A CLEVER REVENGE

A celebrated painter of Madrid, whose real name it will be more discreet not to disclose, but whom I shall call Morales, had just completed a superb picture for the convent of the Escurial. He had received a large sum of money for his work, and by way of a little relaxation after the long continued toil bestowed upon it he had assembled around a well spread table a few choice spirits from among his fellow artists. It was a bachelor entertainment. Not a lady was to sit down with them. Even the mistress of the house herself, Dona Casilda, had been excluded. Morales had sent her off with her maid to pass the day with one of her cousins.

But Dona Casilda, having a little curiosity in her composition, was very anxious to know what was to take place in her absence, and had a strong desire to find out what so many men could have to talk about when there were no women present. Instead, therefore, of remaining at the house of her cousin she quickly returned, bringing the latter with her, and the two were presently ensconced in a little closet adjoining the studio, where, with eye and ear closely applied to the keyhole, they remained eagerly listening to all that passed.

"But, tell us, my friend," said one of the guests, "why are we deprived of the pleasure of Senora Morales' company? Surely her beauty and wit would not have diminished the charm of the delightful meeting."

"There," whispered the lady to her cousin, "That is the first sensible speech I have heard."

"Bosh," replied the husband, pouring out a glass of golden sherry. "Women know nothing of the poetry of life."

"That is true," added another. "Women are mere matter of fact beings—common-place, essentially prosaic. What do they know about the art or the enjoyments of artists!"

"Fools!" exclaimed Casilda.

"Yes," continued Morales. "Take from women love, intrigues, and household affairs and they absolutely have nothing that they can think or talk about.

"Impertinent fellow!" was the comment of the listeners.

"Why," added the painter, "they cannot comprehend a rich joke or one of those capital pieces of humor which the air of the studio inspires. They cannot appreciate them. When a woman plays us a trick, it is always at the expense of our honor."

"Wretch!" This word escaped the two cousins at the same instant and was uttered in a loud tone, but the noise of the guests and the rattling of glasses prevented its being heard. "Ah, Master Simple, and so you defy us to play you a trick without touching your honor, do you? By our Lady of Atocha, I vow that before Lent is over I will have my revenge!"

Casilda set her wits to work, and you shall hear what came of it. On the following Thursday she engaged her brother to procure from the Palace Cabeda, where they are accustomed to sell fragments of old buildings a door of the same dimensions as their own which fronted on the street. She charged him to get one of an antique pattern, covered with ironwork and heavy mouldings. This she had conveyed to her house with all secrecy and kept closely concealed until the favorable moment. She had communicated her design to her brother and a few friends in the neighborhood, on whose aid she relied in carrying out her plot. On a certain evening, when Morales had returned home at a late hour from a convent where he had just completed the painting of a chapel which the monks were to have opened at Easter, Casilda received him with much warmth and a greater profusion of kisses than usual. It was very late when they retired to rest, for Morales must first have his supper.

The night was cold and stormy. Toward midnight Morales' wife began to utter deep groans, intermingled with piercing cries, as if suffering intense pain.

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed she. "I am dying! My dear husband, my last hour is come!"

Her husband, in consoling tones, tried to quiet her.

"I can bear it no longer!" she cried. "Get me a confessor—the Sacraments! It is almost over with me!"

At these cries the domestic hastened to her assistance, but nothing relieved the sufferer. Poor Morales, though sore against his will, was forced to leave his bed.

"I know what it is that ails you, mistress," said the girl. "It is that bad vinegar you mixed with salad. You know it served you the same way last time. Mother Castinoja cured you then."

The painter at this began to scold his wife because experience had not made her more careful, but she only sobbed out in half suffocated words:

"Al hecho no ay remedio" (What is done cannot be undone). "For mercy's sake, go for Mother Castinoja. She is the only one who can give me relief. Bring her quickly, or there will be nothing left for you but to open my grave."

