



# CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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## A "TRAPPIST" CONVENT DESCRIBED BY A PROTESTANT.

(From the *Guardian*.)

The monastery consisted of a larger and lesser quadrangle, surrounded by buildings irregularly grouped about them, of which the chapel was the most prominent object. Beyond lay the gardens and cemetery, a small mound rising from the midst of the latter, surmounted by a crucifix of wood, about 12 feet in height. There was another chapel, and also a waiting-room, the entrances to which were without the precincts of the monastery, the latter being intended for the lady visitors, who might accompany their husbands or brothers so far, but are not admitted within the walls of the establishment. To the left of the chapel I espied the portal, where a benevolent-looking porter of spare habit, a striking contrast to the comfortable, portly personage who is the common English *beau ideal* of a monk, was distributing soup and bread to a few poor people from the neighboring village. He informed me that I could not see the monastery until half an hour had elapsed, as the brethren were about to begin their day. I went to the brow of the hill to enjoy the prospect, and had hardly left the gate before the deep tones of the summons to prayer sounded from the convent bell. Soon the melancholy chant of the monks reached my ear, and awakened old feelings and reminiscences of other times, when I was wont to hear the same notes on the plains of sunny Italy, or amid the ancient fastnesses of Lebanon. Nothing presented a stronger contrast to the sombre picture called up by those tones, than the aspect of the world without. The blue sky unclouded by a single cloud, the gay sunshine, the varied landscape extending for leagues and leagues beneath and around me, the white towers of the Belgian cities in the distance, with many a village spire issuing forth from the groves and plantations on every side, seemed to repel from the mind the ideas of seclusion and monastic gloom, and to remind one that the world, if not abused, has in it much that is lovely and deserving of admiration. Whether the monks thought so I know not, but certainly their convent commanded a magnificent survey of the beauties of nature. As I returned towards the gate I fell in with a party of French and Flemings, who had come thither with the same object as myself. They were most of them farmers or brewers, chiefly interested in the agricultural occupations of the monks, and as they kindly asked me to join their party, I availed myself of this opportunity to elicit from persons who seemed to be plain, practical men of the world, their different views on the subject of the recluses and their labors. All agreed in praising them, nor could even the most fishing questions draw forth anything to their disadvantage. 'Some years ago,' said one of the party, 'this place on which we stand was a mere wilderness, surrounded by thickets, and overgrown with weeds, now there is no land in the neighborhood that produces fairer crops.' 'The *freres* are the best workmen in these parts,' said another; 'they brew, bake, mend shoes, and exercise all trades equally well. And then, Monsiour, their charity is unbounded; they visit the sick, relieve the distressed, entertain travellers, and pray to *le bon Dieu* night and day.' 'Vraiment,' corroborated an old farmer, who had been leaning on his stick during the colloquy. 'Vraiment ils sont tres honnetes, gens ces pauvres miserables freres. Regardez donc,' continued he, directing my attention to a cart ascending the hill, drawn by two fat, well-conditioned horses, and escorted by three lean lay brethren. 'Poor people,' said my new friend, a burly, rosy-cheeked giant, as he gazed upon them with a good-humored, pitying air, 'poor people, how thin they are; but then, *que voulez vous*, they eat only lettuce and bread.'

A priest, who was following the cart, and seemed to have the direction of the others, now made his appearance, and was recognised by some of my party, who saluted him as 'Pere Antoine,' and, after some conversation, easily obtained permission to accompany the cart within the precincts of the monastery. We passed the portal, and were shown into a neat, clean room, with a few prints of religious subjects, where the priest asked us to await his return. 'Do the priests labor too?' I inquired, as soon as he was gone. 'Everybody works,' replied one of my companions, 'from the Pere Abbe downwards.' Pere Antoine now returned, accompanied by the cellarer, a stout, portly personage, whose aspect, I must confess, awakened in my mind some of the traditional ideas before referred to. I felt almost vexed that I entertained them, however, when informed that the poor man had lost his leg, and was for nearly a year afflicted by a succession of severe sufferings, during which his patience and cheerfulness excited the wonder of all around him. He led the way into the court, where he was soon busily engaged in exhibiting the tools, brewhouse, and barns to our party,

