

by the natives, which, given fresh fuel by the Reformation, has lasted to the present day.¹

Yet another fresh departure in the history of monachism, in some respects the most momentous of all, was taken in the 13th century by the institution of the Mendicant Orders, or Friars. Pope Innocent III., in the 13th of the 70 constitutions or canons he promulgated at the Lateran council in 1215, had expressly forbidden the foundation of any new orders, bidding all who desired to embrace the monastic life join some approved community, and similarly directing that such as desired to found new houses should take their rule and constitution from one of the recognized societies. But circumstances were too strong for him, and this very pope was destined himself to sanction two of the most remarkable societies which the Latin Church has ever produced. The time was an anxious one. The speculative activity of the age, coupled with the abuses in the church, was multiplying sects, formidable in numbers, and still more from the contrast their austere mode of life presented, not only to that of the secular society of the day, but to that of the ecclesiastics, notably those of rank, whose pomp and luxury gave rise to the first faint stirrings of a revolutionary spirit amongst the commons, which the great pope, who was then the most conspicuous figure in Europe, did not fail to observe. No effectual weapon of resistance seemed at hand; the parochial clergy, yielding to the difficulties which an isolated rural life throws in the way of intellectual effort (far graver than even now), had almost everywhere sunk into sloth and incapacity; the monastic orders were content, in the better instances, with maintaining their own internal discipline, and had no surplus energy for external work, while in the worse examples (as in that of the Cistercians, just referred to) they served rather as beacons of warning than as patterns for imitation; and, in short, there was an ever-increasing mass of home mission work to be done, and no one to do it.

But the two men who were to do it were already at hand in the persons of Francis Bernardone of Assisi and Dominic Guzman of Osma. The ruling idea in the mind of the former was the elevation of poverty to the first place amongst Christian graces, as the most obvious way of conforming the life of a Christian to that of the founder of his faith; the more intellectual Spaniard dreamed of an aggressive body of skilfully-trained preachers, able at once to grapple with the subtle dialectic of the enemies of the established creed, and to appeal in clear and homely language to the uneducated, amongst whom the Albigenses and other sectaries were making considerable conquests. Francis, the poet and devotee, in renouncing even the scantiest provision which the strictest orders of his time secured for their members, and bidding his followers to live on alms daily begged, taking, in the most literal sense,

¹ There is a very curious letter from Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux, to Pope Alexander III. (1159-1181), asking him to dissolve the Benedictine abbey of Grestain in that diocese, and to draft its inmates into other houses, which illustrates both the kind of abuses which were sometimes found and the desire of the authorities to suppress them. He charges the monks with lack of charity and hospitality, in that they reserved even the broken scraps from the common table as perquisites for their private friends; that they habitually quarrelled, and wounded one another with their knives, being prevented from homicide only by the knife-blades having no point; that one monk had actually murdered the cook, who had complained of his visits to the cook's wife; that the abbot did not provide for the daily wants of the community, but allowed the monks to roam abroad, picking up food for themselves as best they might; that some of them had caused the death of a sick woman by plunging her into ice-cold water under pretext of working a miraculous cure; that the abbot was frequently absent on pretence of business, but really living a loose life; that he had been thus two years in England, till recalled by the bishop, who was forced to send him away again, after appointing a deputy; that this deputy, when drunk, had wounded two of the monks, who thereupon murdered him; so that the house was practically past reformation, and ought to be dissolved.