"My little wife," replied her husband, in a dismal tone, "my dearest wife, Mother Castinoja has moved to the other end of the city. The night is very cold, and the rain is pouring in torrents. Even if I could find Mother Castinoja, do you think she would come to see you through this terrible storm? Compose yourself my dear do not force me to take such a long walk; which I am sure will be of no use."

At this Casilda began to sob anew.

"See what a husband God has given me! I only ask him to go for a nurse at the risk of wetting his shoes, and he refuses. But I know what it is you want—you wish to be a widower and live over again your bachelor life. Ah, I am dying! A priest! I'm poisoned!"

Morales, really believing that his wife was at the last extremity, and fearing if she died that the accusations she had thrown out against him might have serious consequences, endeavored to soothe her by caresses and prepared to light a lantern. He then drew on a pair of stout boots, threw a cloak over his shoulders, and manfully set forth on his noctural expedition in search of Mother Castinoja.

The painter knew that she lived somewhere in the Rue Foncarral, but of the precise location he was totally ignorant. The rain fell in torrents. The night was as dark as Egypt, and Morales cursed the day on which he was married. It may readily be imagined that in such a mood he was not likely to find the object of his search.

But while he is groping along the streets let us return to the sick lady. No sooner did she see her husband fairly off on his expedition than she summoned her brother and a few chosen friends who were lying hid in the cellar. In a twinkling they had the old street door off its hinges and its place supplied by the one bought for the occasion. Above it they placed a huge white sign, on which was displayed in large letters the following inscription:

"The Hotel of the Cid. Good entertainment for Man and Beast."

This done, a large party of friends from the neighborhood who had been let into the secret were speedily assembled. Castanets and guitars were put in requisition. A repast was prepared, and the merry guests began to eat, drink and dance by way of celebrating the dismal expedition of the poor husband who had gone in search of Mother Castinoja.

Meanwhile, having proceeded from street to street, knocked at more than fifty doors and aroused and angered the whole neighborhood, our good painter was at length obliged to return without the nurse. He was drenched to the skin, and his patience was completely exhausted. On approaching his house the sound of musical instruments, singing and peals of laughter burst upon his astonished ears. Thinking he had made a mistake, he raised the lantern, and discovering a different door from his own, with the sign of a hotel over it, he became completely bewildered and began to traverse the pavement anew.

"It is indeed the Rue de Lapaire," said he, "Here is the bookstore of Pedro Trappal, and this the house of Diego le Boiteux, and then, surely comes mine." He recognized the doors of all his neighbors—his alone was changed.

"God help me!" said he, making fifty signs of the cross, "this indeed must be my house. It is but an hour and a half since I left it. My wife was then weeping and groaning with pain, and now they are singing and dancing. I have never noticed a tavern in the street, and surely it is not in my house they would establish one."

He began to make a closer examination, passing his hand over the door, but could not find the knocker.

At last, determining to make himself heard in hopes that as soon as he effected an entrance he would learn the cause of this mysterious transformation, he began to thump on the door with blows loud enough to rouse the whole neighborhood.

The merrymakers within pretended not to hear him.

He knocked still more loudly.

At length, after he stood a long time under the drippings of the roof, a man, with head covered by an old handkerchief, opened the window above.

"Hello, my good man, what in the devil do you you want at this time of night? There is no room for you here. Go elsewhere for your lodging."

"But I wish to enter my own house."

"My friend, it is not our custom to open our doors at this unusual hour."

"Morbleu! but I tell you this is my house, and my father, Diego Morales, paid a round sum for it with his own deniers."

"Hark ye, my fine fellow, I know not if the wine which disturbs your noddle was Val de Pequas or Logroqou, but I'll be sworn it was capital, and the water from the gutters will not hurt you. So go on, or I'll let loose a mastiff. Good night."

Thus saying, he closed the window.

The singing and laughing were renewed within. Morales commenced knocking again, when presently he he heard some one call out:

"Antonio, unloose the dogs."

At this the door was thrown open and forth came a man with two huge dogs, which might have made the joke a rather serious one had they not been held back by their keeper.