and in discussing with them sundry agricultural topics, to which I proved rather an inattentive listener. Remembering the saying of the wise king, that 'the merciful man is good to his beast,' I was, however, much gratified with the sleek, well-fed looks of the horses of the convent. They seemed the only beings connected with the establishment who kept no fasts, and the quiet gravity with which they responded to the affectionate caresses of the worthy old cellarer rather amused me. Fowls and ducks abounded in the yard, which had very much the appearance of a prosperous farm. We then entered the garden, and admired the magnificent display of vegetables. I saw there little fruit, and scarcely any flowers, except on the graves of the departed brethren, which were separated from the garden by a slight fence. At the head of each of these was a wooden cross, with the name, date of profession, and of departure inscribed. Two or three of us went up the mound which rose from the cemetery, and was ascended by a winding path leading to the foot of the large crucifix, from whence a most spacious prospect opened itself before us. My companions were too well acquainted with the locality to feel much interest in this, so, after a hasty glance around, and a quiet expression of admiration, in which the Flemish, rather than the French element predominated, they hastened down again to rejoin the cellarer, whom we found engaged in an animated discussion with a Flemish farmer on the best mode of rearing melons. We continued our walk to the convent, and, after passing the smaller quadrangle, ascended to the dormitory, a large apartment, fitted up with a number of wooden cells, about six feet high, and from four to five feet wide, each containing a rude couch, a crucifix or religious picture, and a monastic garb. The name of the occupant was painted over every cell, and in the lobby was the bell which summoned them to their morning devotions. From the dormitory we descended to the chapter-room, where the monks hold their meetings, and where, when they have leisure, they repose or meditate during the intervals of labor. These are, however, few and far between, and I was informed that it is rare indeed to find any one in the chapter-room during working hours, which, for them, extend from sunrise to sunset. A few books lay scattered in disorder upon some rickety shelves. I examined their titles, but found them chiefly manuals of devotion, or explanations of the Roman Ritual. The Trappists have never been a literary order. Stern old De Rance, their founder, had no great opinion of books or of bookish men. 'Study,' he said, 'brought with it vain disputes, and caused relaxation of discipline.' Prayer, worship, and work were to be the sole occupations of his monks. Writing to the Abbe Nicaise, on the death of the great Arnaud, he remarks—'Voila bien des questions finies; son erudition et son autorite etaient d'un grand poids pour le parti; heureux celui qui n'en a point d'autre que celui de Jesus Christ.'

The church was remarkable for its simplicity, the altar and candlesticks being of wood, painted white; and though everything was scrupulously clean, there was not the slightest trace of decoration visible. The most rigid Puritanism could hardly have more effectively shunned every approach to aestheticism. The choir contained the stalls of the brethren, each having before him his large folio Breviary, while the novices and serving 'freres' worshipped in a species of ante-chapel, still less remarkable for ornament. We proceeded from the church to the refectory, where a lay brother was arranging the provisions for dinner. They consisted of small loaves and lettuces, to which is added a bowl of soup—rather a slight sustenance for men who work so hard. On the wall at the bottom of the table was painted a figure of our Saviour, pointing to the words, 'They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.' To the left was inscribed the Apostle's exhortation, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' A pulpit fixed against the side-wall supported a book of homilies, from which extracts are read during the repast. There is also a refectory for strangers, where one of my companions informed me he had seen more than thirty people sit down to dinner. No remuneration is asked for this, though a small present is occasionally made to the convent. The refreshment afforded, however, does not include meat, but as much good Flemish bread, eggs, vegetables, butter, and cheese as the modesty or appetite of the visitor allows him to consume. The good cellarer would not permit us to leave without partaking of the convent cheer, which soon made its appearance in the form of loaves, butter, cheese, and salad, with some excellent beer. He repeatedly pressed us to do honor to this fare with a hearty and earnest tone, that showed it was no merely formal hospitality he was exhibiting. When we had eaten and drunk, the Abbot made his appearance, and entered into a

