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James Phinney Munroe
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THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CONVENT AT CHARLESTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS, 1834.

By James Phinney Munroe.

A RELIGIOUS riot in Boston within living memory seems, in these days of toleration, almost incredible. To a disbelief at the time in the possibility of such a disaster and to a failure, therefore, to take proper precautions, the burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, on the night of August 11, 1834, was mainly due. But the frenzy of the mob and the supineness of the on-lookers had a deeper origin still in that general law which so often controls the acts of mankind, the Law of Crowds. This law—of which Gustave Le Bon has given so excellent a demonstration—causes men in masses to act either much worse or much better than they would as individuals. Over and over again history has shown that when a number of persons are gathered together, whether in an ordinary mob, a convention, a legislative assembly, or an audience of any kind; or when otherwise unrelated persons are held together by political, religious or social beliefs, forming them into parties, sects or castes,—the action of men so formed into a crowd is in many cases entirely different from what one's experience of them as individuals would lead one to expect. Protected and shielded by the numbers surrounding him, the individual loses his fear of consequences, his sense of accountability, in no small degree his individuality itself. Thus transformed, he becomes, as it were, but an atom in the crowd-mass, moving as it moves, feeling as it feels, acting as it acts. The higher powers of the man, those of reason and judgment, give place to the lower ones, those of instinct and emotion; and these instincts and emotions, act-

ing and reacting one upon another, are intensified sometimes to a pitch of frenzy, so that persons who, under ordinary conditions, are sober, law-abiding and cautious in behavior, will, in a crowd, commit acts of heroism or of brutality seemingly impossible. Whether their deeds be heroic or bestial depends wholly upon the direction in which their instincts and emotions are impelled. For a crowd is swayed in one or all of three ways: by a dramatic event; by a fixed idea which has been built up through years or even through generations; or by an individual who has power of emotional leadership. To one or all of these things a crowd will yield itself much as the hypnotized patient yields to the hypnotizer; and, under the suggestions of that idea or leader or event, will go to almost any length of sublimity or infamy. Such a crowd will march undismayed against an overwhelming foe, will slaughter its dearest friends, will endure fatigues impossible to individuals, will do deeds utterly abhorrent under usual conditions to most of those who commit them. Nothing is too extravagant for a crowd to accept as fact, no revulsion of feeling under a new impulse is too immense for it to experience, no refinement of cruelty or, on the other hand, no height of heroism is too tremendous for such a crowd to indulge in. But in none of these things, good or bad, does it exhibit reason. This was well exemplified in the famous Charlestown mob of 1834.

In that year Boston differed almost more from the Boston of to-day than it did from that of 1634. It was still, to all intents and purposes, a village,



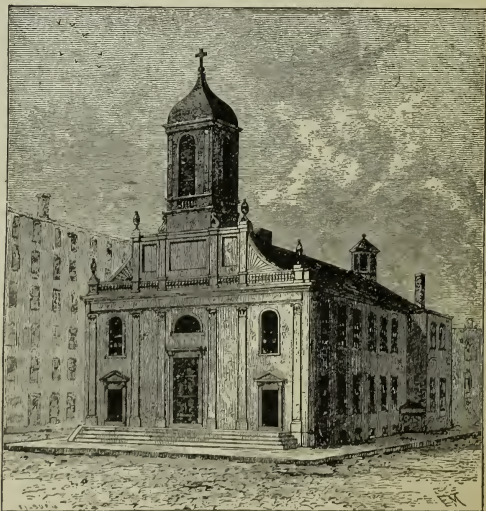
THE CONVENT.

cut off from the rest of the world by seas, isolated from its sister cities by feebleness of transportation. Its population was still practically homogeneous and of the Puritan type. It still viewed Popery with the hatred of the days of the Gunpowder Plot, still looked upon foreigners with eyes not very different from those with which the Chinese, not without reason, regard the "foreign devil" to-day.

