

The letter and the spirit of the obligations assumed towards the Church by the State have been grossly violated ever since Grevy, by a stroke of the pen, decreed on March 30, 1880, the dissolution of the various Jesuit communities throughout France. The laws adverse to religious Orders are opposed not merely to the provisions of the Concordat, but—as sixteen hundred lawyers have declared—to the 'droit public' as well, which gives to religious congregations the same right to exist as associations of any other kind, without special authorisation, so long as they show due obedience to the laws of the land. The new legislation, when in force, will confiscate all the cathedrals, churches, episcopal residences, presbyteries, seminaries, etc., that were erected by the generous piety of the faithful in France. All will become the absolute property of the State—to be hired, under such galling and impossible restrictions, for the purposes of religion, that priests and people will, in all probability, frequently prefer to worship under the blue dome of heaven. It is also proposed by a Freemason Ministry to force upon the Church in France a new constitution and organisation—in a word, 'to work her utter destruction. Brisson, one of the leading Freemason and anticlerical politicians, set forth the Radical-Socialist programme with brutal frankness in a recent speech in the Chamber of Deputies. 'We have,' said he, 'turned God out of the schools, the barracks, the navy, the hospitals, asylums, and other public institutions, and it is now our duty to consummate our great work by turning Him out of the State.' Commenting on this declaration of policy, the London 'Saturday Review' said in a recent issue: 'It is remarkable that, in a country which so ostentatiously boasts of its Christianity as England, the press should treat the effacement not only of Catholicism, but even of the bare idea of God, from a neighboring and just now favorite nation, with indifference or approval.' With one or two honorable exceptions, the same remark applies to the secular newspapers of New Zealand. It applies without any exception to the non-Catholic religious press.

AN ORANGE FALSEHOOD

A SLANDER ON A CONVENT REFUTED

The Orange organ in Melbourne published the other day a vile slander on the Abbotsford Convent, which was promptly refuted by our esteemed contemporary, the 'Advocate.' As the slanderous attack, without the refutation, will probably be reproduced in the 'religious' columns of some of the New Zealand secular papers, we publish both for the information of our readers. 'It is not so very long since the public of Sydney (says the 'Advocate') were startled by a series of charges against the administration of a charitable institution, conducted under the auspices of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in that city. It was soon made evident that the charges emanated from the Orange clique, whose moving spirit is that malignant assailant of Catholicity, Dill Macky. The charges were, of course, promptly met, and, needless to say, were completely refuted, and the Orange conspiracy exposed. Although hopelessly beaten in their malevolent enterprise, Dill Macky's followers were not daunted, and the bright thought occurred to them that a change of venue might enable them to retrieve the disaster that they had sustained in Sydney. Accordingly, it was determined to commence the publication of their organ, the 'Watchman,' in Melbourne, in addition to the Sydney issue, and, with such help, to initiate a campaign of slander in this city against the local Catholic institutions. At first, of course, they proceeded cautiously; but, becoming emboldened by the apparent apathy of the Catholic body, and its contemptuous indifference to the torrent of vituperation and slander which was poured out every week, they at last ventured upon a bold coup, and with the aid of one of those abandoned creatures whom they invariably enlist for such enterprises, they managed to fabricate a charge against the Nuns of the Good Shepherd at Abbotsford. This appeared the other day in the 'Watchman,' in the shape of a string of malignant falsehoods, purporting to come from a former inmate of the Abbotsford in-

stitution. These statements were made in due form before a justice of the peace, who signed the declaration as having been made before him, but who, when publishing the statement in the 'Watchman,' modestly refrained from giving his name in full, and signed himself T. A. R.—, J.P. Apart from the obvious falsehood of the girl's story, this circumstance was calculated to arouse suspicion. A representative of this journal was deputed to investigate the case, with the result that the foul conspiracy was exposed, and even the identity of the too modest T. A. R.—, J.P., was disclosed. The following is the full text of the statement that appeared in the 'Watchman' of June 24 last:—

The Abbotsford Convent.

The following narrative of a Melbourne girl's experiences at the Abbotsford Convent—how she came to be an inmate, and why she escaped—is told by the girl herself, and needs no comment to point any moral. The statement was made to our representative, and subsequently attested by a sworn declaration before a magistrate. Here is the story:—

'I, Ella Laughton, was born at Penshurst, September 2, 1885, and will be twenty years of age next September. My father was killed in the July flood, and my mother died about two years ago in the Melbourne Hospital.

'I have no relations, only my grandmother's sister, I have been to service, but this distant relation, as I call her, asked me about ten months ago to go for a tram-ride, and, getting out of the Abbotsford tram, escorted me into the convent without knowing it was a convent, until I was told so. I was then asked by the nuns what I could do, so I told them I had always been in service. I was then asked if I would stop there for two or three months, as it would do me good to be there, so I agreed.

'When the three months lapsed I asked permission to go out, and was refused, and told it would do me good to be there, and I received the same answer every time I asked to go out. I did no wrong in there, and did no wrong before I was taken in the convent, so I determined to escape when I got the chance.

'I told the nuns that I would try to escape, and did so on Sunday morning, June 4, 1905. I thought I would go towards Richmond, and try and find this distant relation, but failed. While in the convent I was informed by a young girl that mentioned she stayed with an old lady in Otter-street, Collingwood, and had a daughter named Lizzie. I asked where this street was, as I thought they would allow me to do my hair, and give me an old hat to wear, as I had none on my head.

'I found the street, and, on making inquiries, I related my story of escape to a young girl. She informed her mother, and this kind person received me in her home, and, having been attended to by her, I was kindly asked to remain which I did. I have been asked by this lady to remain in her home as one of her daughters, and to be treated as such, or to remain until I got a light situation. I consented to stay with this lady, and feel comfortable and happy.

'I was working in the convent for nearly nine months in the ironing room. I am a Protestant, and was obliged to go to Mass, also to catechism, and also to witness all in their religious service.

'They wanted me to go to the confessional box, and tried very hard to get me to go, but they did not succeed. Many Protestant girls try and escape. Three or four escaped the same week as I did. One girl in particular, from Kensington, has been in there four or five years against her will, and would do anything to get away, and made a number of attempts to escape. There are some girls who are there for life, and they are kept constantly on the watch to prevent any getting away, or attempting to escape.'

This young woman is now being well cared for by a member of one of the Orange ladies' lodges. This good sister took her in and gave her a home for as long as the girl liked, and also secured employment for her. The dress she escaped in, and the little white cap and all the clothing worn at the convent, are numbered. These will be kept as a memento of her nine months' incarceration.

The Girl's Declaration.

'I, Ella Laughton, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I was an inmate of the Abbotsford Convent, and that the documents following, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, consist of the statements made by me, and it is a true and faithful account of my experience and treatment during the time I was in such institution. And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions