

CLEANLINESS AND GODLINESS

A sociological study of the Good Shepherd convent refuges for the social reformation and christian conversion of prostitutes and convicted women in nineteenth century Britain.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the transformation of prostitutes and other women in the magdalen asylums, the convict refuge, and the certified inebriate reformatory conducted by a roman catholic order of nuns in nineteenth century Britain. Laundry work came to play a central role in the activities expected of the women admitted to these quasi-monastic houses. Its significance is examined in terms of organisational and symbolic correspondences with the structure and ideology of transformative institutions directed to christian conversion. The thesis initially identifies different organisational forms and the ideology revealed by the long-span history of convent refuges. It goes on to consider the problems that tradition posed in the later institutions. The historical account, ordered around a primary sociological concern with transformation, discloses the struggle between the nuns, the secular authorities, and others, to assert differing ideas of religion, morality, and work. The theoretical discussion examines the structure and process of transformation, and the system of classification and control on which it is based. Moving from the notion of Total Institution, the analysis formulates a sociological model of the refuge as a 'Theopticon'. This provides a stable context for a pattern of transformations ranging from the laundry work to the liturgy. The analysis also deals with the role and status of the long-term transformand in pursuit of christian holiness. The theoretical model is then taken back to analyse the major issues raised by the historical account: the persistence of laundry work in the refuges, the nuns' resistance to public inspection and control, and their refusal to pay wages to the penitent women. The historical data is largely derived from primary sources and includes architectural, statistical, and photographic material, as well as documentary evidence.

For Christine and Delyth

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## INTRODUCTION

When he first set eyes on the magdalen asylum at Hammersmith, the eminent victorian architect Augustus Pugin was moved to remark:

'Horrid place this - the worst kind of thing I ever saw - looks like a workhouse'. (1)

And such might have been the impression of any passer-by. It is true that the magdalen asylum housed large numbers of inmates, and worked them too. Like the workhouses, they were institutions concerned with moralisation. Such functional imperatives did produce a similarity of architectural form but there the likeness ended. Unlike the workhouses, the Good Shepherd magdalen asylum pressed beyond moral orderliness in the pursuit of christian holiness. The *raison d'etre* was a safe passage to heaven. It may not be surprising then that Mr. Pugin embellished the buildings and built a church in the gothic style. He, at least, was convinced that architectural style should express the essentially spiritual nature of the enterprise. For him the contrast between the nineteenth century workhouse and the 'ancient poor house' (2) traditionally associated with the religious orders could not be greater.

The Good Shepherd Sisters came to London from France in 1841 and by the turn of the nineteenth century they had established and developed a network of twelve magdalen asylums extending from Cardiff to Glasgow. Nine of these voluntary refuges for 'fallen' and destitute women continued long into the present century. In addition the nuns conducted a number of reformatory and industrial schools for girls from the late 1850's, a refuge for convict women from 1867, and a certified inebriate reformatory from 1898. Unlike the magdalen asylums, these other institutions received women who were compulsorily admitted, were in receipt of government grant, and were subject to Home Office inspection. In all the establishments laundry work played a central role as a source of institutional revenue and as a means of reformation.

Viewed as a whole the Good Shepherd refuges and reformatories constituted both a remarkable project of christian conversion and a major resource for the roman catholic engagement in nineteenth century religious philanthropy. They span the whole gamut of Victorian concern with deviant or delinquent women and girls. They encapsulate the controversies and innovations that marked both the public and charitable endeavours to provide care, control and rehabilitation for those women and girls leading penurious and disordered lives. In its own right the story certainly deserves recovery from the residues of nineteenth century social and religious life, although its reconstruction in this study primarily serves a different purpose.

The construction of an historical narrative is implicitly theoretic however interesting a story it may be, or however much it comes to serve as the primary datum for the enquiry of some other social science. Documents have to be asked the proper questions. As Marc Bloch puts it, every historical research supposes that from the very start the enquiry has a direction. (3) This research is directed to the description and sociological examination of the Good Shepherd refuge as a particular historical form of what may be called transformational institutions; an organisational form and social process developed and conducted with the intentional aim of changing persons. In this case it seeks to effect change from sinner to penitent, and even beyond, in the sisters' perception, to the very reaches of heaven itself; yet co-existing with an uneasy simultaneous engagement in the secular task of turning dissolute and convicted women into ordered members of society. The leitmotif is transformation and the historical documents have been cross-examined with that in mind. The work has been undertaken in accordance with the conventional canons of historical investigation, but with a sociological sensitivity. This involved a conscious effort to avoid both the historian's temptation to let the story speak for

itself and the sociologist's temptation to retreat from the history in pursuit of some kind of general conceptual scheme or causal analysis. Yet at times the interest of each requires a distance from the other. The primary task has been to elucidate the sociological nature of the transformations in a Good Shepherd refuge.

Early in the research it became clear that an adequate understanding of the Good Shepherd refuges in Britain could not be achieved without some prior knowledge of their ideological and organisational origins in much earlier developments. These events, historically recoverable in Europe from the eleventh century, are termed the Magdalen Movement. The gradual growth of the refuges, their changing forms, and the transformation from management by lay women to that of nuns, and later by religious orders specifically created for the work, are described in Chapter I. This survey occasioned the identification of six principles that consistently informed ideology and practice: Voluntary Admission, Transformative Work, Classification, Separation, Quasi-enclosure, and Specificity of Commitment. These are then used as a working scheme with which to order and analyse in its course the historical narrative of the original Good Shepherd refuge at Angers and the development of Good Shepherd work in Britain. Chapter 2 recounts the elaboration of the earlier form of refuge and the creation of the new order of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers. Taken together the first two chapters reveal the coherent and fairly fixed series of ideological and organisational relationships which preceded the definitive form of the Good Shepherd refuge already established at Angers by 1835. They provide the 'longue durée', the silent historical depths of the immediate events in the narrative, and the axis along which the research is located.(4)

Hammersmith came to serve as the model for all the other Good Shepherd magdalen asylums in Britain, as well as the sole link between



them and the motherhouse at Angers. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account, drawn entirely from primary sources, of the early difficulties encountered by the sisters in establishing themselves in London. In particular, this chapter seeks to reconstruct an authentic picture of the religious concerns of the sisters in the everyday life of the magdalen asylum, of their hopes and frustrations in the daily task of transforming the penitents. Perhaps here, more than in any other chapter, the sources may be allowed to speak for themselves, given the direction of the research. Whereas the historical work of the earlier chapters is fundamental to the generation of models and concepts, the ground work of theorisation, Chapter 3 strives to create a circumstantial narration based on the testimony of those involved; to capture the expression of the 'mentalité' of the Magdalen Movement of the past in a current event.(5) The Hammersmith story is one which exemplifies the dialectic between present actualities and the claims of tradition and legitimation. The immediacy of its events have a sociological and historical significance that can only be grasped adequately within the context of the broader sweep of the Magdalen Movement.

The convict refuge at Brook Green and the certified inebriate reformatory at Ashford in Middlesex are described in Chapters 4 and 5. The refuge developed at Angers had already vitiated the principle of voluntary admission, so cardinal an aspect of the refuge up to the time of the French Revolution, and still a fundamental feature of the Good Shepherd magdalen asylum. Despite the warrant provided by the practice at Angers, the stories of Brook Green and Ashford portray the uneasy partnership between the English sisters and the state officials. Initially the nuns might have thought that they were running magdalen asylums under another name, but there soon emerges from the historical evidence a tale of clash and contradiction between their own hope and work for penitent christian conversions among the

inmates and the public expectancy of women normalised within the official definitions. The narrative is engaged in the same way as in Chapter 3 save that each account is also set in the context of the development of public provision for criminal and dissolute women. The theoretical task of the narrative in these chapters is to hone further, by comparison and contrast, our understanding of the central transformative work of the Good Shepherd Sisters, especially in terms of the perceptions of the participants. The accounts of the convict refuge and the inebriate reformatory also direct our attention to the relationship between classification and transformation, and more particularly to the institutional problems that can arise when the transformational objectives and the categories that constitute the classification are ambiguous or disputed.

As the historical narrative gradually took form, it became clear that laundry work played a role in ways deeper than the obviously economic. As well as being a prime means of institutional self-maintenance and reformative work, it also displayed a singular organisational congruence with the life and conduct of the magdalen asylum. In a more fundamental way it served as a kind of symbolic analogue for the task of cleansing sinners. Using plans and photographs, an analysis of registers and account books, as well as the normal written historical sources, Chapter 6 is given to the construction of a detailed account of the Good Shepherd laundry; its work processes, manpower deployment, and management. The wealth of empirical data is used to explore the compatibility of laundry work to the objectives, organisation, and activities of the magdalen asylum, the symbolic aspect being left to a later chapter. The account of the laundry is another perspective on the nature of transformation. Although there are narrative events, a greater reliance is placed on the use of statistical data derived from a thorough analysis of the registers and accounts, and from the

plans and photographs. In themselves the photographs testify to the physical conditions and arrangements in a way that transcends the solely verbal and numerical evidence. And that, despite the difficulties of interpretations. (6) The chapter is significant to the development of the study in the way it helps us to understand the material base of institutions committed to essentially spiritual transformations. At the same time it enhances our grasp of the Good Shepherd endeavour by depicting the processes of classification and transformation as disengaged from the purely religious rhetoric.

When the various lines of historical enquiry began to converge and cohere, there emerged a recurrent theme in the events; the pre-occupation of the Good Shepherd Sisters with a series of parliamentary and other attempts, throughout the nineteenth century, to impose differing kinds of public control and inspection upon the convents and magdalen asylums. Later in the century they were also faced with pressures to pay wages to the inmates. In general they successfully resisted the attempts. These disputes raise such fundamental issues that they were further researched historically, and they are recounted in Chapter 7. The resistance to control, inspection, and wages rested on the sisters' need to demonstrate and secure a definition of the convent and magdalen asylum as an autonomous religious institution totally distinct from the secular world. The struggle to resist secular encroachment went on throughout the whole period and exemplifies the differences and similarities between religious and secular institutions of social control and transformation. The chapter raises in a particularly vivid way the conflict of discourses concerning the nature of the transformations held to occur in the Good Shepherd refuge.

Having constructed the historical narrative as far as the reciprocal engagement of sources and theme would permit, the penultimate chapter is concerned with the explicit theoretical task of creating a sociological

model of the Good Shepherd refuge. Central to the discussion in Chapter 8 is the difficult problem of conceptualising the essentially ambiguous process of transformation, and the ambivalent status of the transformand, in a way that may adequately account for the specific Good Shepherd case. For this purpose the two generic concepts of Transformation and Classification are derived from the six principles that had been previously identified in the historical account of the Magdalen Movement. The two concepts are explored as the building blocks of the sociological model.

Goffman's notion of the total institution is taken as the starting point for the analysis. Although it proves to be of limited applicability to the specific cases in the research, it provides some useful leads to a more refined theorisation. In particular it points to the necessity for a more sustained treatment of transformational objectives and the system of classification upon which transformation is based. Some aspects of the work of Durkheim, Mauss, Needham and Douglas are used for the analysis of the system of classifications, while Foucault and Bernstein are drawn upon to relate that system to the nature of control within the refuge. The discussion of classification as the base of transformation makes it possible to isolate some of the key features of the latter concept. Special attention is paid to the spatio-temporal aspects of the process in arriving at a definition of transformation. The discussion attempts to clarify the relationship between the dynamic and invariant aspects of transformation and raises the puzzling question of how one may conceptualise the long term status of many transformands within the Good Shepherd convents and institutions. A solution to this difficult theoretical issue is sought through an analysis of the temporal dimension and its subjective perception in a roman catholic institution. The chapter then goes on to consider the total range of transformations in the Good Shepherd refuge

in the light of the sociological analysis. At this stage the spatial dimension is included to develop the concept of a Good Shepherd refuge as a Theopticon. Finally the categories of classification and the directions of transformation are correlated on a grid to provide a further image of the nature of structured social transformation.

Although the historical account was ordered around a concern with the nature of transformation, the narrative produced three important questions of its own: Why was laundry work chosen as the dominant type of work for the inmates, and why did it persist for such a long period? Why did the Good Shepherd Sisters resist Factory Act regulation of the magdalen asylum laundries? Why did the nuns, despite public pressures, refuse to pay wages to the inmates? These questions had been answered in some ways by the historical narrative itself. In the final chapter they are taken up again and analysed largely in terms of the theoretical model already developed.

To make too rigid a distinction between history and sociology would be alien to the spirit of this study, for the chronicle cannot be told without recourse to concepts by which to identify its events. (7) Yet there is a certain tautology in the reciprocal confirmation thereby entailed. This is a radical problem for what one might clumsily term sociological historiography, and not within the compass of this research finally to resolve. Writing to the nun whom she had just appointed superior of the Finchley convent in 1871, the Provincial Superior had this to say:









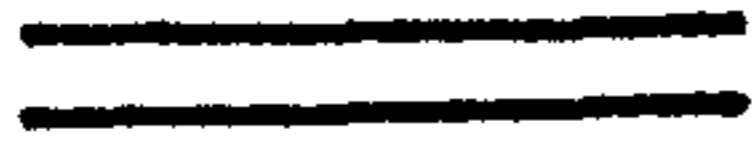
"A Superior in that house who knows practically what our classes are, would do far more towards bringing that Class into what we wish and turning these 'women' into 'children of the Good Shepherd'"

(8)

By the reconstruction of an historical narrative this research seeks

a similar practical engagement in the life of the Good Shepherd refuge as a necessary prelude to understanding. It is an unavoidable irony that the story is transformed by the very attempt to capture it for analysis.

Key to Diagrams

1.  Clearly defined boundary
2.  Weakly defined boundary
3.  Formal religious enclosure
4.  Movement in or out
5.  Movement in and out by either category
6.  Movement in and out by higher category only
7.  Penitents becoming religious madeleines or nuns of another order
8.  Compulsory admission
9.  Strongly defined boundary but not formal religious enclosure

CHAPTER 1:THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND ORGANISATIONALFORMS OF REFUGES

A narrative is not bound to chronological order, so it is the choice of the researcher to begin the study with an exploration of the origins of the Good Shepherd refuge in much earlier events. A knowledge of origins may be insufficient for complete explanation but it is substantially enhances understanding. (1) We need not embark on this exploration, which spans seven centuries, with any sense of apology for Fernand Braudel, among other historians, has exhorted sociology to recognise the exceptional value of the long time span. That value rests in its capacity to reveal the plurality of social time:

'Nothing comes closer to the crux of social reality than the living, infinite, infinitely repeated opposition between the instant of time and that time which flows only slowly.'

(2)

If we are to understand the Good Shepherd refuge, its interior life, and the events of its development in Britain, we need to know something of the stable elements, the structure, which hindered the flow of its history and shaped it in its course. We cannot solely concentrate on the contradictions and stabilities of present events as if these were somehow outside time and as if the discourses that expressed them were disconnected from their own genealogy. The evidence with which to interpret the nineteenth century Good Shepherd refuge has first to be caught in its own unrealised and unintentional past. The chapter is therefore an archeology of structure; a pursuit of the invariances of social forms and processes which only the long time span can reveal. (3)

The women's refuges and penal institutions with which we are concerned were owned and managed by a roman catholic religious order



of women called the Sisters of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers. They were founded in 1831 by Rose-Virginie Pelletier (1796-1868) at Angers in western France, and eventually developed into an extensive international order specialising in work with women and girls who had been before the criminal courts, or who were otherwise in need of special care. They came to England in 1840 and established themselves initially at Hammersmith, a district of west London. The order was a separate and independent development of an earlier religious congregation, Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge, which had been founded at Caen in Normandy by John Eudes. The older order was itself a significant seventeenth century development of a tradition in christian charitable work which can be traced back to the eleventh century.

This tradition of reformatory work with prostitutes and other women and girls leading 'la vie licencieuse' traces its ideological roots to the biblically recorded encounter between Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene. (4) Whether it be historical fact or traditional myth, the image and symbolism of that encounter served as a legitimating model and spiritual force for the development of what might loosely be termed the Magdalen Movement. Any adequate understanding of the Good Shepherd establishments in nineteenth century Britain will depend in part on some historical account of these ideological origins.

Such an account may point to certain endemic or recurring features of the Magdalen Movement. Although changing in their historical form, these features remain deeply implicated in the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters, and constitute a crucial element in their relations with central and local government.

The historical record indicates that institutions dedicated to the reception and conversion of prostitutes had been a consistent feature of roman catholic life in Europe, certainly since the 11th

century. Variouslly known as 'refuges for penitents', 'houses of repentance', or 'hostels of God', and normally dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, they were to be found over the length and breadth of Europe. (5) By the end of the 11th century there already existed in Strasbourg, for example, an 'Order of Penitents of Magdalen'. (6) At the beginning of the 12th century the famous preacher Robert d'Arbrissel founded a refuge at Fontevrault, as did the other popular preachers Foulques de Nerra and William d'Auvergne later in the same epoch. (7)

Despite the religious motivations and aims, it would be erroneous to assume that these institutions were founded in isolation from the concerns of the civil powers. Even 400 years earlier Charlemagne had attempted a total repression of prostitution, only to find that despite draconian penalties the policy was unenforceable. (8) In 1254 King Louis of France, freshly returned from crusading in the Holy Land, attempted a complete repression by ordering the total banishment of all prostitutes. It was about this time that he helped William d'Auvergne to found the refuge 'Filles-Dieu' in Paris. Needless to say, the policy of repression led to such evasion and deception that Louis was forced to tolerate prostitution. Instead, he regulated the activities of prostitutes by confining them to particular areas of the city. (9) In the following century prostitutes were required to wear distinctive clothing. (10) King Louis' commitment to a policy of public control (albeit one of reluctant toleration) on the one hand, and to reformation through refuges on the other, is an early example of the ambivalence towards prostitution that often recurred in church and state policies on the question.

During the next three centuries the civil powers generally tended to laxity in implementing public control, while the charitable attempts to reform prostitutes continued unabated. In the 14th century 'Religious of Madeleine' were to be found at Marseilles and Naples. The future

King Louis XII had given up part of his Hotel d'Orleans for use as a convent for repentent girls in the 15th century, <sup>(11)</sup> There were similar institutions in Rome by the 16th century: the Refuge of St. Martha founded by Ignatius of Loyola <sup>(12)</sup> and the Holy Cross Monastery founded by the Carmelite nuns. <sup>(13)</sup> It was about this time that a new edict was issued at Orleans entirely prohibiting prostitution. It took seven years to implement this decree, and then only by force when the brothel districts were cleared in 1567. The decree had met with considerable popular resistance and vacillating implementation by an ambivalent administration. <sup>(14)</sup> Clandestine prostitution flourished as a consequence, for not only had the perennial demand to be met but 'no Magdalen repented on the order of the State'. <sup>(15)</sup> During these centuries the pattern of civil response to prostitution seemed to be an alternation between repression and control. There appears to have been no collusion between church and state in pursuit of these policies, indeed the refuges were often initiated independently of formal ecclesiastical authority.

Characteristically, the refuges were founded by laypeople as a specific response to local needs, often in a burst of evangelical enthusiasm after the visit of some particularly forceful preacher. The founding group usually consisted of local worthies, men and women, of whom a few would put up the rent or the money to purchase a suitable property. Some of the single women or widows amongst them might wholly dedicate themselves to the work by living in the house as 'gouvernantes' or 'directrices' with responsibility for the day to day control or conduct of the madeleines, as they were called. This type of arrangement was the most typical and is designated Type 1.

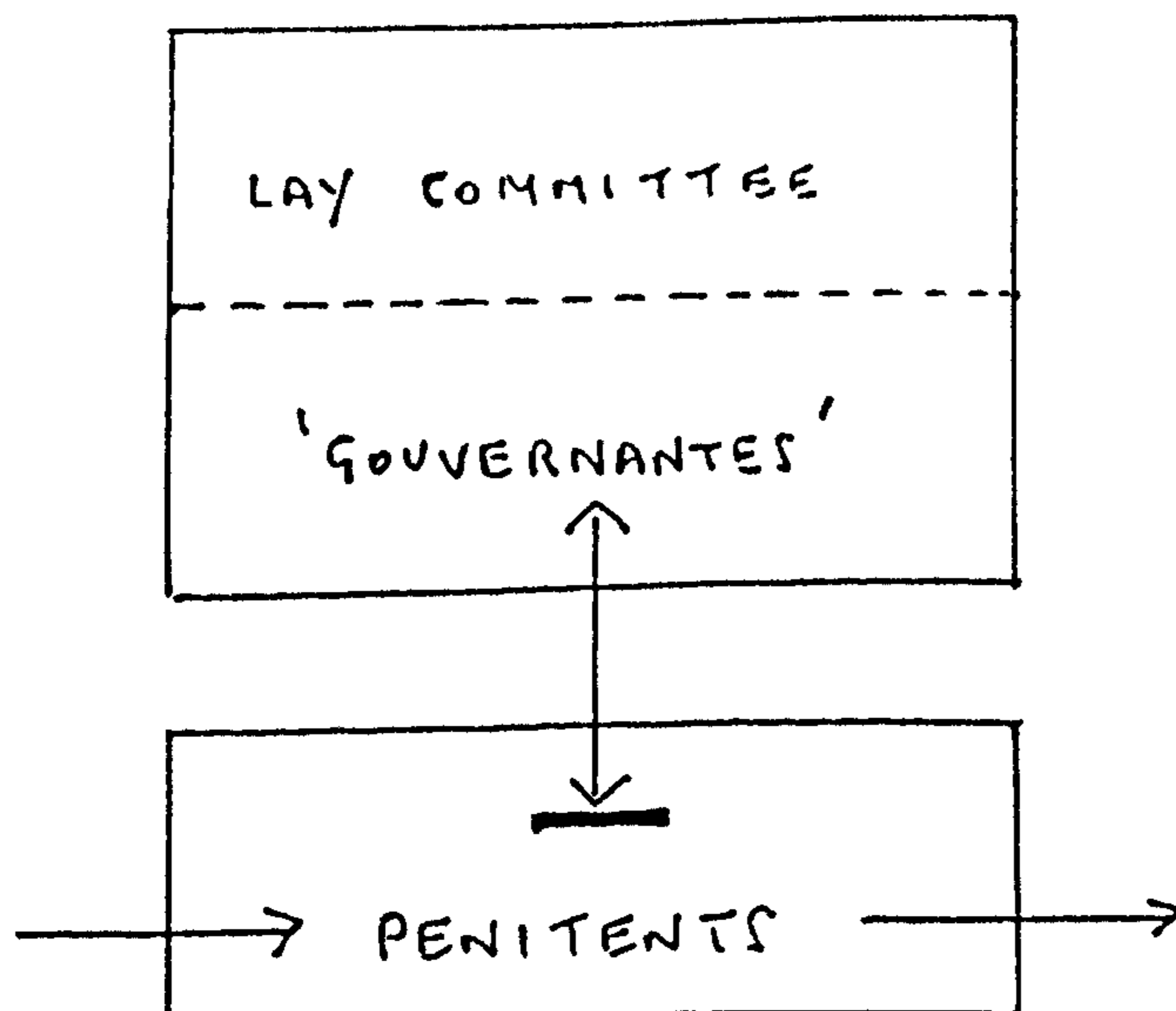


Figure 1: TYPE 1 REFUGE

In some instances the local initiators would do no more than provide the material resources and the madeleines would govern themselves. Such an arrangement existed, for example, at the Abbey 'Madeleine d'Essay' founded in 1519. <sup>(16)</sup> This is designated Type 11.