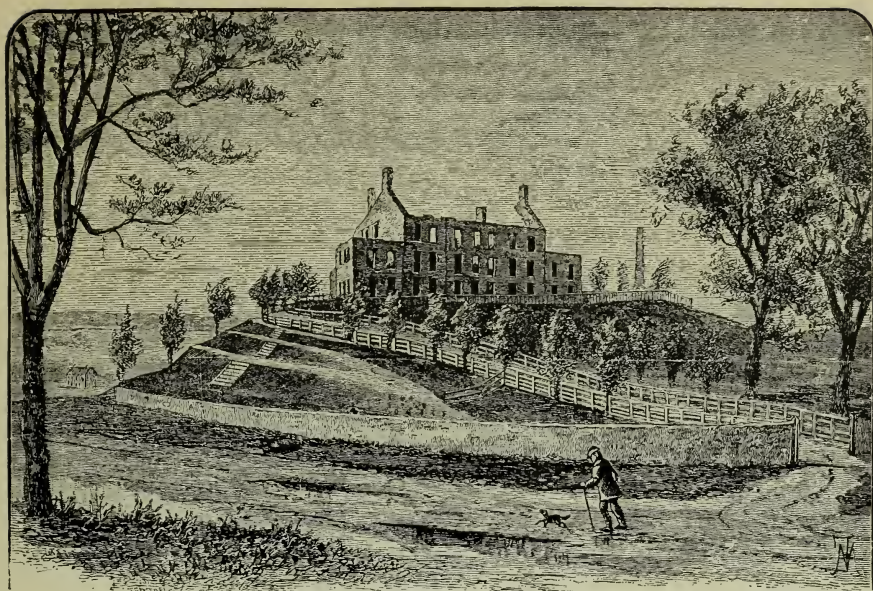
The population of the entire United States was only about fourteen millions, that of Boston scarcely forty thousand; and what is now the Charlestown District was then an independent town. But the development of railroads, coupled with political and social distresses in Ireland, had brought new problems into the lives of this chosen people of Puritan Yankees. The demand for laborers had attracted what seemed in those days a vast number of foreigners, mainly Irish, and their coming had created the necessity for the Roman Catholic religion, a demand which the zealous leaders of that faith are never slow in meeting. Thousands of Catholics had, within a few years, come to the city, and they were ministered to by two churches, the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, on

Franklin Street, and a smaller church in Charlestown. To the less intelligent portion of this heretofore homogeneous little city, here were two portentous things: imported labor, and the vanguard of the Pope of Rome. More significant, the two new things seemed to have close relation.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Order of St. Ursula, a sisterhood vowed to the giving of religious and secular instruction, had established, in 1820, a convent in a small building next to the Cathedral; and so well did these nuns prosper that in 1826 they removed to a larger building at the foot of Mt. Benedict (then at the extreme limit of Charlestown, now a part of Somerville) and began the erection of a large convent on the top of the hill itself, in the midst of an estate of



From the Memorial History of Boston.
CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY CROSS, FRANKLIN STREET, BOSTON.



From the Memorial History of Boston.

THE RUINS ON MT. BENEDICT.

twelve acres. A minor cause of offence was that they were enabled to do this largely through the generosity of a converted Protestant, a Mr. Thayer. In 1828 the new building was occupied, and a conspicuous and imposing one it must have been. The main house was fully eighty feet long, three stories high, with a pitched roof, a large dormer, and a cupola; and on either side it had wings, a story less in height, extended back to enclose a paved courtyard. The whole was of brick and, with its grounds elaborately terraced, with gardens and bowers and greenhouses, with a farmhouse, barn and other out-buildings, and with a view embracing on one side the whole Boston basin with its flanking hills, and on the other the harbor and the sea, the institution must have indeed been, as its circular asserted, "an extensive establishment . . . commanding one of the most beautiful prospects in the United States."

The course of study which the Convent offered was no less elaborate than the building. "All the attainments" were to be got there—to quote again from the circular—

"which may be found necessary, useful and ornamental in society." The young ladies in the Junior Department (the juniors and seniors being inexorably kept apart) had to content themselves with the common branches and plain and fancy needlework; but no sooner did they enter the Senior Department than they had spread before their minds, according to the prospectus, "Plain and ornamental writing; Composition, both in prose and poetry; ancient, modern and natural History; Chronology; Mythology; and the use of the Globes; Astronomy; Rhetoric; Logic; Natural and Moral Philosophy; Chemistry; Arithmetic; Geometry; and Botany; every kind of useful and ornamental Needlework; Japanning; Drawing in all its varieties; Painting on Velvet, Satin and Wood; and the beautiful style of Mezzotinto and Poonah Painting." Music with different instruments and dancing were also taught, the latter by the original Papanti; and this feast of arts and sciences was capped, in the last quarter, and at an added charge of twenty dollars, with cookery.

We may smile at this formidable



RUINS OF THE CONVENT, SHOWING THE OLD MIDDLESEX CANAL.

From an old painting in the possession of A. M. Kidder, Esq.

list and wonder how five women could impart so much in so short a space of time; but it was the English fashion of that day, and many a day after, for the accomplished young lady to do all things—most of them very badly; and there seems every reason to believe that the overworked Sisters of St. Ursula, mainly Irish ladies, were accomplished and well taught. In this school on Mt. Benedict was offered, therefore, a training very rare in the New England of that time.

Absolute regularity of hours was enforced by the Convent bell, from the early rising at half past five to the early retiring at half past seven. The day was well filled with tasks—not the long list of the prospectus, but the common branches, together with drawing, writing, lettering, sewing, embroidery, music and other accomplishments thought essential to the well bred girl of seventy years ago. The schoolrooms were small, with square boxes placed regularly around

them, and with one or more tables in the centre. On the boxes the pupils sat, their backs, in the good old fashion, unsupported; and in the boxes were kept their books. On fine afternoons the girls did much of their working, and some playing, out of doors, a nun always with them, not to repress them, but, on the contrary, to take a lively and childlike interest in their most trivial doings. The meals, eaten in silence, were plain but wholesome: always an abundance of good bread, sometimes with butter, sometimes with sauce, never with both; plenty of fresh milk; tea or coffee made innocuously weak; meat once a day, excepting, of course, on Fridays; vegetables from the Convent farm; and occasionally a plain pudding. The uniform of the girls was a gray bombazet with caps of blue, save on Sunday, when white was permitted, and on certain great days, when a pink sash might decorate the white.

The supreme event of the school year was Coronation Day. Then par-

ents and friends for the only time were admitted to the schoolrooms, the prizes of the year awarded, a gold and silver medal given, and the two best girls of the year crowned with artificial wreaths (white for the senior and pink for the junior) and seated upon thrones to the sound of a coronation song. One stanza of this will perhaps suffice:

"Proceed, fair Queens, to your fond homes;
Give joy unto that sacred dome;
Return to be a Father's pride,
The stay of a fond Mother's side.
Long may your welcome's echo sound,
And grateful words be heard around.
Long may your virtues breathe on earth,
Long breathe the odour of your worth."

Then followed the one feast of the

tinguished in Boston and its vicinity; but a few—and these were generally the only Catholics—came from regions so widely separate as Canada and the West Indies. Beyond attendance upon morning prayers, and mass on Sundays, the Protestants were required to take part in no religious exercises, nor was the slightest attempt made to convert any to the Romanist faith. This point was so hotly disputed at the time, and afterwards, that it is most valuable to have direct testimony from Protestant ladies who were pupils at the Convent, declaring that, while good morals were constantly instilled by the sisters, the subject of religion was never broached by them. The Protestant pupils were not simply permitted, they were re-



MT. BENEDICT AS IT APPEARS TO-DAY.

year, at which the nuns vied with one another in producing elaborately indigestible dishes, whose secrets they had learned in the French convents of their younger days.

The pupils of this Ursuline house on Mt. Benedict, averaging about seventy in number, were mainly the daughters of wealthy Protestants.* Most of the girls bore names dis-

quired, to take their own Bibles to the church services, and were urged to read from them during the saying of the mass. One of these ladies states, further, that never were more perfect gentlewomen than the sisters, and that not once in her long residence did she see them out of temper or wanting in sweet patience. Notwithstanding—or perhaps because of—this serenity of disposition and the absence

* See partial list of pupils at end of article.



THE ADAMS HOUSE, BROADWAY, SOMERVILLE, WHERE THE NUNS
AND PUPILS TOOK REFUGE.

of severe punishments, the discipline among the pupils was extraordinarily good. Their greatest transgression, which brought its own swift punishment, was the stealing and eating of raw turnips from the Convent garden.

