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MONASTERIES AND CONVENTS:

THE NECESSITY

FOR

GOVERNMENT INSPECTION.

A LECTURE

BY

THE REV. P. M'VICAR,

UNITED ORIGINAL SECESSION CHURCH, DUNDEE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

DUNDEE: WILLIAM KIDD, NETHERGATE.

EDINBURGH: J. MACLAREN & SON, PRINCES STREET.

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THE NECESSITY FOR GOVERNMENT INSPECTION.

THE Church of Rome is thrusting herself, more and more, every year, upon the attention of Great Britain. Her aggressive character is incontrovertible, although some would fain have us believe that her advancement in Britain is more apparent than real. In a little book, published anonymously in 1879, entitled the "Spectre of the Vatican," this is the prominent idea. The writer, with all the coolness and plausibility of a Jesuit, endeavours to make out that the different organisations of Rome have in them the elements of weakness rather than of strength: that the very things wherein ordinary observers of the times think the great strength of Rome lies for progress in the country, are just her drawbacks; so that to become alarmed at the seeming progress of Rome in Great Britain is really to become alarmed at what is only a spectre of the Vatican.

To the same effect are the words of Mr. Gladstone, in his pamphlet on the "Vatican Decrees." At page 3, he says:—"Among the causes which have tended to disturb and perplex the public mind in the consideration of our own religious difficulties, one has been a certain alarm at the aggressive activity and imagined growth of the Roman Church in this country." He tells us, also, he believes "the alarm to be groundless." Is it then only the spectre of the Vatican, the shadow of the Pope, the ghost of Romanism, which we see rearing itself in so many places over the land, at one time in the form of a Popish school, at another, in the form of a Popish college, at another, in the form of a Popish chapel, and at another, in the form of a Popish monastery or convent? Some professed Protestants, who have become so far Romish in their spirit, as to take everything upon trust, may accept this as the true explanation of the matter; but it will hardly be entertained by those who have become habituated to the exercise of their judgment, and to believe the evidence of their senses.

Unquestionably, one branch of Rome's progress in the country is the rapid increase of monasteries and convents. From a map issued in 1876, by the Protestant Educational Institute, we learn that the number of monasteries and convents in Scotland, England, and Wales, was 357 that year. In 1833, there were none; so that from 1833 to 1876, there was an actual increase of 357 of these establishments in Great Britain. In the *Bulwark* for September 1880, there are some interest-

ing notes drawn from the "Catholic Directory" of the same year, from which it appears that there are now "477 monastic and semi-monastic establishments, seats of religious communities in Great Britain, of which 439 are in England and Wales, and 38 in Scotland ; and of these 151 are establishments of male communities—136 of them in England and Wales, and 15 in Scotland ; and 326 are establishments of female communities—303 of them in England and Wales, and 23 in Scotland." From these figures it appears, there has been an increase, in the number of these religious communities in Great Britain, of 120 during the past four years.

An important addition to the number of these religious houses was made last year. In the month of August, the newspapers contained brief notices of a series of services at Fort-Augustus, extending over three days, to celebrate the opening of the completed buildings of St. Benedict's Monastery, College, and Hospice, "intended," we were told, "as Scotland's offering in honour of the 14th centenary of the birth of St. Benedict, and as an act of reparation for the sacrilege committed in the once numerous monastic cathedrals and churches, in this country, during the period of the Reformation." The usual audacity of Rome appears in this statement. How far the Protestants of Scotland have contributed towards the completion of these buildings for Popish purposes we cannot of course tell. In the interests of Protestantism, with which they are identified, at least in name, we fervently hope they have been few. But we scorn the allegation, that the Popish buildings referred to are Scotland's offering in honour of St. Benedict, and as an act of reparation for the destruction committed in Popish cathedrals and churches in this country during the period of the Reformation. Whatever the leaders of the Church of Rome, and the Roman Catholic portion of our country intend by these buildings, one thing is certain, Scotland has not yet sunk so low as to give herself, in anything approaching a national way, to such humiliating, unholy, and God-dishonouring work. It will be a sad day for Scotland when she sets herself to the completion of buildings to the memory of Romish saints, and to prop up, in such a manner, the doomed Kingdom of Antichrist. At the same time, we cannot shut our eyes to the multiplication of these establishments among us, a fact which proves the aggressive character and growing influence of Rome in the land, and tells us that there are in our midst bodies of men and women whose presence is sure to yield bitter fruit, unless in the all-wise providence of God some timely check is imposed upon them, in the way of subjecting these houses to Government inspection and the laws of the country.

