

there was any compulsion, her vows are declared null and void. But says Mr. White, the nunneries are large "houses, with high walls like prisons ; having tall windows at a great distance from the ground, and guarded by strong and close iron bars, bristled over with long spikes." This is of course to raise horror and sentimentality, and make people believe that the inmates of these convents are prisoners forcibly incarcerated. But how far is this from the truth ! Bars, and spikes and high walls, are not so much to hinder the nuns from getting out, as to hinder young libertines from getting in ; to protect the religious from insult ; and particularly to secure their reputation from the calumnies of the wicked. If such means were necessary for preventing the inmates from escaping, we should find them every where employed for that purpose ; but we could point out most regular and exemplary communities where they are not to be found ; and Mr. White advances, what we defy him to prove, that in nunneries in England, " many feel at present unhappy." He can know little about convents here ; and it is unworthy of an honorable man to cast upon them such sweeping and groundless imputations.

But if he cannot prove nuns unhappy in this country, he is determined they shall be elsewhere, and therefore he strives to illustrate his positions by three affecting histories of nuns, of whom two were his own sisters, and the other a young lady known to him, whose name was Maria Francisca Bareiro. Far be it from the writer of these pages to withhold sincere sympathy for the loss Mr. White has sustained in his two sisters, holy and virtuous as they undoubtedly were. But fiat justitia ! the world is not to be told, with so little proof, that these young ladies were brought early to the grave by a conventual life. Of the first he says, " air, amusement and exercise might have saved her." They might, but then also they might not ; and she could have enjoyed all these freely in the enclosure, for convents always have gardens for air and amusement attached to them, and we are very sure that the care and tender solicitude of nuns for their sick, is positively not equalled by that of any relatives or description of persons on earth. The other sister embraced, it appears, a severe rule ; but she had sufficient time to consider before she took the step ; she had at least a twelvemonth after she assumed the habit, to try all the rigors of the rule, before she