

and £4,000 per annum. This was for the Province of Otago. Now this same Province will have to pay £18,000 probably for administration. But, of course, considering outlying districts have local self-government, and such able politicians as Mr. PYKE and Mr. MANDERS at the head of affairs in country districts, the enhanced cost is a mere bagatelle. In fact, under the circumstances, the present system, although costing about six times as much in money, is really cheaper than Provincialism!

THE "VAGABOND" AT ABBOTSFORD.

SOME months ago it was our privilege to publish in these columns testimony, borne by a tried friend of theirs, to the value of the religious orders. We were then empowered to show, by quoting from the letter of an aged priest, a letter which the writer had only intended for the eyes of those who, like himself, were members of an order, that the sole inducement which nuns, at least, require to recommend to them any particular sphere of labor, is that it may be made clear to them that they shall there find an ample field in which to exercise their self-sacrificing duties; and that the only fear, which is considered of sufficient force to deter them from embarking in any special enterprise, is least they may be prevented thereby from carrying out in its perfection the discipline which they find it necessary or advisable to observe, so that they may be prepared faithfully to perform the tasks to which they are devoted; whether these be teaching, attendance on the sick, or anything else by which the love of God and the welfare of man may be promoted on earth.

We are now, again, in a position to lay before our readers testimony that bears on the same subject; but this time, instead of a venerable missionary, dead in harness, and whose voice reaches us strengthened a hundred-fold by the witness of his life, we look to the writing of a clever and not always over-scrupulous journalist, who professes the easy philosophy of a thorough man of the world. Amongst contributors to journalistic literature at the present day, there is none who has more deservedly made his mark than the gentleman who, under the *nom de plume* of "Vagabond," enriches the columns of the Melbourne 'Argus.' His writings are anxiously looked for and read with avidity, and many an editorial scissors rejoicingly clips them as a god-send of the raciest nature. But clear-headed as the "Vagabond" may be, and of wide experience, he has not been so fortunate as to have escaped the general glamour, and the meshes of prejudice have so entangled his brain that frequently it happens his lively sentences are blurred with no-Popery utterances, and the babble of the anti-Catholic party is plainly discernible there; so that, on the whole, we cannot claim him as a friend, but rather we may, without a sacrifice of charity, rank him amongst our foes. If, therefore, by chance anything emanates from his pen of a nature favorable to Catholic individuals or institutions, we may characterise it as the testimony of an enemy, and, as it were, a voluntary gift of the Egyptians.

The "Vagabond," then, has paid a visit to the convent and asylum of the Good Shepherd at Melbourne, and has, in his agreeable style and pithy paragraphs, recorded a favorable impression of most things that there came under his observation. His mind was turned towards the establishment in question by a strange incident that befell as he was walking through the streets one night, and which, with its attendant circumstances and consequences, he relates in a manner exceedingly quaint and amusing, and with a sort of cynical philanthropy, which is not altogether uninteresting. He had already received from the rev. Mother, an invitation to visit the institution under her direction, of which, however, he had not hitherto availed himself, but being impressed with a new interest in the matter, he now repaired thither.

Did he really expect to find the convent doors barred on the inside, so as forcibly to prevent the egress of the inmates, or is the following merely intended for the information of those who are idiotic and wicked enough still to believe in the hideous inventions of MARIA MONK and Baron CAMPIN, so much as to read which it requires a certain amount of antecedent depravity. Here is what he says, "My first glance is towards the door. I see that inside it is not locked, and that it is possible, during the day, for any one to get out without troubling the Sister who acts as janitor, and that, in this respect, liberty of action is not controlled." To those whose experience of

convents is somewhat wider this sounds very funny. However, being in and perceiving that it was possible for any one who should so desire it to make his or her way out, what further came under this writer's observation. Very gladly would we avail ourselves of his own brilliant diction, and insert his description unimpaired, but unfortunately it is too lengthy for our columns, and, therefore, we can but manage to give an imperfect sketch of it, with here and there an extract from the original. He finds, then, a plain and neatly furnished building of wood, scrupulously clean, no doubt, as convents always are, and he takes a seat in the parlor to await the coming of the rev. Mother, who presently arrives. "The door opens and two ladies enter, attired, like the portress, in long robes of white serge, and hoods and bandages of the same material. There is nothing in dress to distinguish the Superioress from an ordinary sister. Falling from the throat, they all wear a broad white serge band, underneath which they can incessantly tell their beads without ostentatious display. They all have hung round their neck a chased silver locket, heart shaped, and bearing the monogram V.J.M., which I afterwards found means 'Vive Jesu et Marie!' This is the password of the Order, it having been founded in France. From the waist, beads and an ivory cross are hung. Emphatically an ugly dress, one to disguise all beauties of youth, feature, or form. The age of each individual wearer has to be guessed at." Alas, for the sentimentalism that some folk suppose to attach to the habit of the nun—a habit whose sole attraction consists in its associations.

After some preliminary conversation, the "Vagabond" is escorted by the Sisters over their establishment. They pass through several rooms where the work of the laundry is being carried on. "In all these rooms I see 'penitent fallen women' working under the eyes and superintendence of a few nuns. Their dress is of the plainest: any attempt at personal adornment being apparently discouraged. They are of all ages, but the majority are old women. On some there is a settled look of despair and discontent; they have not yet found peace. Others, and especially the younger ones, looked cheerful, happy, and contented with their lot. Except during the hour of silence, they sing at their work, French *chansons* and Welsh odes being heard; for many nationalities are gathered here, and many creeds, for it is the boast of the good nuns that they open their gates freely to women of all denominations. The rev. Mother tells me they will not attempt to influence the religious faith of any penitent, they will not press them to go to chapel, or ask them to read religious works. If they did proselytise, I, for one, should hold them blameless. The fallen woman, rescued and reformed by Catholic hands, is likely, logically to embrace that faith." But it requires something more than a mere logical sequence of events to lead a stray sheep into the fold of the Catholic Church, and for this, no doubt, the prayers of the nuns are continually offered. Some further interesting details are here given, for which, however, we have not room, and next the party proceed upstairs. "Then upstairs we marched, through rows of dormitories, spotlessly clean, and very crowded. In a room attached to each ward, one or two sisters sleep. Night and day the penitents are watched and cared for." The work-rooms are then visited, and there it is discovered that all the clothes worn by its inhabitants are made in the institution.

Inquiries respecting the inmates of the establishment elicit the following information. "There are at present 136 in the asylum, some of whom have been there for many years. Last year the total number received was 244. Of these, 48 were placed in service or restored to their friends. Others were discharged for misconduct, or sent to the hospital, and five died. The receipts from all sources, including the Parliamentary grant of £950, and £2,045 realised by the penitents' labor, were £1,807. The expenditure was £5,400, or not £25 *per capita*. Over £860 was expended in building repairs, fittings, and furniture. New buildings are, in fact, sadly needed for the health and comfort of the inmates." Further details are given, relative to the conditions of admission and the discipline maintained, in all of which wisdom and moderation are plainly evident. The paragraph concludes thus. "But this discipline is softened by the kind womanly sympathy of the nuns, who look on the fallen ones, not as lost souls, but as strayed sheep whom it is their duty and pleasure to gather to the fold of the Good Shepherd, for here and hereafter." Are not all nuns, in fact, the spouses of Him who said, "Go and sin no more?"