The Mother Superior, a French-Irish woman, did no teaching, her time being more than occupied with a general oversight of the establishment. She was little seen, therefore, by the pupils, unless they were sent to her for admonition. Mild as her punishments were, her extraordinary dignity of manner seems to have made an astonishing impression, so that the smile or frown of an Eastern potentate could not have been more momentous. This regal attitude and habit of mind, coupled with an ignorance of the world in general and of the Yankee world in particular, made that secular intercourse which, as Superior, it was her duty to carry on, not entirely successful. Mother St George (that being her religious name) lacked tact; she despised her neighbors, the brick-making *canaille*, mostly worthy men from New Hampshire, who hated Popery and all its works; and she had little patience, although she paid them promptly, with the heretic tradespeople and town officials of Charlestown.

The winter of 1833-34 was one of

extraordinary religious revival in New England. The active and fervent Protestant preachers of Boston and its vicinity seized the fruitful occasion to denounce Popery. Dr. Lyman Beecher, especially, in a series of lectures, seems to have hurled all the thunderbolts of his eloquence against the Catholic Church so rapidly taking root in

Protestant America. These zealous pastors can scarcely have refrained from pointing their words by directing a warning finger towards this prosperous house set conspicuously on a hill and holding within its walls the daughters of so many Protestants. At the same time, the laborers and mechanics were not slow to denounce the Irish Papists, seeking and securing the work that belonged of right to the natives, and to imagine all manner of Jesuitical plots in this rapidly increasing influx of foreign Catholics. Moreover, the pupils of the Convent themselves, very properly forbidden to enter that



part of the house reserved to the use of the nuns, imagined, with school-girl readiness, many mysteries, which, told outside the school, grew with repetition into startling tales. So from all sides the law of the crowd was slowly working, and the minds of the people were being brought into a widespread state of suspicion, ready for hypnotic leading to almost any lengths.

The first incident to attract general attention was the alleged escape of Rebecca Theresa Reed. She was an ignorant but imaginative young person, whom much reading of romances had made yearn for the life of a nun.

from ear to ear, ever amplified as they travelled, and which, after the destruction of the Convent, were published under the title, "Six Months in a Convent," producing much excitement and controversy. In this book—which was written for her—Miss Reed made charges of forcible proselyting and of an intended abduction of herself to St. Louis; but these charges were woven into such a tissue of false and improbable statements, that it is charitable to suppose her to have been a neurotic who, by her imaginings and repetition of them to others, brought herself into a state of actual belief.



FROM THE WRITING BOOK OF MARIA W. COTTING, JANUARY I, 1833.

Taken into Mt. Benedict as a servant, she was soon disenchanted, and ran away. This she did by breaking through lattices and climbing a high fence, although the carriage gate of the Convent grounds stood wide open. The Mother Superior happened to witness this melodramatic flight, and called several of the sisters and pupils to the window "to see Miss Reed run away." This girl's romantic imagination and the credulity of certain of her friends created marvellous revelations of ill-treatment and wrongdoing at the Convent, revelations which passed

While it is impossible flatly to confute her statements, there is the strongest internal evidence against them, the simple fact that she alone saw and experienced these dreadful things being enough to disprove them in a court of law. However, her stories made a vast impression, especially as they were met, on the part of the Mother Superior, with the contemptuous and violent language which she almost habitually used towards too zealous Protestants.

A trivial incident—the ordering off the Convent grounds by the porter, the popular story asserting with

violence and the setting on of the Convent dog, of some ladies who had attempted to cross them, and the subsequent drubbing of the porter by a brick-maker, Buzzell, afterwards one of the leaders of the riot—did not tend to improve the strained relations between the Superior and her neighbors; and on July 28 occurred a sensational affair which seemed to confirm the stories of the eloped Miss Reed and to prove this imposing building on Mt. Benedict a veritable Bastille.

A large share of the labor of preparing for the Coronation Day of 1834 had fallen upon the Mother Assistant, Sister Mary John, the teacher of music. It is stated that for a long period she had to give no less than fourteen lessons of at least forty-five minutes each a day. This tax upon her nerves resulted, naturally, in brain fever. In delirium she escaped from the Convent, sought refuge with its nearest neighbor, a Mr. Cutter, and was by him sent to what was then West Cambridge, to the house of Mr. Cotting, two of whose daughters had been pupils at the nunnery.

A night's rest under the tender care of the Cottings restored Miss Harrison (for such was her worldly name), and on the next day, at her own earnest wish, she was taken back to the Convent. But the ravings of this nun while in delirium, her appeals for aid, and the not unnatural perturbation of the Mother Superior and the Bishop over her flight, gave rise to most dreadful rumors. Here, then, was the striking incident needful to compel the attention of the community and to carry out the law of crowds. At once this poor sister was dubbed the "Mysterious Lady," and the wildest stories of her ill-treatment and sufferings found immediate and unqualified belief. In the popular mind the building on Mt. Benedict became a very labyrinth of dungeons, crowded with instruments of torture, and every iniquity associated with the most corrupt periods of the

church was fastened upon this quiet institution.

Within ten days after the return of Sister Mary John to the Convent, rumors of her imprisonment, of her secret removal to more horrid dungeons, even of her torturing and murder by being buried alive, had attained extravagant proportions. The Boston daily papers added fuel to the flame by publishing these rumors, without comment, but without the slightest investigation as to their probability.

To quiet the public agitation, Mr. Cutter, in whose house Sister Mary John in her delirium had first taken refuge, called at the Convent on Saturday, August 9, saw the now convalescent nun, and was by her informed, with lamentations over the trouble into which she had brought the sisterhood, that she was entirely at liberty to leave the Convent at any time, but that she had not the slightest wish to do so. This gentleman agreed, therefore, to publish over his signature the true facts regarding this so-called "Mysterious Lady" in the Boston papers of Monday morning. Unfortunately, in those sleepy days of journalism, his statement did not appear till Tuesday.

Meanwhile the selectmen of Charlestown, bestirring themselves, had arranged thoroughly to inspect the Convent; and on the afternoon of Monday, the eleventh, they visited the building. If we are to trust the account of Mrs. Whitney, in her book, "The Burning of the Convent," these officials were met with upbraiding from the Superior and with jeers from the pupils; but according to their own published statement, which did not, of course, appear until Tuesday, the twelfth, "they were conducted by the lady in question" (Sister Mary John) "throughout the premises, and into every apartment of the place, the whole of which is in good order, and nothing appearing to them to be in the least objectionable; and they have the satisfaction to as-

sure the public that there exists no cause of complaint on the part of said female, as she expresses herself to be entirely satisfied with her present situation, it being that of her own choice, and that she has no desire or wish to alter it."

Whatever fault one may find with the English of this statement, it was explicit; but it came too late,—would have been too late even had it appeared on the morning of the fatal day. The law of the mob had done its work, reason had departed from the hypnotized mind of the community, and imagination, running riot, had built up a fabric more lasting than was to be the "beautiful edifice" upon Mt. Benedict.

For, during those early August days, the "Boston Truckmen" and other organized bodies had been holding secret meetings. From them, or from other sources, had come inflammatory circulars denouncing Catholicism in general and the nunnery in particular. Destruction of the Convent building was openly threatened; and rumors of a most alarming nature flew about the city. A procession of parents and friends, therefore, visited the Superior all day on Monday. Not one of them, however, thought it necessary to remove the pupils, all agreeing that a mob in the vicinity of staid old Boston in the nineteenth century was something not to be thought of. These visits, the continual requests for a sight of Sister Mary John, the inspection by the selectmen, seem to have electrified the atmosphere of the sleepy Convent with a new and pleasurable excitement rather than with fear. So unwonted was the bustle, that soon after their early going to bed the pupils in their several dormitories were fast asleep.

Towards ten o'clock this sleep was broken by sudden and fearful howls. The much talked of mob had really come, having swept in comparative silence out from Boston over the Charlestown bridge. It was as yet

small in size and wholly irresolute; but, wakened by its onward rush and shouting, the pupils, already in a state of tension, were at once thrown into a fever of excitement, most of them screaming, not a few falling in hysterics and some in a dead faint. The poor nuns—always excepting the Mother Superior, who never faltered or flinched throughout that fearful night—were in little better case than the children, one of them going off into convulsive fits, Sister Mary John, the innocent immediate cause of the disaster, again losing her shaken wits, and a novice, far advanced in consumption and who died within a few days from shock, remaining all night as one already dead.

For two hours the mob did little except to hurl blasphemous and indecent threats against the nunnery, defying the Superior to come out, and calling upon her to show them the "Mysterious Lady" imprisoned in the dungeons of the Convent. Little of this, fortunately, reached the ears of the children, for the dormitories were at the back of the building; but the nuns, cowering in the unlighted front rooms, heard it all; and the Mother Superior, chafing more and more under the horrible insults, could at last be no longer restrained. Breaking away from the weeping sisters, she flung wide the middle door—that door which only she and the Bishop had a right to use—and faced the mob. Had she understood the fickleness of crowds, had she known the power that a woman of her courage has, had she appreciated that sight and sound of poor Mary John, even in her distraught condition, would have set at rest the rumors at least of murder, she might at that eleventh hour have saved her community. But she met that cursing mob with a violence only less than their own, calling them vagabonds, drunkards, *canaille*, exciting their worst suspicions by positively refusing to produce the sister, and threatening them, in language she had already used to

Mr. Cutter, that "if they did not immediately disperse, Bishop Fenwick had ten thousand Irishmen at his back, who would sweep them all into the sea." No combination of words could have been more ill-timed. This threat was immediately answered by two pistol shots, which, going wide of their mark, resulted both in a temporary sobering of the mob and in a forced retreat of the Superior, dragged back into the house by her terrified subordinates.

For some time yet the mob hesitated, prowling about, muttering and cursing; then of a sudden it swept off down the hill, and the mercurial children became frantic with the joy of relief,—but only for a short time. Soon they hear a tearing and cracking, as the crowd pull down the Convent fences; soon they see first a flickering and then a flaming, as huge bonfires, richly fed with tar barrels, shoot up, revealing the rioters, some of them fantastically disguised, dancing like madmen in rings about the flames.

Whether or not preconcerted, these bonfires set on that lofty hill attract within a short time a multitude of people. They attract, too, the primitive fire engine of Charlestown and the newly created fire department of Boston. The former firemen, after some parley with the rioters, go, like the king of France, down the hill again; the latter remain (and probably their contention that they took no part in the assault of the Convent was justified), but do nothing to save the threatened property, being completely paralyzed by the mob spirit. At that time, and even much later, a few resolute men, all testimony goes to show, could easily have dispersed the rioters; but, as we have seen, the firemen did nothing; one selectman raised a feeble voice, but having weak eyes, too weak to recognize any of the rioters, soon went home and to bed; and a great crowd of ordinarily respectable citizens, who, there is no doubt, were specta-

tors of the scene, contented themselves with watching from afar, the word "mob" and the hypnotism of the situation wholly quenching their collective courage.

Probably at this point a powerful sustainer of mobs in the shape of a barrel of rum was brought and distributed. Made brave by this, the body of one or two hundred men, with brands from the fires, again surged up the hill like savages. Armed with bricks and stones, deaf to all thought of reason, possessed by an animal hunger for destruction, they began, shortly after midnight, this most outrageous assault upon a house occupied solely by ten feeble women and fifty terror-stricken children. Never, certainly in the history of New England, has there been a more cowardly performance. Bad as some others of our mobs have been, their fury was at least directed against men, possessing some power of resistance and retaliation.

The character of the band which made this courageous charge is quite well sampled, so to speak, by the thirteen men who by the efforts of the "Faneuil Hall committee" subsequently were arrested and put on trial. The mob seems to have been made up of Boston laborers and mechanics, who, intending merely to intimidate the Irish by a demonstration against this Catholic house, were led by the crowd-fever into unexpected violence; of brick yard employees who had personal grudges against the Convent and its Superior; of ignorant and prurient-minded men whose imaginations had been inflamed by foulest stories of monastic corruption; of friends of Theresa Reed, who seems to have had power to rouse a bitter championship; of bigots who thought to do religion a service by destroying one of its homes; of Irish Protestants, who are proverbially unfriendly to their Catholic brethren; of petty criminals and law-breakers, always present where there is prospect of disorder; and,

finally, of thoughtless boys, who were there for fun. But, by the mob-spirit, all these men and boys were brought down to one common level of brute destructiveness.

The first impulse of the Superior when she saw these demons coming, as she no doubt believed, to kill her, was to invoke the only shadow of law she had within her reach. With pitiable faith in the power of magistracy, she thrust out from an upper window the daughter of a Cambridge judge, bidding her warn the mob—which, however, was quite heedless of her—that her father would put them all in prison. This poor weapon failing of effect, the Superior, marshalling the children in their customary two-by-two, started toward the barred front door, thinking, perhaps, that a sight of this terror-stricken flock might move the mob to pity. But this modern martyrdom of St. Ursula was not to be. Just as Mother St. George reached the middle landing there came a tremendous shower of stones, breaking all the windows of the lower story and giving access to the Superior's office. Fortunately for her, this room contained much of value, including a large sum of money; and while the mob stopped to pillage, she had time to take her flock of nuns and children down a back stairway and out into the paved court, leading them thence into the Convent garden. This garden, luckily, was cut off from the front of the building by high board fences. It was, therefore, quite deserted, and the poor fugitives could patter unmolested, and in trembling silence, to the vicinity of the Convent tomb, a large brick structure which the zeal of the searching selectmen had caused to be opened, and in which, doubtless, the Superior intended to stand at bay.

What an experience for those terrified women and children, crouching in that silent garden on that hot August night! On the one side, the half-opened tomb, more terrible to most of them than the rioters themselves;

on the other the gloomy building, lighted at first dimly and fitfully, as a few of the rioters with lanterns and firebrands sought plunder through the upper rooms, and then more brightly, as the mass of the mob, having searched the cellars in vain for dungeons and instruments of torture, mounted from floor to floor, smashing the furniture, tearing down the curtains, shivering the mirrors, throwing the combustibles into great heaps, and flinging the solidier articles, even pianos and harps, out through the crashing windows; and over all, the late-rising moon flung weird tree-shadows, while the blazing tar barrels made of the hilltop a huge beacon, reflected and multiplied a hundred times in a wide circle of glowing brick-kilns.

So long as plunder and the work of destruction should keep the mob in the building, its fugitive occupants were safe; but the rioters still howled for the Superior, still searched fitfully for the body of the "Mysterious Lady," and must soon look systematically for both. At this critical time—for even had the nuns not been paralyzed with terror, it would have been impossible for them to get the fifty or sixty children over the high board fence which, shutting the world out, shut also the fugitives in—Mr. Cutter, the neighbor who had already figured so prominently, came again to the rescue. He and the men with him broke through the fence, and, partly through this opening and partly by lifting them over the high palings, got all the nuns and such of the pupils as had not escaped in other directions out of the garden and down the hill to the Cutter house. Here the testimony is very conflicting. It is asserted, on the one hand, that the fugitives remained in this house until it seemed imperative for them to seek a more distant shelter; on the other, that the Superior refused to enter Mr. Cutter's house at all, and started across the mile of dreary clay flats towards Winter Hill, dragging her

tired charges after her. Whatever the facts as to his residence, it is certain that Mr. Cutter insisted upon going with them thence to find some safe asylum. So this strange procession struck across the fields among the brick yards, Sister Mary John striding ahead, muttering and gesticulating; the stronger nuns half dragging, half carrying, the dying novice; the Superior, stout and scant of breath, always commanding a slower pace; and the weeping, weary children, in every state of undress, some with little more than their nightgowns, others with their entire wardrobe upon their backs, huddling behind; the whole scene illuminated by the huge torch of the Convent building, now a mass of flames.

How Mr. Cutter went from door to door of his friends, knocking in vain at the seemingly empty houses; how the good Mr. and Mrs. Adams, with hospitality, but with deadly fear for their own lives, took them all in; how the former, with astonishing presence of mind and histrionic ability, threw the rioters—who soon followed, hounding the Superior—off the scent by feigning to have just awakened; and how, as daylight came, the friends of the fugitives, guided by Mr. Cutter, came to the rescue of the nuns and children, is too long a story.