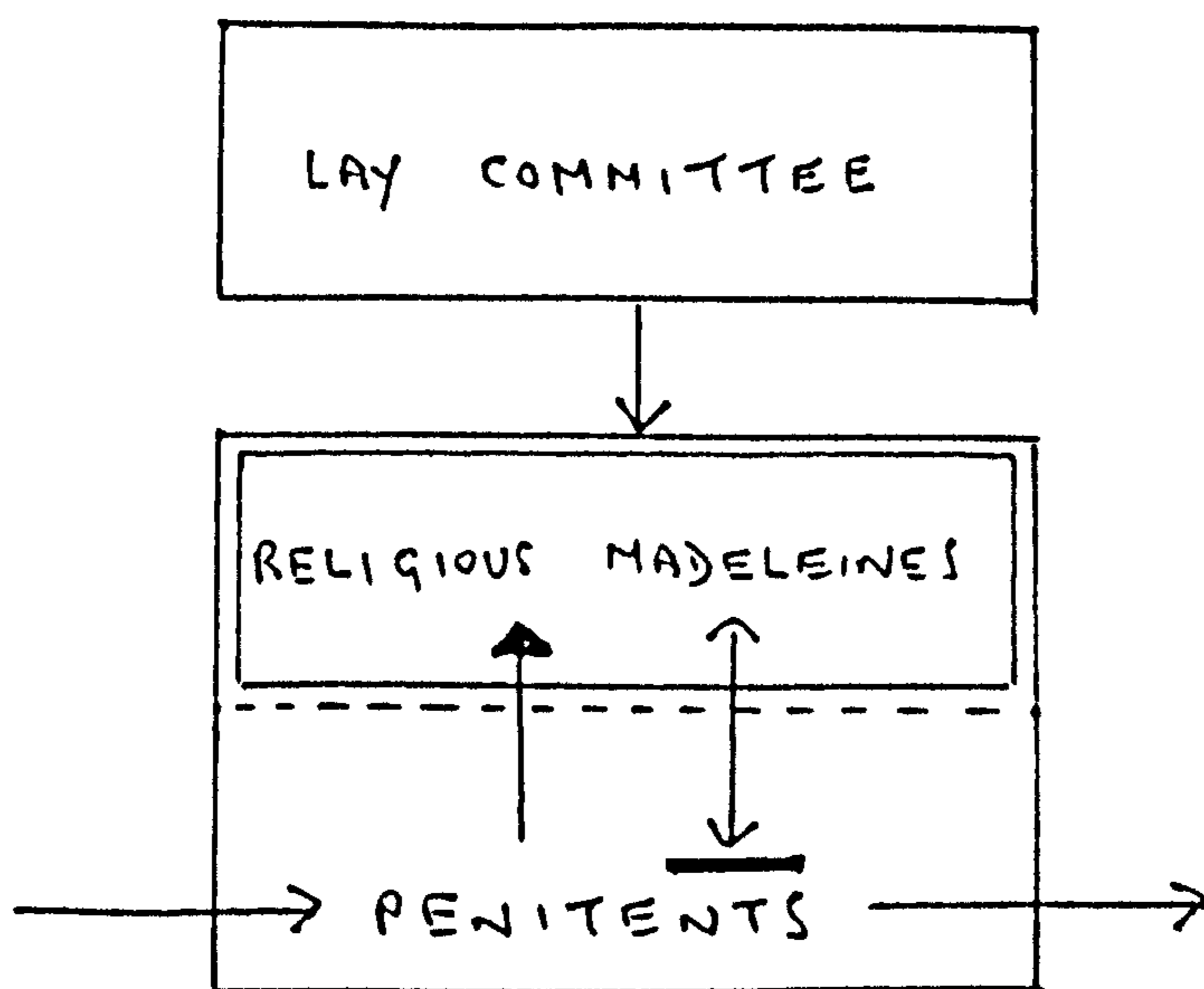


Figure 2: TYPE 11 REFUGE

There were instances of the management of such projects being taken over from the lay group or autonomous madeleines by established religious orders such as the Benedictines, Carmelites, or Ursulines. This is designated Type 111.

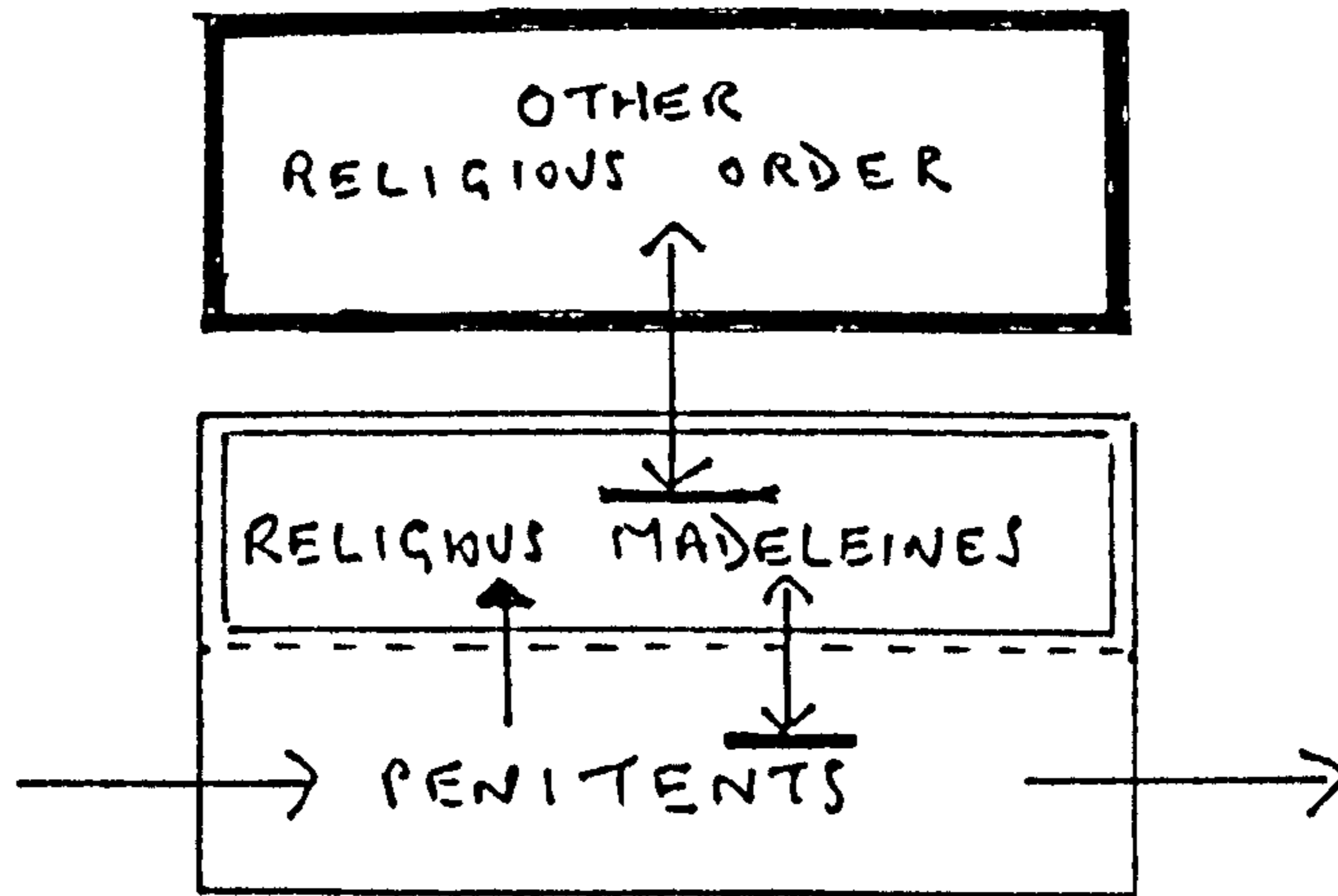


Figure 3: TYPE 111 REFUGE

However, the difficulty of the work usually led to such upheavals in the established monastic practices of these orders that the attempts were often abandoned. This happened at the Paris Madeleine where four religious orders made successive attempts at management over a 40 year period. (17)

The local nature of the enterprises and their dependence on charismatic initiators or momentary religious enthusiasms tended to render them short-lived. This institutional instability often led to local hostility, as the maintenance of the refuge would tend to fall on the civil authorities. Similarly, it was not unusual for the self-governing communities of madeleines to fail to persevere after the initial conversion from prostitution, or else to transform themselves into conventional religious communities as the founding penitents died out. The historical record seems to indicate a general pattern

of institutionally unstable and predominantly lay-managed institutions.<sup>(18)</sup>

Attempts to compensate for this instability became a significant factor in the later development of the magdalen movement.

Although the origins and organisational features of the refuges varied considerably, there was one clearly marked and common characteristic which rested at the very base of this tradition in charitable work. This was the requirement that the women should only enter the refuge voluntarily, with the prime aim of doing penance for their past lives and of seeking some kind of conversion to an ordered christian life. Later founders such as Ignatius of Loyola and John Eudes were just as insistent as their 12th century precursors Robert d'Abrissel and Foulques de Nerra that only those who freely wished to reform themselves should be permitted to enter.<sup>(19)</sup> Exceptions to this basic rule were very rare, unless a refuge had come under the control of local magistrates and deteriorated into a town prison for dissolute and vagrant women.

There was no compulsion to enter the refuge or to remain there, and this fundamental essential of the tradition is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF VOLUNTARY ADMISSION.

The organisational patterns of the refuges began to change towards a more homogeneous form during the 17th century. In a large measure this may be attributed to the vision and innovation of two people: Elizabeth de Rainfang and John Eudes. Each founded a religious order specifically to work for the reclamation of prostitutes: Madame de Rainfange at Nancy in 1624, to be followed in 1641 at Caen by John Eudes. Before outlining these pivotal developments in more detail, the direction and increased momentum of the magdalen movement during the 17th century may be better appreciated by delineating some general features in the social and religious life of France at that time.

At the socio-economic level it was a period of successive

agricultural failures, indeed there were famines right through the century. (20) Foreign trade went into a steady decline, and there was continuous high unemployment. This persistent economic stagnation was exacerbated by Richelieu's war policy which necessitated heavy taxation, particularly upon the peasantry. They were also subject to local levy by the landed aristocracy. Not surprisingly, poverty, hunger, and disease abounded. These conditions were a major factor in the popular revolts and riots endemic throughout the century. Some of the most widespread were in Normandy where there were local rebellions on three occasions between 1636 and 1643, one of which lasted for two years until violently suppressed at Caen. However, the material conditions and the suppression of the peasantry are only one part of the story. During the same period the French state was becoming more centralised and absolute as Richelieu gradually succeeded in curtailing the local autonomy of the nobility, despite major attempts by them to rebel in the 1640's and 1650's. By the end of the 17th century power had effectively passed from the nobility to the new administrative and legal bourgeoisie. This concern with centralised government and unified administration was accompanied by an increasing rationality in the ordering of society. These trends were reflected in the pre-occupation of the newly powerful bourgeoisie with the poor and with the merits of work. (21)

These pre-occupations may have been almost inevitable given the extensive marginality created by the prevalent socio-economic conditions. It was a society abounding in the 'asociaux': vagabonds, the poor, the unemployed, the mad, abandoned children, prostitutes and the like.

These were 'evils' that were shunned in disgust. Evils that were fearful because they could lead to a shameful contamination. These were attitudes which were the very antithesis of those expressed in the biblical story which grounds the traditional ideology of the magdalen

movement. Perhaps it is not surprising that such attitudes should result in a perception of poverty as a condition resulting from sin and vice; in a perception of the poor as culpably idle people who constitute,

'... a danger for society or public order because they are homeless and because they do not acknowledge social values ..... All those who refuse a definite religion, family and moral order make up a marginal population whom it is necessary to confine.'

(22)

The end product was the policy which Foucault terms the 'Great Confinement'. Indeed he goes so far as to assert that:

'For the Catholic Church, as in the Protestant countries, confinement represents, in the form of an authoritarian model, the myth of social happiness.'

(23)

It is certainly true that the Church appeared to find no difficulty in accommodating itself to the work of confinement. This may be explained, in part, by the traditional christian attitudes to work and poverty. Such a ready co-operation may also be due to the reforms of the Council of Trent, which were not implemented in France until this period, some 50 years after other European catholic countries. Consequently, the religious sphere of life in 17th century France was dominated by the intensive progress of the counter-Reformation. There were many disputes over the reforms, the main thrust of which was to tighten church discipline, strengthen local episcopal authority, improve the education of the diocesan clergy, and to restore catholic life among the people. Thus the tendency to mysticism apparent at the beginning of the century was gradually replaced by an emphasis on moralism and practical action in the work of conversion and personal



salvation. This process of renewal and redirection had a major effect on the piety and charitable activity of the laity. Although the old religious orders had reformed themselves, their prestige gave way to a more active mission to the people through the laity and the reformed diocesan clergy. It was a period of French catholicism characterised by 'exuberant disorder and abundant initiative'. (24) This spirit of initiative was evident in the development of new religious orders which were specifically concerned with active charitable works of various kinds, like those of Madame de Rainfang and John Eudes. The laity formed associations for similar purposes, such as the secret Company of the Blessed Sacrament, which was also instrumental in founding refuges for prostitutes. (24) The poor and the sick, the dissolute and the libidinous, the vagabond and the madman, were not solely the objects of charitable care. Above all, they were souls to be saved.

So far as christian spirituality and symbolism were concerned, the poor were held to constitute a special sign of the presence of Christ, a kind of contemporary recapitulation of his human suffering and rejection. Therefore, to give alms is at one and the same time to accept Christ, to imitate his compassion, and to comfort his suffering. There was also the added dimension of doing penance for sin by giving up time, money, or goods. These connotations implicate a very condensed symbolism into the relation between the poor and their benefactors. It is paradoxically symbiotic in that the recipient provides to the giver an opportunity for the practice of both virtue and penitence. The reciprocity of these definitions comes to serve as a powerful religious underpinning to the work of confinement. (26)

The policy of confining the poor, the idle, and the dissolute was not, of course, something entirely new. In England it had been tried as early as 1553 when Edward VI made over his palace at Bridewell to the city of London for use as a 'house of correction and occup-

ation' for the poor, and for rogues and whores committed by the courts. For the convicted, work was intended as a post-punitive cure. (27) The provision of houses of correction throughout the country was later enabled by Queen Elizabeth's 1601 Poor Law. (28) The basic principle of the system was to confine men and women to work as a means of discipline and reformation. (29) These early houses of correction were never really a success because of local control leading to corrupt practices in the use of inmate labour. By the end of the 17th century many of them had been absorbed into the system of local common goals. (30) Even so, work continued a central feature for the purpose both of discipline and reduction of maintenance costs. In Holland also, rasp-houses had been established in the middle of the 16th century at Amsterdam and Rotterdam. They exhibited a similar commitment to the reformative amalgam of confinement and work. Even 200 years later, at the time of John Howard's journeys of investigation, they were putting men and women to work 'upon this profound maxim, Make them diligent, and they will be honest'. (31)

What was new in the 17th century was the rapidity with which confined labour was adopted throughout the countries of Europe. The Charité, a house of confinement for the poor, was opened at Lyons in 1612, (32) Vincent de Paul re-organised Saint-Lazare at Paris in 1632 'to receive persons detained by His Majesty', (33) and the first of the zuchthausern of the german speaking countries was set up at Hamburg in 1620. (34) There were similar developments in Belgium, Spain, and Italy, and soon the pattern was well established throughout Europe. By the end of the 18th century the network of houses of confinement was extensive, as can be seen from John Howard's careful documentation. (35) At that time there were 126 workhouses in England, 11 zuchthausern in germanic countries, 33 hôpitaux général in France; while the Dutch rasp-houses, the Maison de Force at Ghent, and the Silentium at Rome, would come to serve as models of a reformed English

(36)

penal system in which labour was central. Protestant asceticism was combining with catholic monasticism to create a formidable instrument of social control.

Although similar houses had been established in France, the development there was quite different in its degree of centralisation and concentration. The Hôpital Général was established in Paris in 1656 by royal decree specifically to prevent 'mendicancy and idleness as the source of all disorders', (37) It was an amazing institution, housing some 6,000 inmates within a few years of its foundation, and formed by combining five existing institutions (hospitals, orphanages, and prisons) under the management of a board of directors with absolute powers delegated by the king. In 1676 all French cities were required to establish an hospital general. The characteristic of these hôpitaux most remarked upon, from John Howard to the present day, was the diversity of the inmates and the lack of classification. Both Foucault and Doerner seek for some hidden logic, for some principle of cohesion behind the apparent disorder, for the social reality it must have represented to French people of the 17th century. Albeit with differences of emphasis and some dispute over method, both are agreed that an imperative of labour and power lay behind the hospital model. (38) For Foucault, these institutions are archetypical of the confinement movement and reflect a new sensibility to poverty, the duties of assistance, and the new work ethic. They constitute one of the 17th century answers to the economic crisis of low wages and high unemployment. (39) Doerner also views the hôpitaux général as elastic instruments of labour control, although he stresses their role as a resource to the police and the courts:

'.... a third instrument of absolute power in the service of both control and welfare, punishment and education for order, work morality, and reason.' (40)

Thus an absolute state was able to isolate the major social problems of the day and support its claim that the existing social order was rational and moral. <sup>(41)</sup> Although it seems generally agreed that labour in the hôpitaux général was usually ineffective in actually reducing unemployment and in controlling costs (as was often the case with similar institutions in other countries), it nevertheless came to serve important symbolic and ethical functions. <sup>(42)</sup> Later in this study these functions of work will be examined more closely.

In the medieval christian tradition, to work was to pray, for to do so seemed not only to harness the passions and to inculcate obedience, but also to perform penance. In biblical mythology work is necessarily implicated in the original sin of Adam. It constitutes both punishment and redemption in the saga of man's fall from grace. This notion is successively re-worked in its expression but remained, over three centuries, an essential part of the ideology of work in houses of confinement.

The notion of work as in some sense curative and reformative lies at the root of labour in the refuges and is viewed as a major element in the transformation of the penitents. It is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF TRANSFORMATIVE WORK.

The religious orders that were founded later specifically for the conduct of refuges incorporated in their documents clear statements on the ideology that sustained that notion of work. Given the voluntary nature of admission and departure this was essential if the penitents were to be kept at their tasks without manifest control. The conscious effort of the nuns to communicate an ideology of work parallels a growing pre-occupation with the same task in society as a whole. Anthony has argued that the construction of a new concept of economic man required the dismantling of the medieval way of thinking about

(43)  
 work. But this was something the sisters always refused to do; a refusal that led them into certain contradictions. Not the least of these inhered in the maintenance of a morally and religiously transformative concept of work for the penitents whilst simultaneously engaging in an increasingly calculative concept for their relations with the external world. This contradiction would become a particularly acute feature of their history in the nineteenth century, and it is discussed at length in chapters 7 and 9.

As the refuges became more organised and as the commitment to the conversion of socially rejected women, many of whom might be properly accounted the casualties of economic change, so the refuge became more economically successful. Their ultimate religious values accelerated the transformation of the refuges as commercial enterprises. Thus the refuges might be viewed as microsociological confirmation of the Weberian hypothesis on the relation between religion and capitalism. Yet it is a paradoxical confirmation which perhaps qualifies Weber's emphasis on the removal of asceticism from the monastery into everyday life. It may be true that, as with protestantism, the asceticism of roman catholicism became more rational. However, in the case of the refuge, it remained within the monastic enclosure. It was the economic fruits of that asceticism which engaged into the external world and not the asceticism itself. Perhaps the account of the refuges holds a key to Weber's own statement of what needs to follow his analysis:

'The next task would be rather to show the significance of ascetic rationalism .... its historical development from the medieval beginnings of worldly asceticism to its dissolution into pure utilitarianism would have to be traced out through all areas of ascetic religion.'

(44)

To complete our account of the seventeenth century we return briefly to the measures taken to control prostitution. In the light of the active moralism and the growth of confinement that characterised that century in France, it may not be surprising that the repressive measures against prostitution of 1560 were renewed. In 1619, for example, the prostitutes of Paris were ordered to disperse and to take up other occupations under pain of strict penalties; a harsh policy in the face of high unemployment and poverty. <sup>(45)</sup> The enforcement of this policy varied from district to district and those who were convicted were usually sent to the Bicêtre, one of the worst prisons in Paris. <sup>(46)</sup> It eventually became a part of the Hôpital Général. Later in the century, the policy of toleration and control was adopted and backed up by a special prison built in 1684, the Salpêtrière. The 'femmes publiques' were permitted to operate under licence to the police, who could commit them directly to the Salpêtrière by lettre de cachet. Louis XIV and Colbert promulgated Rules for the Salpêtrière which were remarkably similar to those of the refuges, laying down a strict timetable of daily worship and religious instruction, uniform, diet, and work all supported by a system of rewards and punishments. <sup>(47)</sup>

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS FOR REFUGE WORK

During the course of the 17th century refuge work was taken over increasingly by religious orders, although lay activism in the matter remained a powerful force. A major development of the magdalen movement occurred in 1624 at Nancy, where Elizabeth de Rainfang established a new religious congregation called 'The Sisters of Our Lady of the Refuge'. Madame de Rainfang (later known as Sister Elizabeth of the Cross) was a rather strange person who had been ill-treated by her parents, and married off by them at the age of 15 to a widower

aged 57. She had five children by him. When he died, in disgrace and poverty, she was left in her early 20's to bring up alone the three surviving daughters. In 1618, when she was 26 years old she became mentally ill. This was an epoch of frenzied allegations of diabolic possession, when witch hunting was prevalent throughout Europe; no doubt an epiphenomenal reflection of the social and economic uncertainties already outlined. Epiphenomenal or not, the consequences were frequently real, and Elizabeth de Rainfang was publicly exorcised on many occasions in the churches of Nancy. Later, after she had founded her religious order, some jesuits who were convinced of her sanctity started a cult of her while she was still alive. This was strongly disapproved of by the Roman Inquisition and they were ordered to have no further communication with Madame de Rainfang. A failure to comply led to their expulsion from the Society of Jesus. (48)

In the light of such bizarre personal history, it is all the more remarkable that Elizabeth de Rainfang's initiative received the very prompt approval of her bishop, Mgr. Jean des Porcelets de Maillane; that within three years the work was formally authorised by the civil power in the person of Charles IV, Duke of Lorraine; and furthermore, that in 1634 Pope Urban VIII approved a formal Constitution. From the later narrative, it will be evident that the speed with which all these necessary approbations were granted was extraordinary. Finally in 1655, the year before he ordered the establishment of the Hôpital Général in Paris, Louis XIV issued Letters Patent to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Refuge. (49) The new order extended rapidly and by 1742 there were over 20 foundations mainly in eastern and central France, ranging from Nantes to Avignon. (50) Although all the houses were founded from Nancy, each was independent and self-supporting, while remaining loosely federated with the others through the common Constitution, ideology, and work. Even the principle

of loose federation was a major organisational advance on the autonomous isolation that had previously characterised refuge work. Federation would be sufficient to establish a common ambience and approach to the task of reclaiming prostitutes.

The foundation of this new order was an event of particular significance, for it was the first to be specifically devoted to work with prostitutes. Previously, the few refuges which were also convents were self-governing communities of former penitents who had taken religious vows, and who directed those inmates who had not done so (Type 11); otherwise, the majority of refuges were managed by laypeople (Type 1). In the present case, the founding group of 13 women, including Madame de Rainfang and her three daughters, took religious vows and dedicated themselves to refuge work. It was a totally new departure for a group of such respectable women to establish themselves under formal vows 'afin de prendre soin des pénitentes'. (51) This arrangement is designated a Type IV(a) Refuge.

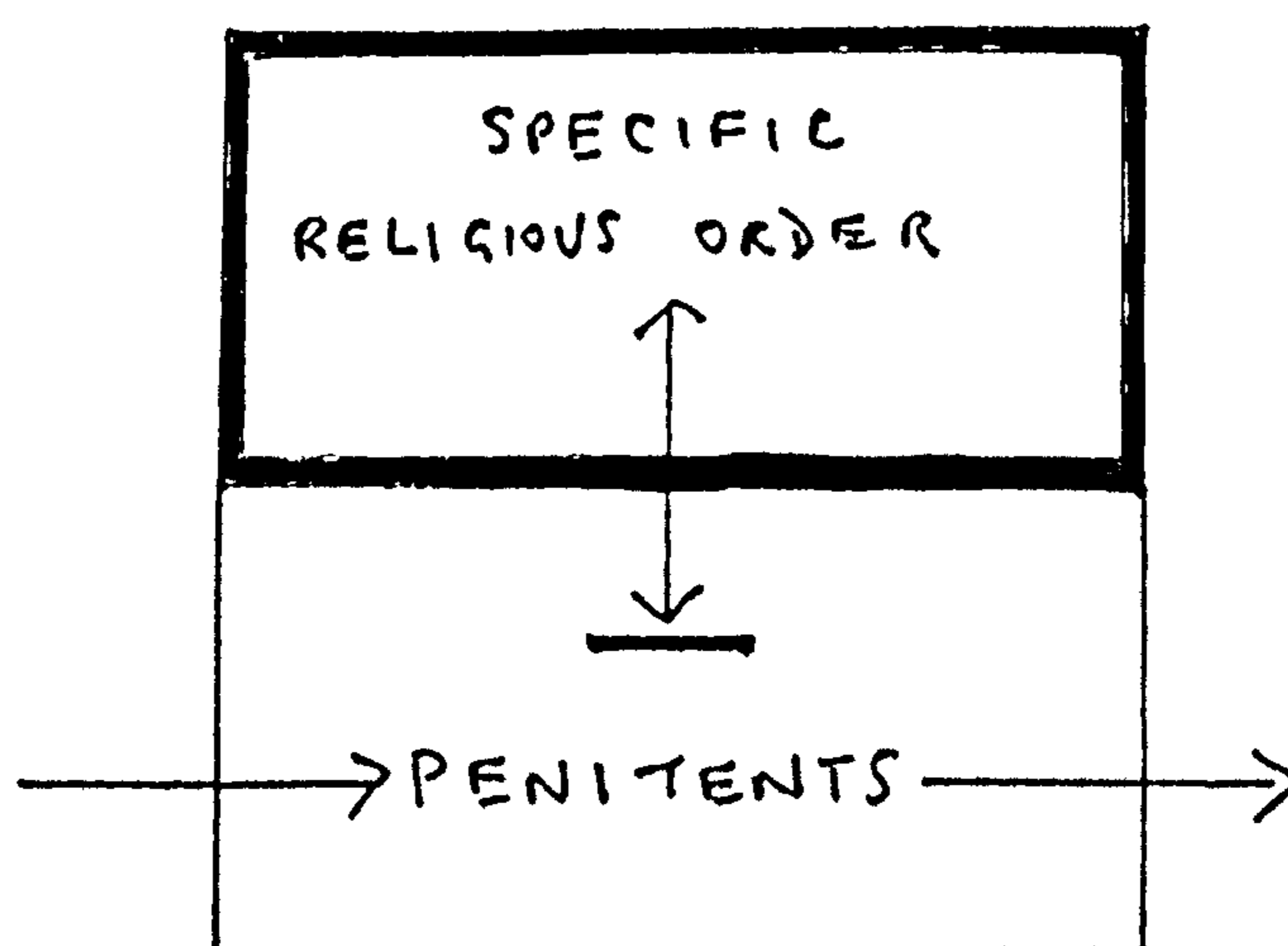


Figure 4: TYPE IV(a) REFUGE

Especially innovative was Madame de Rainfang's introduction of a fourth vow, additional to the usual religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This special vow (which later became known



as the vow of zeal) specifically bound the sisters to work for the conversion of women and girls leading lives of vice, and to care for those in danger of becoming sexually immoral. (52) The transformation of the old style 'lay committee' into a religious order would, of itself, have gone quite some way towards solving the institutional instability frequently evident in the other types of refuges. The fourth vow, however, firmly secured a stability and permanence to the particularity of the work. It became a powerful ideological source of differentiation of task. This was especially important in the face of the frequent local hostility to refuges. Moreover, the Church's longstanding ambivalence towards prostitution resulted in refuges often being deflected to a more 'respectable' charitable activity.

