

peril of life to the invalid and weak. As the flames spread from house to house, you could behold, through long vistas of the lurid empire of flames and gloom, the miserable tenants of the once peaceful home issuing forth in dismay, bearing the chattels most useful or precious, and seeking escape through the narrow channels which the flames left them only in the centre of the streets. Fortunately, the streets of Columbia are very wide and greatly protected by unobscured trees, set in regular order, and which, during the vernal season, confer upon the city one of its most beautiful features. But for this width of its passages, thousands must have been burned to death. These families moved in long procession, the aged sire or grand-sire first—a sad, worn and tottering man; walking steadily on, with rigid, set features and fearless eye—too much stricken, too much stunned, for any ordinary shows of suffering. Perhaps, the aged wife hung upon one arm, while the other was supported by a daughter. And huddling close like terrified partridges, came the young, each bearing one little bundle—all pressing forward under the lead of the sire, and he witless where to go. The ascending fire spouts flamed before them on every hand—the snouts of the demons assailed them at every step—the infernal fires danced around them as they went, piercing their ears with horrid thrills and imprecations. The little bundles were snatched from the grasp of their trembling bearers, torn open, sacked, and what did not tempt the robber was hurled into the contiguous pile of flame. And group after group, stream after stream, of fugitives thus pursued their way through the paths of flaming and howling horror, only too glad to fling themselves on the open ground, whither, in some cases, they had succeeded in conveying a feather bed or mattress. The malls, or open squares, the centres of the wide streets, like Empress street, were thus strewn with piles of bedding, on which lay exhausted mothers—some of them with anxious physicians in attendance, and girdled by crouching children and infants wild and almost idiotic with their terrors. In one case, as we have mentioned, a woman about to become a mother was thus borne out from a burning dwelling. It was scarcely possible to advise in which direction to fly. The churches were at first sought by many several streams of population. But these were found to afford no security. Thither the hellish perseverance of the fiends followed them, and the churches of God were set on flame. Again driven forth, numbers made their way into the recesses of Sidney Park, and here fancied to find security, as but few houses occupied the neighborhood, and the trees not sufficiently high to lead to apprehension from the flames. But the ingenuity of hate and malice was not to be baffled, and fire-balls, thrown from the heights into the deepest hollows of the park, taught the wretched fugitives to despair of any refuge from enemies of such unweary and unremitting rage. Again

were they forced to scatter, finding their way to other places of retreat, and finding none of them secure.

XXII.

One of these mournful processions of fugitives was that of the sisterhood of the convent, the nuns and their pupils. Beguiled to the last moment by the specious promises and assurances of officers and others in Sherman's army, the Mother Superior had clung to her house to the last possible moment. It was not merely a home, but in some degree a temple, and, to the professors of one church at least, a shrine. It had been chosen, as we have seen, as the place of refuge for many of other churches. We have already assigned the reasons which led all parties to believe that it was particularly safe as a retreat. Much treasure had been lodged in it for safe keeping, and the convent had a considerable treasure of its own. It was liberally and largely furnished, not only as a domain, but as an academy of the highest standard. It was complete in all the agencies and material for such an academy and for the accommodation of perhaps two hundred pupils. Among these agencies for education were no less than seventeen pianos. The harp, the guitar, the globe, the maps, desks, benches, bedding and clothing, were all supplied on a scale of equal amplitude. The establishment also possessed some fine pictures, original and from the first masters. The removal of these was impossible, and hence the reluctance of the Mother Superior to leave her house was sufficiently natural. Assured, besides of safety, she remained until further delay would have perilled the safety of her innocent and numerous flock. This lady marshalled her procession with great good sense, coolness and decision. They were instructed to secure the clothes most suitable to their protection from the weather, and to take with them those valuables which were portable, and, accompanied by the Rev. Dr. O'Connell, by Mr. Jacob Cohen—who was especially efficient in their service—and others, the damsels filed on, under the lead of their Superior, through long tracts of fire, burning roofs, tumbling walls, wading through billows of flame, and taking, at first, the pathway to St. Peter's (Catholic) Church. Blinding fires left them almost aimless in their march, but they succeeded in reaching the desired point in safety. Here, on strips of bedding, quilts and coverlets, the young girls found repose, protected by the vigilance of a few gentlemen, their priest, Mr. Cohen, and we believe by two officers of the Yankee army, whose names are given as Col. Corley and Dr. Galaghan. To these gentlemen, both Catholic Irish, the Mother Superior acknowledged her great indebtedness. They had need of all the watch and vigilance of these persons. It was soon found that the fiends had followed them in their flight, like sleuth-hounds, and were making attempts to fire the edifice on several sides. These attempts, repeatedly baffled and as often renewed, showed at length so tenacious a purpose for its destruc-

tion, that it was thought best to leave the building and seek refuge in the church-yard, and there, in the cold and chill, and among the grave-stones with the dead, these terrified living ones, denied to rest, remained, trembling watchers through the rest of this dreary night.

XXIII.

We take leave here, to borrow freely from a communication made by the Rev. Lawrence P. O'Connell to the Catholic *Pacificator*. He so fully reports the fate of St. Mary's College that nothing need be added to it. We have simply abridged such portions of his statement as might be dispensed with in this connection:

"St. Mary's College, founded in 1852 by the Rev. J. J. O'Connell, pastor of the Catholics in Columbia, was robbed, pillaged and then given to the flames. The College was a very fine brick building, and capable of accommodating over one hundred students. It had an excellent library attached, which was selected with great care, and with no limited view to expense. It also possessed several magnificent paintings, executed in Rome, and presented to the institution by kind patrons. Besides the property belonging to St. Mary's College, that of four priests, who were its professors and lived there, was also consumed. Each, as is always the case amongst the Catholic clergy, had his individual collection of books, paintings, statuary, sacred pictures, &c. Nobody who is not a rigorous student and a lover of literature can possibly realize the losses sustained by these gentlemen. Manuscripts of rare value, notes taken from lectures of the most eminent men in Europe and America, orations, sermons, &c. are treasures not often valued by the vulgar, but to the compiler they are more priceless than diamonds. Of those who lost all in St. Mary's, three are brothers, viz: Revs. Jeremiah J. O'Connell, Lawrence P. O'Connell and Joseph P. O'Connell, D. D.; and the other, Rev. Augustus J. McNeal."

The Post Chaplain, the author of the report from which we draw, was the only clergyman in the College when it was destroyed. He was made a prisoner, and, though pleading to be allowed to save the holy oils, &c., his prayer was rejected with blaspheming and curses. A sacrilegious squad drank their whiskey from the sacred chalice. The sacred vestments and consecrated vessels used for the celebration of the mass—all things, indeed, pertaining to the exercise of sacerdotal functions—were profaned and stolen. Of the College itself, and the property which it contained, nothing was saved but the massed ruins, which show where the fabric stood. The clergymen saved nothing beyond the garments which they had upon their persons.

XXIV.

The destruction of private libraries and valuable collections of objects of art and virtu was very large in Columbia. It was by the urgent entreaties of the Rev. Mr. Porter, the professors and others, that the safety of the South Carolina College library was assured.