"You cursed fellow," he said, "what do you mean by making this clamor? Were you not told there was no room for you here?"

"But, my good friend, this is my house, and I cannot comprehend what piece of sorcery has converted it into a tavern."

"My good man, you are certainly under a strange delusion. There are neither Morales nor mulberries in this neighborhood."

"I am a painter, well known in this city, and of some celebrity in this quarter. Call my wife, Casilda. If she is not transformed into a landlady, she will doubtless extricate me from this labyrinth."

"The landlady is Maria Perez. For more than six years this has been one of the most frequented hotels in Madrid. Its master is Piedro Carasco, and I am his valet. And now take yourself off."

The poor painter made the best of his way by groping along through the darkness to the house of a friend. From the lamentable voice in which Morales asked admittance the friend thought some serious calamity has befallen him, and hastened to let him in. Morales related his adventure, but his friend listened with incredulity. However, he prepared him a bed and advised him to go to sleep, for he doubted not that Morales had been making a little too free with the "jocund grape."

In the morning the painter still persisted in maintaining the truth of the story, and his friend, curious to behold the enchanted mansion, accompanied him home.

But to the utter astonishment of the mystified artist, another change had come over the spirit of his dream. The marvellous sign had disappeared, the house was secured by its accustomed portal, and everything had resumed its former quiet and peaceful appearance.

"Come, Morales," said his friend, slapping him on the shoulder, "confess that you have taken a drop too much last night and were afraid to return home."

"On my honor as a man and as an artist," replied Morales, "I have told you nothing but the truth."

Morales rapped sharply at the door. The maidservant hastened to open it.

"Oh, Senior Morales!" cried she in tones of well feigned astonishment, "how could you have the heart to stay out all night carousing with your friends and your poor wife lying here at death's door? And to go off under pretense of finding Mother Castinoja! Shame on you!"

"Shame on you!" cried a dozen shrill voices from the neighboring windows. "You have an angel for a wife, and you leave her in this cruel way to die without assistance!"

"Ah, indeed! And where have you been all night? In some filthy tavern, I guess, drinking with your good-for-nothing companions. What an abominable thing a man is who plays the bachelor!"

"But it is with me he has the account to settle," cried Casilda, who now came up, looking wan and pale, as was natural, after a night of dissipation. "And so you believed I was dead, and you thought to come back and squander my dower on your bachelor parties! But you did not reckon on the kind services of the neighbors."

"My dear little wife," said Morales soothingly, "if you will only listen to me, you will find that I am much more to be pitied than blamed."

And here the poor artist began to relate what had happened to him.

But his story was received with shouts of laughter.

"Tell that to others! Do you take us for idiots, Morales, to whom you are telling some of your humbug stories of the studio? Confess the truth, man. You have fallen in with some of your scapegrace companions, with whom you have passed the night drinking and carousing. Tell the truth and beg pardon for your fault, instead of standing there telling these cock and bull stories that no one will believe."

And, in truth, Morales had come to this at last. Crestfallen, overwhelmed by ridicule, he was forced to sue humbly for pardon, which was only granted him on the condition that he would give no more bachelor parties.—From the Spanish.

THE ESCAPED NUN

By Katharine Tynan in the Catholic World

The intelligent and cultivated Englishman is perhaps hardly aware, at least consciously, that there still appears in the suburbs of London and in English provincial towns, the Escaped Nun, a lady who is as much out of date at the beginning of this twentieth century, as the story of human sacrifice among the Jews and other exploited myths of the kind. One wonders if the same lady is yet extinct in America.

The Escaped Nun draws large audiences. She is a living and most thrilling example of the "Shilling Shocker" or the "Penny Dreadful." She affords numberless thrills. She is suggestive, indecent, prurient. Finally she ministers to that *odium theologicum* which is apt to enter so strongly into lives led amid narrow and dull surroundings. There are abundant reasons for her vogue; and the curious thing is that there is no protection against her calumnies for the innocent and devoted women whose lives are besmirched by the foulness of her fancies.

