

the Roman Catholic Bishop of Beverley. The defendants denied the charges, alleged that the matters in dispute had been referred to the bishop, (whose award had been unfavorable to the plaintiff), and put on record the plea of 'leave and license'. The case was tried before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn and a jury in the Court of Queen's Bench, and lasted for three weeks. The Solicitor-General (Sir John Coleridge), Mr. Digby Seymour, Q.C., and the present Mr. Justice Wills appeared for the plaintiff, while Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Hawkins, the late Lord Justice Mellish, and Mr. (now Sir) Charles Russell represented the defendants. The material facts were as follows: The plaintiff, who was the daughter of an Irish gentleman, entered the convent at Hull in 1858, taking upon herself the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. For two years all went well. But in 1860 the defendant Mrs. Star, according to the plaintiff's story, was seized with a sudden desire to know what passed between Miss Saurin and her father confessor, pressed the plaintiff repeatedly for information on this point, and set about procuring her expulsion from the convent when it was withheld. These statements were, of course, denied by the defendants. The conflict of testimony to which the case gave rise was very severe. According to her own account, Miss Saurin was subjected to a system of continuous persecution, was compelled to black stoves, brush boots, and do other household work which belonged to the province of the lay sisters and not of the nuns; was obliged to eat mutton, towards which she was 'known to have a constitutional aversion'; was deprived of writing materials, of clothing, and of bedding, was watched night and day, was falsely accused of levity, if not unchastity of behaviour, and, to crown all, was deposed from the rank of sister as the result of an *ex parte* and grossly unfair commission of inquiry before the Bishop of Beverley. By the defendants and their witnesses these charges were either denied or 'explained,' and the plaintiff's character was painted in colours very different from those in which she had herself portrayed it. According to the defendants, Miss Saurin was a very troublesome person

to deal with. She 'borrowed boots,' and ate 'at improper hours.' Her letters to her father and mother were 'too tender in their affection.' She 'meddled with the laundry work by washing her own things when another had been appointed to that duty,' 'gathered unripe gooseberries,' 'had a candle to go to bed with and hid the bits left,' would not hurry herself to avoid the 'grievous sin' of being late for mass on Sunday, altered the clock without permission, gave hard crusty bread to a sister suffering from the 'mumps,' wrote letters without leave, told lies, once made a younger sister 'blush' by asking her if she 'intended to marry,' and moistened the dying lips of one of the sisterhood with salt-butter. Some of these enormities Miss Saurin may possibly have committed; but the following points, elicited by Sir John Coleridge in the course of a series of very skillful cross-examinations, told heavily against the defendants and eventually gained her a verdict of 200*l.* damages.*

(1) One of the charges on which the plaintiff relied was that the defendant Mrs. Star had taken from her certain parcels of papers and relics. Mrs. Star alleged that she had no other motive for this act than to prevent the plaintiff from writing upon them 'anything that was disparaging' to the sisterhood. Thereupon the Solicitor-General handed to the witness a small card representing our Saviour kneeling at the cross, and underneath the words, 'Pray for your sister Mary Theresa Magdalen,' and asked her if she supposed Miss Saurin would write upon that? The witness answered in the affirmative! (2) The defendant was cross-examined as to plaintiff's conduct with a priest at Hull. The following passage is so short that we shall transcribe it. 'You say in your statement that you perceived a great forwardness, and that she was in a state of excitement when he was at the convent, and that you had an undefined feeling of uneasiness, &c., now what do you mean by all that? Do you mean a charge of improper behaviour against her?—By no means. What do you mean by excitement? That she was not in

* On the counts of libel and conspiracy; there was no evidence worthy of the name to support the charges of assault and false imprisonment.