THE DESIGN OF MONASTERIES AND CONVENTS.

These institutions are the dwellings of monks and nuns. Within them are confraternities of single men and women who have retreated from the world to spend the remainder of their days there in a religious life. It is common to regard monasteries as exclusively the homes of monks, and convents as exclusively the homes of nuns ; but, remarks

a writer, "monasteries are not only for men, but for women." It is well, also, to remember, that the priesthood of Rome have unrestricted access to convents at all times. Now, to the unthinking and ignorant, this seclusion may appear praiseworthy. They may regard it as a proof of uncommon devoutness of spirit, saintliness of character, looseness to the things of the world, and self-sacrifice in the cause of religion. That it is on the part of each recluse an instance of self-sacrifice is true ; but it is self-sacrifice remarkable only for its blindness. We cannot justly regard it in any other light than the act of a deluded spirit, and the fruit of a blind devotion. It lacks nobleness, because it lacks enlightenment—the enlightenment which springs from Divine truth, and an intelligent understanding of the claims of God and of society upon them.

That bodies of men and women should withdraw themselves from the world to this life of isolation is unnatural and unwarrantable. It is unnatural, because it is cutting themselves off from all the relationships and duties of life, and it is unwarrantable, because there is no law of God which requires such a service at their hands. Nor is a life of perpetual seclusion the means ordained by God for nourishing piety. Christians, according to the Scriptures, are to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. Now, the way to train soldiers is not to keep them shut up in a prison-house, like the poor nuns of Rome, but to send them forth as occasion requires to confront and grapple with the foe. So is it with the Christian. Daily seasons of solitude and communion with God are needful to Christian growth and vigour ; but equally necessary is the daily going forth into the world, to discharge its duties, endure its trials, grapple with its evils, resist and overcome its temptations, in order to strengthen and develop our own Christian life, and promote in the best way the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom and of the glory of God. To no Christian does God say, Shut up your light in a cloister. To all Christians He does say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." We might add, this attempt to get away from the world is quite useless and very foolish. The three great enemies of the Christian are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The flesh unfortunately, they have to carry with them ; the devil, as has been said, is at no loss to find an entrance ; and in these circumstances it is not worth their pains to attempt a separation from the world.

HOW THE INMATES ARE EMPLOYED.

A question of some interest is, In what way do these devotees spend their time? What is the general routine of every-day life among them? It is difficult to answer this question with that fulness and certainty one would like, because, Rome has so shrouded monastic and conventual life from the eyes of the world that we can speak only of these establishments, for the most part, from the information she has supplied, or the revelations of such as have abandoned her communion. Avowedly, a life spent there is one of religion and chastity.

