

it rose higher and higher, and surged and roared at the base of the column-like rock, the summit of which it would shortly submerge. And there stood the unfortunate, watching the rising waters.

His mind torn and distracted as it was by evil passions could not forget the pious teachings of his boyhood.

His excited fancy brought strange voices to his ears on the wings of the tempest. Mocking or threatening faces seemed to gleam out of the darkness, shadowy hands seemed to beckon him to the foaming waters.

"Who talked of self-murder!" he exclaimed wildly. "I do not rush on death. I wait. I do but wait, to be swept away in the vortex of these waters, from which I cannot if I would escape!"

Then as he folded his arms, and stolidly awaited his coming doom, a voice, the accents of which were not framed by his heated fancy, smote his ear.

"Oswald, Lord Oswald!" cried that voice, "in heaven's name what takes you here on such a night as this?"

The youth turned his head, and tossing upon the foaming waters he perceived a boat, the occupants of which, at great danger to themselves, were endeavoring to urge athwart the waves by their oars, for had the sail been spread the boat must have immediately capsized. A lantern secured at the prow of the vessel dotted the darkness with a speck of light as though it were a ruddy star: and at intervals, as the showers of spray were scattered, showed the persons of those who were risking their lives to save him who did not care to save himself.

These persons were three in number. A weather-beaten man in the garb of a fisherman, a young man wearing the white habit of the neighboring Cistercian monastery, and a boy of about fourteen years of age.

## WOMAN AND THE CONVENT.

By LADY BLANCHE MURPHY.

THERE are two or three principles said to be very well understood in our day, for instance, that of association, *i.e.*, of the right of any set of rational beings to form communities; that of representation and the desirability of such division of labor as this makes easy; and that of self-support, a cardinal point in the code of the agitators of the woman question. There is, in the Catholic Church, an institution intimately connected with every one of these principles. This is the conventual life.

But the principle of association and of organised corporation is not a newly discovered one, and, in the case of women especially, the Church has always taught it. In the early days of Christianity, pious women felt within themselves an unlimited power of doing good to their fellow-creatures, and to meet this hunger of activity, the monastic life was framed. Indeed it grew up naturally out of the necessities of the times, for the germ of a life in common was contained in the informal assemblies of Christian women, associated for the purpose of prayer and good works, under the roof of some matron of greater experience than themselves. Gradually the gathering became larger, and like bees from the parent hive a little swarm of picked and tried members could leave and form a community elsewhere. In the East, for example, Paula and Eustochia, the friends and scholars of St. Jerome, settled at Bethlehem to minister to the pilgrims and prevent the Roman authorities from misusing their power towards inoffensive strangers. In the West, barbarian princesses turned to practical account the natural reverence that was paid to womanhood, and the convents of the Saxons, Franks and Celts, were really powerful corporations.

Besides this, the convent embodies the principle of representation. Common sense tells us that though a thousand things may be equally praiseworthy, no one can do them all at once. Prayer, expiation and intercession are primary duties, but God mercifully takes into consideration the demands of practical life and forgives us the debt. Yet is that a reason why some should reluctantly take up the burden and stand before God as the representatives of his more careless creatures? It is essential that children should be taught, the sick tended, the aged sheltered, the wicked exhorted and reclaimed. These things, even now-a-days, are done by representative persons, paid by the State for so doing, and looked upon as vicariously executing the duty of the whole community. Why should they not be done by women, the voluntary substitutes of their kind, not for State pay but for the love of God? Wives and mothers have another sphere; they cannot shine by the wayside and cheer the path of the lonely wayfarer, but they can delegate this wider task to their unwedded sisters, and through them take their share of this work of mercy. A common objection is often made about the contemplative orders, "the women who sit behind iron bars, doing nothing." But consider a moment. In the old and grave game of chess, there are pieces that move irregularly, some that can go but two steps at a time, some that may sweep to any distance on a given line, etc. The king, however, is almost motionless. But is he therefore useless? Without him would the game still be chess? So with these apparent statues of the cloister. They are the foundations of convent life, and, like those of material structures, are built out of sight. Their work is prayer; they are the pickets of the world—they watch while the army sleeps. Why do not all the sailors in a ship sit up at night instead of leaving everything to the "look-out?" Why is a light-house entrusted to but one or two men, who do duty for their port and town? So the Church, having her representative workers, has also her representative watchers.

But are the women idle? The annual work within doors is not so very useless an occupation; it is the life of thousands of our working girls, and they, I think, would have good reason to laugh if anyone accused them of sitting all day behind the iron bars of factory windows, doing nothing! whilst half the day, the women of contemplative orders are at work. But a factory girl earns her living and supports her family by her work. I answer to that, that a nun does the same. She earns her living, because, in most instances, she cultivates the convent garden, does the common house-work, spins, weaves, or at least makes up her own garments, and works at things which, being sent beyond

the convent walls, are sold to defray the convent's expenses. She supports her family, because the poor are her family, which the convent feeds and clothes, and ministers to in various ways through its almoners.

Of intellectual occupations, the conventual life is full. In medieval times, nuns spent most of their time transcribing the Bible. St. Boniface, in the 8th century, was constantly sending to the nuns of Ireland for Bibles for distribution among the heathen. Some of these, from the great reverence in which the Holy Scriptures were held, were written in liquid gold. The holy women of the East studied Greek and Hebrew, that they might help in translating the Scriptures. In our days, when education is the chief aim of the active orders, a high degree of knowledge, artistic, literary, and even scientific, is demanded of their members. Trades also, and all sorts of practical, useful knowledge, are familiar to many orders. It has been objected that convent life destroys individuality of character. Another mistake. In fact, it gives individuality to many women who otherwise would be insignificant, for the humbler spirits of a community are taught to feel that, no less than upon the more highly gifted members, lies the responsibility of the whole sisterhood. Each little action is thus invested with a vicarious dignity that goes far to raise the casual performer of such actions in her own estimation, and consequently ends in seriously raising her whole moral standard.

Now remains the principle of self-support and independence, perhaps at present the most important side of the question. It is urged against convents now-a-days that with them it is always a case of mendicancy. It must be remembered that a few orders were founded on the principle of poverty, *e.g.*, the Poor Clares, the Little Sisters of the Poor. Even those are so far self-supporting that what they receive in charity is almost entirely bestowed in charity again, and "he who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." The holy and touching usury is surely a kind of self-support. They also save many charitable but careless people the trouble of seeking out real cases, and are a guarantee that the gift shall not be perverted to any questionable use. Convents help, and, in many cases, relieve the State. They feed, clothe and educate a portion of what the world calls the "pauper population," and they provide for any energetic, aspiring woman, with a definite object in life. Some are devoted to the care of female prisoners, and some again serve as reformatories. The State subsidy in these cases is almost always quite inadequate to the expenses incurred, but the work done by the convent (laundry or sewing work, or other industries) mostly fills up the gap. In former times convents possessed endowments: these have disappeared under the altered circumstances of our times, yet the convent is willing to do the work it ever did, and more. The value of money is ever growing higher, and money is indispensable to conduct any establishment. If a convent works for money, it is more self-supporting than when it had an endowment; for now it asks for wages for work well and thoroughly done, and few other corporations would accept such low and uncertain wages as the convent gladly receives. It would be a pity if the stinginess of the age should debar a multitude of earnest, energetic women from prosecuting works which they are dying to do. The Church does not ask or extort help from hard-working men and women, who can scarcely make both ends meet (though, in fact, those are just the readiest to give), but it is a legitimate demand to make of prosperous business men that, since they have no time to give to charity and teaching, they should provide means to those who do give their time, their brains and their health.

The convent is the home and type of independent womanhood, and the conventual is the only experiment of community life which has kept itself pure, both from the stain of "free-love" and the stamp of hard, unsympathetic, unwomanly strongmindedness (I use this word in its common but erroneous acceptation, because it is comprehensive and best serves the purpose in this place). "Mind has no sex," says John Stuart Mill, but St. Augustine had said the equivalent sixteen centuries before. "Strength of soul obliterates weakness of sex."

## THE IRISH HOME RULE MEMBERS.

CERTAIN Otago papers have published extracts ridiculing the Home Rulers in Parliament. In doing so they have taken their cue from English and Scotch papers, whose London letters and Parliamentary intelligence have been dished up so as to make it appear that the Home Rulers had been setting the rules of the debate at defiance, and also bringing themselves into ridicule. This is what the London 'Saturday Review' says of the Home Rulers, and the statements of that journal should carry more weight than those of the hired scribblers of the anti-Irish party, and the echoes of them by their Otago clacquers.

"The considerable body of Home Rule members who were returned at the general election have, on the whole, done no discredit to their constituencies. It fortunately happens that neither party had any sufficient motive for bidding for their support." Left to themselves the supporters of Home Rule have offered no factions interruption to general business, nor can it be said that they have occupied an unreasonable space of the time at the disposal of the Parliament. Mr Butt had long been known as a fluent and effective speaker. Mr Sullivan has, in his first session, displayed considerable oratorical power. There is no reason to expect that during the continuance of the present Parliament the cause of Home Rule will be materially advanced; but its promoters have done their cause no injury.

While the 'Saturday Review' condemned Home Rule as a "mischievous innovation" it credits Home Rulers with having conducted themselves in a proper and decorous manner in Parliament.

The following is the key to the rage of the Tory journalists. The 'Review' says:—"The most gratifying result of the session to the more far seeing members, probably consists in the failures and disasters which have befallen the Government," also, "advocates of Home Rule and of other mischievous innovations are beginning to recover courage in the anticipation of another political change which may restore their power of deciding the conflicts of evenly balanced parties."