The Escaped Nun need not be in every case nor in any case a conscious liar or criminal. She may be, as a matter of fact, suffering from hysteria. Ask any doctor or any student of mental diseases and he will tell you that such morbid manifestations and imaginations are most common in a certain class of disorder. Only less piteous than the case of the women of holy lives besmirched and defiled, is the case of the poor creature whose disordered imaginations are dragged in the light of day or the gas-light, for the entertainment of the impure and the gross-minded. That the woman who was once a nun could stand up in a public hall with such tales on her lips is as poignant a thing in its way as the distraught Ophelia singing her lewd songs.

The demoralization that follows the Escaped Nun is a serious matter. Her "revelations" are not only for the ears of those who conceivably are not hurt by them; they reach the ears of the young as well—I have not heard that there is any limitation as to the age of the audience—the *odium theologicum* gives a reason for the discussion of these matters in circles where the avowedly prurient would be kept out of sight; worst of all, ignorant and well-meaning people may be persuaded that societies of women, ostensibly banded together for the services of God and His poor, indulge habitually in secret orgies of vices or are victims of persons more wicked than themselves. The evil the Escaped Nun does spread further and further, like the circles of water into which a stone has been thrown. Not only are the ignorant deceived, but to the wicked is given a justification for their wickedness. Religion is defiled and cast down in the mud of the streets.

There have been numberless pamphlets written and circulated to expose the Escaped Nun. It is quite safe to say that not one in a thousand overtakes the calumny. The persons who run to hear the libel are not those whom the refutation reaches. Surely it is time that the Escaped Nun was regarded by law as on the same level with other indecencies and corruptions which pollute the fount of human virtue at its very spring.

As a matter of fact there is no such thing as an Escaped Nun, because there is no such thing as an immured nun. I do not believe there is a convent in existence, as I know convents, that will not gladly open its door to set free the woman who has mistaken her vocation in becoming a nun. Such a one, whose discontent takes, or may take, the form of hysteria is indeed, a menace and a dread to every convent. Most gladly will the nuns see such a one depart, and breathe freely when she is beyond the convent portals.

I think I am safe in saying that where the affairs of a convent have been dragged into the light of day—as in the law courts, where the evidence for and against has been thoroughly sifted, the result has shown that the convent has nothing to conceal. A difficult person in a subordinate position, an over dominant person in the place of authority; these are the worst things that have been brought to light. There is no record of proceedings in the case of a nun who has escaped, or wished to escape. The disputes have been in the matter of property; and there has been nothing in the result to make Catholics blush for the convent.

I am personally aware of the cases of nuns who have left their convents and given trouble afterwards. In one case the nun, who had become a Catholic and a nun when of a mature age, returned to Protestantism and became a militant enemy of her late religion. She had always been a strikingly eccentric person, whose eccentricities would have been a matter of mild scandal anywhere except in Ireland where the confidence in a priest or a nun is a touching thing. Released from the convent, these eccentricities were more striking than ever. She had had a spurious reputation as an author, which must have cost the convent great sums, for she had brought out a number of lifeless and empty volumes on a scale of great magnificence.

To me, if I were not a Catholic and a believer in the conventual life as a life of great supernatural virtues and happiness, if I were a doctor or a philanthropist, or a person much interested in my kind, I should bear enthusiastic testimony to the virtue of convents as regards the health of the world. The convent solves the great and painful difficulty of defeated and disappointed womanhood into which even an ordinary happy woman, if she be a sympathetic and understanding person, gets many sad glimpses. To the many women, intended by nature to be wives and mothers, framed absolutely for that purpose, yet denied by law or civilization or the preponderance of their number over those of the male sex, the fruition of their purpose, the convent offers happiness, supernatural if not natural; it gives them the love of God and the rapture of the mystical life for the love of lover and husband; in the childless arms and the childless heart it places humanity in its greatest need of soul and body; it gives the warmth of family life and the security of home.