no thought for the morrow, appealed to the popular imagination, always ready to kindle at the sight of genuine self-sacrifice; Dominic, with not less insight as a thinker whose first care was for doctrinal orthodoxy, as that of Francis was for personal piety, saw that there was a demand ready to spring up for more exact and intelligent religious teaching than could then be had, save in a few great cities. The occasion which urged him to the task he undertook is noteworthy. He had long been a canon of Osma, the strictest and sternest member of an ascetic community, when in 1203 he had to go on a journey with his bishop, which brought them into the very midst of the Albigenses in the county of Toulouse, where they saw how powerless the clergy were to contend against their rivals. On their road home the bishop and Dominic met the three papal legates returning discomfited from Languedoc, but attended with as much pomp as a triumphal progress would have justified. Dominic rebuked them sternly, telling them that it was not by splendid retinues and costly garb that the heretics won their converts, but by zealous preaching, by humility, by austerity, and by at least seeming holiness. Both the new founders sought and obtained at Rome, after some difficulty, the approval of their new institutes, and that in the very year 1215 which had seen the formal prohibition of all fresh orders. Francis speedily returned to his home, but Dominic, whose idea had by this time expanded from that of converting merely the Albigenses of Provence and Languedoc to that of influencing the whole world of nominal Christians and outer heathen, settled himself in Rome, where the pope appointed him to the important office of Master of the Sacred Palace, which has ever since been held by a Dominican, and carries with it the authority of chief censorship of the press. The two new foundations borrowed from each other, Francis copying Dominic's scheme of itinerant preachers, and Dominic imposing on his disciples the mendicant poverty of Assisi. These two particulars, the total absence—at any rate at first—of such endowments as had proved a snare to the older societies, and the substitution of itinerancy for inclosure, are the features which distinguish the friars from the monks who preceded them. The Franciscan institute was a bold attempt to democratize the church; Dominic's Friar Preachers, though recruited freely from men of a humble grade, have always had somewhat more of an aristocratic tone about them, due to their intellectual calling; they have held a high place in Christian art, counting amongst them such names as Fra Angelico and Baccio della Porta; and their reputation for orthodoxy and for a purer type of moral theology than the Jesuit one has always stood high. They also count amongst their members the two most eminent divines of the Middle Ages, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, and they have been fruitful in producing zealous missionaries; but the one great blot on their career is that they have been the directors and officials of the Inquisition ever since the formal constitution of that tribunal as a permanent organization. The Franciscans, less distinguished for mental triumphs than their competitors, have yet some famous names, chief of which are Duns Scotus and Roger Bacon—for Bonaventura, though set by the Franciscans as the "Seraphic Doctor" in competition with Aquinas, the "Angelic Doctor" of the Dominicans, is scarcely entitled to very high intellectual rank—and at one time they seemed likely to establish as firm a hold on the university of Oxford as the Dominicans did on that of Paris. The swiftest success and popularity attended the two new orders; privileges and exemptions were showered on them from Rome, wealth, in despite of their vow of mendicancy, was emulously thrust upon them by the laity; and, above all,

a remarkable and widespread religious revival, a dead-lift to ministerial efficiency in every direction, repaid their early labours, while they had between them almost a monopoly of the popedom for nearly two hundred years. And one peculiarity of their organization gave them a degree of strength which no other orders possessed. Each monastery of the older societies was practically isolated and independent of all others, unless it were itself a dependent priory or cell belonging to a greater house. Some societies had, it is true, general chapters, but these were rare, and at best only effectual in establishing a certain uniformity of practice in all houses of the same rule. But the Friars, like the Templars and Hospitallers of an earlier day, and like the Jesuits of a later one, were enrolled in something of military fashion, under a superior-general, with wide powers, who directed and controlled their actions from one central point. Every group of neighbouring friaries was formed into a congregation, under a local head or provincial, and he was always in direct communication with the general, so that a common government united the whole body into a compact mass. But their very success was fatal to their character. The vow of poverty was the first part of their institute to break down. Even before they began to be counted amongst the richest orders of Christendom, there is indisputable evidence—that of Bonaventura, himself general of the Franciscans—that the mendicant system was working nothing but mischief. He tells us, writing while the order was still very young, and within fifty years of the founder's death, that it was even more entangled in money cares and business concerns than the endowed communities, precisely because there were no funds available to fall back on in emergencies; that the brethren, discouraged from work by mendicancy, were habitually idle; that they roamed about in disorderly fashion under pretext of questing; that they were such brazen and shameless beggars as to make a Franciscan as much dreaded by travellers as a highwayman; that they made undesirable acquaintances, thus giving rise to evil reports and scandal; that conventual offices had to be entrusted to untried, unspiritual, and incompetent brethren; that vast sums were lavished on costly buildings; and that the friars were greedy in the pursuit of burial fees and of legacies, so that they encroached upon the rights of the parochial clergy. If such were the mischiefs at work before the first zeal had begun to cool, it may readily be gathered how entire was the failure at a later time. Indeed, as regards the Franciscans, not only did they endeavour to evade the stringency of their institute even in their founder's lifetime, but the whole society was soon divided into two hostile camps, one of which desired to adhere closely to the original rule, while the other was content to fall in with the habits of the "possessors," as they had been wont contemptuously to name the endowed orders. And what is very curious in this connexion is that the friars who were loyal to the principle of poverty broke away for the most part from the church, forming new sects, such as the Fratricelli, or attaching themselves to elder ones, like the Beghards and the Apostolici, which handed on in secret the Gnostic traditions of the third century, apparently stamped out in the crusade against the Albigenses, while those who openly disregarded the will of their founder remained steadfastly in the Latin church. No order, except the Benedictines, has had so many branches and reforms as the Franciscans; amongst which it will suffice to name the Capuchins, the Minims, the Observants, and the Recollects; while the Poor Clares, the nuns of the institute, have also divided into Clarissines and Urbanists. The institution of Tertiaries, seculars affiliated to the order as honorary members, while