friendly conversation with my companions, in the course of which he made many inquiries after their families, and expressed his hopes to see us all again soon at the monastery. He was a fine looking man, of about forty; but his austerities, I was told, had materially affected his health. Soon after we took our departure; and the worthy cellarer, in bidding us farewell, did not forget to re-echo the hospitable wish of the Abbot, and hoped that he should shortly welcome us once more to the Trappist Convent of Mont des Chants.

## REPEAL OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

(From the *Gateway Vindicator*.)

The shifts to which those who wish to uphold the Anglican Church are put would be ridiculous if they were not so extraordinary, and so pregnant with consequences of future importance. The Privy Council can push the Bishops from their stools—laymen repudiate occasionally both Bishops and Clergy; and the thirty-nine articles exist only on sufferance, or are appealed to in some case of expediency, having about as much authority in church government as the bye-laws of a Corporation generally possess. The Church of England affords, this moment, one of the strangest anomalies in the Christian world. There is no principle of cohesion, no bond of unity, no great truth as a foundation to rest on. It is merely an Ecclesiastical Corporation, with clashing interests and jarring views—simony, sinecurisms, and palaces for prelates. With all the appliances and means, in a worldly sense, which such an establishment should possess, they cannot teach the people, and what is more, the people will not be taught by them. The Bishops live in a lofty beatitude, like the gods of the Epicureans, uncaring for the miseries of the multitude who become rank and gross in the debasement of ignorance, under the walls of their palatial homes. The inferior clergy have neither the power nor the will—or they have the power and the will—to remedy the popular evil which exists. If it be the first—*cui bono* their existence at all, as a priesthood; if it be the latter, why do crime and ignorance continue to increase in iniquity every day in England? Whilst the good and the educated are compelled, as an act of religious necessity as well as in acknowledgment of truth, to have recourse to the certainty of the centre of unity, the less enlightened and depraved are driven to dissent or infidelity. In point of fact, there is no Church of England—we have instead a bench of Bishops, Tithes, Pluralities, Church Lands and Church Rates.

To remedy this state of things has now become the business of some zealous laymen of station and influence. They have seen the Establishment unchurched by its own ministers, and godliness sacrificed to greediness. They have seen saints in crape and lawn, like Midas of old, turning the sacred things they touched into gold; like the same auriferous wretch, they will die of a plethora of riches, and in their death be the cause of the destruction of the Established Church.

To arrest this impending fate, Lord Shaftesbury has been elevated into a sort of lay Pope—an Ecclesiastical Dictator. Lord Shaftesbury, perhaps with good intentions, has contrived to give people a great distaste for his moral reformations of every thing. In his hands, philanthropy becomes cant, and religion takes the form of humbug. Men will not endure a Joseph Surface any more than a Cantwell. Moral sentiments gushing perennially from the lips of a pretender, are as disgusting as the sectarian holiness which smells of the Conventicle. Men will not be taught Christianity by laymen—they will not be lectured into religion by laymen—they will not be indoctrinated in points of belief, and changed into pious members of the community, having a unity of faith, hope and charity, by lay sinners like themselves. All human history attests the failure, when these things have been attempted by reforming zealots or ignorant enthusiasts.

But what is Lord Shaftesbury's plan for reforming the Reformation, for bringing England back again to Protestantism? His plan is to send lay preachers with "distinctive badges," all over England, to preach in the highways and byways, and convert the people under the very purple noses of the parochial parsons.—Lord Shaftesbury and his *propaganda* have so far repealed Oxford, and repudiated the Archbishop of Canterbury. They "take a number of men—professional men, tradesmen, clerks and others," who, instead of a knowledge of dogmatic theology, are only to evince the "necessary ability," and having placed "badges" on their arms (the imposition of hands)—they are sent on their mission to teach and preach, whilst steeples, cathedrals, gables, churches, Bishops' courts and palaces—swarm all over the land.