The complex of aims and consequences that derive from the Fourth Vow is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF SPECIFICITY OF COMMITMENT.

At the beginning, the community consisted entirely of women of previous good character, but Madame de Rainfang later allowed suitable penitents to become full members of the order. (53) The penitents themselves were divided into two classes; those who showed a good spirit, and who were therefore allowed to share in the community of the religious sisters; and those not yet of the right disposition, who were governed by the others under a slightly different rule. This latter group lived in separate quarters in the same cloister, but there was no enclosure in the ordinary monastic sense. (54) This later variation permitted by Elizabeth de Rainfang is designated Type 1V(b).

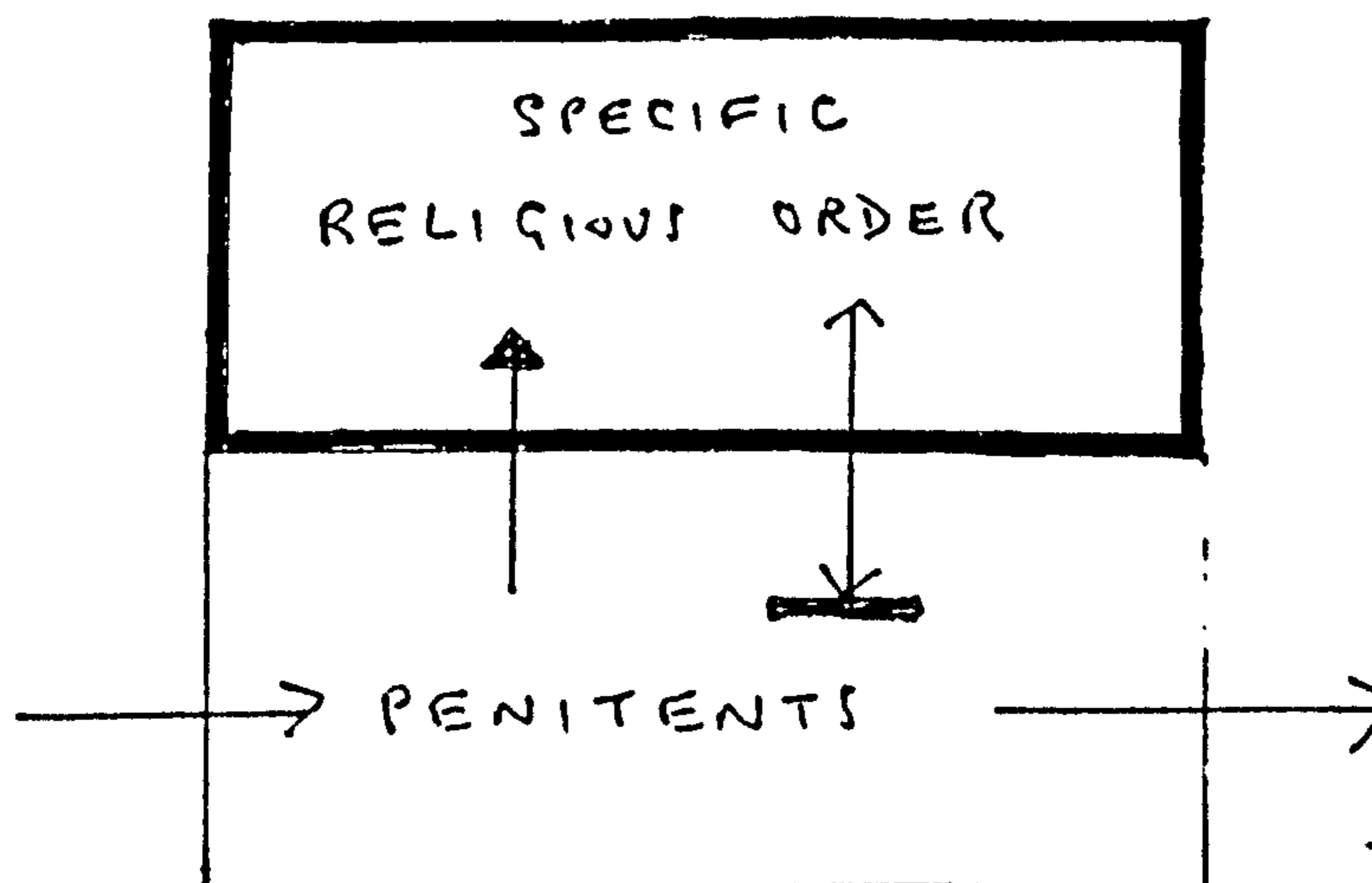


Figure 5: TYPE 1V(b) REFUGE

Despite the rapid growth of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Refuge, none of Elizabeth de Rainfang's houses survived the French Revolution. It has been suggested that the order was already in a state of decline prior to the revolution due to two major weaknesses in the concept: the lack of monastic enclosure for the penitents, and the admission of former penitents to full religious profession. (55) Whether this can be fairly argued or not in retrospect, Madame de Rainfang's innovations certainly determined the future development of the magdalen movement as a work for religious orders specifically bound to the task of converting and rehabilitating prostitutes.

The internal organisation of the refuges was refined during the course of the 17th century. This development is well illustrated in the case of the Sainte Madeleine of Paris. (56) There the penitents were divided into three groups and housed in entirely separate quarters according to their degree of motivation, and their formal capacity to make vows.

At the lowest level was the Class of St. Lazarus, comprising

those who were not yet disposed to be good, and who had been placed in the class by their parents or other competent authority. They were obliged to wear a black uniform. At the intermediate level was the Class of St. Martha, which housed those who had not yet made sufficient progress to make vows, or who were canonically ineligible due to marriage or illegitimacy. These women wore a grey habit and their membership of the class was entirely voluntary. At the highest level was the Class of St. Madeleine. These penitents had taken solemn religious vows and wore the Augustinian habit. They followed the Rule of St. Augustine and lived under a Constitution written for them by Vincent de Paul. They were approved by Pope Urban VII and in every sense fulfilled the formal requirements of a religious order. <sup>(57)</sup> Originally this class governed the other two classes, but later the overall control rested with a succession of different religious orders not specifically dedicated to the work. The initial arrangement at the Paris Madeleine is designated a Type V(a) Refuge.

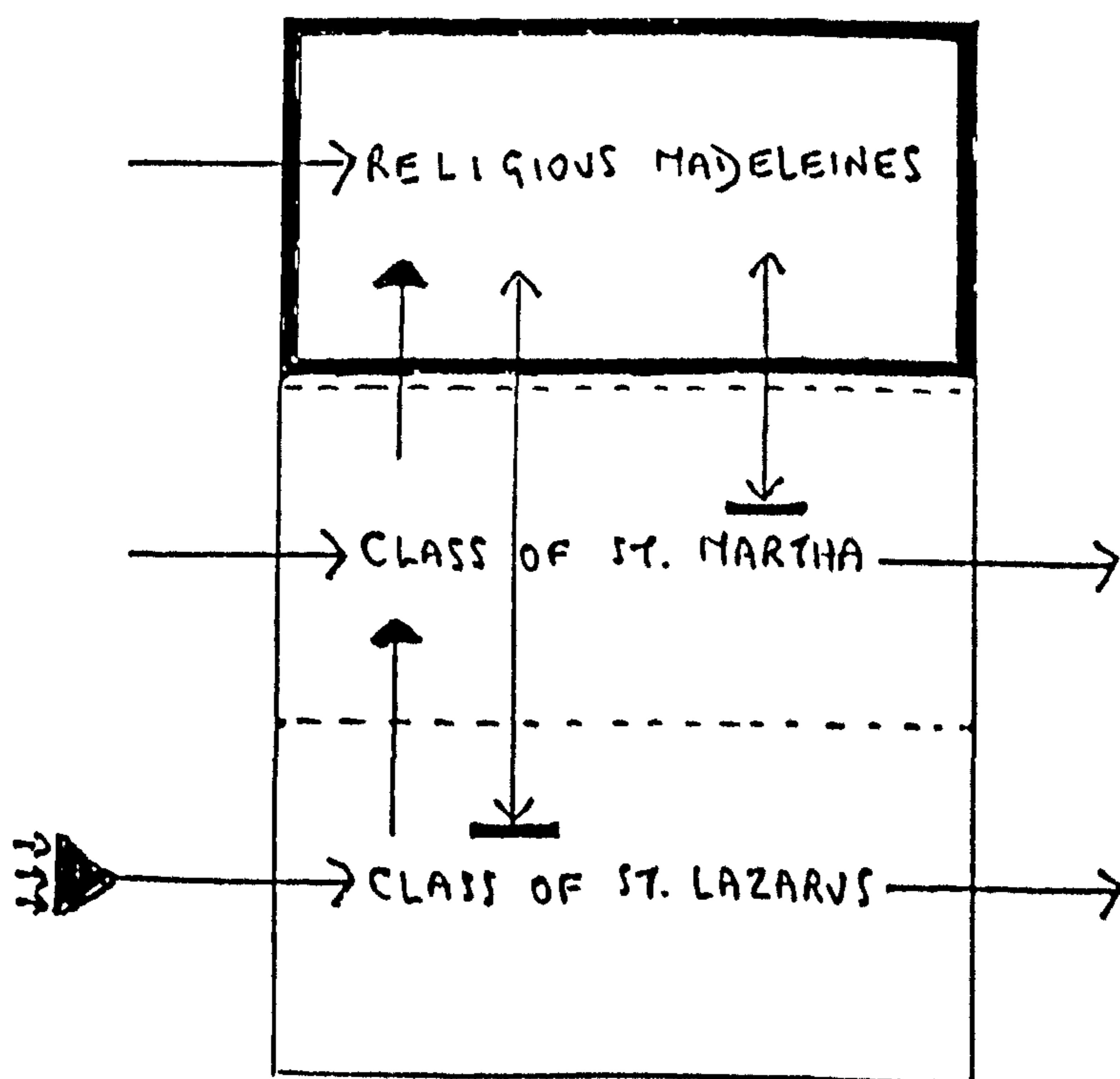


Figure 6: TYPE V(a) REFUGE

The Paris Madeleine represents a clear example of a detailed hierarchical classification based on a criterion of degree of transformation from sin to a commitment to the religious life. Entry to the classes of St. Martha and St. Madeleine was possible either vertically from the lower class or directly (horizontally) from the outside world. The multiplication of entry points weakens any notion of a necessary progression through the whole system, while strengthening the emphasis on the initial voluntary conversion of those who enter the two upper classes from the outside world. In terms of the various types of refuges already discussed, the Madeleine was an autonomous convent of religious magdalens with an additional classification of the other penitents into two classes. This is more refined than the system adopted by Madame de Rainfang. That there were successive, and finally successful, attempts to bring the Madeleine under the management of other religious orders, illustrates the ambiguity of status accorded to those penitents who became fully fledged nuns in the Class of St. Madeleine. At Nancy, it may be recalled, the converted penitents desirous of religious life were eventually allowed to enter the order equally and fully with the sisters recruited from respectable and conventional backgrounds. A concession that later commentators used in partial explanation of the order's failure to survive the French Revolution. The history of the Madeleine seems to suggest that, despite the profession of the class of magdalens, there remained a need for management by a conventional religious order. Despite the trappings of full conventual life, the degree of responsibility necessary for autonomy was, rightly or wrongly, perceived as lacking. This ambiguity was to become a central issue in later developments. The later form of Madeleine is designated a Type V(b) Refuge.

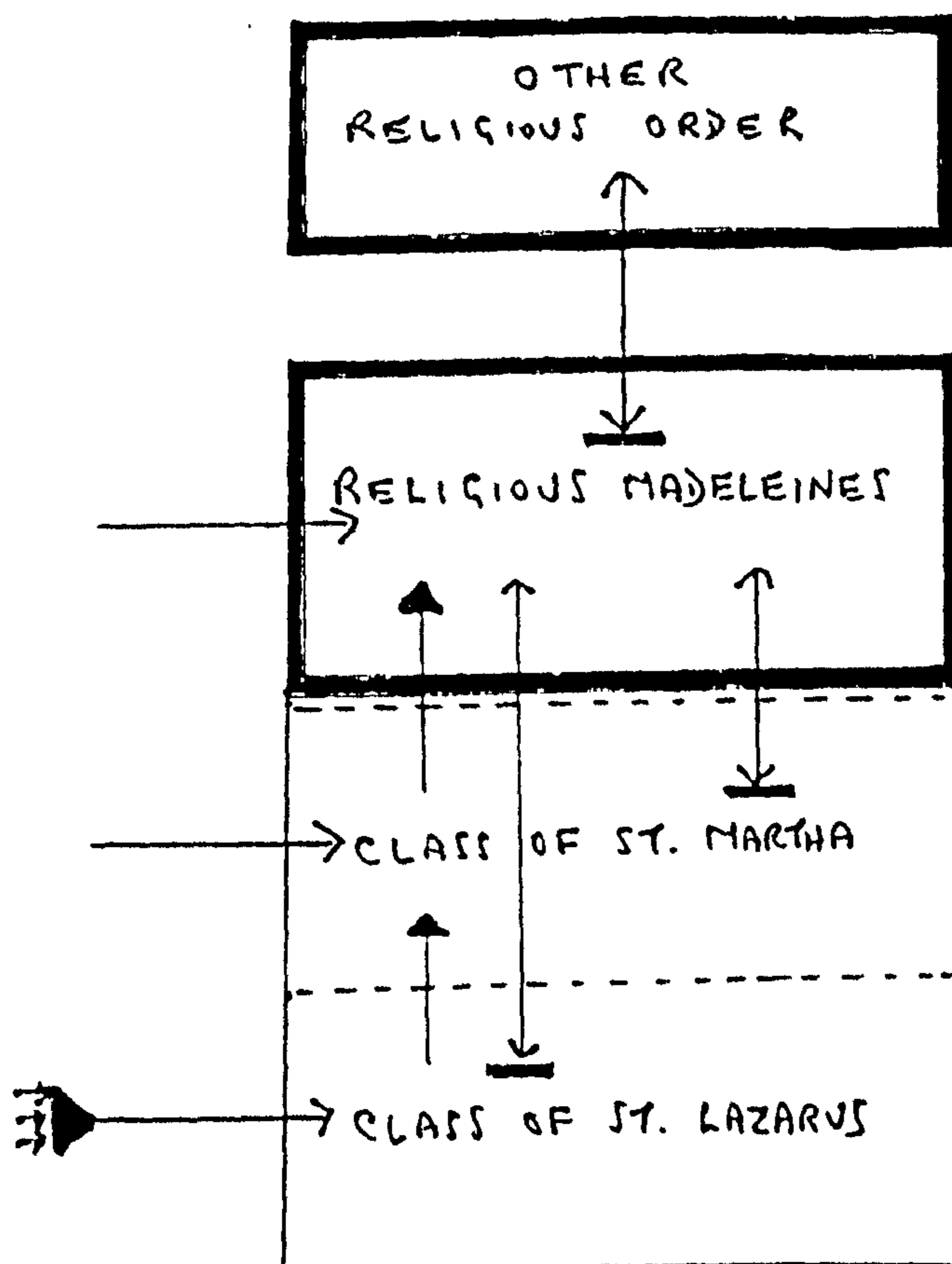


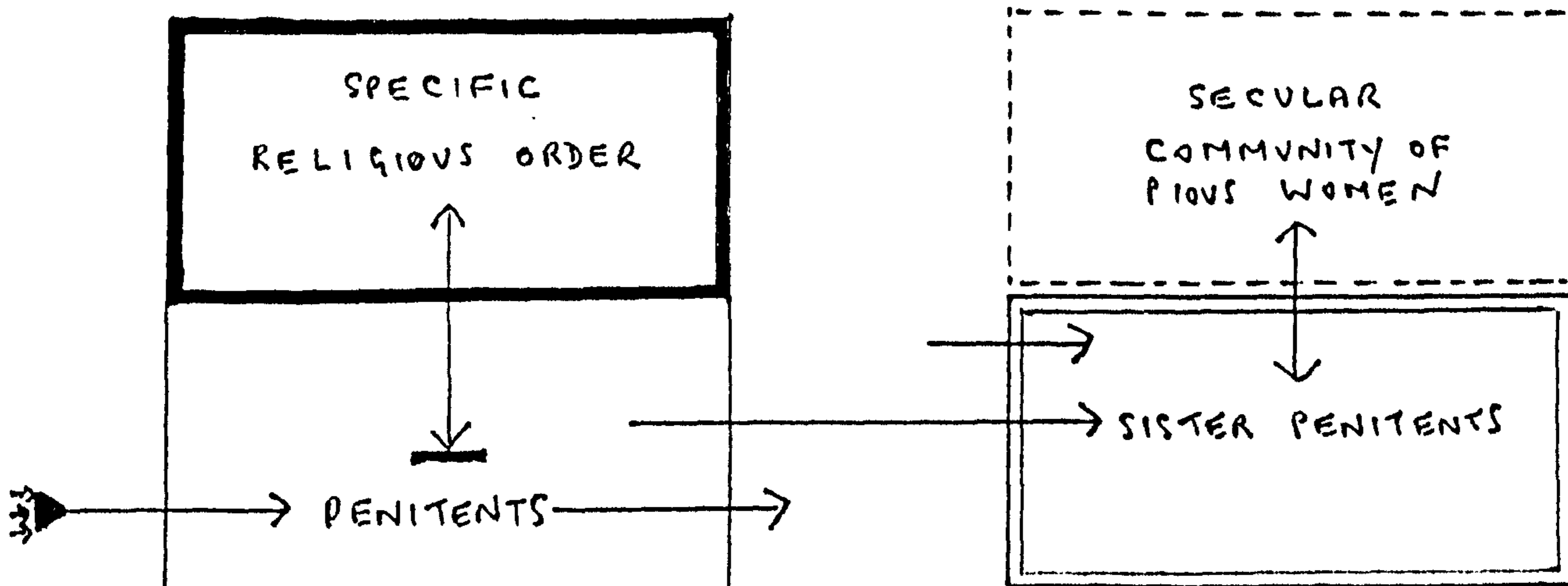
Figure 7: TYPE V(b) REFUGE

The detailed organisation of the penitents based on a criterion of their degree of transformation from sin to commitment to the religious life is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF CLASSIFICATION

Different modes of refuge organisation and classification are well illustrated by two pre-revolutionary houses that are particularly relevant to this study. They were both founded at Angers: the Maison de Sainte Madeleine in 1640, as a place of expiation for 'femmes dereglées' compulsorily admitted; and the Celle du Bon Pasteur founded in 1692 for those who had left the former house and who then desired a more

complete conversion to the christian life. The Bon Pasteur was one of many founded by Madame de Combe of Paris. Although the women who staffed it as governesses called themselves 'sisters', they took no solemn vows and lived in an unenclosed secular community dedicated to the work of converting fallen women. The Maison de Sainte Madeleine, on the other hand, was founded by the local clergy, and the women who took charge made full religious vows. They dressed in blue habits to distinguish themselves from the penitents, who remained in secular clothes. (58) The Bon Pasteur was not enclosed, although both 'sisters' and 'sister penitents' wore religious habits, black and brown respectively. There was a considerable sharing of community life by the two groups in the house, and by the eve of the Revolution there were 31 sisters, 40 penitents living a religious life, and 16 boarders. (59)

The two houses at Angers stand in sharp contrast to each other so far as the classification into sisters and penitents is concerned. In the Maison de Sainte Madeleine it was absolute, while at the Bon Pasteur it was highly ambiguous. Neither house displayed any classification of penitents according to the degree of transformation. But viewed in the context of their existence in the same locality, their complementary organisation provided a co-operative system of progressive classification according to the degree of penitence and conversion. The Maison de Sainte Madeleine is almost homologous to Madame de Rainfang's original refuge (Type 1V(a)), except that admission was compulsory. The Bon Pasteur represents a new variant and is designated a Type VI refuge. They are depicted in parallel in Figure 8 to reflect their manner of working.

Type IV(a) REFUGEType VI REFUGEFigure 8: THE COMPLEMENTARY SYSTEM AT ANGERS

## THE REFUGE OF JOHN EUDES

The development of the magdalen movement which originated at Caen in 1641 is of particular importance to the understanding of the ideology and organisation of the Good Shepherd Sisters. It was there that John Eudes (1601-1680) initiated the foundation of the religious congregation of Our Lady of Charity, from which the Good Shepherd Sisters were formed in the early part of the 19th century. John Eudes, who was canonised in 1925, was a central figure in the efforts to renew the French church in the 17th century. He was an influential preacher and writer, involved in the wider moral and religious revival of his day, yet active in the more specialised task of improving the education of the clergy. By all accounts he was not a man taken lightly by his contemporaries. His whole effort was directed to the work of conversion. His writings consistently develop the theme of a compassionate God, a compassion which Eudes was concerned to reflect in practical initiatives. (60)

During a mission he preached at Caen in 1635 a number of prostitutes had been converted and he was confronted with the problem of how to assure their perseverance. The pressing need was to remove them from their usual milieu, and lodgings were found for them with families of good repute:

'He involved a stolid and ordinary woman, Madeleine Lamy, who was not well off but noted for the depth of her faith and charity. She welcomed them into her home where she instructed them, taught them to work, and provided for their needs, with the help of alms provided by Father Eudes himself or by other pious people.'

(61)

However, this was a temporary solution which could provide no stability to the work, depending as it did on individual response to particular exigencies. Some years later, with the help of leading laypeople, including M. Jean de Bernières de Louvigny, Treasurer of France, and Madame de Camilly, a house was bought. By 1641 Eudes had obtained the necessary ecclesiastical and civil consents to establish it as a refuge under the conduct of laywomen wholly given over to the work. The following year King Louis XIII granted Letters Patent which authorised,

'... the establishment of a house, under the invocation of Our Lady of Refuge, for the reception of two classes of persons, to wit, girls and women who, after having led a scandalous life, wish to retire there to amend their conduct, with liberty to leave when they choose; also ladies of unsullied fame, who are perfectly free, and moved by the desire of serving God and working for the salvation of souls, voluntarily seclude themselves in the said house - these, by the temporal good that they may bring, will benefit a great number of the former; and knowing that the said young ladies may desire to consecrate themselves by the vows of the religious profession ...' (62)



Although the Letters Patent leave open the possibility of a religious community developing later, the refuge was undoubtedly intended as an organised lay response to a specific local need. The house was named Our Lady of Refuge, and its financing and staffing clearly depict it as a Type 1 Refuge. The committee consisted of three lay people, one of whom paid the purchase price of the house, another bought the furniture and fittings, and the third provided food for the penitents. The original staff consisted of two ladies of high social standing in the town. They could not agree and one eventually left within the year, but by the end of the following year there were seven altogether. The original lay character of the project is perhaps further underlined by M. de Bernières' leading role in the Company of Blessed Sacrament, the secret association of catholic lay people which included the repression of prostitution among its activities. <sup>(63)</sup> The Letters Patent also make explicit the voluntary nature of the admission and departure of penitents. The origins of the enterprise strongly suggest that Eudes, although very much a creature of his time, was only prepared to participate in the attitudes of the Great Confinement to the degree he considered necessary. He did not seek to admit to the refuge all repentant prostitutes, but only those who wished to recover their self respect, with a view to leading an ordered christian life in the world. He was interested in returning good laywomen to everyday life and not in enabling converted prostitutes to become nuns.

Within a few years there were quarrels among the women who conducted the refuge. They could not agree on organisation and objectives, differences which were compounded by the desire of some of them to commit themselves more permanently by means of religious vows. By 1644 only two of the original group of laywomen remained. This internal unsettlement was exacerbated by an outburst of strong local hostility, which very nearly resulted in the closure of the refuge by the city

authorities. Only the higher authority of the royal Letters Patent saved the day. These events forced a re-appraisal and it was agreed to invite the Visitation Sisters to take over the conduct of the refuge. They would be responsible not only for the supervision of the penitent women, but also for the religious formation of the women who wished to commit themselves to the work as nuns. This arrangement was yet another variant in the long evolution of refuge organisation. The calling in of another religious order to train the staff personnel as well as to care for the penitents implied a planned transition from a lay group to a religious community. This arrangement is designated as a Type VII Refuge.