continuing to live in the world, and adopting a certain modified daily rule, was a powerful factor in the success and strength of the order, and was adopted, but with less conspicuous results, by the Dominicans. The rivalry of these two great bodies with each other, prolonged with much bitterness for centuries, and their disputes with the parochial clergy, whom they long displaced in general repute and influence, belong rather to general church history than to the annals of monachism, and may be passed by with this brief allusion; while it suffices to say that all the support they, and the other less important communities of the same kind, such as the Carmelite and Austin Friars, received from the popes, whose most effective allies they were in every country where their houses were found, was not able to avert their decline in general estimation; and there is no figure in later mediæval literature on which the vials of contempt and indignation are so freely poured as on the begging friar, and that, if must be said, deservedly.

As the 13th century is the apogee of later monachism, so the decline begins steadily at the very outset of the 14th (which is also the date of ordination becoming the normal custom for choir-monks, instead of the exception, as formerly), continuing down to the crash of the Reformation.¹ The great schism of the West, the rise of the Wickliffites and Lollards in England, and of the body later known as Hussites in Bohemia, could not fail to act injuriously on the monastic orders; and, though the creation of fresh ones continued, none of those founded during this era were influential, and few durable. It will suffice to name some of the more prominent:—the Olivetans in 1313, who were rigid Benedictines; the nuns of Bridget of Sweden in 1363, who followed a rule compiled from those of Basil and Augustine; the Hieronymite monks in 1374; the Brethren of the Common Life, founded by Gerard Groot in 1376, who did much for education and in home mission work, but are chiefly famous now in virtue of one member of their society, Thomas a Kempis; the Hieronymite Hermits in 1373-1377; the Minims in 1435; the Barnabites, a preaching and educational order, in 1484; the Theatins (a body of Clerks Regular who aimed at little more than raising the tone of clerical life, made but slight pretension to austerity, and are, indeed, mainly noticeable as having suggested to Ignatius Loyola several points which he adopted in regulating the mode of life to be pursued by the members of his institute) in 1524; and the Capuchins in 1525.

In the Reformation era itself the monastic bodies had sunk so low in the estimation of even the rulers of the church that one clause in the report of the committee of cardinals appointed by Pope Paul III. (a body composed of Sadolet, Contarini, Reginald Pole, Giberti, Fregoso, Badia, Aleandro, and Caraffa, afterwards Paul IV.), delivered in 1538, was worded as follows:—

"Another abuse which needs correction is in the religious orders, because they have deteriorated to such an extent that they are a grave scandal to seculars, and do the greatest harm by their example. We are of opinion that they should be all abolished, not so as to injure [the vested interests of] any one, but by forbidding them to receive novices; for in this wise they can be quickly done

¹ The language of Nicolas de Clamenges (1360-1440)—rector of the university of Paris, known as the "Doctor Theologus"—in his treatise *De Corrupto Ecclesie Statu*, paints the moral decay of the monastic bodies, and especially of the Mendicants, in the very darkest colours. He not only charges them with waste, idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, and profligacy, but alleges the condition of convents of nuns to be such that there was little practical difference between allowing a girl to take the veil and openly consigning her to a life of public vice. And the *Revelations* of Bridget of Sweden (1302-1373), approved by the councils of Constance and Basel, and by Popes Urban VI., Martin V., and Paul V., fully confirm the darkest features of this testimony as regards the religious houses of the 14th century.

away with without wrong to any one, and good religions can be put in their place. At present we think the best thing to be done is to dismiss all the unprofessed youths from their monasteries."