The rule, which in some cases, one might grumble against as antiquated and tyrannical, is, one must confess, justified of its results. Without the rule would it be possible for so many women of varying temperaments and tempers and tastes and inclinations to live together in the harmony which prevails under the convent roof? I claim no immunity for the nun from the common human failings. She would not claim such immunity herself. "We didn't leave our hearts behind us when we became nuns," is often heard from the lips of a nun, who is not ready to accept the somewhat dreary isolation from human griefs and joys which the fervid idealist might be disposed to bestow upon her. In the convent there are divergences as well as elsewhere. There are attachments; there are what might be dislikes if they were not held in check by the rule and by the high, supernatural ideals which are always in the forefront of a nun's thoughts. I have said in my haste, when I was younger that I am to-day, there was need for a congregation of women to do good works where there would be freedom of coming and going, where the members would keep in touch with the world, with books and music and art and what not. With a fuller knowledge I believe that such a congregation would not be possible, would not exist for long. It is the rule, the incessant business, as well as the supernatural virtues, that keep the convents going. The hours packed to overflowing with occupation of one kind or another, the soul has not time to get into mischief. Satan finds no idle hands for which to provide mischief in the convent.

As a convent school pupil, acquainted with nuns from my earliest infancy, accustomed to a tender intimacy with nuns in my earlier and later womanhood, I bear testimony that as a whole the nuns have satisfied my highest ideals of conduct. My years under a convent roof have left me with an exquisite feeling of the poetic atmosphere which is about the nun like a subdued sunlight. The odor of conventual sanctity is indeed fragrant in my nostrils. I speak of the Irish convents which I know best, and I strive to recall my childish impressions of the convent school. Mine happened to be a very old-fashioned school and a very old-fashioned convent. It had been established during the penal days when a priest's head had the same value as a wolf's, when the adherents of the Old Religion sheltered themselves behind high walls, practiced the rites of their religion in secret, and had only the honor and honesty of their Protestant neighbors to trust to that they should not be despoiled of all they possessed. No Catholic could own a horse of the value of more than £5. A son conforming to the established religion could take all, leaving his father beggared. Everything a Catholic had was liable to confiscation; and the estates of many Irish Catholics were only saved to them by the honorable friendship of their Protestant neighbors who held for them the property they had forfeited by their adherence to their religion. Schoolmasters were in as evil cases the priests; and nuns were also under a ban.

The shadow of those penal days yet hung heavily over my old convent. It secluded itself between high walls and had an air as though it lived by stealth. It was originally the house of some Irish nobleman or gentleman,—a great house of four stories, with wings at either end. There was a sunk floor in which were acres of kitchens and pantries and sculleries. It was quite a good walk from the school-house in one wing to the chapel in the other, and we used to take it two by two, our heads covered with black veils like so many little senoritas. Midmost of the two wings was the convent, which was strictly enclosed. There were high screened doors of glass and iron work beyond which lay long sunny corridors that had the most extraordinary fascination for my childish imagination. My memory of the place is as of something sunny, bright, clean, so clean that the strongest sun showed no mote in the atmosphere. There was a garden at the back in which we played our games and took our constitutionals, a dreary garden of vegetables and a few forbidden fruit trees, with the nuns' cemetery in the heart of it. Outside those walls lay the world. We used to hear the bells of St. Magdalene's Church chime on Sundays; and at one point the high wall lay between us and a public thoroughfare, where we could hear the feet of the unseen passers-by and dream our dreams of what lay over the wall.

The nuns' garden was a much more cheerful place. It lay in front of the house, a thick hedge enclosing it instead of the forbidding stone walls. It was a place of grassy spaces, with flower-beds cut in the grass and gnarled fruit trees everywhere amongst the flowers. On high feast-days we were allowed there for the afternoon recreation with the nuns. It was a place of winding walks and arbors and shrines set in every tree. The convent garden is always a place of conceits. I can remember the nuns there in their recreation hours, the novices chattering and laughing with a light-hearted gaiety that was like a grove of starlings in summer. The novices would crowd round the older nuns, especially the Reverend Mother and the Mistress of Novices. We used to hear the same sound of chatter and laughter coming through the community room windows in the winter afternoons. There is something peculiarly child-like about the gaiety of nuns.