What that life comprehends will vary according to time and circumstances. But it would seem to embrace devotion, penances, works professedly for charitable purposes, teaching the young—of course in the interests of Rome—and specially those whose friends have money to part with, works of necessity for themselves and of usefulness for the general good of the monastery or convent. A writer gives the routine of the convent in these words :—“They get up at six in the morning and go to prayers and to hear mass till seven : from seven till ten, they may work or breakfast in their chambers, or in the common hall : at ten, they go to the great mass till eleven : after it they go to dinner : after dinner, they may divert themselves till two : at two, they go to prayers for a quarter of an hour, or if to sing vespers, for half an hour : and afterwards, they are free till next morning.” In M’Gavin’s “Protestant,” we are told of a correspondent who visited some nunneries in Montreal, in company with a Roman Catholic family. In the course of conversation with a young nun to whom he was introduced, he was led to ask, on account of the great variety of ages among the nuns, how the employments were shared among them. The reply was to the following effect :—“The youngest of us are chiefly employed in making clothes for the pupils and for the older nuns who are incapable of doing it for themselves ; those of a more advanced age teach, and employ themselves with sewing for charitable purposes ; sometimes also in doing work for mantua-makers from whom the convent receives a compensation. Conserves, cordials, and many such things are made by those who best understand them.” It is well, however, to remember that the activity of monastic and conventual life depends much on the power of Rome in any country. Where she is predominant and undisturbed, there is less religious earnestness and activity, and a deeper and more open indulgence in all the works of the flesh, as the past history of these establishments, in our own and other countries, testifies. But this would hardly do in these times where there is much Protestant life. On this subject the *Bulwark* for September, 1880 says :—“It would not suit the purposes of Rome to have in England and Scotland, at the present time, nests of lazy monks, corpulent and comfortable, living at their ease. Her ‘religious’ in this country are generally her devoted servants, ready for such work as she appoints them to perform, and zealous in the performing of it—ignorant of the truth, but zealous for the interests of ‘the Church,’ and for what that Church has imposed upon them as religion. Many of them, both male and female, are engaged in educational work, on which much dependence is rightly placed for securing in their Romanism the children of Romanists, and for training them in perfect ultramontanism,”—that is the Pope’s absolute supremacy in temporal and spiritual things—“and by which also not a little is done in the way of proselytising. Others are employed in various works of charity, in visiting the poor and the sick, in attendance at almshouses and hospitals, and other such places ; and many females have the nursing of the sick for their special work. Their works of charity afford them

opportunities of proselytising or of attempts at proselytising, of which they are not slow to avail themselves, and in which they often adopt ways and make use of means that none but Romanists would consider fair or right."

THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THESE INSTITUTIONS.

We would not require to depend on the information supplied by Rome, regarding the life led within these buildings, else we would err grievously, for her picture of monastic and conventual life is one of unmingled piety and bliss, but, alas! it is a picture more ideal than real. According to Rome, the character of these institutions is one of the purest morality and the most elevated piety. She calls life there one of religion and chastity. Wicked imposture! The history of these establishments is of the most damning nature. We do not mean to dwell upon their moral character, for it is too gross and offensive to the moral sense of mankind. Were we free to unveil this aspect of the subject and lay before our readers such facts as have come to light, we think the evidence which could be adduced sufficient to fasten upon them the infamy of being nurseries of impurity and abodes of crime. Bishop Burnet, in describing the state of the English nunneries at the time of the Reformation, writes of them "as containing abominations equal to any that were in Sodom." And if impurity did not disfigure and disgrace them still, why not throw them open to the light of inspection? "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." As illustrating the truth of these observations, we take the following from the *Bulwark* for January, 1881:—"While Baron Von Müller was resident in Mexico some few years ago, a political conspiracy was set on foot by the monks of the Franciscan order. General Concomfort, the then president of the republic, ordered the monastery to be levelled to the ground as the penalty. The plenipotentiary of the United States of America, General Gadsden, was among those who were present when the Government officers entered within its walls, and the following is the narrative which the Baron gave of what he witnessed on the occasion: 'We had scarcely crossed the threshold, when a group of about thirty ladies attracted our curiosity, the majority being married women who had been missed for several years. All trace of them had been lost, and they had been mourned over as dead, while they lay, concealed by the monks, and endured their outrages.' Again, 'As I approached the altar,' says the Baron, 'I was arrested by the dead sounds my footsteps raised as I moved about. Whilst I was noticing this to the General, we were joined by the governor of the city. He took no little interest in the subject we were talking about, and ordered the workmen to be brought in who were engaged in demolishing the building. Upon raising the stone floor, a subterraneous apartment was discovered. But none of them were disposed to adventure a descent into it. I and the General therefore took

down one of the large tapers standing on the altar, and descending a narrow flight of steps, soon alighted in a hall, where we found a great heap of little mortuary cases, which contained the skeletons of infants that had died soon after their birth.' It may well be added:—"The bare possibility of such abominations taking place in this land of Protestantism and of freedom is enough to fill the mind with horror. But that possibility has to be manfully faced, for Rome's tactics are unchangeable.'"

It would be altogether ungenerous to the priesthood, however, to represent the many women, who, in youth and virginity, take "the veil," and make the convent their home, as doing so without the earnest solicitations and enticements of these so called holy fathers. Every convent, be it remembered, is reputed by Rome to be a veritable paradise. The women allured thither are young unmarried women, usually young ladies of means, and they are allured by a spectre of piety and happiness. We call it a spectre, for when the nun crosses the threshold of her new home, it speedily melts away for ever into the grim realities of convent life, and shows her, that in being allured to the cloister, she was being led like an ox to the slaughter. When any young lady takes the veil, she is said to be married to the Church, and when she crosses the threshold of the convent she crosses to return to the world no more. Henceforth, the convent is to be her home, and the priest her friend. If there is one thing more inhuman than another about the Romish priesthood, it is this enticing of young women within these prison-houses, to be at their mercy and will. Can the curse of God fail to descend upon a system which perpetuates such delusion and cruelty?

THE SOVEREIGN AND LAW WITHIN THESE INSTITUTIONS.

One would naturally think the Sovereign ought to be Queen Victoria, and the code of government British law, seeing these buildings are situated within the territory of Great Britain. But, alas! to our humiliation and shame it has to be acknowledged, the authority of our Queen is unknown there. The Sovereign of the convent is not the Queen of Britain but the Pope of Rome; and the law of the convent is not British but canon law. The Queen and Government of Britain exercise no more control over the internal workings of monasteries and convents than if they were situated in France or Spain or Italy. Every temporal and spiritual interest is under the supreme control and direction of the Papal authorities. There is no appeal allowed to any temporal power on earth. And the British Government not only allows Rome to rule the convent, but to debar all inspection on the part of others, even of itself; so that for aught the Government or any other party in the land knows from inspection, these reputed homes of piety and holiness may be the abodes of immorality, cruelty, and abject slavery. No doubt, if a cry should reach the British Government,—a cry of oppression and distress,—the Government will claim the right and exercise the power to go in and set the captive free. But then, think how impossible this is! The op-

pressed nun has no means of communicating with the outer world. She is constantly watched and guarded. As Dr. Wylie says in his "Rome and Civil Liberty": "Whatever the mental or bodily torture she may be enduring she cannot make known her case. Nor is there any power in Britain to compel a Lady Abbess to produce her for the satisfaction of her friends. They may suspect that all is not right; they may wish to have their fears set at rest by a personal interview; but they are met at the door of the nunnery by a message from the Lady Superioress, that their relative has no wish to see them, and no desire to leave her present abode. Thus the law is powerless: it stands paralysed at the convent door. The domain within is under the exclusive jurisdiction of canon law; and, let the oppression practised be what it may,—let fetters be employed to coerce the will,—fasts, penances, darkness, to tame the spirit,—let deportation, or death itself, crown the whole,—that convent cannot be opened; that wickedness the law can neither reach nor remedy." Thus the power of Rome within these buildings is of the most unlimited character; the inmates are completely at the mercy of her bishops and priests; and so long as they keep their victims within these prison-houses they are free to practise upon them the most heartrending wickedness and cruelty. Do men call that religion? We call it tyranny—and tyranny all the more galling that it is done in a land which boasts of its freedom. Such despotism is worthy only of the prince of tyrants.

GOVERNMENT INSPECTION.

On what ground, then, should we claim the Government inspection of these houses? Well, *First, on the ground of personal liberty.* It is one of the most sorrowful and humiliating things connected with our national existence, that any body of men should be allowed to keep helpless women in perpetual imprisonment under the guise of religion. That the person of every subject in the realm is sacred and inviolable, save when they break the civil laws of the country, is a principle which lies at the very root of British liberty; and they can only be imprisoned by the regularly constituted authorities. But here are many women, allured, we believe, into these houses in a moment of thoughtlessness and infatuation, and however much they may have changed their minds they cannot regain their freedom. Yet they have not broken any law of their country; and this tyranny, the State allows to be practised, by an ecclesiastical despotism, which claims to be above all earthly princes and governments.