As this formal document showed the current of high ecclesiastical opinion, so the lay view took expression in the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* of Ulrich von Hutten, which was to the Dominicans of the 16th century almost what the *Provinciales* of Pascal were to the Jesuits of the 17th; while they came also under the more delicate scalpel of Erasmus's wit. Not that the objections were wholly new, for it is evident from Thomas Aquinas's defence of monachism against its detractors that they were nearly all used in the 13th century. The interests involved were, however, too vast and complicated, the supposed impolicy of an admission on so large a scale of the charges alleged against monachism by the men of the New Learning too serious, to allow of any such sweeping measure of reform as that proposed by the cardinals being carried out. A certain amount of discouragement shown towards the older societies; the enactment of some partial corrections by the council of Trent, not touching any principle whatever, but apparently saying something because public feeling looked for something to be said; and, above all, the creation of a new type of order, the famous Company of the JESUITS (1534), represent the total action taken by the Roman Church during the actual crisis of the Reformation. Apart from such direct revolts from the Latin obedience as those in Bern, Zurich, Denmark, and Sweden, which at once involved the monasteries in the general overthrow of the old system of things religious, the most remarkable proceedings in the reaction against monachism were those taken in England, at a time when no breach with the Roman Curia was thought of. So far back as the 13th century Kings John and Edward I., and yet again in 1337 Edward III., had confiscated the "alien priories," as those houses were called which were dependencies of foreign monasteries, and the last named let out their lands and tenements until the peace with France in 1361, when he restored their estates; and similar raids were made on them both in his reign and in that of Richard II. Henry IV. showed them more favour; but in 1410 the House of Commons proposed the confiscation of all the temporalities held by bishops, abbots, and priors, petitioning the crown to employ their revenues in paying a standing army of knights and soldiers, in augmenting the incomes of some of the nobles and gentry, in endowing a hundred hospitals, and in making small yearly payments to the secular clergy. This fact attests the unpopularity of the church and the religious orders at the time, and, though the large scheme was dropped, yet in 1416 parliament dissolved all the alien priories, and vested their estates in the crown. They were for the most part applied to ecclesiastical purposes; but some portion, at any rate, passed into private hands, and was permanently alienated. Hence there was nothing to create surprise, much less opposition, when Cardinal Wolsey in 1523 obtained bulls from the pope authorizing the suppression of forty small monasteries and the application of their revenues to educational foundations, on the plea that these lesser houses were quite useless, and not homes of either religion or learning, whereas a learned clergy was imperatively needed to combat the new religious opinions which were making rapid way. And that the monasteries had been subject to serious vicissitudes all along appears from the fact that only about one half of all the foundations known to have been made in England were in existence at the date of the dissolution. There is little reason to trust the charges of immorality brought against the monks when Henry VIII. had once resolved on the pillage of the monasteries, seeing how the path opened

by Wolsey could be followed up. The characters of the king himself, of Cromwell, his chief agent in the dissolution, and of Layton, Legh, and others of the visitors appointed to inquire into the condition of the houses, are such as to deprive their statements of all credit; and, besides, the earlier Act of dissolution, granting the smaller monasteries to the king, limits the charges of misconduct to them, expressly acquitting the larger houses. Nevertheless, when the appetite for plunder had increased with the first taste of booty, accusations of precisely the same sort were brought up against the great monasteries, though in no instance has any verifiable proof been preserved.¹ But there can be no reasonable doubt (especially in view of the visitations of Archbishop Warham and other pre-Reformation prelates), that the religious houses, viewed simply as corporate estates, had been very badly managed for a considerable time, were heavily encumbered, and a weight round the neck of financial progress in England; and that, as spiritual agencies, they had mainly outlived their usefulness, so that, lamentable as were the circumstances of their destruction, and scandalous as was the waste of the property seized, there is little reason to suppose that any practical benefit would have flowed from their continuance, whatever might have been the advantages of an honest and economical measure of reform, or even of transfer to other purposes on the principle of *cy près*.²

