A year or two ago we gave a lengthy list of the European rulers, crowned and uncrowned, who fell beneath the assassin's hand during the nineteenth century. In addition to these attempts were made during the past forty years on the lives of Napoleon III., Queen Victoria, the Emperor of Germany and Austria, the Czar of Russia, the present King Edward VII. (when he was Prince of Wales), and the King of Greece.

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But, independent of risks from assassin or conspirator, many of the royal families of Europe have more than the usual share of the personal and domestic woes that fall to the lot of people in humbler station. Domestic bickerings are the canker-worm of the royal houses of Russia, Wurtemburg, and Prussia. Scrofula has set its mark deep in the royal house of Madrid; lung-troubles in that of Savoy. Insanity in a hopeless form is the woful appanage of the royal stock of Bavaria, and, to some extent, of that of Denmark. The poor insane ex-Empress Carlotta of Mexico still dwells in a palace in her native Belgium. The ex-Empress Eugénie is a lonely and heart-broken widow. The Emperor of Germany is the victim of a hereditary disease. Moreover, according to a contemporary, he 'now carries with him a small but serviceable revolver in his pocket, or in his belt when he is in full uniform. The threats of the anarchists have caused him to have recourse to this measure of security.' The late king of Holland died by inches of disease contracted in his youth. The royal family of England has had, even within the past few years, severe domestic trials; that of Austria has been riven with a double grief within the decade. If the king and queen of Sweden have also their private skeleton in the closet, it does not appear in public. Plainly the mantles of kings Priam and Lear have fallen in shreds upon the royal palaces of Europe in our day.

The Convents of Great Britain.

One of the most striking evidences of the wonderful vitality and productive power of the Catholic faith in England is to be found in the extraordinarily rapid progress and spread of the convents and various charitable institutions throughout the country. In a new work just published in London, entitled 'The Convents of Great Britain,' Miss F. M. Steele tells the story of the rise and multiplication of these congregations of religious women, and the extent and rapidity of their development is indeed amazing. In 1800 there were no more than twenty-one convents in England. In 1892 they had increased twenty-fold, there being nearly four hundred and twenty religious houses for women. To-day, according to Miss Steele, there are over ninety distinct congregations of women, and the number of separate communities nearly all of them possessing a chapel of their own, is over 600. Allowing an average of ten for each community this would give us, on the very lowest estimate, a total of at least 6000 nuns now settled in Great Britain.

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In most cases these communities have developed from very humble beginnings. The common type is that which has its origin in two or three sisters being set down in a small cottage in some obscure village or town, where they steadily increase, until in due time there appears the full blown convent building, with its school, church, and gardens complete. Some of the establishments however are of quite an ancient lineage and have a varied and interesting history. Of all the ninety congregations now existing there is only one it appears that can be traced back to pre-Reformation times. That is the community of the Bridgettine-nuns, once at Isleworth, who were driven out and settled at Lisbon, whence they returned a few years ago to Chudleigh. An English Dominican House was established by Cardinal Howard at Vilvorde in 1661, and is now found at Carisbrooke. The oldest convent that has remained in its original primeval seat is stated to be that at Micklegate Bar, York. This was founded in 1686, so that it has now been two hundred and sixteen years in the one abode. Of this venerable building Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, in his *Fifty Years of Catholic Progress*, writes:—'I recall visiting the place when a boy, having an aunt in the convent. It was then a modest but substantial dwelling-house of old pattern, with about a dozen windows in the front and a heavy porch over the door. Passing by many years later, I was astonished to see the change. Great buildings had grown up, stretching down the side, with a church, spacious gardens and grounds all overpowering the original 'Mother House,' which still seemed hardy and full of vigour.'