Next to life itself nothing is dearer than liberty. Our forefathers fought, bled, and died, to secure this precious blessing, and through their heroic contendings it has been transmitted to us and our children. Shall we then surrender it to a system, which has proved itself in the past to be the sworn foe of all freedom? And ought we silently to see our countrywomen robbed of this birthright, through the craft of Rome and the indifference of statesmen? Surely not! It makes one burn with righteous indignation to think that such iniquity is tolerated in this free land.

British liberty confers on every rational and professedly loyal subject in the kingdom the right of possessing property, of having his or her person secured from violence and injustice, of moving about from place to place, and of communicating with others. But the woman who takes "the veil" is stripped of all these rights. As has been said, "She becomes as one dead and in the grave." Henceforth she has no rights. Whatever she may have taken in of her situation and prospects at the time she took "the veil," the Pope's magistrates—the territorial bishops,—and their artful underlings the priests, regarded her as giving herself up with all that she had to be the Church's property, and entirely, in body and soul, at the disposal of the Church, whose head claims to be above all princes, and repudiates responsibility to any power on earth. Of course, it may be said, the nun takes this step of her own free choice. Admitting this, we ask, Does she comprehend the import of the step till it is taken and too late to recover her rights and liberties? Rome dare not bring this point to the test, for her bolts and bars and opposition to Government inspection show the nuns cannot be trusted with their freedom, nor the country trusted with a knowledge of their feelings and circumstances. Indeed, the language of the Council of Trent assumes that it is not an infrequent thing for nuns to repent of their vow and desire to escape. Mark this: "The holy synod . . . enjoins on all bishops by the judgment of God to which it appeals and under pain of eternal malediction, that by their ordinary authority in all monasteries subject to them, and in others by the authority of the Apostolic See they make it their special care that the enclosure of nuns be carefully restored wheresoever it has been violated, and that it be preserved wheresoever it has not been violated, repressing by ecclesiastical censures and other penances, *without regarding any appeal whatever*, the disobedient and gainsaying," that is, those wishing their liberty, "and calling in for this end, if need be, the aid of the secular arm." These words would be meaningless on any other supposition than that not a few in the various sisterhoods come to change their minds and to desire their former freedom. What an appalling thing, it must be, for a young lady to discover, that the place she expected to find a home of piety and happiness is a prison of iniquity and cruelty, and that she has been entrapped into a vow which has not left her a single right! Could slavery deprive a woman more of all that makes life precious than do these artful priests those young females whom they allure into these dens, and retain, with the grip of the guilty, knowing that there is a law without which condemns their deception and wickedness.

Now we ask, Is it not a violation of the liberty of British subjects and of the very spirit of the British Constitution, that a body of men in the land should be permitted to keep women incarcerated in these houses against their will, to be at their mercy? It is nothing to say that the nuns have entered of their own accord. The points are, Do they remain of their own accord? Is a Church to be allowed to induce women within these houses to be kept there