The negative evidence of the effectlessness of the older orders supplied by their very small share in the counter-Reformation, which lay virtually in the hands of the Jesuits alone, is reinforced by the reports made by the emissaries of the new company to their superiors, which attest that the accusations of the German reformers against both the secular and regular clergy on the score of ignorance and dissoluteness were only too well founded. Accordingly several new societies were instituted during the latter half of the 16th century, aiming at putting new wine into the old bottles of the Carmelites, Cistercians, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Benedictines; but none of them proved of much importance. A larger measure of success attended some established on an active basis, such as the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, a catechizing order erected by Pius V. in 1571; two communities for tending the sick, one founded in Italy by Camillo de' Lelli in 1584, the other, the Brothers of Charity, by John of God at Granada in 1538, but not formally sanctioned till 1572; and still more prosperity attended the Ursuline Nuns, a community chiefly devoted to the education of young girls, founded at Brescia by Angela de' Merici in 1537, and confirmed by Paul III. in 1544. Yet, with the single exception of the Jesuits, no new society could be said to have laid hold in any degree of the popular mind, nor were the attempts to revivify the elder bodies continued. It remained for two newer still to rehabilitate the waning respect for monachism of all kinds, and that by borrowing one chief feature of the Jesuit organization, the abandonment of that principle of isolation from the outer world which lies at the root of true monachism.³ Of these the

¹ A full examination of the case against the monasteries will be found in Dixon, *History of the Church of England*, vol. i. pp. 324-383.

² The number of houses suppressed and overthrown by the two Acts of 1536 and 1538 was as follows:—186 Benedictine houses, 173 Augustinians, 101 Cistercians, 33 Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, and Austin friaries, 32 Præmonstratensians, 28 Knights Hospitallers, 25 Gilbertines, 20 Cluniacs, 9 Carthusians, 3 Fontevraud, 3 Minoresses, 2 Bonhommes, 1 Brigittine; total, 616. Their aggregate revenues were valued at £142,914, 12s. 9d. annually.

³ Soon after the Jesuits rose into note and popularity, a very curious and little known extension of their institute was made in Flanders. Two English ladies, acting with the sympathy and counsel if not at the recommendation of F. Gerard, rector of the Jesuit college at Liège, founded a community which they named Jesuitesses, adopting

first was the Oratory, founded by Philip Neri in 1558, but not approved by authority till 1577, and copied independently by Cardinal de Berulle at Paris in 1611. There were no vows imposed on the members of this society, though they lived under rule, and they employed themselves in doing all kinds of clerical work under episcopal supervision. The Italian house is chiefly celebrated as having included the famous Cardinal Baronius amongst its earliest recruits; but the French one held a high place in the religious revival of the 17th century, well-nigh rivalling the Benedictines of St Maur in learning (with such representatives as Simon, Thomassin, Morin, and Malebranche), and the reformed Cistercians of Port-Royal in piety, though sharing with the latter the reproach of Jansenism. But the second was far more influential, and has been fruitful ever since in the works of its copyists as well as in its own. It was the institute of the Sisters of Charity, established by Vincent de Paul in 1634, on the lines of the ancient community of the Hospitaller Nuns of St Augustine, but with some remarkable modifications, not only in respect of the vows, which were only yearly and inward, but in the spirit of their discipline, as formulated in his own memorable words,—“Your convent must be the houses of the sick; your cell, the chamber of suffering; your chapel, the parish church; your cloister, the streets of the city, or the wards of the hospital; your rule, the general vow of obedience; your grille, the fear of God; your veil to shut out the world, holy modesty.” The original scheme of Francis de Sales for the Nuns of the Visitation, founded in 1610, was almost identical; but the opposition was then far too strong, and he was forced to make them a cloistered community. Vincent's order of Mission Priests, more commonly known as Lazarists, was also a successful and useful institute, though not vying in the extent of its influence with the other, which, as has been implied, has powerfully affected the organization of many of the active communities which have since been formed. No religious body did more to enable French monachism to bear up against the general obloquy it encountered during the 16th, 17th, and early 18th centuries,—a temper on the part of the public due to more than one cause. In the first place, the wars of religion had done much to harden and coarsen the feelings on both sides, and rigid adherence to the extreme positions of Catholics or Huguenots, as the case might be, was set far above any gentler and higher ideas. Next, the monasteries of both sexes had all but universally fallen into the patronage of the crown (in virtue of the concordat of Bologna, between Pope Leo X. and Francis I.), and were jobbed away as apanages for a dissolute nobility, who squandered the revenues, and suffered discipline to become relaxed, often to the generation of serious scandals. This malversation operated in two ways. It made the monasteries hard and bad landlords, grasping closely all the feudal privileges and monopolies which they continued to enjoy, a proceeding which bore hard on the tenants and labourers, so that the monks shared to the full the unpopularity of the nobles (precisely as was the case in Germany, during the Peasants' War of 1525); and the evil repute of