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Full justice has not yet been done, and probably never will be done, to the part played by the convent institutions in the Catholicising of England. One thing at least is patent: the good nuns have lived down the odium and obloquy which were the portion of the pioneers of the religious Orders in England, and have now gained a sure place in the favor and goodwill of even the non-Catholic portion of the community. The convents have come to stay, and marvellous as has been their progress in the past, it is, after all, only an earnest of still greater things to come. The eloquent words of Cardinal Manning on the future of the Church in England apply with special force to the future of her conventual institutions: 'The Church is now seen, and heard, and known. Englishmen have now for more than 40 years been with us in our worship; they have heard our preachers; they have seen our colleges, convents, and schools; they have laid aside suspicions, fears, hates; in the open light of day these old superstitions are gone to the moles and to the bats. Educated Englishmen know us better. The poor in England have no animosities against the Faith of their Fathers. Our people are mingled with them; and they labor together and live together. They are accustomed to see with no wonder our clergy and our Sisters visiting convicts. They were then in the first beginnings of our restoration. The walls were raised; but the mortar was yet moist, and the structure had not yet hardened into its solidity. We have now a system covering the whole land. The Church in England is now so rooted and so fruitful that it needs only time to grow to its fulness.'

A Boer Tribute to the Irish.

Now that the war is over we shall probably get more than one history of the struggle from the Boer point of view, and in due time the public will have some chance of seeing the war in its true perspective. So far as we know, the first authoritative Boer version of the contest which describes the war with any detail is the volume entitled 'With Steyn and De Wet,' which has been just published by Methuen and Co. It is written by Philip Pienaar, an educated Boer, who himself took an active part in the fighting, and who contributed some remarkably graphic sketches to the *Nineteenth Century* during the earlier history of the struggle. The present volume—judging from the lengthy extracts from it which we have seen—is full of interest, and should be a very welcome addition to the literature of the war. The book has not yet reached this Colony, but our contemporary the Sydney *Freeman* gives a very full account of it, and we take from the columns of our contemporary one or two brief extracts from the volume which throw an interesting light on the Boer feeling for the Irish and their unbounded appreciation of the Irishman as a fighter.

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'Sometimes,' says Pienaar, 'the merits of the different commandoes would be discussed. The palm was generally awarded to the Irish Brigade and the Jonannesburg Police, two splendid corps, always ready for anything, and possessing what we others painfully lacked—discipline. The burghers used to relate with much relish a story of how one day the British shells came so fast that even our artillerymen did not dare leave their shelter to bring ammunition for the gun; how two of those devils of Irishmen sprang to the task, and showed how death should be faced and danger conquered. Erin for ever!'

Again he says: 'In the camp they had six Connaught Rangers—a captain, lieutenant, and four men, about four of the lot wounded. They alone of all their regiment had managed to reach the bank of the Tugela Bridle Drift, about 200 yards from the trenches of the Swaziland commando. Finding no shelter in the river bank, exhausted, wounded almost to a man, they ceased firing, whereupon our men left them in peace until the end of the fight, when they were brought over and complimented upon their pluck.'

The author has evidently a clear grasp, too, of the 'Irish Question,' and a full appreciation of, and sympathy with, the feeling which the Irish in Ireland have toward England, as the following passage will show: 'On crossing the railway near Honingspruit we captured a train. From the newspapers taken out of the mail-bags we learned that we were being closely pressed, and that hopes were entertained of our speedy capture. We did not grudge the papers the pleasures of hope; what we objected to was the crocodile tears over us poor misguided, ignorant burghers, who were too stupid to see the beauty of becoming exultant British subjects, like the Irish.'

Father Thurston's Challenge.

Some time ago we gave particulars in this column of a challenge recently made by Father Thurston, S.J., with reference to a disputed point regarding the moral teaching of the Jesuits. A writer in the London *Referee*, signing himself 'Merlin,' had trotted out the well-worn fable about the Jesuits teaching that 'the end justifies the means,'—a doctrine which they have over and over again denied and repudiated. Father Thurston then publicly offered to have the whole question submitted to an independent committee of expert scholars to be nominated by 'Merlin' and the editor of the *Referee*, and challenged the commission to produce one single Jesuit theologian who taught such a doctrine. The offer and challenge were accepted, and there was every prospect of an inquiry being held which would settle the question to the satisfaction of even the most bigoted anti-Jesuit. Unfortunately however the