There was a dog belonging to one of the lay-sisters who was a sort of complete workman in herself. She was gardener and carpenter and hen-wife and dairy-woman and swine-herd and many other things—a privileged person; and no one questioned her right to keep a dog, which went in and out among the nuns at recreation hour and had much notice and petting.

Also there were many robins in the garden, and they had become wonderfully tame. It used to be a pretty sight to see the robins perch on the nuns' shoulders and heads and take crumbs from their tongues. It seems to me looking back that the robins gave delightful testimony to the innocence and harmlessness of the nuns.

My convent belonged to one of the oldest orders of the Church and had a very austere rule. The nuns never partook of meat in any shape or form. From Holy Cross, the 14th of September, till Easter, they had only one full meal a day with a collation. They rose at 4:30 a. m. all the year round and retired to bed at 9 p. m. At 9:30 the bell rang profound silence, which could only be broken in case of great necessity. "Praise be to Jesus!" the nuns would say the last thing at night; and from that onward the silence was unbroken till the Sister, whose duty it was to call the others, offered them her finger tips which had been dipped in the holy water font, saying again: "Praise be to Jesus!"

These nuns belonged to one of the contemplative orders, for which some people who consider themselves broad-minded in admiring the active orders, have small toleration. They were of the few orders of women on whom it is incumbent to sing the Divine Office every day. This singing of the Divine Office, if I remember rightly, occupied seven hours of the day, and a goodly portion of it was accomplished before the bell called the children for Mass. The Divine Office and the school occupied the nuns' time pretty well; there were artists and poets among them; musicians, embroiderers, illuminators of fine manuscripts. Despite the hard asceticism of the rule, which kept poor Brother Ass, the Body, in a perpetual and, one would have said, painful subjugation, the nuns were as merry as children.

As for their simplicity—although the convent had its astute business women, wiser in their generation than the children of this world—their simplicity often made irreverent little girls smile. I remember that they had a very ancient organ in the school oratory, which had painted upon it the god Pan. Since the shaggy goat-god was not fit for convents and convent school-girls one of the artist nuns had changed him to David, putting a crown on him and a royal red robe and disguising the feet. Yet quite obviously it was Pan, or Bacchus, or some other pagan deity; or else it was David in most disedifying mood. And the school-children knew it. It was one of many simplicities which I could tell if this were not a serious article.

Their childlikeness, side by side with the hard ascetic life, was strangely alluring. Their contemplative manner of life was such as even tolerant people and people of their own religion denounce and decry. "What is the good of the Contemplative Orders?" they ask. "Surely they are out of date, only fit for the Middle Ages." A world which runs itself to death in the pursuit of folly and worse, has even dubbed the Contemplative Orders lazy and selfish. Well, to the nuns, it would seem a proposition beyond doubt, that in praying for those who would never pray for themselves, in constantly praising and worshipping God, whom the world insults and defies with every instant that passes, in mortifying and denying innocent bodies, because all the world over other bodies are committing sin every day; that in this life of prayer and penance offered for others they are really filling an important part in God's scheme of the regeneration of the world.

It takes all sorts to make up the world, spiritual and otherwise. Side by side with the women who pray and meditate are those whose ministration are to the body and to the soul through the medium of the body. Who shall dare to say which is the more meritorious? To me, if I were not a Christian and a Catholic, the thought of the Contemplative Orders would be like the thought of water-wells in the desert. When one thinks of the mass of sinning and suffering humanity, of the suffering of the lower creation, of the things that every day and every night put out the stars and moon and "make a goblin of the sun," it is good to turn and look upon the cool, green places of the world from which atonement and intercession arise through the hours of the day and night, as though the world swung a censer before the Throne of God. It is the *Deare Secret Greennesse* of George Herbert, the quietness upon the thought of which the soul may brood and find peace.