against their will and treated as she pleases, without being responsible to the civil authority in the country? And, Is the State doing its duty in not securing to those unhappy creatures the exercise, if they choose, of their personal liberty? No enlightened lover of freedom and patriot of his country, if he looks at the subject dispassionately, will stand up in defence of such tyranny. If women will enter into convents we cannot do otherwise than deplore their error and infatuation; but let not one of them be imprisoned for life against her will. We cannot regard any Government—Liberal or Conservative—as true to the Constitution, which does not secure to every subject in the realm the right of personal liberty. Every other woman is free to change her religion at pleasure; but though the nun may have discovered that the convent is a prison and the priest a villain, and in consequence has repented of her vow and desires to recover her liberty, she cannot have it. She is told the thing is impossible: that she has taken a vow of marriage to the Church which is irrevocable and eternal. Such despotism ought to be put an end to in the country. The question is not one of religion but of liberty. Every door in the realm is open to the law but the convent door. As Dr. Wylie says: "The door of every jail—of every lunatic asylum—of every factory, and of every castle and palace in the kingdom is open. Like death with impartial foot it (the law) must cross every threshold, else civil equality and universal personal security cannot exist." In asking then that these houses be thrown open to Government inspection, we are seeking no more than simple justice for the inmates—no more for them than we claim for and exercise ourselves—no more than the British Constitution gives to every subject in the kingdom who is capable of using it. We boast of our liberty as Britons, and we have good reason to do so, for there is no country in the world where greater personal liberty and security are enjoyed than in the kingdom of Great Britain. In days past, the British Parliament voted twenty millions for the liberation of her slaves. Let it not be said that the spirit of British liberty is dying out of us; and, as we never mean to be slaves ourselves, let us deny to any church or society the right, under the mask of religion, to reduce the subjects of our Queen to such degrading bondage. If these convents are like paradises,—the sweet abodes of virtue, happiness, and peace,—and if the nuns are so delighted with their new homes that they would not walk out though the doors were open, we ask, Why does Rome insist on keeping the doors barred, and not make the experiment of opening these houses to the light of inspection? Looking at the exterior of these buildings, no reasonable and thinking man or woman could come to any other conclusion than this, that they are more like jails which need the help of bolts and bars to keep their inmates secure, than happy homes, where the sin and sorrow of the world never enter to interrupt the devotion and mar the peace and joy which are said to reign there. Their prison look is fitted to awaken the suspicions of the most thoughtless. Instead of leading us to regard them as bright and happy homes, their outward appearance leads us rather to believe,

that there is something done there which will not bear the light of investigation. Would that the eyes of our statesmen were opened to see their unpatriotic conduct in winking at such tyranny!

Secondly, *we ask the Government inspection of these houses in the interest of the Sovereign and Constitution.* The authority of the Sovereign extends to every subject and to every piece of territory in the kingdom. But, granting to the Church of Rome permission to purchase lands and build houses, free from all inspection and control on the part of the State, is practically to alienate the soil of Britain from the jurisdiction of the Queen to the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome. Constitutionally, our Queen has the right to stretch her sceptre over the entire kingdom; but in point of fact the exercise of that right is denied her by the very action which secures that monasteries and convents should remain absolutely sacred to Rome. The authority of the Queen reaches to the door of the monastery or convent, but it does not cross the threshold. It goes round the boundary walls, but not one inch of territory within does it cover; and all through this unpatriotic exemption from State inspection. Is not this to circumscribe the authority of the Sovereign within her own dominion, in favour of a foreign power which claims to be above all earthly rulers and governments, and is the enemy of our civil and religious liberties? And is it not sanctioning the erection of a kingdom within a kingdom? So entirely is British rule excluded from monasteries and convents that the ground which they enclose is, as Dr. Wylie has expressively put it, "like a portion of foreign soil pieced into the free earth of Britain."

The impolitic and dangerous character of that policy, on the part of our Legislature, which grants to these houses exemption from State supervision appears, when we consider the increased territory which Rome is acquiring, to be placed, in this way, beyond the sceptre of Victoria. As an instance of this, the Press recently informed us, that near a place called Worthing, in the English county of Sussex, an Order of Monks have bought an estate of 350 acres, and upon that estate are now erecting buildings which are to cover fifteen acres. "This," said the London Correspondent of one of our daily papers, in September last, "is the third monastic establishment founded in England within the last few months, and the growth of these peculiar institutions threatens to introduce a new feature into the social life of this country." On the part of Rome, what is this but stealing the land, bit by bit, from the lawful Sovereign of the realm, to add it to the already acquired territory of Leo XIII. in Great Britain? And, on the part of the Legislature, what is it but allowing Rome to bring the authority of the Sovereign gradually within narrower and narrower limits.