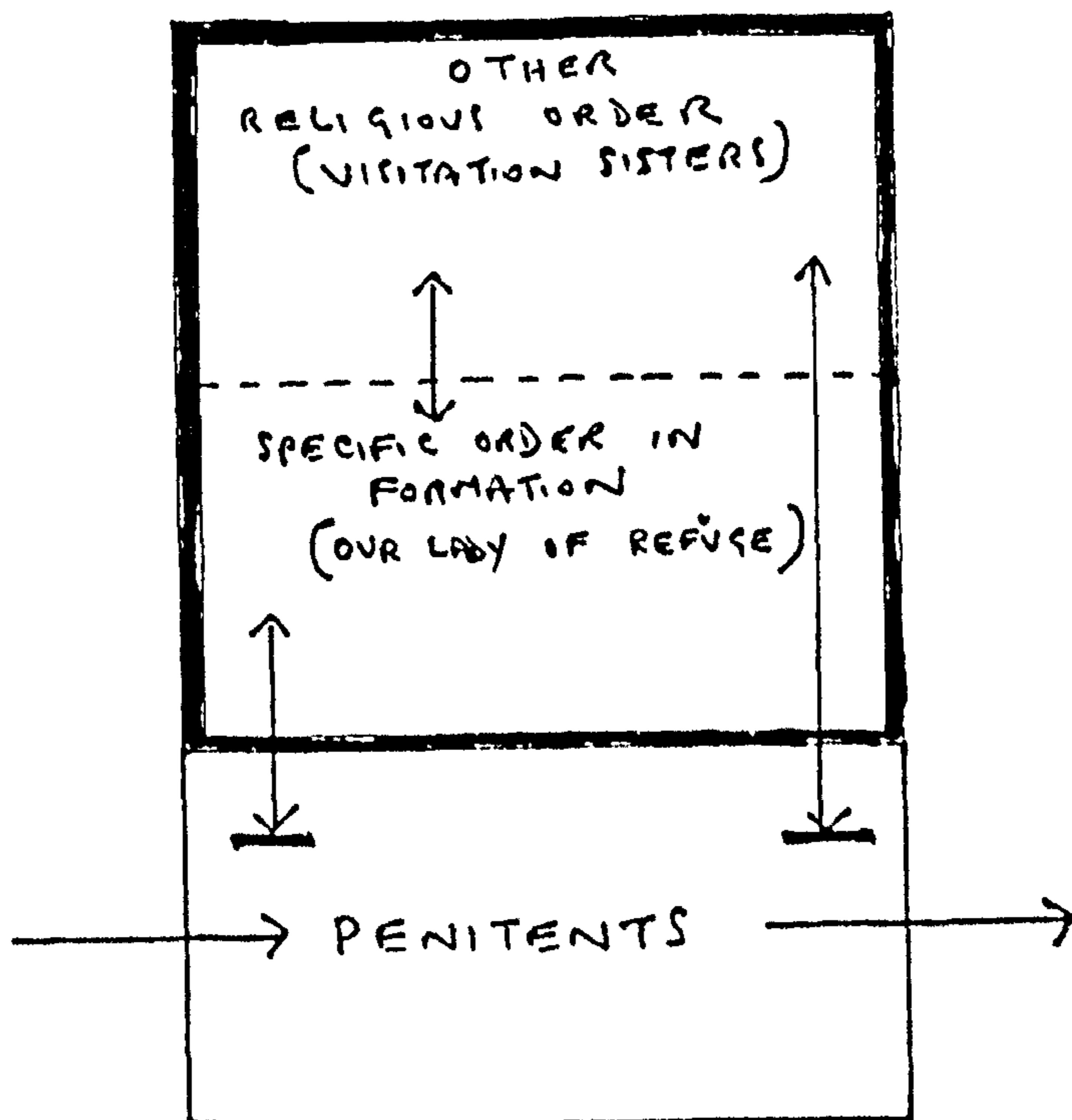


Figure 9: TYPE VII REFUGE

In the context of the time such a transition was easier to intend than to achieve for three quite fundamental reasons which concern the formal nature of religious orders: enclosure, the Church's attitude to sexual vice and chastity, and the principle of voluntary admission.

Since the 13th century, the approval of new religious orders had been reserved to the Papacy, and the provision of enclosure made

compulsory. Over the subsequent centuries the observance of enclosure became slack and it was possible for nuns to be dispensed from solemn vows. The general looseness and instability of religious life that had arisen were among the abuses attacked by the Council of Trent. The new rigour was given effect in 1566 by the constitution *Pastoralis Curae* of Pius V. This established unequivocally that the two essential requirements of any properly constituted religious order were solemn perpetual vows and strict enclosure. These two conditions were regarded as fundamental safeguards to the religious life and permanent commitment of the nuns. <sup>(64)</sup> Consequently, in the administrative context of the prevailing ecclesiastical law, it can be more readily understood that the notion of housing penitent prostitutes in a properly constituted convent presented a formidable challenge to the very nature and purpose of enclosure.

The difficulty of changing the secular staff of the Caen refuge into a religious order did not rest solely on such an administrative aspect of canon law, but also on the notion of nuns and prostitutes as mutually exclusive categories. It was considered wholly inappropriate for professed nuns to live in close proximity to former prostitutes. The contiguity of the pure and the impure threatened the integrity of either category. The difficulty was fundamental. It was rooted not only in the nature of the madonna-magdalen opposition, but also in the function of the convent as a place where women of good character and respectable family were seeking to transform themselves to a more perfect christian life through the penance of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Enclosure and solemn profession existed precisely to provide a stable framework for the transformative assault on the self central to the life of the nun. Additionally, to engage nuns in refuge work, which of its very nature constitutes an anomalous transformative margin, is to compound the problem radically. The idea of permitting a refuge

for penitent prostitutes to exist within a convent enclosure was totally inimical to the religious and moral ideas of the time.

The third difficulty turned on the voluntary admission of penitents. Not only did this practice run counter to the mounting tendency of the state to confine prostitutes and others by force, but also counter to the established practice of those families who committed their recalcitrant daughters for penitential detention in such places as the *Sâlpêtriére* and the *Abbaye*.<sup>(65)</sup> Indeed, the fact that women were compulsorily committed by the magistrates to the refuges at Rennes and Paris, where they were confined in chains and subjected to corporal punishment, was a main reason for the reluctance of the sisters of Our Lady of Charity to manage these houses.<sup>(66)</sup> In the early years the sisters were totally unwilling to staff refuges which were, for all practical purposes, a part of the state system of compulsory confinement. That they would not do so was a major obstacle to their ready acceptance by the civil power, and a source of uneasiness to the church authorities.

These crucial difficulties and the hostility of the town authorities of Caen must have figured large with the local Bishop of Bayeux, Mgr. James d'Angennes. His opposition to the creation of a religious community at the refuge was formidable, despite Eudes' view:

'The Religious appointed to this employment shall be chosen with care; they shall have their exercises and their community life, entirely apart from the Penitents; there will be no relation between them, beyond instructing them, and watching over them during manual labour.'<sup>(67)</sup>

The bishop's objections were met by providing for the complete separation of the penitents, who were to be given a rule of their own. The religious sisters followed the rule of St. Augustine and

lived under the Visitation Constitution, which was gradually adapted to the specific situation as experience suggested. The question of separation remained the central issue in all subsequent negotiations until the order was formally constituted by Pope Alexander VII in 1666. These negotiations are worth tracing in more detail as they reveal the evolution of a major feature of the refuges with which this study is specially concerned.

The first approach to Rome was made by the bishop in 1645. His letter states very clearly what was envisaged:

'....I believe that I ought principally to show myself . . . zealous in attacking the shameful intercourse between the sexes, a vice that, like pride, infects a great number of men. And as experience teaches us, it is a vice that is most difficult to cure in women, especially when they are hardened in crime; but it may happen, sometimes, that a ray of divine light pierces through the gloom that surrounds them, and though they be furlongs deep in sin, and their fall numberless, this ray of light shows them their degradation, and they are touched with sorrow, and anxious to regain that peace which they lost by their bad habits; but on account of the lack of that charity that should hold out a helping hand to bid them arise and sin no more, and because there is no place where they may go and do penance for their misdeeds, and flee the occasions of their sin, they are like sheep without a shepherd

In view of this, most holy Father, and to prevent such disorders, and by the initiative of several persons of the city of Caen, which is in my diocese, I have had established for over four years a house which the King has been good enough to confirm by his letters patent under the title of Daughters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Refuge, where these notorious characters were received with a view to their conversion. Their admission must be voluntary, those by whom they are received being ladies of fair fame, who feed, clothe, and instruct them, besides edifying them by their saintly lives. When they prove by their conduct that their conversion is solid, and they desire to return to society, those in charge endeavour to give them a chance to better themselves, either by an honest marriage, or being placed at service under some pious lady..... several ladies of piety, distinguished both by birth and breeding, as well as by their wealth, have formed the design of entering the said house, with the view to endow it with their worldly goods, and there apply themselves to the instruction of the said girls and women of ill fame, provided it please your

'Holiness to permit them to do so, after a long trial of their fidelity in acquitting themselves of the pious exercises marked out for them, also to make the three ordinary vows of religion, to which they may add a fourth which regards, particularly, the end of the Institute .... But all these pious designs would fail, absolutely, on account of the fickleness of their sex, unless they are bound by the sacred ties or bonds of the vows of religion ....' (68)

Despite the clarity of what was proposed in the letter, the ordering of the relationships between the religious women and the penitents was not specific enough to satisfy the Roman authorities. Nevertheless, the new Bishop of Bayeux, Mgr. Edward Molé, felt able by 1651 to give his local approval to the new order under the title of 'Daughters of Our Lady of Charity':

'.... a Community of maidens who consecrate themselves to God by the solemn profession of the three vows of religion, under the Rule of St. Augustine .... to assist, harbour and guide the girls and women who have fallen into the disorders of a licentious life .... we reserve to ourselves the right of prescribing such Constitutions and Rules for them, as well as for the direction and guidance of the Penitents, such as we reasonably judge proper for them .... and desirous that an Institute so holy and so useful should be durable, so that the Religious would not readily renounce their vocation .... we enjoin them, under the good pleasure and approbation of our Holy Father the Pope, to make, besides the ordinary vows of religion, a fourth, which is to serve with the grace of God, in the conversion, instruction, reception and guidance of the girls and women who, having fallen into sin, will enter in the said monastery to change their lives and to do penance for their sins .... Afterwards, the said religious of the Visitation of Caen .... shall return to their own monasteries, if it does not appear necessary to keep them for some time longer for the good, utility and advantage of the said Community ....' (69)

This episcopal instruction clearly constituted a new religious congregation, subject to the ultimate approval of Rome and under the close supervision of the local bishop. By the end of the year the Visitation sisters, who had been managing the affairs of the refuge and the embryonic

community, returned to their own convent. At last the transition seemed complete, save formal approbation from the Pope. Yet nearly ten years later there was still no approval from Rome. The superior at the refuge in Caen, possibly driven by a sense of isolation and lack of legitimacy, suggested to Eudes that they might affiliate with the house of the Nancy sisters which was at Avignon. This was decidedly not to Eudes' taste for the penitents there, as was noted earlier, were governed by former penitents who had become members of the religious community:

'.... this patterning after Avignon, of which you spoke; I will not allow; it cannot be tolerated. I would certainly rather see the house utterly destroyed.' (70)

Writing to the same nun, a few years later in 1662, with an account of the state of the Roman negotiations, Eudes points out:

'....it is one of the most difficult affairs that can be treated in Rome; for, first, they look upon it in Rome as a novel Institute, and consequently, as something that is most important. Secondly, they look upon it as an Institute composed of ladies of good morals who have to apply themselves to the direction of repenting sinners, which is a difficulty that the authorities in Rome cannot overlook or surmount; they believe that the first cannot live with the others without extreme peril to themselves.

To prove to you that no-one has been able to overcome this objection you must be aware that the Refuge at Nancy, who are at Avignon, at Digon and in Rouen, have not yet obtained their Bulls of erection from our Holy Father, notwithstanding their efforts. And, remember, theirs is not so difficult a situation as ours, because their Community is composed of Penitents who, consequently, are not exposed to the same perils .... I feel positive that (our representative) will not cease to pursue the business we entrusted to him; if he should, all the trouble that you have taken for the house of Our Lady of Charity would be wasted, for if we cannot get the Bull of our Holy Father the Pope it cannot exist, because the first Religious that shall be tempted to give up her vocation will be easily persuaded that her Community was not approved by the Pope, hence her vows are invalid; thus she will leave, and the whole house will be

'disrupted and fall to the ground ....'

(71)

These exchanges not only illustrate the difficulties concerning the vows and the separation of religious women from the penitents, but also a particular differentiating characteristic of Eudes' concept of refuge work that was present from the start. This was his insistence that under no circumstances should converted penitents be allowed to become members of the Daughters of Our Lady of Charity. If they wished to become nuns, they would have to leave and enter another order that would accept them. This can be viewed as a safeguard for the maintenance of the integrity of categories within the order. It may also be seen as a reflection of Eudes' idea that the primary work of the refuge was to return converted prostitutes to the ordinary world.

A year earlier the Pope had been persuaded to set up a special commission to study the separation question. In another letter to the refuge at Caen, Eudes noted the central problem confronting his agent in Rome:

'Yesterday I got a letter from him in which he stated that there was a great difficulty over this rule, the governing of Penitents by the Religious .... To overcome this difficulty he showed that the Penitents are separated from the Religious by a wall; that they have their dormitory, refectory and chapel entirely separate, also; that there is a door in this wall through which two of the older Religious, chosen by the superior, enter every morning into the Penitents' quarters, and leave again in the evening; that during the night they are watched over through a grate or trellis window; that there is always a lamp lighted in the middle of their dormitory before a statue of the Blessed Virgin; that they give the charge of watching over the giddy ones of the flock to those Penitents who are more settled, and more established in virtues; that during the night they keep under lock and key those who would be capable of causing trouble or mischief to others; that they receive no one by force into the house - only those who, touched by God, enter voluntarily for the purpose of conversion and penitence.



'He said, too, that expecting that all these things were in force he made use of them in order to do away with the difficulty that always obtained. I tell you now so that you may practice these things as much as possible, if they have not been done up to this; because if this business succeeds, they write from Rome to the Nuncio to inform themselves as to the truth of the statement; hence, the necessity of seeing that it be found true ....' (72)

There is, perhaps, a nuance in this letter that the precise separation arrangements were only conceded in order to complete the protracted negotiations. They do not, in themselves, reflect any point of principle in Eudes' thinking, it could be argued. Whether this be so or not, once enacted the rules were followed throughout the history of the order.

By the autumn of 1661 these safeguards had been agreed as sufficient by the Roman authorities and on that basis Eudes formulated the following Rules for Penitents:

- '1. They should receive only those who, touched by the grace of God, enter voluntarily to do penance.
2. That while they are there they strictly keep to the cloister.
3. That they are never to be received in this monastery to become Religious, but if they desire this state of life they should be sent to those monasteries in other cities where Penitents are received.
4. That they have their dormitory, chapel and refectory entirely separated from the Religious.
5. If any prove incorrigible she should be sent away.
6. Although they are in the same monastery with the Religious they must be separated at least by a wall, in order that there be no intercourse between them, except by order or permission of the superioress.
7. That there be a door in this wall, through which two Religious enter every morning, by order of the superior, to go to the quarters of the Penitents, to be with them during the day where they are all together, in order to watch over their conduct, to

- '  
superintend their devotions and read spiritual books to them, at the hours marked; outside of that time they are to perform manual work. In the evening after prayers and examen the Penitents retire to their cells, and the two Religious are to retire to their own sleeping apartments, after they close the door and bring the key to the superioress.
8. Among the Religious they make choice of the oldest both, as to age and manners to send during the day to remain with the penitents; for greater security they do not send the same Religious continuously, but change them from time to time.
  9. If there is someone among the Penitents who is suspected, she is placed under lock and key during the night.
  10. During the night there should be a lighted lamp burning before a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and one of the Religious should watch over them through a grate placed in such a way that she cannot speak with them without being heard by the other Religious.
  11. That no person who is suspected in any way, be it even their parents, or any man or woman, be allowed to speak with them, except in the presence of one of the Religious.' (73)

Several aspects of these Rules are worthy of particular note.

Rule 2 resolves the enclosure question to the extent that the penitents are to be admitted to the enclosure, and that is where they will remain during their stay. Although this may appear to weaken the practical and symbolic significance of enclosure for the nuns, its use as a means of containing the penitents replaces the secular connotation of confinement as compulsory incarceration. At the same time, the confinement of the penitents is strengthened by the religious symbolism of the enclosure, and by its dependence on ecclesiastical authority whose power was generally perceived as reaching even into the next world. Rules 6 and 7 compensate the nuns for an apparent loss of enclosure by providing for physical separation from the penitents; while Rules 8 and 10 reduce the possibility of any particular relationship forming between the penitents and those nuns engaged in their supervision by day and night. In other words, the Rules bring the enclosure into

the service of confinement, while providing the necessary compensatory arrangements to protect the separation of nuns and penitents.

This application of the canonical enclosure to the penitents is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF QUASI-ENCLOSURE to distinguish it both from the enclosure of the nuns, and from confinement as a secular response to the socially marginal.

At long last, in January 1666, after some four further years of experiment and detailed enquiry, and 25 years after the actual establishment of the Caen refuge, Pope Alexander VII formally approved the new religious institute as the Priory of the Refuge of our Lady of Charity at Caen. At the same time he granted prospective approval of any similar house that Caen Priory might found in other parts of France. The protracted nature of the negotiations over so many years, and the nature of the issues considered to be at stake, reveal vividly the deep implication of the separation question in the ideological base of women's religious orders engaged in rehabilitative work with prostitutes.

The strict separation of nuns and penitents in convent refuges for prostitutes is referred to as the PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION.

Compared with the previous types, the refuge developed by Eudes was remarkably simple in its structure, and exceptionally clear in its other-wordly objectives. This was due to the revolutionary notion of placing the penitents within the religious enclosure; to a markedly strengthened separation of nuns and penitents; and to a single classification of the penitents. This was the form of refuge maintained by the order of Our Lady of Charity and re-established after the French

Revolution. Its philosophy and organisation would have been familiar to Rose-Virginie Pelletier during the fifteen years she spent at the Refuge at Tours until 1829, where she had been both Mistress of Penitents and Superior. It was this form of refuge she went on to establish at Angers and which she developed further as the Good Shepherd Refuge. John Eudes refuge is designated as Type VIII Refuge.

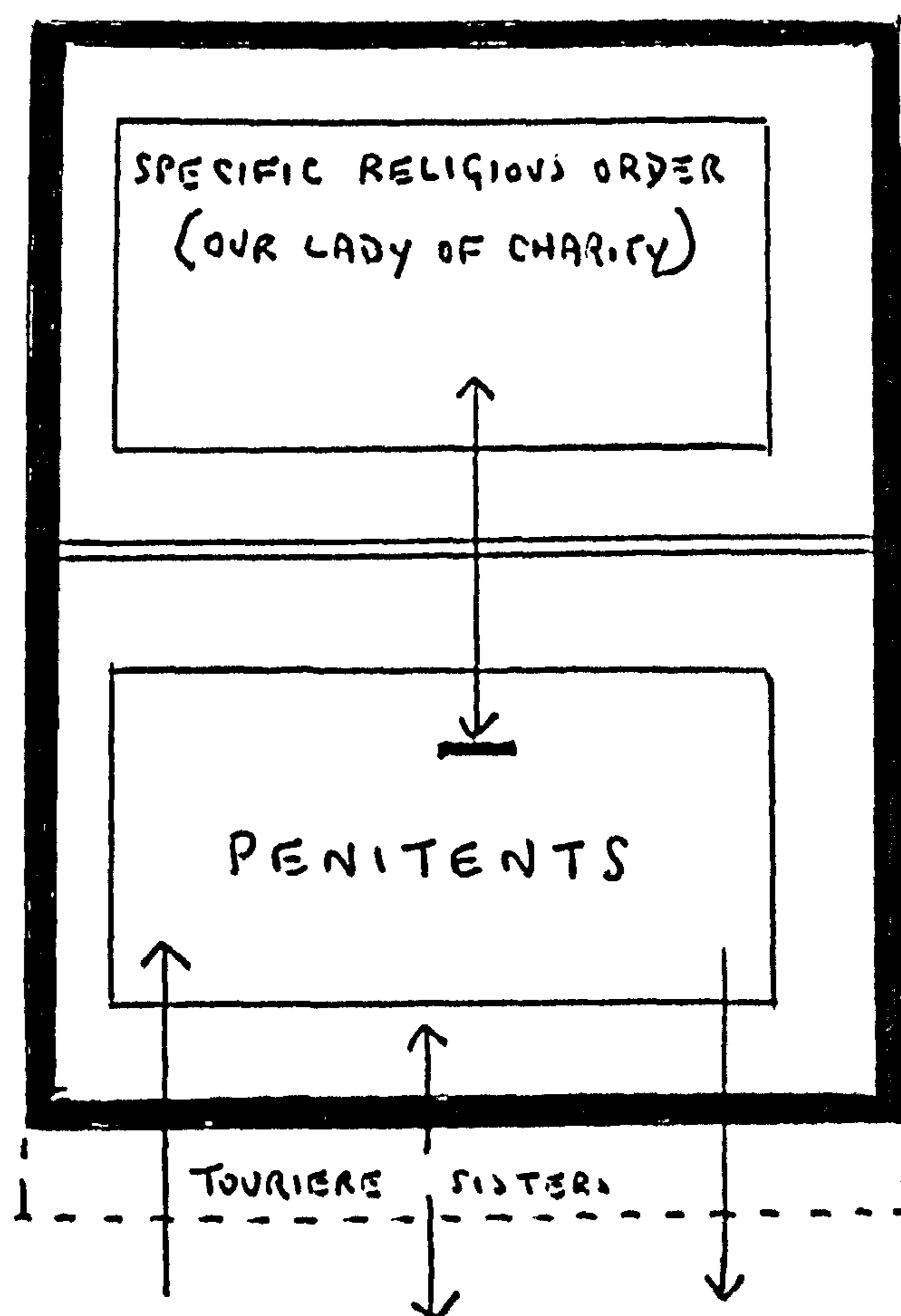


Figure 10: TYPE VIII REFUGE

## THE CONSTITUTIONS

The Constitutions of the new congregation had been experimentally developed by adapting those of the Visitation Sisters to the particular needs of the work with penitents. Throughout the long struggle for approval Eudes had tended to accept the rules pragmatically developed by the superior at Caen. Consequently, in the period after 1666 he had no difficulty in incorporating them in the new formal Constitutions. These consisted mainly of the traditional Rule of St. Augustine and the amended Constitutions of the Visitation Sisters. To these he added a long introduction expressing his intentions in founding the order of Our Lady of Charity, a totally new First Constitution on the aims and objectives of the order, and a statement on the Fourth Vow.<sup>(74)</sup> This edition of the Constitutions was published in 1670; a slightly amended version followed in 1681, to which Eudes added a preface before his death. The 3rd and definitive edition of 1737 was finally approved in 1741. It was this edition which was taken over by the Good Shepherd Sisters in 1831 and used by them, with few modifications, until as recently as 1956. For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to consider seven of the original clauses in more detail.

In Constitution 1 'THE END OF THE INSTITUTE, AND THE MOTIVES WHICH OUGHT TO URGE THOSE WHO PROFESS IT TO CARRY IT OUT WITH EARNESTNESS'

Eudes makes absolutely clear certain aspects of the work which remained a central core of the ideology and organisation. He begins by talking about religious orders in general, and then continues:

'For as in the Church of God there are hospital sisters, whose duty it is to care for those sick in body, so also it is necessary that there should be Religious whose monasteries may be, as it were, hospitals where those sick in the soul may be taken in and enabled to recover their spiritual health; and as there are Ursuline nuns, whose principal aim is to try to introduce the fear of God into the souls of the innocent, so also it is very important that there should be nuns whose especial end it should

'be to labour in re-establishing the same fear in the souls of the penitents.'

(75)

This notion of the refuge as hospital is one to which the sisters will cling during later struggles to maintain their immunity from secular interference. In the same Constitution, Eudes sets out a lengthy theological justification for this special aim. It is a rationale which centres on the powerful imagery that 'one soul is of more value than the whole world, and consequently to withdraw a soul from the abyss of sin is a greater thing than to create the world'.

(76)

He concludes this section with a statement of the three essential qualities required of an applicant for admission as a penitent:

- '1. That they seem touched by God's grace, and desirous of conversion.
2. That they come of their own accord; for there shall be no obligation to receive any who may be brought by force.
3. That there be no reason to think that they are with child, or suffering from any disease that may cause harm to others.

On their arrival at the Monastery they shall be for some time kept separate from the other Penitents, in order that it may be seen what their character is, what are the motives that have urged them to come, and whether there is anything about them that may render it advisable not to place them with the others'.

(77)

There then follows a re-written but substantially similar version of the Rules for Penitents already described. The First Constitution roots the work firmly in the context of saving souls, a work which is as much concerned with the perfection of the sisters as with the conversion of the penitents. It enshrines the voluntary principle, and ensures the separation of the penitents with the enclosure.