My first and most intimate knowledge is, therefore, of a convent of contemplative nuns. But since then I have known many nuns of the active orders. I have known Sisters of Charity who nurse the sick in hospitals and their own homes; who nurse the dying—a tender charity this, when it is remembered amid what circumstances the people of the slums must die; who shelter the blind and train them to a high degree of efficiency despite their sad disadvantages; who do the like for the deaf and dumb; who are ready to go out on the battlefields or into the midst of plague and pestilence to nurse the sick bodies in which they see the members of Christ; who shelter orphans and visit jails and workhouses; who reclaim sinners.

I have known the Sisters of Mercy whose ministrations also are to the sick and maimed in body and soul.

I have known the Little Sisters of the Poor, who take care of the old, worsted in the battle of life. The Little Sisters go on their questing often far afield. They know what it is to meet with rudeness and refusal. Unless some good soul gives them a cup of tea and some bread and butter, they fast all day, for their dependence is on charity, although they will not ask for themselves. To feed them has its own sweet reward. It is as though one were feeding the little children of God. Theirs is a life of austerities, which I have had the presumption to think too great. This order, founded by a poor, lowly Frenchwoman, has attracted to itself in many cases ladies of birth and rank. The Little Sisters and their charges live on almsgiving. They are true Franciscans, for they have nothing of their own. The broken food from hotels and restaurants, the things left from private tables, the rubbish that in many cases might go to the dust-heap are their provision. The Little Sisters eat what is too coarse or stale for their old charges. They find a use for the most unlikely things. I confess I shuddered, on a certain visit paid to the Little Sisters many a year ago, at seeing an exquisite face, telling of birth and breeding, bent above a bed which had seen much service and showed it very unpleasantly. The delicate long fingers were engaged in uncovering this with a view to re-making and covering it; and there was something in the expression of the face which said that many austerities would be preferable to this.

I have also known nuns who instructed the peasant girl in the arts of lace-making and embroidering, who taught them to weave and spin and make tweeds and carpets and blankets and woolen stuffs.

I have known all the varities of teaching nuns, from those—I had almost said from *her* — who in a short score of years have put the education of Irish Catholic girls on a level with others who had a long start of them, to those teach the children of the poor, with the many grades in between; and I am bound to say that in all cases the work has been performed with a selfless devotion beyond praise. I have known many of the convents of the active orders with their busy beneficences; I have known many of the contemplative orders; and I can only say that active or passive their lives were faultless in the sight of men. I have heard minor grumbles against them; that they think all the world ought to work for nothing as they do themselves in the service of God and incidentally of the convent; that they disturb the balance of things economic, bringing labor ill-paid-for and un-paid-for into competition with the work of those who must earn a living wage for themselves and their families; that they educate girls above their station and give them a false standard of refinement; that they spend too much time in prayer.

All these things are beside the purpose. Possibly or probably they are all or some of them true. The matter vital to my argument is that in all my experience of convents, covering some thirty years or more, I have never heard a word of scandal whispered concerning a nun. No one will deny the nuns their foibles, they would hardly desire that; but the image of the nun to those who know her best is always *snow-white! snow-white!* and one's thought of a nun is always a thought of the Madonna.

In the country I know best, the convents are usually recruited from quite young girls. It is one of the arguments against them that girls go into convents without knowing their own minds. Very often they go in from the convent school. Sometimes a girl will come home; and laugh and dance and have her fun through a year or two; then she will slip away to the convent. They are the merriest girls who become nuns. One hears now and again of a girl dancing all night at a ball, coming home in the small hours and taking off the finery with a laugh and a sigh; then slipping away during the morning hours to a convent and putting on the black gown and veil of the postulant. The irresistible call is often answered with pangs. It is not a thing one does lightly; and I have seen a girl at a merry picnic turn suddenly white on receiving a letter which summoned her to the convent earlier than see had expected to go. But they go willingly; there is no doubt at all that they go willingly; and the great renunciation being over, you will find on visiting the convent the girl who was the life and soul of her home and the festivities she joined in, transformed into a still merry demure little nun, whose jests delight the community room and the recreation hour as late they did another audience.