What could have been the journalistic enterprise of that day, which produced nothing more, the next morning, than a few lines of bald statement about the burning of the Convent? But the news travelled faster than the newspapers; and before the day was over, Faneuil Hall, that safety valve of Boston, had seen a monster mass meeting, at which distinguished men, including the eloquent Harrison Gray Otis, spoke in no measured terms, and a notable committee, headed by Mayor Lyman, was appointed to bring the ringleaders of the mob to justice. Mass meetings were held also in Cambridge, Charlestown, and other towns; the militia were called out to guard Catholic property; and bodies of citizens,

under arms, patrolled the streets for a week, ready to prevent new outrages. For it had been shown that even sober Boston could have a mob; and there was no limit to the fevered conjuring of imaginary further mobs. Rumors of organized bodies of Irishmen coming from all over the state to burn and slaughter were rife; demonstrations and threats, counter demonstrations and counter threats, were hurled in newspapers, by handbills, and by incipient mobs, until Boston and its vicinity was in a whirlwind of excitement. The Roman Catholic Bishop Fenwick and the other priests behaved with wisdom and moderation. They exhorted their people in most eloquent terms to take no revenge, but to await without misgiving the course of aroused public opinion and the law.

The Faneuil Hall committee, as has been said, secured the arrest of thirteen rioters; and a mass of testimony, bolstered by much legal eloquence, was poured forth at the several trials. But, while the guilt of most of the defendants was plain, the proof against them was conflicting and impeachable, the atmosphere of the court rooms was blue with bigotry and hate, the tales and rumors which had fomented the mob still had living force. The verdict, therefore, was "not guilty" in every case save one—and he probably the least criminal—young Marcy, a boy of seventeen, who had done nothing more heinous than to sell the Bishop's books that night at mock auction before tossing them into the flames. At the petition of thousands of Catholics, he was in a few months pardoned. So ended the famous Convent mob.

Not really ended; for many a legislature was memorialized to make good the money loss, placed at not less than fifty thousand dollars, suffered by the Bishop and the Convent's pupils. But while, in all cases, the committees of the General Court reported that this reparation should be made, the appropriation of the money has never yet been voted; and for

more than forty years the gaunt ruin of the Convent stood on its conspicuous height, a monument, left of intention by its owners, to the injustice of free Massachusetts.

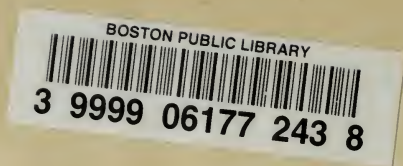
The Convent site and neighborhood were long ago transferred from Charlestown to the town of Somerville. To-day Mt. Benedict has been cut away to fill up the marshes along the Boston and Maine Railroad; and far below the quiet garden of the Ursulines will run streets of houses, obliterating the last vestiges of this dramatic event.

PARTIAL LIST OF PUPILS.

Caroline Adams, Sarah Adams, Sarah Arms, Josephine Barbour, Sarah Barker, Maria Barnard, Hannah Bartlett, Lucretia Beckford, Ellen Bennett, Rebecca Bennett, Frances Bent, Maria Bent, Mary Bent, Susan Bridge, Sophia Brown, Sarah Brownell, Martha Brundell, Mary Bullard, Catharine Callahan, Sarah J. Chase, Sarah Colburn, Mary Ann Coleman, Martha E. Cotting, S. Maria W. Cotting, Charlotte Crehore, Thesta Dana, Julia Danforth, Ann Dean, Sarah Dean, Adelaide Disbrow, Mary Jane Dill, Millicent Dublois, Harriet Edes, Nancy Elwell, Rebecca Elwell, Ann Emmet, Helen Endicott, Penelope English, Eliza D. Fay, Maria D. Fay, Catharine Ferguson, Susan Ferguson, Jane Fraser, Mary Ann Fraser, Lucy Gay, Anna Gibbs, Josephine Gibbs, Ann Gordon, Rachel Graham, Mary Green, Ann Grinnell, Cynthia Hall, Cornelia Hammond, Georgianna Hammond, Martha

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