Constitution 11 'OF THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE COMMUNITY OF THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY' lays it down that:

'The Community shall be composed entirely of Maidens and Matrons without encumbrance, of good behaviour, of irreproachable life, and entirely beyond suspicion. Never on any account, for any cause, or on any pretext whatever, shall anyone be admitted, whatever her qualities or conditions, who has led a licentious life, even though she is entirely converted; nor even one who has been reasonably suspected of leading such a life. This Constitution shall be observed with the utmost exactness, because it is most important and most essential in order to preserve the good fame of the Congregation, and to enable them to labour more efficaciously in the salvation of strayed souls.

As in all other communities of women, there shall be two classes of Sisters; one of Choir-Sisters; the other, of Lay-Sisters, for household work. The latter shall have no voice, active or passive. They shall be like the rest both in dress (except that their veils shall be of white linen and their tunics brown or gray), in sleeping accommodation, in food, in the care taken of their health, in the spiritual exercises suited for them, and in all other things. They shall be treated kindly and cordially by the Superior and by all the other Sisters; for in this Congregation Martha and Mary shall live together without complaints or contempt of one another .... The number of professed Choir-Sisters shall not be more than forty, and that of the Lay-Sisters shall not go beyond six; nevertheless, for good reasons and with the permission of Superiors, the numbers of both may be increased.'

(78)

This Constitution strengthens the notion of separation by its strict requirement concerning the past character of those women to be admitted as nuns. It also classifies the nuns themselves into functional categories. The ideal size of the community specified in Constitution 11 provides for far more choir sisters, as they are the ones who sing the divine service in the church, although even this was a shortened form because of the nature of their work. Additionally, they undertake the main offices of the convent and refuge, such as superior, bursar, or mistress of novices. They also have a voice in decision-making, but for most this would be no more than an equal vote at the triennial election of a superior, or at the periodic admission of novices to profession. The specific duties of the choir sisters are not detailed in this Constitution as many of the major offices are the subject of separate constitutions. Both in past social station and in religious life,

the choir sisters ranked higher than the lay sisters, who carried out the ordinary domestic tasks and who were often illiterate.

Constitution 11 must be taken together with Constitution XLVII 'THE LAY-SISTERS' which spells out their household duties and stresses that, unlike the choir sisters, they are each equal to the other. Despite their lower functional and 'social' status within the convent, the lay sisters are nuns in every sense of the word, taking solemn vows which commit them to a permanent religious life within the enclosure.

It is convenient to consider here Constitution XLVIII 'THE TOURIÈRES, as it provides for a third category of person essential to the conduct of the refuge. The tourières are the women who constitute the link between the enclosure and the outside world; they run errands, deal with callers, buy provisions, and so on. They are engaged in the marginal territory of the refuge, consequently they are the subject of a very long Constitution which specifies every aspect of their qualities and duties. Their work is both necessity and threat, as it constitutes the nexus between the enclosure and the world. They may be paid wages, or board and lodging if they prefer. They live in a special lodge - a kind of gatehouse - immediately adjacent to the enclosure. As few as possible of them are to be employed and only the Superior is allowed to give them orders. At first they took no religious vows, although they were addressed as 'Sister'. By the middle of the eighteenth century they were permitted to take a simple vow of obedience, renewable annually, and known as an 'oblation' to distinguish it from the solemn profession of the sisters who became full members of the order. Even then, they were not allowed to eat with the sisters of the community, nor to join with them in other activities, save on very rare occasions. Taken together, these three Constitutions order the personnel of the refuge by number, status, and function, in the form of an inverted pyramid.



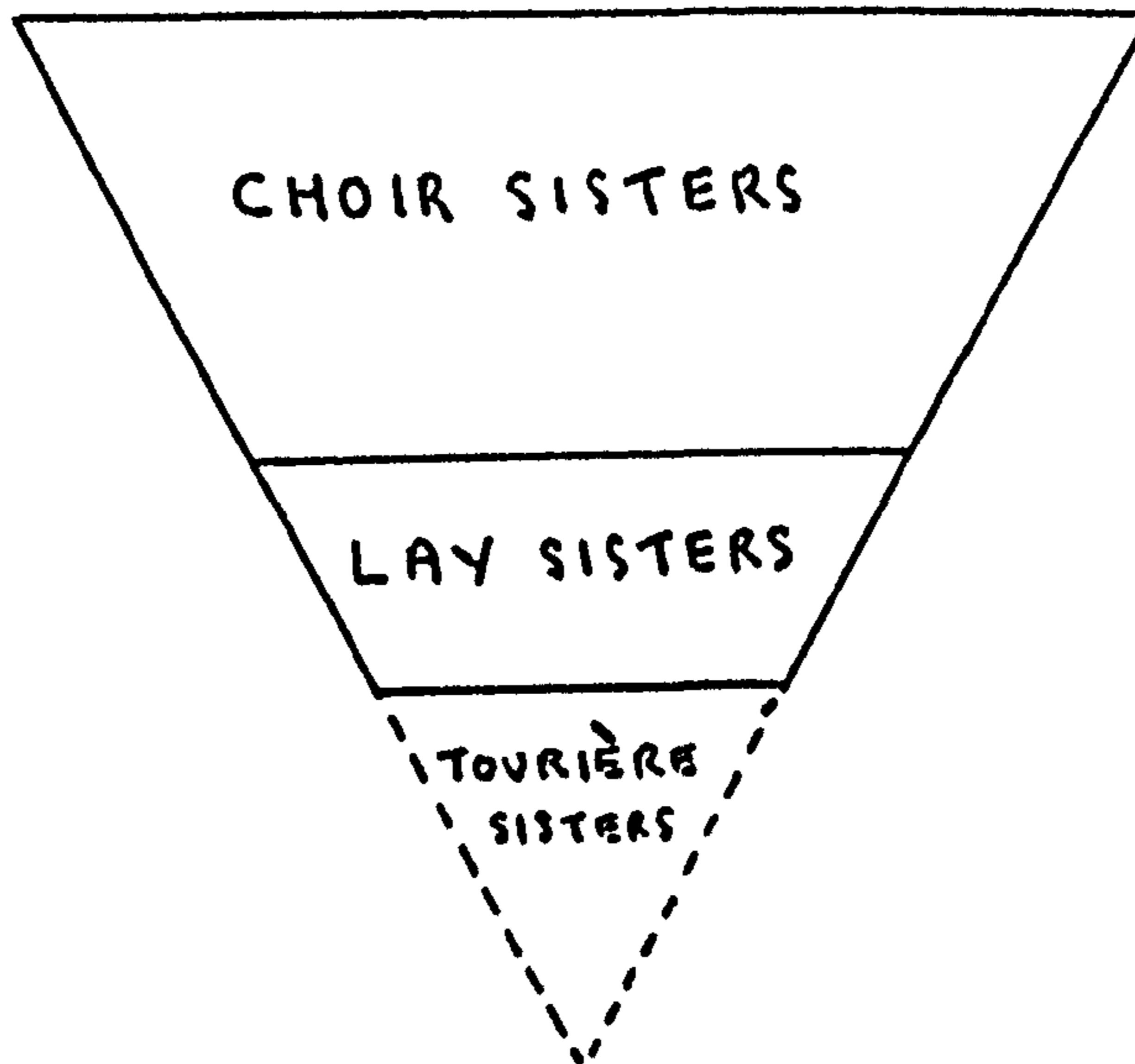


Figure 11: COMPOSITION OF SISTERS

Constitution XIV 'THE VOWS' specifies that no-one may seek permission to take vows until they have completed two years in the novitiate, and goes on:

'In addition to the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, they shall make a fourth, viz. to dedicate themselves as Obedience shall require it of them, to the conversion and instruction of penitent girls and women who shall put themselves of their own accord under their guidance. It will be well, therefore, that the Superior should employ them in the work for some time before their Profession, that they may know what they are binding themselves to.'

(79)

Here, then, is the formal incorporation of the innovation introduced into refuge work by Madame de Rainfang in 1624. There seems to be an implication in the last sentence that the work is of a kind that requires careful thought and first hand experience before commitment.

Constitution XVI 'CHASTITY' begins by noting that the vow of chastity has always been fundamental in religious orders of women, and goes on to elaborate:

'....how much more should this be the case with the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, seeing that they have not only to preserve it in themselves, but also to make it loved by the penitent women under their

guidance. Those Sisters who shall be appointed to instruct the Penitents, shall be very circumspect on this point. They shall be careful never to speak of them, whether directly or indirectly, of sins contrary to Chastity, but shall content themselves with speaking of the horror of sin in general.... There shall be no Images, or Pictures in the Convent or in the Chapel, except such as are calculated to excite devotion. Great care shall be taken that there shall be no nude figures, or anything contrary to modesty or propriety. The sort of books called Romances shall never be suffered in the house on any pretext ....'

(80)

This Constitution reflects the problem involved in the proximity of the nuns and the penitents. For the former, chastity is something to be maintained as a way of self-abnegation, and not to be threatened by any direct talk of sexual immoralities. For the latter, it is a goal to be achieved, and the struggle is not to be undermined by reference to past sexual activity. Talk on such matters, or books and images considered to be suggestive, might occasion sexual arousal for either. The provisions of Constitution XVI are clearly an attempt to allow for the influence of the sisters on the moral reformation of the penitents, while maintaining them free from any taint of impurity.

Constitution XVII 'ENCLOSURE' begins with the observation that 'enclosure is the principal means of preserving the true religious spirit' and continues with a quotation from the Council of Trent:

'No religious woman shall be allowed to leave her convent on any pretext whatsoever, even for a short time, except for some lawful reason which be approved by the Bishop. And no one shall enter the enclosure of the Convent, of whatsoever rank or condition, sex or age, without the written licence of the Bishop or other Superior - and this under penalty of excommunication ipso facto.'

(81)

Among the detailed provisions for maintaining this ruling are the following:

'The Superior shall take great care that the walls which form the Enclosure be in good repair, and, if possible, that they be of such height that those outside may not be able to see the Sisters, nor the Sisters those outside. She shall see, moreover, that there be nothing near these walls which may facilitate ingress and egress.'

(82)

These extracts from Constitution XVII leave one in no doubt about the physical nature of the enclosure and the solemnity with which it was sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority. Its formal expression helps one to appreciate the position of those who resisted the involvement of nuns in refuge work, and the innovatory courage of those who proposed the admission of the penitents to the enclosure.

#### THE BOOK OF CUSTOMS

In addition to the Constitutions there was a Coutumier or Book of Customs. This specified in more detail the directions for the ceremonial in choir, the various customs and usages of the order, and the directions for various occupations of the sisters. They were intended to be a clearly formulated body of instructions supplementary to the Rule and Constitutions. They were largely derived from the coutumier of the Visitation Sisters, whose foundress, Madame de Chantal, had compiled the book in 1624 from her notes of the practices developed by experience during the early years of her congregation.<sup>(83)</sup> In essence, they were a formal version of the interpretations and applications of the Rule and Constitutions to the daily life of the convent. They were further adapted through the experience of refuge work, and the definitive version of the Caen Book of Customs was authorised and published in 1739 after many minor revisions in the light of practice.

Included in the highly detailed instructions of the Coutumier are two lengthy sets of directions concerning the offices of Mistress of Penitents and the Sister in charge of the Works. These are especially

relevant for the light they throw on the ideological origins of the control and treatment of the penitents and their work.

The directions for the Mistress of Penitents, also known as the First Mistress, start with a straightforward affirmation that this is one of the most important employments in the refuge, for it is the one that corresponds most closely to the main objective of the order. The occupant of the post, therefore, must be someone of real and proven virtue, who is imbued with a genuine desire to save souls. This direction, which goes on for some ten printed pages in a large volume, details the philosophy of managing the penitents. It centres on a calm and gentle authority, based on knowing each woman individually while avoiding particular familiarity.

The pivotal task of the Mistress is to prepare the penitents for confession and communion by appropriate religious instruction, and to motivate them to real penitence by instruction:

'....in the lives of the holy fathers of the desert, and of other famous penitents; in the tenderness which Jesus Christ had for the souls who seek to reconcile themselves with Him and the ease with which they can appease Him; in the appalling torments which await impenitent souls; and in the immense glory which God keeps for those who persevere to the very end ....'

(84)

Which, with the desert an apt symbol of the transformative space enclosed by the refuge, is a succinct summary of the religious base of the work in which the sisters are engaged. Lest it be thought that this extract implies the permanent residence of the penitents as a normal feature of the refuge, the same set of directions also requires the Mistress to keep an entrance register in which space must be left to record the departures. (85)

Although the charge of the penitents' work may come under the

care of a separate sister, the Mistress of Penitents still exercised a general control, especially in the matter of ensuring that they understand the true nature of work:

'She must take it as one of her main concerns to keep them hard at their tasks, which they are not to leave without her permission. She will foster in them a kind of liking for it by making them aware that idleness is the mother of all vices, whereas work, which is a penance of divine origin imposed on our first parents, is a fruitful source of merits.'

(86)

Thus is the transformative function of work legitimated by its place in the divine plan.

The directions for the Sister in charge of the Works, later called the Mistress of Work, are largely concerned with the detailed allocation of tasks to both sisters and penitents; and with the provision to the penitents of sufficient materials and equipment to maintain a steady output of finished work. She is particularly charged with negotiating prices with clients, and with keeping proper accounts for the superior. The references to scissors, needles and thimbles make it clear that needlework is the main occupation. In this task the penitents are forbidden to make or mend men's shirts and nuns' habits.<sup>(87)</sup> An instruction that neatly reflects both the forbidden and the unattainable. It makes a neat symbolic contrast which precisely consigns the penitent to the space in between - the anomalous world of transformation.

The belief that work in the refuge is essentially different from work in the world is manifest in the following extract from this direction:

'She shall take care that no secular person shall enter or stay in the place where the penitents are working,

'and she will never leave them alone when several are assembled together; if only one stays she will lock her in when she leaves. She will leave neither ink nor paper in the place where she puts them, nor will she ever use any of them to make designs or drawings, unless it is in her presence. She will not tell the prices of pieces of work, nor for whom they are intended. She may not give any reward to her workers without the permission of the Superior, nor even without the agreement of the First Mistress, as a sign of unity and respect, which is one of the most useful ways of working for their conversion.'

(88)

The exclusion of lay people emphasises the sacred nature of the enclosure in which the penitents are living and working. The secrecy about prices and customers, together with the necessity of referring rewards to higher authority, disconnects the work of the penitents from the cash exchange and reduces its relation to the everyday world.

#### SUMMARY

This historical review of the ideological origins and organisational forms of the penitents' refuges enables one to discern certain features which appear fundamental to this type of institution. They have been referred to as principles in order to reflect their basic role in the evolution and maintenance of the refuges. In all, six were identified: VOLUNTARY ADMISSION, SPECIFICITY OF COMMITMENT, TRANSFORMATIVE WORK, CLASSIFICATION, QUASI-ENCLOSURE, and SEPARATION. Some emerged later than others, and each, over time, has been differently emphasised. Taken together they may be seen as constituting an ideal type of the refuge, inevitably distorted in the historical instances of its realisation. Their history shows that the refuges were frequently as subject to external constraint as to any inner religious dynamic.

Undoubtedly, VOLUNTARY ADMISSION was the most fundamental principle, and the one most deeply rooted in the primitive christian attitude

and the historical origins of the Magdalen Movement. It had not gone uncompromised, as this account has shown, but its recovery in a pure form was a very strong feature of the Eudist refuge. On the face of it, this seemed to be a restatement of the tradition. It represented a clear counter-tendency to the compulsory aspect of the Great Confinement. Against this, it might be argued that the introduction, at the same time, of QUASI-ENCLOSURE provided a subtle and more powerfully legitimated form of confinement, whose very strength rests on a voluntary admission motivated by other-worldly objectives. Furthermore, Eudes' insistence that the penitents return to the secular world contrasts markedly with the compulsory aspect of civil houses of confinement. It also makes for a public display of transformation. In this way the refuges might be seen as performing the latent function of legitimating the forced incarceration of the poor and disordered. There is, then, a sense in which the voluntary admission of the refuge and the compulsory committal of the hospital general may be viewed as tied to each other by the necessity of an inner and hidden logic of reciprocal legitimation.

SPECIFICITY OF COMMITMENT, through the medium of the Fourth Vow, may be seen as the expression of a preferential inclination that corresponds to a christian task peculiar to a precise historical situation.<sup>(89)</sup> In addition the historical evidence suggests that it may be interpreted as an innovative way of countering the intrinsic instability of refuge organisations, as this had been recurrently experienced up to the seventeenth century. Quite apart from its central role in controlling the commitment of the individual nun to her specialised congregation,<sup>(90)</sup> it provided a permanence to the particularity of the task. A task which was beset, within, by the very ambiguity of the transformative process, and without, by the ambivalence of public attitudes to prostitution.

The duplex form of the earlier christian idea of work as both penance and virtue grounded in the creation myth lies at the root of the principle of TRANSFORMATIVE WORK. This was the explicit ideology of the work in the refuges, although the transformative element is only one aspect of the broader concept of penal or institutional work. This will be considered in more detail later, suffice it to note here that the nature of work in charitable and penal institutions was central to the dispute over the public control of labour conditions in the refuges, and over the payment of wages to the penitents. Foucault and Doerner press hard their analysis of penal work as a means of controlling the labour supply, and as a way of off-setting institutional costs, yet they concede that in practice it was almost wholly ineffective. Just prior to the Revolution, the idleness of the inmates of the hôpitaux, and the failure to instil work habits, gave rise to intense public debate which was not restricted to France. (91) This failure may be partly attributed to corrupt staff and to the absence of any classificatory system. Foucault insists, nevertheless, that this incarcerated idleness affirms the ethical value of work. It does so by the negative affirmation that idleness is an intrinsic cause of the varied conditions for which the inmates had been committed, thus substantiating the criminogenic hypothesis of the decree founding the Hospital General. The function of the hospital is to provide a fearful symbol of this reality. Foucault seems to be denying the transformative nature of work, and contradicting his own notion that the hidden logic of confinement is to put social disorder out of sight and to consign it to oblivion. Perhaps it is that the ethical value of work is affirmed by the negative symbol of the apparent consequence of idleness.

By a strange and contrasting paradox, the refuges became highly active workplaces that did achieve by inmate labour a substantial



level of self-support and a degree of organised production that introduced a calculable element into the medieval christian idea of work. <sup>(92)</sup> In this respect they may have reflected the development of capitalism more consonantly than the houses of confinement. VOLUNTARY ADMISSION and TRANSFORMATIVE WORK are closely related in the functioning of refuges, for the former provides a motivation to the latter, thereby constituting a powerful controlling ideology for the labour force once inside the refuge. One of the problems in the Paris Madeleine, for example, had been the decline of manual work. When this was re-established by the religious order called in to manage and reform the refuge, it was remarked by the nuns that a double end had been attained: resources had increased and order now reigned. <sup>(93)</sup>

Compared to the general nature of the houses of confinement or correction, the refuges were highly specific institutions catering for a particular group of women and girls. Consequently, the principle of CLASSIFICATION described here is related especially to the degree of transformation of individuals in that one group. The types of refuges that have been identified vary considerably in their systems of classification, the most complex being the Paris Madeleine. Overall, the classes range on a continuum from the compulsory penitent to the religious madeleine. Although the classification had become more refined by the 17th century, ambiguities remained. A very good example of this is to be seen in the mixing of secular women gouvernantes and sister penitents at the Celle du Bon Pasteur of Angers. The most persistent ambiguity through the long history of the refuges, albeit varying in degree, was the anomalous treatment of the religious madeleines. The Eudist mode of organisation admitted to only one class of voluntary penitents, and they were surrounded by very clear physical and ideological boundaries. There is no consistent trend in the history of the refuges so far as the development of classification is concerned, but the

Eudist type refuge, taken as the end point in this introductory review, marks a return to clarity and simplicity of definition. It represented a way of resolving the essential ambiguity and fluidity of the transformative process, an ambiguity which had brought many refuges to grief or dissolution.

Ambiguity also persisted in the relations between the nuns, the religious madeleines, and the penitents. Here also, there is no marked trend of development in the ordering of the relationship between these categories. Practice varied considerably until the 17th century, when the formal canonical requirements for religious orders were being applied with a renewed stringency. It would be inviting to say that the issue had become acute due to the creation of the first religious order specifically directed to this work, Our Lady of the Refuge at Nancy. Yet Madame de Rainfang had none of the difficulties with ecclesiastical and civil authority that beset John Eudes. The Nancy story must remain a puzzling exception, for all the new women's religious orders that wished to engage in active work, such as nursing or teaching, were faced with the same problems of enclosure and solemn vows.<sup>(94)</sup> It was not a problem solely for the refuge orders.

In the case of the refuge orders, however, there were two inter-related problems. Firstly, no woman could be a nun at all without religious enclosure. If refuge sisters were to be proper nuns, and not just pious women with simple vows, they would have to be properly enclosed. Enclosure is a physical manifestation of a highly symbolic form of boundary maintenance between the sacred and the secular. Secondly, there was the problem of keeping separate two types of women who were regarded as qualitatively different, the prostitute and the nun. It was a highly charged opposition, morally and religiously, actually and symbolically. It was an organisational and ideological imperative of the highest order. This principle of SEPARATION is

enunciated in the Constitutions, and effected through the Coutumier and the Rules for Penitents. But a fundamental question remained. How was transformation to be reconciled with separation and enclosure? Although the question was exceptionally protracted in its solution due to the deep ideological issues involved, the answer was daringly simple: put the penitents in the enclosure. This is referred to as the principle of QUASI-ENCLOSURE because it provided a quasi-monastic environment for the transformation process, while keeping the relationship between nun and penitent subject to a high degree of control. It is a system which keeps out the world to protect the vulnerable penitent, but less explicitly it keep out the world to protect institutional autonomy. Eudes completed the concept with a one class refuge in which transformation was only possible in one positive direction: back into the world as a good woman ready for marriage or domestic service.

CHAPTER 2:                   THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD  
REFUGE

Rose-Virginie Pelletier was born in 1796 on the island of Noirmoutier, just off the North Atlantic coast of France at the mouth of the river Loire. She was the eighth of nine children. Her father, a physician at the town of Cholet in the Vendée region, had fled to the island with all his family in the wake of the French Revolution. She was brought up as a roman catholic during a time when the expression and practice of religious belief were extremely difficult and often downright dangerous.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1810, when she was 14 years old, Rose-Virginie was sent away to a catholic boarding school at Tours run by lay teachers. She stayed there until 1814. The school was near the Tours refuge of the sisters of Our Lady of Charity, and Rose-Virginie gradually formed a desire to become a nun there. By now both her parents were dead, and she was subject to the guardianship of her brother-in-law, M. Marsaud. He was not at all enchanted with the possibility of her joining a religious order which cared for fallen women, nor were her brothers and school teachers. M. Marsaud is reported as saying that he would never consent to it. If she had to become a nun, then she could join the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, an order largely devoted to the education of respectable girls.<sup>(2)</sup> Nevertheless, the young Mademoiselle Pelletier had her way and entered the convent of Our Lady of Charity at Tours in October 1814. She was then 18 years of age. She showed great aptitude for the work, becoming Second Mistress of Penitents while still a novice. In 1817, when only 21 years old, she became First Mistress of Penitents; she then held this post until 1825, when she was elected Superior.<sup>(3)</sup> She was a young woman of great commitment to the work, of immense energy and administra-

tive ability, and abreast of contemporary thinking in penal welfare.

At the same time she was deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the Congregation of our Lady of Charity:

'I can only say that when I first entered religion I was eager to know all about the beginnings of the Order, of its origin, and of everything relating to it, that as a novice at Tours, I always sought the society of the old religious to converse with them. It was my delight after reading the Scriptures, to peruse the manuscript lives of some of our first Mothers, the letters of Father Eudes, and an abridgement of his life, which at that time was not printed.'

(4)

The origin of the refuge at Tours was typical of those mentioned in the previous chapter. A Jesuit priest had first mooted the idea of a refuge in 1705, but it was not established until 1714. The delay was occasioned by local opposition to the nature of the work and by fear that the refuge would eventually become a charge on the city administration. The refuge was suppressed by the revolutionary authorities in 1792, the property sequestrated, and the nuns evicted and dispersed.<sup>(5)</sup> In 1804, five of the surviving pre-revolutionary sisters made a start at restoring the work. By the time Mademoiselle Pelletier entered in 1814, there was a properly established community with a thriving class of penitents. In 1822, a large part of the original property was re-occupied, making it possible to extend the work.<sup>(6)</sup>

Within six months of becoming superior at Tours in 1825, Mother Pelletier introduced a class of religious madeleines. As Mistress of Penitents she had become aware that some of the women in her charge wished to enter religious life. The Constitutions of Our Lady of Charity strictly forbade the acceptance of penitents as religious sisters, an obstacle which the less innovative members of the community were quick to point out.<sup>(7)</sup> Moreover, when such penitents had been placed

with other religious orders, the attempts generally failed. No doubt this was due to the difficulties these women experienced in adapting to a different training after a long period of formation and institutionalisation in a refuge of Our Lady of Charity. (8) Forming the intention to introduce religious madeleines was one thing, but actually establishing the new class was quite another. The sisters of her own community, as well as those of Paris, to whom she had turned for advice, were strongly opposed. They viewed the project as totally alien to the explicit Eudist tradition, despite the historical persistence of religious madeleines in the Magdalen Movement generally. This opposition from her own community she only overcame by the bald exercise of her authority as superior:

'You have elected me your Superior. I am not worthy of the office, and I am confused by it. But since I am your Superior, we are going to found the Magdalens.'

