

about the mysteries of the convent would have been an extremely tame affair. The great speech of the evening would not have been nearly so pointed had it not been delivered before a large number of the sex which a preposterously exaggerated propriety commonly delars from all opportunities of hearing how much of a certain sort of wickedness goes on in the world. The orator whose mastery effort contributed so largely to the triumphant success of the demon's effort is a divine of some denomination, and this fact was doubtless a comfort to some of the audience who might have thought his line of argument rather prurient if he had been a coa se layman. Besides being a divine and an orator, Mr. HOBART SEYMOUR has been a traveller, and in fact a man of the world. He told his hearers that he had once been to Madeira, where he met a priest, in whose company, with some other young men, he visited a well-known convent. The large attendance of ladies pricked up their ears, but to no purpose. All that he and his companions said and did on the occasion "he was not going to tell them; in fact he could not tell a mixed assembly." Great laughter, and one or two solemn nods of approbation, followed this practical joke on the general curiosity. However, "he would say this, that some of the poor girls in that convent implored them with fearful earnestness to come to them at night and assist them to escape, promising to go to the ends of the earth with them on any condition or in any capacity whatsoever." This terrific picture of despair and abandonment had about it the right ring of a genuine polemical anecdote, and the indignant but tickled audience cried "Shame!" with vigorous unanimity. The notion of Mr. SEYMOUR going to the convent "at night," "with fearful earnestness," and the latent unseemliness of "any condition or any capacity whatsoever," were all touches indicative of the true artist. That German rationalist whom the *Morning Advertiser* justly holds up to the pity and contempt of its readers might indeed ask how the poor girls got a chance of such a scene with a number of young men, and even whether it was not as well that they should stop in the convent as roam over the world with Mr. HOBART SEYMOUR in the vague and rather polygamous way they proposed. But no demon of German rationalism intruded his despicable criticisms upon the enchanted audience. The only interruption to the harmony of the evening occurred when Mr. SEYMOUR declared that, when once a poor girl was immured in a convent, "the cry of insulted innocence, the shriek of outraged 'virtue,' could never more be heard. The candid reporter tells us that "this was too much" for a Roman Catholic at the end of the room, "who made such a noise that he had to be removed by the police." What very strange behaviour on the part of the Roman Catholic! Perhaps the poor behavoured being at the end of the room had a sister or a daughter in a convent; and, if so, he ought to have been very much obliged to the kind Christian gentleman who reminded him of her insulted innocence and outraged virtue. If the Roman Catholics were to hold a large public meeting for the purpose of pointing out some defect in the organization of a Protestant community, the British public would doubtless listen to the eloquent invectives with a patience and composure very different from the turbulence of the person for whom Mr. SEYMOUR's elegant and moderate language was "too much." Perhaps the laughter which greeted the speaker's truly decent and charitable joke about the priests who had "no honest wives or legitimate children" would also have been "too much" for this fractious and ungrateful person.

After the unreasonable Roman Catholic had been removed by the policeman, Mr. SEYMOUR got slightly dull and satirical for a time, but he soon recovered the appropriate tone. He proceeded to give what the reporter calls a "lively description" of the interviews he had seen between young monks and nuns "at twilight in Italy." Why at twilight? "He suggested nothing against the propriety of these young people"—nothing, much as one might have thought it. But "the young people" ought to have been allowed to consecrate an honest affection by an honest marriage, and "had he a scourge of scorpions he would drive from the land the Church which would enact 'any laws to prevent it.'" The imagination of the audience was so excited by this graphic picture of Mr. SEYMOUR chasing his adversaries with a scourge of scorpions, that they "broke out into loud and protracted cheering, waving of hats and handkerchiefs for some minutes." The philosophic looker-on would see in this edifying spectacle a conclusive retortuation of the wicked calumny that the most characteristic feature of Exeter Hall Protestantism is its intolerance; and it can only be regretted that a timorous Legislature does not hasten to entrust the power to scourge the Roman Catholics to such temperate and high-minded persons as Mr. SEYMOUR, and those who greeted his Christian aspirations with loud cheers. After this ferocious outburst, he again returned to the amusing aspect of the matter. Not only were the nuns not permitted to marry, but they were permitted to choose a confessor. "Some nuns selected square confessors, some selected round ones"—a statement which must have had some meaning, because the audience are reported to have laughed at it. When a nun got a round or square confessor to her taste, her confessions took an hour, or even more. "It was not for him to say what took place on those occasions;" but the pure-minded audience guessed what he meant, and went on laughing heartily. "Were he not addressing a mixed assembly, he could relate some fearful facts." After all, this scruple was a little superfluous. A fearful fact or two might have helped to tame the imaginative ef-