Further, the authority of the Queen extends, constitutionally, to every subject as well as every piece of territory in the kingdom. But, is this the case in fact, so long as we allow the Papal authorities to fill these houses with men and women who are in all things, temporally and spiritually, subject only to them? Is not this permitting

them to transfer British subjects from the jurisdiction of the Queen to the jurisdiction of the Pope? There is no gainsaying this with any show of reason. If any one should be disposed to deny it, we ask, what authority the Sovereign and Government of the country exercise over the inmates of these dwellings? What protection do they afford them? What means are they using to secure to them their rights and liberties? And what responsibility are the inmates of these houses taught to feel to the British Crown? Absolutely none. For ought our Parliament knows about them or is caring for them, they might as well be in the heart of Siberia. Nay more, we believe our legislators have inflicted a grievous wrong upon the inmates of these houses, in sanctioning the existence of such prisons, where all allured thither are kept completely at the mercy of Rome, and cannot if they would recover their freedom. Is such legislation then true to the Sovereign and Constitution of the country? And is it statesmanlike and patriotic? We believe it is the very opposite; and in the interests of both, as well as of personal liberty, we ask, that this illegality and intolerance be put an end to.

Thirdly. *The well-being of our country demands that these houses be thrown open to Government inspection.* Can it be in the interests of the nation that institutions, numerous and yearly increasing, where bodies of single men and women are housed, should be free from all supervision on the part of the State, and controlled entirely by a power which claims to be supreme, temporally and spiritually, in the world? Is it for the prosperity of the country, morally, materially, civilly, and religiously, that this should go on? Have we not a right, through our rulers, to know how these institutions are conducted? Is their condition everything that could be desired, and in no way incompatible with British Law? And what register does the State keep of the deaths in these institutions? We know that all outside these buildings are compelled by the State to register deaths. How then does the matter stand with respect to monasteries and convents? The following statement supplies the answer:—"In the session of 1875," says Mr. Guinness, the secretary of the Protestant Alliance, in a letter to the press,—“the Home Secretary stated in the House of Commons, ‘that no specific report of the deaths in these institutions is to be found in the Register General’s Office.’”—(*Times*, August 3, 1875.) We ask, is this right? On what ground insist that all deaths in the land be registered but those in monasteries and convents? Can it be conducive to morality and personal security in these houses? Does it not rather put it in the power of Romish bishops and priests to ruin and destroy their victims, if they choose, without fear of punishment? Surely, in the interests of the country’s well-being, we ought to demand that this anomalous state of things cease. Such exceptional, one-sided, and sinful legislation is quite incompatible with the nation’s truest prosperity.

Further, it appears, the Church of Rome is allowed to have the entire control of such unhappy creatures, within these institutions, as become insane. The Government takes no more interest in them

than if they were in the grave. This is not a supposition, but an ascertained fact, for, "in the session of 1876, in the course of a debate on Sir Thomas Chambers's motion in the House of Commons, on the 31st March, the fact was elicited that lunatics were detained in these institutions without notice to, or any supervision by, the constituted authorities." Surely this is a grievous wrong, and strengthens the ground we have for asking the Government inspection of these houses.

In addition to this, is it not evident that the increase of large bodies of men and women in the country, who are not needed to meet the spiritual wants of Romanists, and who are withdrawn from honest industry, must tend to impoverish the nation in a material point of view? Though they do not work, they can eat, nor is it a little which often satisfies their wants. A large portion of the nation's wealth must be consumed in their support, but they contribute nothing to the sum of national industry. Besides the endowments many of them secure for their monastery or convent, we know their begging zeal is unequalled by any other body of religionists; their relics, manufactured and sold to meet all the ills that flesh is heir to, are endless; and their services are never thrown away, like pearls cast before swine, but generously offered always at a fair value.

