious superiors, of men having all the human characteristics of imperfection, ignorance, pride, love of supremacy and control, and earthly passion. The vow has no limitations; it is absolute; there is nothing which the priest can demand of the nun that her vow does not oblige her to render. The natural result of this unlimited authority on the one hand, and this absolute obedience on the other, are what might be expected of human nature. But what they are is largely, from the very nature of the case, unknown; no sight, no sound, passes outside the convent walls. It is only now and then, as in the case of the nun of Barbara of Krakow, that a revelation is made of cruelty and despotism such as startles the civilized world.

The nuns who take these vows are young, ignorant, enthusiastic. Their

enthusiasm has been inflamed by every form of appeal, by every address to the imagination, by pictures of the beauty, the serenity, and sweetness of a conventual life.

Not seldom, it may be supposed, a nun wakes up to find that she has been profoundly in error, that she has been misled, that the life is one to which she is not called; that within the convent there is the same human nature, there is the same heart hunger, as without. Her soul craves once more the voices of her parents, she longs for her home; an innocent love, which she thought to please God by suppressing, rises within her soul. Add to this the revelations which come to her of the jealousies, of the heart burnings, of the narrow ambitions, of the love for supremacy, of the petty religious gossip, which makes up the atmosphere of the nunnery. Add yet darker and more horrible possibilities to which we will only in the faintest way allude. The nun realizes that in taking her vows, she has made a hideous mistake, has ruined her whole life, has violated the human nature and the woman nature with which God endowed her. She would give the whole world if the vows might be retracted and if the convent doors might be opened. But it is impossible; the doors open but to admit.

Can anything be conceived more wretched than a life thus spent? All the experience of the Middle Ages attests that there is not on earth a nearer approach to hell than a religious life out of which the joy and hope and inspiration have departed.

The whole system of a conventual and monastic life is foreign to the genius of a free country. There ought not to be any institution that is not open to public inspection; there ought to be the opportunity for it to be ascertained positively that no sane person is detained in any institution contrary to his or her own will, or after his own desire to be an inmate has ceased. There would be much less objection to the convent and the nunnery if they were as open to the inspection of the public authorities as are all Protestant charitable institutions.

Of course, the secular journals have nothing of criticism to offer upon the ceremony of which we have spoken. Into the reasons of their silence we do not inquire. But it seems time that some one uttered what must be in every heart in reading the narrative of this sacrifice, begotten of superstition and mistaken religious impulse.—The National Baptist.

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FORM YOUR OWN OPINION

Constitutions guard the rights of personal security, personal liberty, private property and of religious profession and worship.—Kent's Commentaries, Vol. 1, Page 407.

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IF YOU ARE A PROTESTANT

and if you are a Protestant you have been vilified and abused by the organ of

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

and the organs in sympathy with

THE DISREPUTABLE

religio-politico monstrosity to a degree beyond anything ever before known. You have been, through these papers, slandered in the

MOST UNSCRUPULOUS

manner. The progeny of an illustrious ancestry which for centuries had battled for liberty of conscience, for equal rights, for civil liberty and religious toleration, has been covered with base, foul and nasuting charges;

HAD HURLED AGAINST

it the most libidinous names, the most disgusting appellations, and for what purpose, to what end? That the Roman church might dominate political affairs; that the Roman priests might stifle liberty of conscience; that the black-coated and black-hearted jesuits might realize to the fullest extent, that "the end justifies the means." But the great effort was a failure.

PROTESTANTS

became indignant at the treatment they had received and, almost to a man, turned and buried beneath

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votes, not only in Omaha, but in Chicago, St. Louis and other great cities of the country every Roman nominated on the tickets. ^{warfare will not} cease with this victory. Roman intolerance, Roman disloyalty, Roman interference in the management of our public schools and Roman Catholic

FILTH

in print will be frowned upon by Americans. Roman Catholics as Roman Catholics will be allowed no part in the government of this country until they strike from their belief the disloyal sentiment, "Catholics first and Citizens Afterward."

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