(9)

Even so, there still remained the further and more difficult problem of determining the precise nature of the arrangements by which the new class could be incorporated without breaking the Constitutions. This major practical question was resolved after discussion with her diocesan superiors and the Carmelite sisters at Tours, although the form of the solution was essentially her own. (10) In effect, she established an order within an order. A solution as simple and as daring, in the context of the times, as John Eudes' earlier proposal to bring the penitents within the enclosure. The Magdalen Sisters, as she called them were to have their own life, rule, and habit, based on that of the Carmelites, an enclosed, contemplative order of some rigour and austerity. They would not be autonomous, as their superior would be drawn from among the sisters of Our Lady of Charity. This

superior would be known as the Mistress of Magdalens. The Magdalen Sisters would be housed in entirely separate quarters within the enclosure. They constituted a convent of contemplative nuns leading an austere life of work and prayer, especially for the conversion of the penitents in the refuge.<sup>(11)</sup> It is generally agreed by her biographers that the founding of the Magdalen Sisters was Mother Pelletier's crowning achievement. It represented an innovative resolution of a perennial tension in the Magdalen Movement. Later in the 19th century, the Superior General of the Eudist Fathers was moved to comment that 'her creative genius had taken flight, and that at the very heart of the convent 'she had given the work of John Eudes its full consummation'.<sup>(12)</sup> Hyperbole indeed, not totally consonant with the historical record, but a recognition that the Eudist refuge was something that could be developed legitimately.

Whatever else one might comment, the establishment of the Magdalen Sisters certainly illustrated Mother Pelletier's willingness to depart from the letter of tradition in response to need. Within another twelve months this spirit was to be expressed again. Writing in December 1826 to the superior of the refuge at Saint-Brieuc, she disclosed a new plan:

Now we are busy setting up a project which conforms well with our fourth vow. It is a preservation class that we are establishing at the request of an infinite number of unlucky families distressed at the difficult temperaments of their children.'

(13)

This evidence of a clearly expressed intention would seem to suggest, in modern parlance, a class for young girls placed by their parents as beyond control, or in need of care and protection. What the French would call 'cas sociaux'. The plan was quickly realised, although

there is some confusion among the main biographers as to its precise nature.<sup>(14)</sup> The refuge had also started to admit orphan girls at this time, and it is not clear whether the orphans and the preservation children were grouped together in one class or kept separate. Two writers assert that the Tours refuge also set up a fee-paying boarding school for middle class girls during this period, as a means of financing the work with the other children. This would be plausible, given the dire financial straits in which the refuge found itself during the 1830 Revolution. At that time the probability of closing the 'children's class' was to the fore.<sup>(15)</sup> On the other hand, Mother Pelletier had displayed throughout her life a strong reluctance to make this kind of arrangement. In a letter of 1838 she commented:

'.... how sad I am because of your plans for a private boarding school. All our Sisters have an extreme repugnance for this kind of work ....Are we going to cast aside our divine works to go and take from other Congregations their vocation and their goal.'

(16)

In the last year of her life she writes to the Archbishop of Colombo:

'In addition to the house for penitents we quite willingly accept orphans, classes for poor children .... we acknowledge that wherever we are entrusted only boarding schools for higher education it is with difficulty we give satisfaction .... neither do we form novices for teaching the upper classes - that is not the end of our Institute .... It is not that we reject completely the establishing of boarding schools, but these are not our special work; and more than once we have reason to be convinced that with hard work and industry, our work can be maintained just as well with work only for the poor.'

(17)

What is clear is that a small Preservation Class was successfully established and that orphans were also admitted. By the end of her



first term of office in 1828, there were 80 orphans and a small group of preservation girls.<sup>(18)</sup> These numbers were maintained throughout Mother Pelletier's second term as superior, and by 1831 there was, in addition, a class of little girl boarders.<sup>(19)</sup> It may be that these 'petites pensionnaires' are of the kind referred to in the letter of 1826, in which case they would simply be a fee-paying section of the Preservation Class. Which would be quite likely if they were placed there by their parents. Otherwise, they might have been private school boarders accepted as a relatively temporary and flexible response to the contemporary financial exigencies. Either way, the preservation class and the orphan girls became a permanent feature of the refuge. On balance it seems likely that there was one Preservation Class for both the orphans and the children placed by their parents.

In less than three years Mother Pelletier had made some very fundamental modifications to the simple structure of the Eudist refuge, which had taken so many years to evolve.<sup>(20)</sup> By accepting the orphans, and the children placed by their parents, she had clearly breached the cardinal principle of Voluntary Admission enshrined in Constitution 1.<sup>(21)</sup> Indeed, one of the major difficulties that had taxed John Eudes had been the re-establishment of voluntary admission in the face of the common practice of parents committing their recalcitrant daughters to refuges.<sup>(22)</sup> Furthermore, the creation of the Preservation Class, a form of preventive work, seemed to modify both the principle of Transformative Work and that of Specificity of Commitment. In the latter case, the principle had been extended or developed to include orphan girls, as well as prostitutes and dissolute women. Such an extension was certainly at variance with the precise terms of the Fourth Vow as expressed in Constitution XIV,<sup>(23)</sup> and accords ill with the hospital model urged in Constitution 1. In the case of the former principle, preservation does not readily connote transformation, but

rather suggests the maintenance and protection of innocence. It is, of course, a matter of degree and therein lies a key.

Mother Pelletier's innovations had a two-fold effect on the Classification principle. By adding a class of Magdalen Sisters, she re-introduced the more detailed hierarchical classification based on the degree of individual transformation, which had reached its most refined expression at the Paris Madeleine in the seventeenth century.<sup>(24)</sup> By insisting on entry from the penitents' class only, she had strengthened the notion of progress through the system which had been weak in the earlier institution. By adding a Preservation Class, she had introduced an entirely new criterion of classification based on age and presenting condition. The greater range of 'cases' that could now be admitted harked back to the pre-revolutionary hôpitaux général, with their poly-functional confinement. In brief, Mother Pelletier had moved far from the essential simplicity of the Eudist refuge to an organisational structure based on a more refined and complex classification. This was a trend that would continue and intensify. Inevitably, the changes brought the Separation principle into a new prominence. For now, not only were the penitents separated from the nuns, but from the Magdalen Sisters and the Preservation Class, each of which was, in turn, separated from the others. Complex and sometimes bizarre physical and administrative arrangements were developed to maintain it so. The Quasi-enclosure principle remained as before, save that the new class of Magdalen Sisters were enclosed by the formalities of canon law as well.

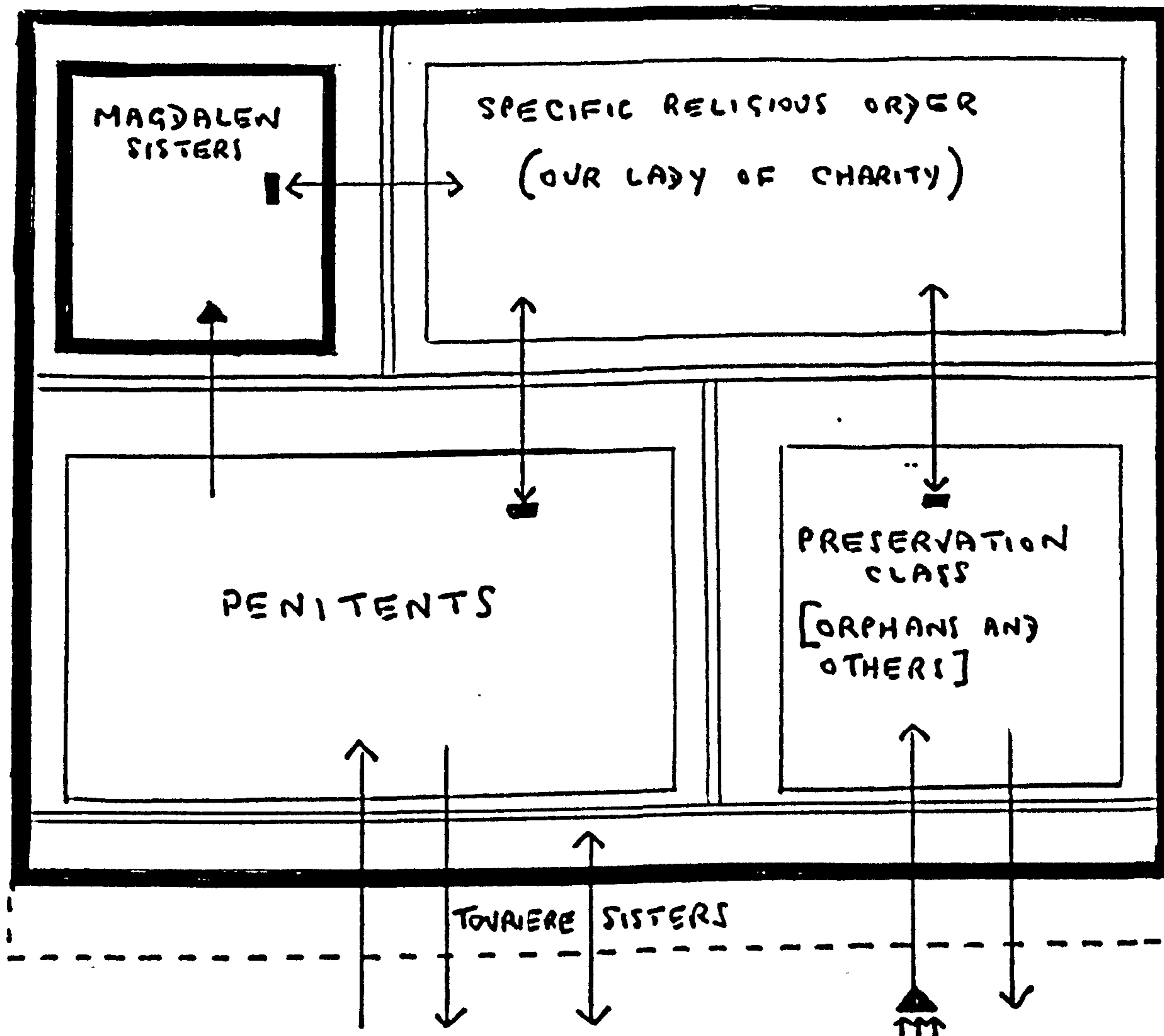


Figure 12: The Tours Refuge of Mother Pelletier

A special significance of Mother Pelletier's introduction of the Preservation Class lies in the clear indication it provides of her awareness of contemporary social needs, and of the official and philanthropic attempts to relieve them. Vagrant children were a major endemic problem during the period of the Restoration and the July Monarchy.<sup>(25)</sup> In France, as in other European countries, the public and many politicians perceived an enormous increase in juvenile delinquency during the second decade of the nineteenth century. Whether this

was so is now much disputed and was even questioned by some politicians at the time. In 1854 Britain's ambassador in Paris advised Lord Palmerston that the establishment of reformatories had led directly to an eightfold increase in juvenile offenders since 1831.<sup>(26)</sup> Many charitable responses had resulted.<sup>(27)</sup> Victor Hugo, commenting on the waifs and strays of this period, notes in 'Les Misérables':

'This is the most disastrous of social symptoms, for all the crimes of the man begin in the vagrancy of the child.'

(28)

A comment which neatly encapsulates the preservation philosophy of the many philanthropists active at the time Mother Pelletier established her class. A positive emphasis on education as the prime instrument of rehabilitation, and a pre-occupation with separating detained children from adult criminals, were basic features of the new reforms. They were features clearly to be seen at the Tours refuge.

It would be difficult to imagine that an informed woman of Mother Pelletier's concerns and intelligence could have been unfamiliar with the writings on these questions of her contemporary Charles Lucas; or with the social projects of the abbé Dupuch, who later invited her to make a foundation at Bordeaux; or with Marie-Clementine Anjorant who began her preservation work with girls in moral danger at nearby Bourges in 1827, to name but a few.<sup>(29)</sup> Mother Pelletier's awareness of contemporary reform in penal and social provisions, and her willingness to adopt progressive policies, would be influential factors in the future development of her work. As government legislation on these matters burgeoned, so she displayed no hesitation in accepting the degree of official control and financing - the 'tutelle administrative' - that this entailed. In some respects, her methods and organisation

became models for government institutions. This would become very evident in England.

Early in 1829, Mother Pelletier received a request to found a refuge at Angers. This came from a group of five parish priests who were anxious to revive the work of the two pre-revolutionary refuges. (30) The sisters of the council at the Tours convent were strongly opposed, but after persuasion reluctantly agreed that Mother Pelletier might make an exploratory visit to Angers. (31) Doubtless, the opposition of these senior sisters was born partly of a prudent desire to conserve the manpower and resources already strained by the success of the Tours refuge; and partly of fear of their young superior's enterprising and innovating spirit. She was, after all, only 30 years old. Thus there was struck, for the first time, a note of reluctance that would develop into a deep-seated and trenchant opposition to all that later developed at Angers. Mother Pelletier herself put it more kindly when she observed:

'My joy, my happiness at being asked for a foundation was inexpressible but for the good Mothers it was quite an emergency! Alas! The majority had gone through the Revolution, some had been imprisoned; they were still under the influence of the Terror, always fearing another revolution would break out.'

(32)

This initial visit convinced Mother Pelletier of the need and feasibility of a foundation at Angers. With money raised by the local clergy, and the support of influential benefactors like the Countess Genevieve d'Andigné de Villequier and Count Augustin de la Potherie de Neuville (both of whom were to devote the rest of their lives and all their resources to the work), plans were made to purchase a disused cotton printing factory known as 'Tournemine'. There were certain historical ironies in the purchase of this particular property.

The factory had been started by the Danton brothers in 1752, after a visit to London to investigate the new cotton printing techniques. However, by the early years of the 19th century, the factory had succumbed to the more advanced industrial competition of the English manufacturers. The site had been chosen by the Dantons for its discreet distance from the city, and for the quality of the water, of which large amounts were required for the bleaching of the cotton. The buildings were constructed to surround the site, so that the 'enclosure ensures the tranquillity of the work and the conservation of secrets'. The women workers, such as the cutters and printers, were between 16 and 28 years old, and lived in the factory, where they were considered to be safe from the temptations of urban promiscuity, or the revelation of production secrets. In the factory they were under 'the supervision of the manufacturer, who assembled the journeymen each Sunday, certainly after High Mass, to pay the wages and to hear about the activities throughout the factory'. He controlled the women's work, their religious practice, their morals, and their freedom. The water from the tributary brook was noted for its bleaching and washing qualities. So much so that there is a record of a 17th century apothecary seeking permission from the owners 'to wash the cotton in the water of the Brionneau and there to build a laundry'. The owners were the monks of St. Nicholas Abbey, a property that would later be bought by Mother Pelletier. The history of the place provides an uncanny prefiguration of what was to come, and points to a certain convergence and continuity in the historic forms and concerns of refuge and factory. (33)

On 29th May 1829, the Tours convent chapter agreed to establish a small community of five sisters in the derelict factory premises at Angers. (34) Mother Pelletier accompanied the group, and stayed until the end of July to see the venture properly launched. She was still

superior of the Tours refuge, and her term of office was not due to expire until May 1831. Repeated requests by the Angers clergy for Mother Pelletier to remain there as superior of the new refuge only served to exacerbate the bad feeling at Tours. Even the sisters of Caen refuge were brought into the dispute, and they sided with the opposition. Despite all, Mother Pelletier was appointed superior of the house at Angers when her term of office at Tours ended. Armed with the 'exeat' of the Archbishop of Tours, she arrived at Angers on 21st May 1831:

'.... We consent and command that Mme. Mary St. Euphrasia Pelletier .... shall go to Angers as Superioress of the New House, known as the Good Shepherd, to govern and more fully establish it according to the form and wise regulation approved by the Holy See for the monasteries of the Institute.'

(35)

Thus began the story of the almost incredibly rapid expansion and development of the refuge at Angers, a time which Mother Pelletier herself referred to as 'an era of miracles' - not unreasonably as it turned out.<sup>(36)</sup>

The form of the refuge initiated at Tours was very quickly reproduced at Angers under Mother Pelletier's leadership. Within a month of her arrival, she had accepted an invitation from the bishop to admit some orphans. They had previously been cared for by a lay association called 'De La Providence' run by the Countess de Villebois. This association could no longer provide the orphans with a secure home, so that the sisters responded with speed:

'We were given only a few days' breathing space which caused us a great deal of anxiety in preparing everyone; we received them on June 10th, twenty in number.'

(37)

At the end of August in the same year, it was decided to establish a class of Magdalen sisters. The refuge at Tours agreed to send three of their Magdalens as a core group. By October they were fully installed in their own quarters, together with the first three Angers penitents allowed to join them as novices. The land and buildings for the orphanage and the Magdalen convent had been donated by M. de Neuville.<sup>(38)</sup>

Fortunately, this rapid expansion was matched by an increase in the number of women who applied to join the sisters. By the end of 1831 Mother Pelletier had accepted 21 novices, all of whom remained.<sup>(39)</sup> Among their number was the 22 year old Marie Regaudiat, who was later to make the first foundation in England.<sup>(40)</sup> This large number of novices compared with only three that had been accepted in the period before Mother Pelletier's arrival. The contemporary annalist attributed this growth to the establishment of the new orphanage:

'The house for the orphans procured for the monastery a two-fold advantage; serving to make the house known, it drew souls to God, and at the same time subjects to labour for their conversion.'

(41)

July 1833 saw the start of a quite separate Preservation Class for young girls, along the lines that Mother Pelletier had intended at Tours.<sup>(42)</sup> Six months later the younger penitents were separated off into their own class:

'Our Mother separated the very young, knowing the difficulties when they were mixed with the penitents, and put the new class under the protection of St. Michael.'

(43)

In doing so, she showed herself to be aware of current thinking, and some years ahead of institutional developments in the public sector.<sup>(44)</sup>



By the middle of 1834, Mother Pelletier had founded four other houses in France. At Angers itself there were 83 sisters, 12 Magdalen sisters, 80 penitents, 60 orphans, and 15 girls in the preservation class.<sup>(45)</sup>

In the autumn, Mother Pelletier received a request from the Prefect of the Department of Maine et Loire to receive young female prisoners currently detained in the city goal:

'We received a proposition from the Prefect of this city; he asks us to set up an establishment for young girls who have the misfortune of committing some fault, and whom one would wish to save from the horror and corruption of prison .... The Prefect is to come one of these days to settle everything; he appears exceedingly pleased and content with the good work of our house. He wrote immediately in our favour to the Ministry ....' (46)

In a short time the new class was started, thus bringing Mother Pelletier for the first time into direct co-operation with the civil administration. Later developments indicate that she gave a special priority to this type of detainee.<sup>(47)</sup> The Good Shepherd Refuge had now reached its definitive form.

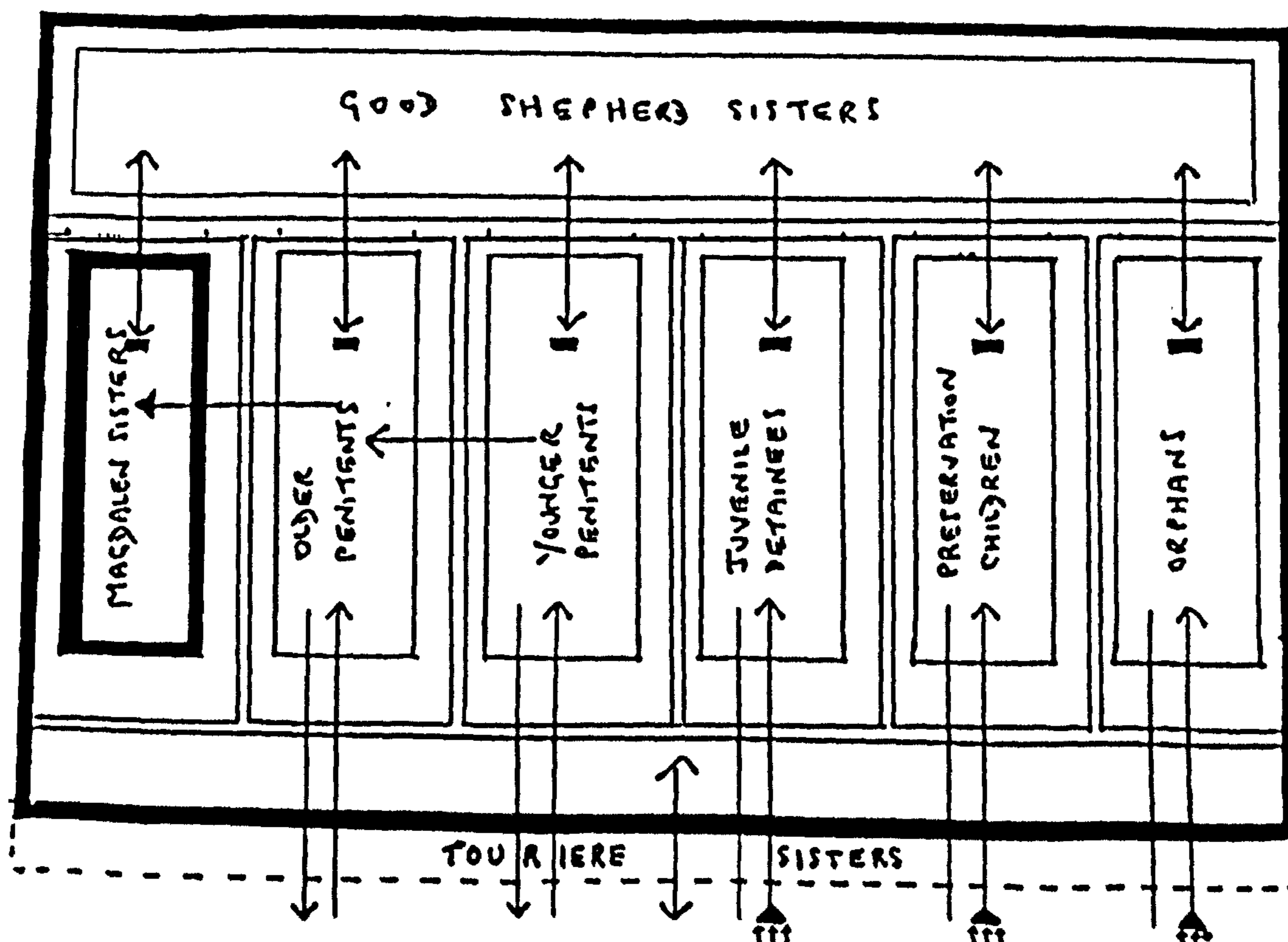


FIGURE 13 : THE DEFINITIVE GOOD SHEPHERD REFUGE

There was one further development in the internal arrangements of the refuge at this time: the creation of an important new category of penitent. Later history will show precisely how significant the new category was to the stability and efficiency of the refuges. Hitherto, the penitents who wished to commit themselves more fully and formally to the religious life were able to seek entry to the Magdalens. The others eventually returned to the world where, hopefully, 'they edified by an exemplary life'. Mother Cornet, then Mistress of Penitents, had noticed:

'There remained others who did not feel any attraction for the enclosed life of the Magdalens, but, on the other hand, remembering the dangers which they had formally incurred in the world, they were fearful about their perseverance if they returned there. They declared they would be happy to dedicate themselves to the class in a black dress, and there to pass the rest of their lives. We were delighted at this, and reflecting how much the poor penitents who came in from the world needed to be sustained by good example, we made haste to speak to (Mother Pelletier) about it.'

(48)

Mother Pelletier devised a system whereby, after two years exemplary conduct in the class, and evidence of sincere conversion, penitents, who so wished, might be considered by the Superior and her council for a two year probation. If they completed that satisfactorily, they were allowed to make a renewable annual vow, or consecration, to remain in the refuge for the whole of the following year. It was generally expected that they would renew this vow over a long period, but the annual renewal left it open for them to return to the status of ordinary penitent or leave the refuge completely. In practice, as it turned out, very many of them stayed in for life. They wore a black dress and a silver cross. They were known as Consecrated Penitents or Consecrates. They made their consecration on the feast

of St. Mary Magdalene. The consecrates continued to live with the other penitents, whom they were expected to edify by their regularity, diligence, obedience, piety, and fervour - 'it is necessary that they should be the model of the flock'.<sup>(49)</sup> They were to be the really white sheep, in institutional argot, the 'trustees'. The first group were admitted to probation in April 1835. In 1866, those in the Preservation Class were also allowed to become consecrates.

During her first four years at Angers Mother Pelletier had not only established a successful refuge with six different classes and a thriving novitiate, but she had also founded new houses at Le Mans, Poitiers, Grenoble, and Metz. The very success of Angers led to requests for the 'ladies of the Good Shepherd' to make foundations in other towns.<sup>(50)</sup> Inevitably, these developments placed a difficult burden on the available resources of nuns and money. For example, in 1832 she had found it difficult to find a nun for the post of Mistress of Penitents at Angers. Successive requests to other refuges of Our Lady of Charity at Nantes and Tours met with firm refusals.

Under the Constitutions of Our Lady of Charity each of the refuges, once founded, was expected to be autonomous and self-sufficient. The refuge at Caen held a primacy of honour as the guardian of tradition within a loose federation of convents:

'The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity founded itself at the city of Caen .... the other Monasteries must have a very tight bond of charity with it, a complete conformity .... For their part the Sisters of the first Monastery must safeguard all that they have received without changing or introducing anything.'