It is well also to bear in mind that the existence and growth of monasteries, which are illegal institutions in the country, endanger the nation's well-being, because they are the hot-beds of Jesuitism. That pre-eminently satanic system called Jesuitism, which can adapt itself to any society, is the secret and sworn enemy of all laws and governments hostile to the Papacy. The Jesuits have been the fomenters of sedition and strife in all the nations of Europe. Their Order has suffered upwards of fifty expulsions throughout its history. During the past year, France was engaged expelling them from her shores. And what have we been doing? In our vain confidence and infatuation, we have been allowing monasteries to increase, where Jesuits may find a home and enjoy perfect immunity from all State inspection, to concoct and mature their unprincipled and wicked plans for the overthrow of the nation's Protestantism and liberties. Is not this unwise, unsafe, and unpatriotic? As well grant a community of thieves exemption from all intrusion on the part of the law, as the Jesuits, whose principles it can be shown are subversive of morality and religion, and of all law and order, unless it be the canon law of Rome. In these circumstances, should not the nation's prosperity lead us to seek that these houses be thrown open to Government inspection?

CONCLUSION.

What then is the duty of every man and woman who claims to be loyal to Protestantism? Clearly to advocate within the sphere of their influence the opening of these houses to the inspection of the civil authorities; and, when opportunities occur, to petition the Legislature for this end. Efforts are made at intervals in Parliament to

secure this laudable object. Let us cordially support every such movement. In this connection it is interesting to note that at the Middlesex Sessions, on the 28th Oct. last, Lord Alfred Churchill gave notice of a motion, to the effect that a memorial be presented to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, calling attention to the existence of institutions in which persons are immured for life, and prevented from holding communication with the outer world, and intimating the opinion of the Court that institutions of this character should be subject to inspection by some public authority. At a subsequent meeting of the Sessions, on the 25th Nov., that motion was carried by thirty-nine votes against nine. This ought to be matter of congratulation to all lovers of liberty and Protestantism. What the Home Secretary and his Government may do with it remains to be seen.

Let us not be hoodwinked and dissuaded from our purpose, by the Popish cry, "It will lead to restrictions on religious liberty." With as much reason might the Hindoo say, that to keep him from offering human sacrifices to his gods is a restriction upon his religious liberty. The British Government, however, has put a stop to such atrocity in India, notwithstanding its religious character. In the same way, the Government ought to put an end to the Popish cruelty and tyrannies practised upon helpless women in our own country by throwing monasteries and convents open to inspection. If the Church of Rome is to be allowed to keep in perpetual imprisonment the women allured into the convent or monastery, because she chooses to say it is a part of her religion, then what iniquity and tyranny must we not sanction if men only say it is part of their religion? Romanists have the fullest liberty to practise the worship of their faith; but to give them the right to destroy the liberty of British subjects, and undermine the authority of the Sovereign and Constitution of the country, is what we ought not in any circumstances to grant, and cannot grant, without laying our rights and liberties in the dust.

Nor let us be moved by the selfish and unpatriotic cry, What have we got to do with monasteries and convents? As well ask, What have we got to do with anything bearing upon the well-being of our fellow-men and of our country? Are we to take no interest in any matter save what directly and at once touches ourselves and our immediate surroundings? Is it creditable to have such an intense regard for one's own ease and comfort that we cannot think to trouble ourselves with the interest of suffering humanity and the well-being of the nation? So far from this, such language is unworthy of men professing Christianity which teaches us to be unselfish and patriotic, and is akin to the old cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" This is not an affair simply for Romanists, but for every Briton, and especially every British Christian, for it trenches upon British liberty, the rights of the Sovereign, and the well-being of the country. Let the Papacy have its own way, in this and other respects, and soon it will show us, that if we do not take to do with it, it will take to do with us. Those who speak of letting monasteries and convents alone have

studied Popery, and read the past history of our country, to singularly little purpose. If others, however, are indifferent, let us seek to be all the more resolute, and endeavour ever to be on the side of truth, liberty and right. And let us pray that the eyes of our rulers may be opened to just views of their duty to God and to the nation in this matter,—that they may rule in the fear of God,—may seek to conserve our liberties, and transmit them unimpaired to succeeding generations. Thus race unto race shall praise the Lord and show forth His mighty deeds.