But lest our readers should think we are drawing

on our imagination, here are the facts, from the *London Morning Advertiser*:—

"A movement of a remarkable character, and affecting, to some extent, the constitution of the Church of England, has been set on foot by a society assembling in the Adelphi, called 'The Church Protestant Defence Association,' and of which the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Marquis of Brandford, and other well-known leaders of the Evangelical party, are active supporters. Hitherto it has been the practice of the bishops to license catechists and Scripture-readers for populous districts, all provided with the means of religious instruction, and, in all cases, strict injunctions were laid upon the men so employed that they must not under any circumstances, 'preach' to the people to whom they paid their visits, that duty being exclusively confined to the regularly ordained and specially appointed parochial clergy. This regulation has been rigorously adhered to in all cases where Scripture-readers have been engaged; but the new movement is avowedly in direct opposition to the arrangement hitherto insisted upon by the bishops. A number of men—professional men, tradesmen, clerks, and others—who evince the necessary ability are to be engaged for the purpose of being sent out to various districts, to conduct an organized system of open air preaching. All the new order of preachers must be lay members of the Church of England. It is not intended that they shall wear the clerical garb in the course of their ministrations; but they will have a distinctive badge by which their identification with the society may be known, and this will form their credential to the people they are deputed to visit. Much alarm has been created amongst the clergy in consequence of this innovation upon long established ecclesiastical usage, inasmuch as they consider that it will ignore one of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, which is to the following effect: 'It is not lawful for any man to take upon himself the office of public preaching. . . before he be lawfully called and sent who be chosen and called to this work by men who have publicly authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.' A representation of these circumstances has been made to the Bishop of London, whose diocese is likely to be the first in which the new order of preachers will operate, but his lordship has not yet publicly expressed his determination on the matter."

To this complexion have we come at last in England. After a trial of over three centuries the Church of the Reformation is condemned by its own children. It was linked with a State the mightiest the world ever produced; it was the teacher of a people the richest, the most scientific and enlightened yet the most debased and brutal amongst civilized nations; it did not elicit the respect of the one or the reverence of the other. Under its jurisdiction the high born did not grow religious, nor the poor consider that they were the laborers of the Lord's vineyard. It formed a church for St. James's, for Canterbury and London and York, for the formal ceremonies of a Court and cold aristocracy—but it was not a church for St. Giles's nor Bethnal Green, nor for the laborers of Manchester, Liverpool, or Glasgow—nor for times of plague, pestilence and famine—for public hospitals, fever sheds, and cholera cabins.

The Church of the Reformation is repealed by Lord Shaftesbury and the Marquis of Blandford, and we have in its place "a number of professional men, tradesmen, clerks and others," with a badge, commissioned, once more, to convert England under the *Church Protestant Defence Association*.

## THE VICIES OF THE IRISH IN AMERICA.

(From the *Catholic Telegraph*.)

"Hit him again, he has no friends." Such is the slang phrase, whose equivalent is the practical maxim that guides editors, preachers, and private men in this country in their conduct towards the Irish. All "riots," "disorderly conduct," "rudeness," committed by the Irish are forthwith blazoned in the press, and resound from the sectarian pulpit, the reporters laying particular stress on the facts that the offenders were "Irish." And this course of action has been so long pursued as to seem stereotyped. The name of "Irish" has become identified in the minds of many, with almost every species of outlawry. Now, we have no mind to deny that the Irish have their vices. Human nature, is human nature, in whatsoever race of men it may be concreted. But we deem it not uncalled for to discuss a little the nature of the crimes charged upon the Celt, and to show his traducers that there is no room for the vindictive and indiscriminate abuse of which he is made the object.

Our words are for serious and thinking men—for men who abhor crime, because it is an offense against