(51)

As late as 1887, one authoritative commentator noted:

'I found in France the same resistance (to change)

'by sisters so very attached even to the smallest details to the traditions of the Venerable Father Eudes.'

(52)

This strong tendency to conservatism had undoubtedly inhibited the extension of the congregation of Our Lady of Charity, despite the continuing need for work with women and girls, and the favourable climate of public opinion. At this time there were only eleven refuges of Our Lady of Charity (excluding Angers and its four foundations), of which seven were pre-revolutionary houses re-opened.<sup>(53)</sup> The closer co-operation of the refuges under central direction might lead to a more efficient use of resources, a common policy, and a unity of spirit. All would conduce to the better fulfilment of the work. The idea of a central house or generalate gradually dawned on Mother Pelletier, and her lay collaborator M. de Neuville, after the refusals from Nantes and Tours:

'To make the monastery a Central House where a general novitiate would be established so as to send subjects afterwards to the ends of the earth to work for the rehabilitation of souls; this was precisely the holy and unique ambition of Mother (Pelletier).'

(54)

For the next three years there was a complex and disputatious round of negotiations, and a plethora of intrigue, whose finer ramifications are not germane to this study. It will suffice to outline the essentials of the episode.

The first formal expression of a de facto generalate appears in the decision of the Angers chapter, meeting in March 1833, to make a foundation at Le Mans. This was made conditional on the continuing control of the new house by the superior of Angers, to whom regular reports were to be made. Furthermore, any women who applied to join

the sisters at Le Mans were to be sent to Angers for their novitiate training. <sup>(55)</sup> The first de facto creation of a superior-general, and therefore of a separate religious order, occurred on 14th May 1835, when the superiors of Le Mans, Poitiers, and Grenoble met with the Angers chapter to elect Mother Pelletier their superior-general. <sup>(56)</sup> A new clause for the constitutions, and a new vow of obedience, had already been drafted, but tentatively included in the Book of Customs rather than the Constitutions. The main opposition came from the refuges at Caen and Tours, quite understandably; and they were backed by 14 bishops led by the Archbishop of Tours. It is interesting to note that between 1807 and 1809 Napoleon had agreed to the re-opening of the refuges on the grounds that they were public utilities; and on the condition that a generalate was set up with Paris as the central house. That would have made for more efficient administrative control by the government. <sup>(57)</sup> The Paris refuge had been willing, but so many other houses of Our Lady of Charity were hostile that the proposal never developed. The sisters at Tours and Caen were not slow to point out this past episode. <sup>(58)</sup>

Le Mans, the first house founded by Angers, now withdrew from the project. Even so, the generalate proposals were submitted to Rome. On 9th January 1835 the Pope approved a decree which established a generalate at Angers to govern and co-ordinate all the houses founded from there. <sup>(59)</sup> They were to observe the rules laid down by John Eudes, and a superior-general was to be elected every six years by a constituency drawn from all the houses. In the event, Mother Pelletier was successively re-elected throughout her life. Despite the decree, the opposition continued until, in April, Gregory XVI issued a brief which re-iterated the previous decree in weightier language. This left no doubt of the de jure creation of the new congregation of Our Lady of Charity

of the Good Shepherd of Angers, which had as its object:

'.... not only to afford a safe refuge to girls, women and widows who had unhappily fallen, where .... they are made to pass from the most shameful disorders to a chaste life, great regularity of morals and piety, but also to instruct young orphans in the holy precepts of the Catholic religion, so that .... they may dispose themselves to live in a pious and Christian manner in the religious state or in the world.'

(60)

The first edition of the Constitutions of this new congregation were published in 1836. They were identical to those of Our Lady of Charity, save for the addition of two entirely new clauses and three major amendments. One new clause established the office of Superior-General, and there was an amendment to allow for her election.<sup>(61)</sup>

The other new clause reflected the general status of the congregation by permitting the appointment of a Cardinal Protector at Rome.<sup>(62)</sup> That was a matter of continuing irritation to the local bishop, but need not concern us further. Of the two remaining, one gave the Superior-General a flexibility to vary the number of sisters in any community.<sup>(63)</sup>

In the old Constitutions the numbers had been fixed at a maximum of 40 choir sisters and 6 lay sisters.<sup>(64)</sup>

The other major amendment is of considerable importance, as it legitimated developments already occurring. It added the following section to Clause 1:

'The Congregation, might, nevertheless, if the Superioress General, with the consent of her Assistants, approve it, accept the direction of houses of detention for women; and have establishments in which they might receive women and girls, placed there by their relations, or competent and lawful authority, for punishment.'

(65)

This was a formalised and very radical departure from the purely Eudist

tradition, although it is pertinent to recall that an Imperial Decree of 26th December 1810 had defined the status of refuges as public utilities, to be at the discretion of the civil administration for service as hospitals and prisons.<sup>(66)</sup> The principle of accepting those placed in the refuge by authority was to be incorporated in all revisions of the constitutions right up to 1970. For 120 years they remained basically as they were in the 1836 edition. The second edition of 1867 permitted the administrative division of the congregation into geographical provinces largely based on national boundaries.

At the time of Mother Pelletier's death in 1868, there were 110 houses organised into 49 provinces around the world. There were 2,760 sisters, 7,234 penitents and magdalens, and 8,483 preservation children and detainees.<sup>(67)</sup> By 1901, near the end of our period, there were 220 houses, in which 6,763 sisters were caring for 19,039 penitents and magdalens, 23,506 preservation children and 2,341 women prisoners and girl detainees.<sup>(68)</sup> By comparison, the refuges of Our Lady of Charity numbered 23 in 1901,<sup>(69)</sup> The impetus to this remarkable expansion had been laid down in the 1830's. When the first Good Shepherd sisters came to England in 1840, there were, even at that early date, 25 Good Shepherd houses in France, Italy, and Bavaria.

The special achievement of Mother Pelletier, the women with 'the head to govern the entire church'<sup>(70)</sup> was the establishment of a new congregation which, in the opinion of her co-réligionists:

'.... preserved the objective and the principal means set out by the Venerable Father Eudes, and she was satisfied to reconcile the rules of the Venerable with the necessities of the present times ....'

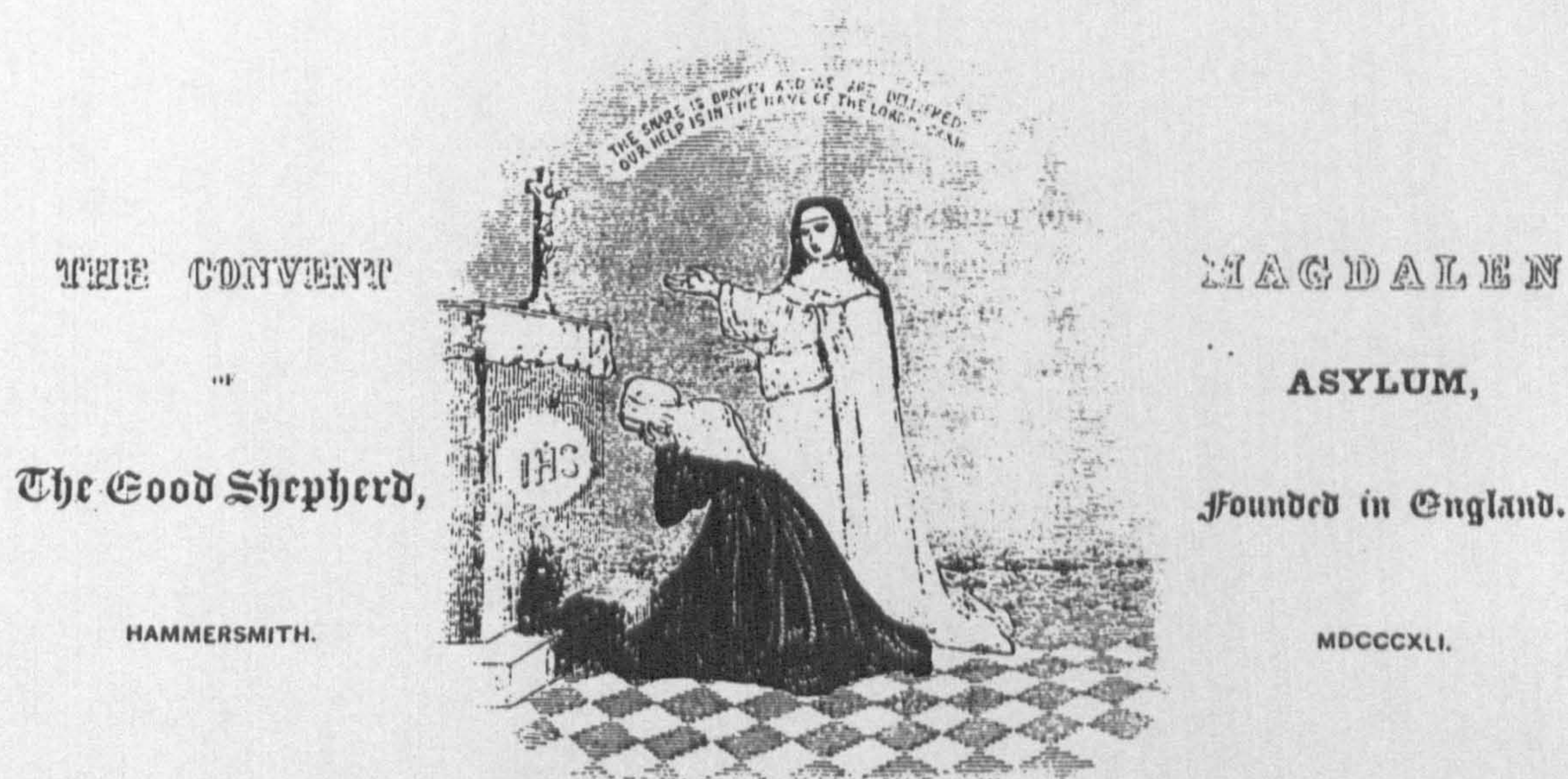
(71)

It is equally clear that contemporary necessities involved her in a close co-operation with the penal and corrective institutions of

the state.

This chapter completes the reconstruction of the context in which the Good Shepherd refuges of Britain must be set. Mother Pelletier had very quickly brought about very radical changes in the structure of the refuge, not to mention the centralised bureaucratic organisation of many refuges into one religious order. It might be argued that she had recovered and re-incorporated strands of the pre-Eudist tradition into her refuge. On the other hand, her development of the work may be viewed as so innovative that the tradition of the Magdalen Movement had been entirely disrupted. Certainly, she had retained the purity of the old refuge by a very protective separation of the penitents class, yet she had deepened its interiority by the possibility of consecrated status and movement to the magdalen convent. Despite the maintenance of the traditional Eudist rhetoric, it is hard to resist the evidence that many of Mother Pelletier's new arrangements were a direct response to secular developments in a fast developing industrial society, as well as a reflection of the new penological ideas. This is nowhere more manifest than in the range of women and girls she received and in the increasingly refined hierarchical classification that she used to order them. The seal is put upon these changes by the provision she made in the new Constitutions for the possibility of co-operating with the public authorities in the work of detention. However, it should not be forgotten that her accommodation is also a visionary and diplomatic recognition that if the work of christian conversion is to go on it has to increasingly engage in the institutional ways that officialdom would countenance. In the next three chapters we can see how the British Good Shepherd sisters found themselves in much difficulty and contradiction when they sought to make similar accommodations.





Supérieure, Madame Régaudiat, | Director, Rev. James O'Neal.

This illustration stands at the head of a printed appeal publicly circulated by the Good Shepherd Sisters during their first year at Hammersmith. They were seeking funds with which to build a magdalen asylum. The nuns never balked at the publicity necessary to secure support for their work, although they were always careful to observe a sensitive secrecy about the individual life histories of the women in their care. It is surprising, then, that their work went unmentioned by the informed commentators of the time. Writing in 1862, Mayhew - to mention but one - listed 21 institutions in London 'adapted to the rescue and reformation of fallen women', of which 10 were Church (1) of England establishments and the remainder under evangelical auspices.

At that time the Good Shepherd magdalen asylum had been in existence for nearly 20 years, not to mention the three others at Glasgow, Bristol, and Liverpool. Even present-day writers perpetuate the silence. (2)

Whatever the reason, the silence serves as unintended affirmation of the interiority of the transformation which the Good Shepherd Sisters sought to accomplish.

This chapter largely seeks to pierce that interiority by reconstructing a picture of life at the Hammersmith magdalen asylum as it is revealed in the convent annals, the registers, documents and letters. Unlike a printed circular or book intended for a wider public, or even the Constitutions and the Book of Customs, which attained a certain objectivity in the life of the Good Shepherd Congregation, these other sources unintentionally reveal the practices and attitudes born of everyday life. They give a glimpse of an alien existential world and provide traces of subjective meanings which can be set in the context reassembled in the earlier chapters. To some, such a reconstruction is a suspect task: Rock has argued that a 'reconstituted past is phenomenologically impoverished and unsure'; while Stedman Jones more bleakly exhorts us to remember that 'history is an entirely intellectual operation which takes place in the present and in the head'. (3) From the start we have not gainsaid that the sources have been recovered, selected, and ordered with a view to seeking a sociological understanding of the particular transformations in which the Good Shepherd Sisters engaged themselves and the penitents. This is the source of our own existential involvement with the nuns and penitents long since dead. Subject and researcher build their own inter-subjectivity. That being so, for much of the chapter the sources have been allowed to speak for themselves. The theoretical import rests in the attempt to complement and inform the later analysis with some interpretative historical sociology.

Throughout the 1830's there had been a number of influences which would lead Mother Pelletier in the direction of an English foundation. Foremost among them was her main lay collaborator, the Count de Neuville. He had been an ardent anglophile ever since his jesuit school had moved to Stonyhurst in Lancashire after having been expelled from Liège by the French revolutionary authorities.<sup>(4)</sup> Subsequently, he had kept up his interests and personal contacts in England. As early as 1833 he had started to mention English affairs in his almost daily correspondence with Mother Pelletier:

'England is not peaceful. There has been a riot at Manchester and several places are in a state of seige.'

(5)

That they had already discussed the possibility of a foundation in Great Britain is clear from a letter written in 1839 in which de Neuville referred to a meeting between himself and Bishop Gillis of Edinburgh:

'I was able to give him a push about a Good Shepherd foundation in Ireland where I think you want it to be.'

(6)

In England itself the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, accompanied as it was by a growing confidence among the roman catholic community, created the conditions for catholic participation in the social philanthropies of the day, not least in the work of rescuing and reforming 'fallen' women and girls.<sup>(7)</sup> Although the sustained campaign of the Victorian reformers against prostitution was yet to come, along with the research and writings of such as Acton and Mayhew, there were already in existence many charitable societies providing

refuges and rescue homes. Moreover, there is clear evidence that the Good Shepherd Sisters themselves were aware of such institutions in England managed by protestants.<sup>(8)</sup> It was precisely the absence of any specifically roman catholic provision for such women which had lead to the first approach to Mother Pelletier.

In April 1840 she was visited at Angers by Mr. Eberhard who was returning to his work as chaplain to the Good Shepherd convent in Munich. He had been spending a holiday in London with his friend Mr. Jauch, the priest of the German Church there. He brought a letter from Jauch requesting the admission of three English women of his acquaintance to the novitiate at Angers. More than that, he called for the founding of a Good Shepherd house in London, where it was sorely needed. He had the support of Marchioness Wellesley, a catholic and erstwhile romantic idol of the Duke of Wellington, but regrettably now only his sister-in-law.<sup>(9)</sup> She was willing to put up 5000 francs per annum towards the expenses.<sup>(10)</sup> Thereafter events proceeded with a confused rapidity to the discomfort of all parties.

Mother Pelletier had mentioned her hopes for London to the Superior of Lille, Sister Levoyer, who had been at Angers at the same time as Eberhard. Later Mother Pelletier wrote to say that she had responded favourably to Jauch's request. Sister Levoyer was very enthusiastic and wrote from Lille:

'We await your orders to fly to this new mission.'  
(11)

In the event she jumped the gun. Together with another nun, Sr. Vincent, and with the chaplain M. Dehée an escort, she left for London on 13th May.<sup>(12)</sup> Apparently they were anxious lest the English benefactors should tire of a response, an anxiety which later events would prove

well founded. As Sr. Levoyer was to remark in her first letter from London:

'.... we left before making the time known to you lest they not permit it to us.'

(13)

They had left without adequate money or the necessary episcopal authorisations. This caused considerable personal privation and difficulty in getting themselves accepted by the roman catholic authorities in London. Mr. Jauch was very put out at such a rapid arrival for he had not yet rented a suitable house. Mother Pelletier was unable to obtain retrospective permission from Bishop Paysant of Angers, who feared she was overstretching her resources. In July he ordered them to return. This left a certain sense of grievance among the English supporters of the enterprise and an undercurrent of resentment against control from Angers. That it could not be attributed to Mother Pelletier on this occasion was no matter. The two sisters returned to Lille on 2nd July but at least they brought with them three postulants from London, Catherine Nugent, Rosine Macarty, and Selina Fish.

Despite the debacle, mainly due to over-enthusiasm and poor preparation, the contacts had been made and a realism born of experience could prevail in the next attempt. The Marchioness Wellesley recovered from her disappointment and wrote to say she would continue her support. Mother Pelletier, undaunted, was already writing to her two closest confidantes describing London as the foremost of her ambitions. In addition, the English-speaking Bishop Hercé of Nantes had become involved in helping the three English novices. Like de Neuville, he had been brought up in England during the French Revolution and constantly spurred Mother Pelletier to the completion of a foundation in London.

By November she had secured the reluctant permission of the Bishop of Angers. Sister Regaudiat, accompanied by Sr. Fison and the inevitable chaplain escort, was sent over to London. It was a task that Sister  
(21)  
Regaudiat only accepted under compulsion.

It is perhaps difficult for us now to appreciate the formidable nature of the undertaking. Quite apart from a suppressed personal reluctance, neither sister spoke English and England must have seemed a rather fearful island. After all, England had been a protestant country for nearly 400 years, with all that implied to a French catholic nun. Moreover, it was barely 20 years since Bonaparte had been defeated by Wellington, with all that implied about English antipathies. They would have been aware through de Neuville and Herc e of the social unrest in England, of the poverty and degradation as the economic depression grew worse from the late 1830's. The 'monster city' of London with its 'grave', unsociable, suspicious' inhabitants of 1839, so vividly described by their fellow countrywoman Flora Tristan, awaited  
(22)  
the two sisters. On top of this more general knowledge they would have had a more detailed awareness of the difficulties faced during the unsuccessful attempt of the previous summer. Despite the anglophile opinions of the Count de Neuville and Bishop Herc e, for these French nuns it was a real journey, into an alien land. All in all, the courage and ultimate perseverance of the two sisters in overcoming personal disinclination and local opposition stands as eloquent testimony to the strength of their ideological commitment to reformative work with the women of the streets. The journey took over a week due to appalling conditions in the English Channel and when they arrived in London on 19th November they were at once beset with difficulties. The priest who was to have housed them in Chelsea had died the day before. After some days in a West End hotel they were given accommodation in the  
(23)  
Benedictine convent at Hammersmith. Hammersmith was, even then,

notable for the number of roman catholic institutions established there. (24)

It has already been noted how the initial establishment of refuges depended almost entirely on local philanthropy. The present case was no exception. Sr. Regaudiat and her companion had arrived with only £40 and the Vicar-Apostolic of the London District, Bishop Thomas Griffiths, although courteous and kind, gave them:

'no great encouragement at first unless they could provide temporal means for carrying out their purpose.'

(25)

Nine days of house hunting in London had revealed that suitable properties could only be rented at prices quite beyond their means. To make matters worse a leading roman catholic banker had been made bankrupt with widespread losses to the roman catholic community. This brought charitable benefactions virtually to a halt as London roman catholics were understandably reluctant to allow the establishment of an under-  
(26)  
taking which would further drain their resources. The position of the sisters was now very precarious and looked like becoming a repetition of the earlier debacle.

At this juncture they were introduced by Mr. Jauch to Rev. John Jones. He was an eccentric London clergyman who moved in fashionable circles, having been at one time the priest of the Bavarian Embassy chapel. He played a prominent part in roman catholic policy-making  
(27)  
and the Marchioness Wellesley was among his many influential friends.

Jones had earlier built a house for himself with an adjacent convent at St. Leonard's-on-Sea. This was now vacant. Several other religious orders had tried to settle there but each had left in turn after finding  
(28)

Jones far too demanding and variable a landlord. Whether this was known or not to Jauch, or to the Marchioness, must remain a matter of conjecture.

Either way, they prevailed on the sisters to go to St. Leonards where they remained from 29th November until 2nd February 1841. The fact that the two original sponsors urged this course of action is surprising given their very strong desire for the foundation in London. It suggests that they had reservations about the capability of the two sisters; a reservation that seems to have been shared by Mother Pelletier herself. (29)

Sr. Regaudiat's own misgivings were not without cause, not least because the geographical location would make it difficult to secure work for the support of the house. (30) The episode is worth recounting a little further for it illustrates the same pattern of tension between the sponsors and sisters that was evident in the historical account of the development of the refuges.

In no time both Mr. Jones and the Marchioness had written to Mother Pelletier requesting her to replace Sr. Regaudiat. From the distance of Angers she was inclined to agree. She was aware that Sister Regaudiat, who had previously failed in a similar assignment at Bordeaux, was seeking her permission to abandon the venture and return to Angers. (31) She had no first hand knowledge of Mr. Jones, but he was supported by Mr. Jauch and the Marchioness Wellesley. In mid-December she wrote to Sr. Regaudiat urging her to remain at St. Leonards while promising to relieve her as soon as another sister was available. At the same time (and in nearly all the subsequent letters) she strongly advised her to rely on the Marchioness. (32) By early January Mother Pelletier had begun to concede that St. Leonards was unsuitable, but was unwilling for the sisters to return to London until a house was available. She could hardly expect her nuns to remain in a situation where:

'Mr. Jones could not make a proper semblance of a monastery - he lived in this house with our sisters who served him.



'Our sisters seeing it was necessary to be patient and not establish classes.'

(33)

Within a few weeks she had informed Sr. Regaudiat:

'Mr. Jones has just written a contemptible letter - I desire nothing so much as to see you quit that place.'

(34)

Among other things Jones had asked for £700 'to begin with'. (35) So

anxious was Mother Pelletier that she told them to return to the

Benedictine convent at Hammersmith forthwith and guaranteed to provide  
(36)

the rent for a suitable house. Into the bargain, Mother Pelletier

had also fallen out with Marchioness Wellesley, her most influential supporter in England.

Although the Marchioness had written frequently to Mother Pelletier during the St. Leonards episode pressing her view on the situation, she eventually wrote to Bishop Hercé of Nantes to complain about the way the matter had been handled. The bishop informed Mother Pelletier that the Marchioness:

'.... has written me a long letter which you will find attached in which she gives up all her co-operation in the good work leaving it entirely under your direction. One of the young novices can translate it for you and you may notice the frigid tone which prevails, however, I have done my best with her .... Now Madame Superior, I believe you must reply to her even though her letter is a response. However, I am disposed to insist you will be agreeable. You know that on this point nothing will discourage me.'

(37)

Mother Pelletier and Marchioness Wellesley, both very capable and independent women, were now locked in disagreement about the conduct of affairs in England. Although the Marchioness was to become a close and influential friend to Sr. Regaudiat, she remained cool with Mother Pelletier and probably became one of those who later would urge a

complete break with Angers.

The situation was far from easy when the two sisters returned to London. A Jesuit priest of standing advised them:

'England would not be ready for another four years and it was madness to remain at present.'

(38)

Many people were not sympathetic to the work because of its nature, considering it dangerous for 'the pure to come into contact with the impure'; a familiar enough theme in the creation of religious orders specialising in this work. A few weeks after their return to Hammersmith Mother Pelletier wrote:

'.... we are beset by letters from London and all are objections, of course.'

(40)

Nevertheless, she encouraged Sr. Regaudiat to find a house and promised to recall her to Angers thereafter. Bishop Griffiths who had at first held back was so touched by their perseverance that he promised them £1000.

These early vicissitudes encapsulate the repetitive problems faced by nuns who seek to establish refuges for prostitutes; the struggles for control between local sponsors and the authorities of the religious order; the need to situate the refuge within reach of the prostitutes and the work to support them; and the difficulty in gaining acceptance that the reclamation of prostitutes was appropriate work for nuns.

The two sisters wasted no time in renewing their search for premises and by March they seemed to have three possibilities in mind. Writing from Angers, the Secretary of the General Council informed Mother Regaudiat (as she had now become) that Mother Pelletier:

'.... wants neither the first house of which you speak to

'her in your last letter nor the third, but the second, which suits her perfectly for the moment. So lease it yourself in complete security; and as for the rent be calm, for (she) has taken steps which will definitely succeed. Let her know if it is paid for only six months or for a whole year, this tender mother will send you 3000 francs at once as part payment - followed by the other half of the rent and the remainder to meet your needs .... Some of our monasteries which are comfortably off will pay the rent, not only this year, but even in the following years. Only today I am writing to them about this matter. Bear in mind one thing, take the house but yield nothing on the price of £150.'

(42)

This illustrates quite clearly the detailed control exercised by the central government of the Congregation and the advantages of pooled resources which the generalate allowed.