All convents desire young postulants. It is not disappointed disillusioned women, who have grown rooted in their own habits and their own ways, that make the best subjects for the convent rule. Rather is the older postulant one to be received with anxiety, at least; and, though the genuine vocation may and does come to women over thirty, it is they who in many cases leave the convent later, who if they persevere suffer the most in the necessity of submitting their own will in all things to another's.

The Irish mother giving up her young daughter to a convent will say, between a smile and a sigh: "Ah well, sure she is safe anyhow; safer than those who get married." I have often heard an Irish mother say that she would rather see her daughter in a convent than married, a saying which has a special strangeness in a country where the married estate and the bringing of children into the world are held in peculiar honor.

But, to be sure, the mother is right. Life has many chances and changes. The innocent child fresh from the convent school is often among the farming and shop-keeping classes in strange contrast to the youths among whom she may look to marry. The convent schools make ladies of their girls, as the monastery schools do not make gentlemen of their boys. Perhaps the monasteries where no woman comes, lack the exterior purity and refinement of the convents, which those children from the farm-houses and shop-parlors take on as to the manner born. Many a convent school-girl finds her dream and her ideal in the bare, light, convent rooms, amid fields and flowers where never a rough word is spoken, nor a voice raised, where all is gentleness, peace, purity and an almost over-refinement, rather than in marriage with a man of her own class. What the nuns teach her she is not able to put off; and the call of the convent follows and finds her at the hearth or at the dance.

I have tried in this somewhat discursive article to bear testimony to the convents and the nuns, whom the Escaped Nun defiles in her platform appearances up and down England. It seems to me somewhat of an infamy that such things should be permitted; and an anomaly that the Englishman, whose daughters and sisters, just a little dearer, a little more sacred than those who have remained in the world, a little more surely his—should remain silent while they and their convents are dishonored and defamed by foulness. Those convents where:

"The Brides of Christ
Lie hid, emparadised,"

are dragged in the foulest dirt of the sewers up and down England; and it seems no one's part to interfere.

Let me bear one woman's testimony to the convent's purity and to its beneficent purpose. If there were more convents there would be less of the strange manifestations of the natural woman that we find in our literature, on our stage, in our law-courts. The convents do not breed suicide or madness or shame. To the convents before all the colleges, all the high schools, I would commit the training and the shaping of our girl-children.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN EARLY IRELAND

FATHER AMBROSE COLEMAN AN IRISH DOMINICAN READS ABLE PAPER ON BLESSED EUCHARIST IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TIMES AT EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

An excellent paper on "The Blessed Eucharist in Ireland in early Christian Times" by an Irish Dominican, Father Ambrose Coleman, was read at the Eucharistic Congress in Madrid. We reproduce it in full as printed by the Catholic Times.

In connection with the preposterous claim made by the Irish Protestant Church to be the "Church of St. Patrick," the heir to the true faith that he brought to Ireland, the proud possessor through him of a real apostolic succession of bishops and clergy, is their denial that the early Christians believed in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar or in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In their controversial tracts they labor to prove that in those days the Church in Ireland was quite independent of Rome; that there was no belief in purgatory, no invocation of saints, no devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, and coming to the central object of Catholic faith and devotion, the Blessed Eucharist, that the early Irish Christians regarded it merely as a commemoration of Our Lord's death on the Cross as do the Protestants at the present day. This claim to hierachical and doctrinal continuity made by men who have nothing in common with our ancestors in the faith is by no means an argument of recent date, though since the Disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland we have heard more of it than formerly. It was of Armagh (1624-56) who, with a great show of erudition,

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