forts which the orator's disgusting insinuations were no doubt successful in begetting. Another speaker said he could quote cases "of gratified lust and secret cruelty," but, like Mr. SEYMOUR, he contented himself with a few suggestive hints. A third, with immense gusto, read the preamble of the Act of Parliament for the suppression of monasteries, and the assembly gloated over the recurring phrases descriptive of "vicious, carnal, and abominable living. It can only be hoped that most of the audience were in blissful unconsciousness of what the terms were exactly meant to describe. But it would be very chimerical to suppose that any of the persons present knew anything whatever about monasticism. The chairman, who probably gets his ecclesiastical history from the *Times*, evidently supposed that the first monk was St. BERNARD. Mr. COLTHOUN, in fact, was only surprised by Mr. SEYMOUR in zeal and energy. He considered that as we had put down Thuggee, and infanticide, and the sacrifices to JEGGERNAUT in India, although they were religious practices, so we should show no mercy to convents. "He grieved to say, there were many ladies who had gone into those places from pious motives, and who were leading holy and upright lives." One is a little puzzled at first to understand how the fact of leading a holy and upright life, or of being actuated by pious motives, can be a matter for grief. But no doubt the chairman means that, just as the Madeira nuns would have been better off in officiating, "on any condition and in any capacity whatsoever," to Mr. SEYMOUR than in leading the conventional life, so these ladies ought to be compelled by law, or a scourge of scorpions, to give up their holiness and uprightness, and to come to St. James's Hall to see what real enlightenment and purity and Christian charity could effect. Perhaps, as, according to the chairman's own admission, many of them do lead holy lives, they would have been rather astonished at Mr. SEYMOUR's account of the cry of insulted innocence and the shriek of outraged virtue, and of the choice between round and square confessors.

Of course, a meeting of this sort could not separate without calling itself a friend of civil and religious liberty. Having bellowed, and waved hats and handkerchiefs, in applause of a desire to extirpate the Roman Catholic Church because it holds a certain view about celibacy, these people naturally congratulated themselves on the keen appreciation of the inestimable worth of a religious liberty tempered by scourges of scorpions. They see nothing inconsistent with civil and religious liberty in the formation of a great political confederacy for the purpose of rejecting every candidate at the approaching elections who will not bind himself to vote for a measure interfering with the domestic regulations of religious communities. "If a candidate hesitated on this point let us reject him." "Let every man be in earnest in this matter who respected his mother's memory." If the desired object were ever so expedient, what reasonable man could support it in the hands of such advocates—people who talk about that portion of the "press of England which is not yet crushed by 'Kewish tyranny, nor deluged by Lomish arts'?" The whole proceedings are well worth a careful notice. They show with peculiar force the shameless folly and wickedness which religious fanaticism can develop in people who, in other matters, are probably not wanting either in common sense or virtue.—*London Saturday Review*.

A SPRIG OF HOLLY.

I don't think a jollier party can ever have assembled itself together than the one that was staying at the Firs last Christmas. The cause of this extraordinary joy and good feeling were to be found, perhaps, in none of us being of kin. There was not so much as a brace of cousins among the guests to mar the harmony, either by their love or hate. Added to this, our hostess had no sons to protect against insidious advances, and no daughters to get off. She could venture to be open-hearted and nobly reliant on the friends she had gathered together without doing violence to the maternal instinct.

The party included every element of success. We had handsome men and intellectual men, men of money and men of mark; and we had fits, fascinating women, and one heiress. The Apollo of the party was Lionel Poole, a treasury clerk. His good looks were a perpetual source of discomfort to somebody or other, for they were rather of the plaintive order. His eyes had a habit of saying more than they meant—unconsciously, let us hope, for the sake of his soul, for more than half of his young lady acquaintances had been bitten alive by him at night in a manner that left no doubt whatever on their minds that they were to be the recipients of an offer from him in the morning.

He was so pre-eminently handsome a man that I fear in describing him I may rather slur the indisputable claims he had to be considered something else. Lionel Poole was a clever man also, with a utility talent that turned everything to his own advantage.

To tell the truth, I was more than slightly astonished when I came down into the drawing room the day of my arrival to find him installed in the Firs.

He was palpably a pampered guest, too, for he had the key of Mrs. Fitzgerald's private photograph album in his hand; and after that lady (our hostess) made her appearance, he went and sat by her side, and made comments that were inaudible to the rest of us, but that, to judge from the expression of his face, were not flattering to the portrayed ones.

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