the rule and organization of the famous company, and taking the three usual vows, but, with a bold disregard of precedent, not only omitting the customary vow of enclosure, but actually sending the members of the society out as itinerant preachers. Their object was to train a body of emissaries for the Roman Catholic mission in England, who might obtain entrance and escape the incidence of the penal laws in a manner impracticable for men. They had considerable success for a time, and Mrs Ward, their projector, obtained some degree of papal approval, and became “mother-general” over more than 200 of these female preachers in the various colleges of the society. But after an existence of about eighty years it was suppressed by Pope Urban VIII. in 1630.

the convents—of whose real character we get at least one trustworthy glimpse in the account of the abbey of Mauduisson which Angélique Arnauld reformed—came home to all the Huguenots and their friends, because both before and after the legal continuance of the edict of Nantes they were used (according to a very early application of monastic houses not yet obsolete) as prisons, where Huguenot women and girls were shut up in order to bring about their conversion, forcibly if necessary, but somehow in any case. And there is evidence to show that the Huguenots resented this policy most bitterly, not only on polemical grounds, but because they were firmly persuaded that the morals of their wives, daughters, and sisters were in no less peril than their faith in such places. When to this sentiment is added the hostility of the Jansenists to the school of opinion which had persecuted them, razed their famous house of Port-Royal, and literally flung the bones of its deceased members to the dogs, it will be easy to judge how powerful were the forces mustering for the overthrow of monachism, and how little even such stern reforms as De Rancé's at La Trappe, which has always had a marked attraction for soldiers, could do towards abating the danger. Nor were there wanting public scandals and cases before the law-courts which helped to fan the rising flames of hatred.¹ Another cause which contributed much to the decay of discipline and of practical religion in monasteries of both sexes was the custom which prevailed throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, of disposing of the younger members of poor but noble families in the cloister as a safe and reputable provision, without any regard to the vocation of those so dedicated, and merely because the sum which sufficed to secure permanent admission was much smaller than that necessary to purchase a commission or public office for a son, or to provide an adequate dowry for a daughter.² At the Revolution, the religious houses, amounting (without reckoning various minor colleges and dependent establishments) to 820 abbeys of men and 255 of women, with aggregate revenues of 95,000,000 livres, were suppressed by the laws of 13th February 1790 and 18th August 1792. In Germany the storm had broken somewhat earlier, if not quite so violently. The Thirty Years' War had wrought much mischief to not a few of the religious houses, without taking into account the great number which had been destroyed in the territories of the Protestant princes; and when the death of Maria Theresa in 1780 left her son Joseph II. free to act as he pleased, he dissolved the Mendicant orders, and suppressed, in despite of the personal remonstrances of Pius VI., the greater number of monasteries and convents in his dominions. In Italy, despite the multiplication of new institutes, the process of decay continued throughout the 17th century, and one most remarkable testimony to the fact appears in the report of the Venetian ambassadors at Rome in 1650 to their government of an interview they had with Pope Alexander VII.

¹ One of these is interesting, as settling a point which has been often disputed,—the existence of those monastic dungeons known by the name of “in-pace,” familiar to the readers of *Marmion*. It is the condemnation of the abbot of Clairvaux by the parlement of Paris in 1763 to a fine of 40,000 crowns for causing the death of a prisoner in an “in-pace.”

² This worked much evil in France, but produced perhaps even greater mischief in Germany, where what were styled “Noble Abbeys” were not uncommon, entrance to which, save in the inferior capacity of lay-members, was barred against all who could not prove patrician descent and a certain number of armorial quarterings. A relic of this survives in a few secular *Stiftungen* (Protestant and Catholic) for noble canonesses in Germany; and the notion was at any rate as respectable as that which holds good in some communities even now, where women who can pay a certain sum at entrance are admitted as choir-sisters, while those who cannot do so must accept the humbler position of lay-sisters.