In May Mother Regaudiat took a two year lease on the house in King Street, Hammersmith, and the following month three more sisters  
(43)

were sent over from Angers. On 21st June the first two penitents were admitted, although one was dismissed almost immediately and not  
(44)

recorded in the entrance book. The first penitent was Anne Droskell, a young girl from Chelsea who remained until April 1843 when she was returned to her parents. By the end of the year the establishment consisted of 3 choir nuns and a laysister, one tourière sister novice,  
(45)

and six penitents. Fourteen people crowding into a detached suburban villa placed a great strain on the complex rules of separation and enclosure. It must have been very difficult to fulfil the ordinary requirements of convent and refuge as prescribed by the Constitutions and the Book of Customs. For a start, enclosure would have been no more than notional. Their neighbours on one side showed their annoyance by noisy behaviour and stone throwing, especially during the penitents' recreation period in the garden. This reached such a pitch that the local police sergeant, fortunately a roman catholic called Kelly, was required to restore the peace. The house on the other side was a school for clergymen's daughters whose proprietor accounted it a

singular misfortune to adjoin both nuns and street girls:

'.... the remarks and admonitions also over the wall and through the palings were what any English Catholic can imagine, who has met in the world with specimens of methodistical and evangelical cant.'

(46)

Whether they were disapproved of or not, the nuns were certainly a novelty. Any glimpse through the convent door or over the wall was an occasion for excitement. Small boys even going so far as to lie on the pavement in order to see under the door.

(47)

The first Community Letter, a kind of report sent to Angers every two or three years, gives a vivid picture of life in those early days of the Good Shepherd foundation in Hammersmith. The letter claims there were 14 penitents, although the entrance book only records six of them. The discrepancy may be due to tardy and inaccurate recordings. It is more probable that the figure was somewhat inflated to impress Mother Pelletier. The penitents are described as being very largely about 20 years old or more and the stress is on their religious progress: ten made their first communions and six were confirmed, of whom one was a converted protestant. The account of the conversions of penitents is couched in vivid language. The stress is very much on the struggle to overcome vice:

'The great temptation of the girls of this land is to commit suicide when they are overcome with regret, and a very large number drown themselves in the Thames.'

(49)

So far as the daily life was concerned each sister seemed to exercise a plurality of tasks. Mother Regaudiat, as well as being Superior, also acted as bursar, sacristan, storekeeper, and infirmarian. Her assistant, Sister Fison, was Mistress of Penitents and also looked after their uniforms. Sr. Bellanger was Mistress of Works as well

as 3rd Mistress of the Class, to which tasks she added those of ringing the bell, attending to the linen and habits of the sisters, setting the tables for tea and dinner, reading to the community in the refectory, teaching the penitents their Rule, and looking after the beds and washing. Sr. Kearsley, the only English speaker and still a novice, was the 2nd Mistress of Penitents, the 2nd Sacristan, and the English secretary. Poor Sr. Robineau - the only lay sister - was gardiner, cook, refectorian, 2nd storekeeper, as well as being responsible for ringing reveille and many other tasks. The two tourière sisters, locally recruited young women, did all the outside errands and answered (50) the door. This activity seemed to have been as much determined by a desire to reproduce the Angers ideal of conventual and refuge life as by the needs of the penitents. Certainly Mother Pelletier was pleased:

'My soul leaps for joy a thousand times, dear daughter, while reading your Community Letter .... London is once more the most beautiful flower from this divine flower-bed. It is the triumph of grace over all Hell.'

(51)

But there were material problems to cope with. As yet no work had been secured for the penitents and Angers had only promised help with the rent, together with subsistence for the nuns. The cost of maintaining the penitents had to be raised from charitable donations. This proved to be no easy matter as so many demands were being made on the roman catholic public at this time. During these first years the nuns owed much to the fund-raising efforts of their ecclesiastical superior Mr. John Robson:

'His ardour for the success of an asylum for the destitute and abandoned animated him to make every sacrifice and stoop to any humiliation to procure the pecuniary means for supplying the wants of those for whom it was intended.'

(52)

Unfortunately his enthusiasms carried him away and early in 1844 he  
 (53)  
 left 'having involved himself in inextricable difficulties'.

Living entirely by donations from well-wishers and by subsidies from Angers was not a satisfactory state of affairs; no less for ideological reasons than for financial unpredictabilities. It will be recalled that the work was intended not only to support the establishment but also as a prime means of the transformation of both sisters and penitents. What work there was at this time consisted largely of needlework with some washing, all solicited by door to door enquiries made by the two diligent *tourière* sisters or the maid:

'The good little maid Mary who was but sixteen years of age, was indefatigable in her exertions for the house. She walked miles to procure a little work, going from shop to shop soliciting employment. She was obliged to return sometimes empty handed, and after a fruitless search weary and disappointed. Then she would recommence her search the next day with renewed courage, and by leaving a deposit above the value of what she brought away, she would get some few shirts, and when done she would anxiously take them back to the employer, and when they were approved of (which was not always the case) how joyfully she would return to the dear home ....'

(54)

It was about this time that the ill-fated Mr. Robson suggested a laundry but this was impracticable in premises taken on a two year lease. By the end of 1842 there were 15 penitents in the house, although the number of sisters remained the same. Clearly the pressure on space and resources was increasing and the lease on the King Street house was due to run out in the middle of 1843. Mother Pelletier was also anxious:

'Since your very interesting letter, my darling daughter, have you found a house? Do you hope to be successful? You know all I think about this holy work of England .... We will omit nothing in order to promote it and she will surely become the crown of the Institute.'

(55)

Early in 1843 a house was bought for £3000 with money loaned  
 (56)  
 by Bishop Griffiths. Beauchamp Lodge was a substantial but rather  
 dilapidated house which for some years previously had been adapted  
 to use as a distillery. It stood on Fulham Palace Road near the present  
 Hammersmith flyover and its grounds ran down close to the river Thames.  
 Although the sisters and penitents did not leave King Street until  
 the lease ran out in May, possession of the house was taken in March.  
 A handy-man, Daniel Geraghty, was employed to live there as caretaker  
 and later to work as the laundry roundsman. Plans were put in hand  
 to build a penitents refuge as well as to start the laundry business.  
 From the start the sisters referred to the refuge as the Magdalen  
 (57)  
 Asylum.\*

The Magdalen Asylum was completed in June whereupon the whole  
 community, nuns and penitents, moved to the new premises. In order  
 to keep the spirit of enclosure the group left very early in the morning  
 (58)  
 by a back lane along the side of the Thames. Daniel Geraghty's appoint-  
 ment was confirmed and a cow was bought. In the years to come garden  
 and dairy produce would be used to off-set costs. Although some washing  
 was taken in, needlework was still the main source of revenue, other  
 than donations, and produced about £100 in the first year. One of  
 the problems was that most of the penitents had only the most basic  
 needlework skills and could only do the commonest shirts at 4 shillings

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\*The use of the title Magdalen Asylum reflected secular current usage in  
 England. In the present context it is somewhat confusing when it is  
 recalled that within the convent there are also the Magdalen Sisters  
 leading a distinct conventual life. Although the term Magdalen Asylum  
 had gone out of general use by the 1870's, its use will be continued  
 through this study to distinguish it from the Convict Refuge and the  
 Certified Inebriate Reformatory.

(59)  
 per dozen'. Not long after they had settled in their financial  
 difficulties came to a head when Mr. Robson failed to produce the  
 money to meet the builder's bill. (60)  
 Bishop Griffiths advanced a  
 further £4400 to meet this crisis, thus saddling the venture with  
 a very substantial debt. Towards the end of the year another five  
 nuns were sent from Angers. By December 1843 there were 13 nuns,  
 (61)  
 19 penitents, a maid and a manservant.

The main event of 1844 was the opening of the first laundry.  
 The difficulty in starting this enterprise is clearly described by  
 the annalist:

'An advertisement was published in April for commencing the  
 Laundry. A cart and horse were bought to send and bring  
 the linen, the expense of which was £20. In addition to  
 the serious sum already mentioned, another heavy one was  
 contracted for all the great stoves, boilers and other  
 things necessary for the Laundry. Great expense had been  
 incurred in making Tanks under the Laundries and Wash  
 House, arched and well cemented for the reception of rain-  
 water: but unfortunately as rain was not at command, and  
 a great quantity of water was required, there was not  
 sufficient even to begin the first week. This was very  
 unfortunate and added greatly to the labour for there was  
 no remedy but putting a large cask into the cart and  
 bringing water from a great distance, which was done for  
 several months. Daniel, and our little horse Captain,  
 had many a trot up and down the lane to keep on the  
 washing, and even then many times water was wanting.

But this was not the only difficulty: the Penitents were  
 yet to form, and the Religious also, for they had not  
 been brought up to the profession. Several among them  
 were by no means ignorant as to the method of directing  
 Laundry affairs, yet to have them well and quickly  
 executed with such deficient means was a laborious matter.  
 The first washing was done in the last week of April and  
 the receipts for the first quarter was about £60, the  
 second about £130. This second was a very hard one.  
 About 35 families had sent their linen and the frequent  
 and heavy showers in June and July, so well attested by  
 haymakers and strawberry women, were also marked by the  
 new laundresses, who studied as they had never done  
 before, the clouds and the quarter of the wind. It  
 frequently happened that the things had to be dried in  
 the room where the stove was also used to heat the  
 irons. It was therefore by no means sufficiently  
 powerful to dry quickly. Consequently two or three  
nights in the week were also occupied in this, and thus



'it went on until a proper drying apparatus was made. From these inconveniences more than one of our dear sisters' health suffered, but it was in a good cause and their recompense is in store. Experience had to be gained for the wetting and the drying were equally ill-managed: but it was admirable to see our dear Sisters so laborious, so indefatigable, so humble, they stooped to every kind of work and many an obstinate and idle child for very shame went to the labour she was trying to avoid when she saw such examples before her. More than once the Religious, and once even the Superior with them, themselves did what the penitents had refused.'

(62)

This vivid account requires little commentary save the passing observation that the practice of drying the washing in the ironing room was a particular target of the Factory Acts when they were later applied to laundries. One might also note that both penitents and nuns engage in the actual work of the laundry. Whether this was intended or not, it was certainly in the spirit of the Constitutions with their emphasis on transformative work for both.

Needlework was the main form of work in the Good Shepherd houses on the continent, and remained so until the middle of the twentieth century. It was a tradition going back at least to the beginnings of the order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge. Although the Good Shepherd sisters in Britain always retained a small amount of needlework, the introduction of laundry work represented a major departure from customary practice. The economic and social factors that may have induced them to set up a laundry and to develop it as the dominant type of work are discussed in Chapters 6 and 9 below.

In May and June five more nuns arrived from Angers (Sister Fison had returned there earlier in the year) and at the end of 1844 there were 32 penitents in residence. (63)

In four years then, from a start of two sisters with £40, there was a community of 16 nuns living in their own house with a purpose built magdalen asylum and a laundry in full operation. It might be said that from this point the Good Shepherd

Sisters were fully established in Britain. Mother Pelletier wrote from Angers:

'.... our London is so miraculous and precious; we learn about your success with delight, my well loved daughter; it seems that our dear Sheep have increased a great deal and our works are going on well always ....'

(64)

Mother Regaudiat must have been very pleased with this approbation for during 1840 and 1841 she had very much wanted to give up the struggle to make a foundation in London. Mother Pelletier had visited London herself in June 1844 and given the work her encouragement. The Community Letter for that year says of Mother Regaudiat:

'.... despite her poor health, (she) presides at all the works; her devotion and zeal are untiring and know no bounds nor limits, despite the frequent visits she receives and the correspondence with which she deals. She presides always at the exercises of the Community, and yet finds the time to bring words of comfort to the dear penitents who greatly respect and love her. She has so adopted the English customs that one might believe she belongs to this nation; she has won the esteem and affection of some of the highest-ranking people of the kingdom, so much so that one of them said to our very honoured Mother (Pelletier), during her stay in England, that as long as she permitted them a Superior so prudent and well-informed, the London establishment would always prosper. The visit of (Mother Pelletier) seemed to have given her a new strength and new life; for her health, previously so variable, is manifestly improved, and we hope to keep her a long time yet.'

(65)

Hyperbole apart, this extract reveals the general superintendence of the superior over all aspects of the establishment and her assiduous attention to public relations with the influential and philanthropic. By this time Marchioness Wellesley had been joined by the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, the emigré Duke of Bordeaux, the Duchess of Leeds, Lord Petre, Lady Beddingfield, and other less titled but no less substantial and influential benefactors. (66) The laundry advertisement had not only brought in custom but had also attracted the attention of well-

wishers and increased the number of visitors and benefactors.

Although the nuns were manifestly gratified by their initial success in the laundry business, their real interest lay in the religious progress of the penitents. The Annals, a private journal of the community, the Community Letters to Angers, as well as annotations in the Entrance Book, catalogue conversations, communions, confirmations and deaths, like some kind of spiritual audit. Sometimes the stories are couched in language uncomfortable to a present day reader yet entirely typical of mid-nineteenth century roman catholic and protestant religiosity. In one instance, it is meticulously noted against the record of Isabella Silk's entrance on 10th November 1841 that she had subsequently become a consecrated penitent. Later annotations record that she entered the Magdalen Sisters as a novice in December 1852 but returned to the penitents' class in February 1853 as a consecrate. She made another attempt at the Magdalen Sisters in the same year and remained there until 1869 when she again returned to the class in her former status of consecrated penitent. (67)

In the Community Letter of 1844 it is noted how on 21st November:

'We renewed our vows before Monsignor Griffiths, and we took advantage of this happy occasion to hold the first communion of 13 of our penitents. Of this number 5 were Protestants, 3 were conditionally baptised and abjured their religion by a solemn profession of faith, the two other newly baptised, on whose brows the water of regeneration had not previously flowed, became children of the Church. They were dressed in white and accompanied by a very distinguished lady who had been chosen as their godmother .... Immediately after the tireless Prelate gave a most touching homily and confirmed the 13 penitents who had received the bread of life for the first time.'

(68)

Earlier in the same letter it is recorded:

'Two of our penitents died this year in excellent dispositions and fortified by the sacraments of the Church; their mortal remains rest in our cemetery.'

(69)

One of the deceased penitents was Mary Morgan, who presented herself at the Magdalen Asylum on 14th July 1844.<sup>(70)</sup> The annalist recorded of her:

'A Penitent died who had been but three months in the house. She had presented herself with so much sincerity and ardent desire for real conversion, that it was impossible to refuse her admission although she was rather a subject for a hospital than any other place. She had been directed to apply to us by a Protestant clergyman who had given her money to pay the omnibus. She was truly an edifying penitent. Her sufferings were intense but borne with great patience. Whether in consequence of some unskilfulness, or from some other cause after having her leg lanced, she lost her power of speech lay, for three days in her agony, making vain efforts to speak and in the greatest pain. A lady who visited her touched her leg incautiously and her screams were such as could never be forgotten; indeed the whole scene was most heart-rending, particularly as it was impossible to guess what she was most anxious to say. She is buried in our cemetery and her cross bears the name Perpetua.'

(71)

The name 'Perpetua' would have been the pseudonym that it was customary to give each penitent on entry. Isabella Silk was renamed 'Euphrasia'. Each penitent was known only by this name while in the Magdalen Asylum. It was a device to provide a measure of protective anonymity as well as the symbolism of a break with the past. If a penitent went on to become a consecrated penitent she was given yet another name. If she went on further to become a Magdalen Sister she was renamed again in just the same way as any Good Shepherd nun. Only the Superior and the Mistress of Penitents were supposed to know a penitent's real name. Otherwise the sisters referred to them as 'the children', however adult they might be. Apart from emphasising dependency, re-socialisation, and 'the second innocence of penance', as the 1841 circular put it, the practice expressed the nuns' own sense of their vocation as mothers. The penitents addressed them as 'Mother'. The nuns especially regarded the consecrated penitents as their adopted children.

The Circular Letter of 1846 had this to say about one of the women who had just been admitted to Consecration after 4 years in the penitents' class:

'She had been sent by a Protestant magistrate on her discharge from prison; this gentleman told us it was only a trial, for it had needed two policemen to bring her to us. This poor child was not even baptised. She was received here for the necessary instruction; the grace of the sacrament regenerated her; since she has been a Catholic, we notice with great comfort that she takes care of her character and works hard day by day to curb her violence, to respond to the grace she had received from the Divine Saviour. Her companions, delighted by her gentleness, begged for her the dress of consecration.'

(72)

There are many such accounts and they are characteristic of the Annals, Community Letters and the private correspondence of sisters. This particular Community Letter concluded:

'.... since the beginning of our foundation, we count 25 Protestants converted, 3 solemn baptisms, the others have been conditionally baptised; 60 have received confirmation, and 64 have made their first communions.'

(73)

The Annals, unlike the Community Letters, also record the cases which seemed to be failures or where the outcome was uncertain. Three of these will suffice to complete the picture of the pivotal concerns of the Good Shepherd Sisters:

'A young Irish girl caused much pain by her imprudent want of caution in speaking of herself, as her misery could not have been too carefully concealed, since she said the cause of it was a minister of God's Church. She was well educated, had a good memory and wonderful precocity of judgement. Unhappily she related her story to some of her companions, and although much was done to prevent the consequences, and from time to time they seemed dormant, the result was that she too was obliged to quit the Asylum later.'

(74)

The second woman was Emma Briggs:

'.... about 40 years of age according to her own account but she appeared a dozen years older. When the Superioress and the First Mistress went to the parlour and had heard a little of what she had to say, she remained silent for some time whilst a short conversation passed between the Religious. Our dear Sister Irene having made some unfavourable remark, she heard her out and then said, 'I understand French'. This person was received and named Josephine. She went on pretty quietly until the Sisters arrived in May from Angers, and then she betrayed great uneasiness for she well knew that one amongst them was well acquainted with her history. Our dear Sister Ursula knew something of her, how much she was uncertain or whether it would not be divulged. She had assumed a fictitious character, she had done very much harm by lending herself to the enemies of our holy Religion. At this time she passed for a convert but wished to be thought the person who had written against convents under the name of Maria Monk. Thinking herself partly discovered, she was from time to time a source of great trouble, although her conduct was not positively such as would justify her expulsion, and the Penitents seemed to see through her and consequently not to be injured by her conversation .... such a character was a real burden, but frequently, attacks of illness, accompanied by fits of repentance which might have been sincere at the time prolonged her stay.'

(75)

Anne Mullaney was one of the very first women to enter the refuge in the old King Street days. She had become a consecrated penitent and in August 1844 she had been sent to Angers with Mary Kenny, a fellow penitent, to become Magdalen Sisters, as a community of Magdalen Sisters had not yet been started at Hammersmith. A later annalist annotated in the margin:

'She made her profession as a Magdalen after much inconstancy at Easter 1856. She was sent back a few years afterwards with the name of Magdalen of St. Theresa. She was most unsatisfactory and strange and finally was sent to the Lunatic Asylum at Colney Hatch. The last we heard of her was as one of the worst cases they had.'

(76)

And of Mary Kenny it was later noted:

'After a series of deceptions, pretended ecstasies etc. she was sent back to England where she continued the same course until all the priests of this diocese were

'forbidden to hear her confession. In 1853 she applied to be readmitted among our Penitents but was refused.'

(77)

These accounts have been quoted at some length in order to reflect their frequency in the convent and Magdalen Asylum documents; to stress the centrality of these religious concerns to the sisters. The Magdalen Asylum, like the convent itself, was about transformation from sin to salvation. The laundry activity, and any other work, must be understood in that context. The accounts reflect the way the sisters see the penitents and their work with them. It is possible to build up another kind of profile through the analysis of entrance books and other documents.

The main working record kept by the sisters was the Penitents Entrance Book. At Hammersmith, three of these registers span the period of this research. Most of them are entered up well but occasionally the information recorded is reduced to the barest essentials of name and date, probably because of the exigencies of the moment; perhaps a shortage of nuns, or a rush of women seeking admission. Only in the later years was the information ordered in columns. For the most part the form of the entry varies with the Mistress of Penitents. These registers are ordered chronologically by date of admission, and normally record the name and the assigned pseudonym, age, place of origin, method of referral, date of departure, and (where appropriate) a note of the reason for dismissal. Whenever a penitent goes on to consecration or enters the Magdalen Convent, an appropriate annotation is made; baptisms, confirmations and first communions are similarly recorded. Sometimes the sisters enter the reason for a voluntary departure. These annotations were squeezed into the space allotted to the original entry, or were even written across it. In general the registers reflect the institutional growth of the magdalen asylum.

By 1890 the second volume contains less information on religious matters, and a tendency to routine entries is very evident in the third volume.

The annotations provide an interesting glimpse into the way the sisters saw some of the penitents. They are generally brief but convey much, as some of the comments found among the 1888 entries reveal:

'ran away over the wall and not to be taken back'

'not a Penitent, a young lady, no shelter'

'doing harm to others, bad spirit, would not work'

'caused a great disturbance by her violent behaviour'

'only made a lodging of it until she could get help'

'bad conversation, had a policeman to put her out'

'Puseyite - wanted to remain in her own religion and left'

And of one who had previously been in the Good Shepherd magdalen asylums in Liverpool and Manchester, it was noted:

'put out after having behaved abominably, cutting up her clothes, her fare being paid by our Mother to Liverpool, to get her out of London, a great grumbler also.'

(78)

The entrance books also provide a source for quantitative data, although their analysis has constituted a very formidable task. One particular difficulty is that at no point do they record the actual number of penitents in the asylum at any fixed date. The only opportunity afforded for a ready calculation occurs at 1866 when the second entrance book was started. The names of all the penitents still resident who



had been admitted prior to 1866 were re-entered. For any other year, before or since 1866, it is necessary to go back through the entrance books to identify those still in residence. A Provincial Register was kept from 1856 to 1869 and records the total numbers in the magdalen asylums on a biennial basis; other more sporadic information on the point can be gleaned from the Community Letters and the Annals. This data is set out at Appendix 1: Table 2. The entrance books have been used to calculate annual admissions, the percentage of penitents who left during the year of their admission, and the period of residence. This information is tabulated, together with annual laundry receipts, at Appendix 2: Tables 1 & 2. It is set in comparative context in Appendix 1: Tables 3 - 5, where similar calculations are tabulated for the magdalen asylums at Glasgow, Bristol, and Finchley, the only other Good Shepherd asylums for which complete sets of entrance books are extant. The years 1866, 1878, 1888, and 1908 were selected for a more detailed analysis of the age structure, and this is shown at Appendix 2: Tables 3 & 4.

The fuller information for 1866, together with the first entrance book, has been used to construct a complete profile of the Penitents Class at Hammersmith on the 31st December 1866. When the pre-1866 admissions had been brought forward into the second entrance book, much of the information had been summarised even further. Consequently, it was necessary to go back through the first volume to recover fuller information about each of the penitents still resident who had been admitted in former years. The Death Register was also searched forward to 1920 for the whole of the 1866 Class to determine the penitents who had stayed in the magdalen asylum permanently and to complete the information on those who had become consecrated penitents. The results of this analysis are shown at Appendix 2: Tables 5(a) - (g).

On 31st December 1866 there were 102 penitents in the class, of whom

75 were women admitted prior to 1866. The other 27 penitents comprised those who had remained out of the 57 who were admitted during the course of 1866. The departure rate of 52% within that cohort of admission is in the higher range for the whole period 1841-1911, for which the average was 40%; although the total number of admissions is very close to the average for the previous ten years. The departure rate was higher than at Glasgow and very much higher than Bristol. Immediately we gain an impression of a class in which a substantial stable element co-existed with much movement among those more-recent admissions. By 1866 the class had been established for nearly a quarter of a century, yet it still held a significant number of women from the early years. Indeed, 20% had been admitted prior to 1856, and another 13% between then and 1860. About three-quarters of the women had been recommended by other people, predominantly clergy, although there are some interesting differences within the class. The proportion of self-referrals was very much higher for the women admitted in 1866 than for those admitted previously, but more akin to the pattern in the 1844 class. Among the thirty penitents from the 1866 admissions who left during that year, the proportion of self-referrals was even higher, standing at over a third. Perhaps it suggests that those whose entrance was less manifestly influenced by other people felt more able to leave. It is more likely, however, that this group of women were among the more desolate; vagrant young prostitutes of the streets, not given to seeking help from the clergy or others, and with little or no stable human contact. They probably came to the magdalen asylum for temporary physical relief, and returned to their former lives after some respite, or when the institutional restrictions became more than they could bear. A third of them left within a month, and well over half had gone before three months had elapsed.

Over a third of the women in the class who had been admitted

prior to 1866 were under 20 years old when they were originally admitted to the magdalen asylum, compared with only a fifth of those admitted in the course of 1866. In the class as a whole, well over a half were under thirty years old and this pattern remained fairly consistent for 1878, 1888, and 1908 as well. Women between 20 and 24 years old comprised the largest age group, although in the other three years the under-twenties made up the largest group. As the century proceeded there was a tendency for the age range of first admissions to extend to the 40 and 50 year old women as well. At 31st December 1866 about a quarter of the women who had been admitted prior to 1866 were over 40 years old. Even so, the average age of the class was 22 years, and it remained approximately the same throughout the nineteenth century. The total age structure of the December 1866 class is very similar to that of the classes in the other years.

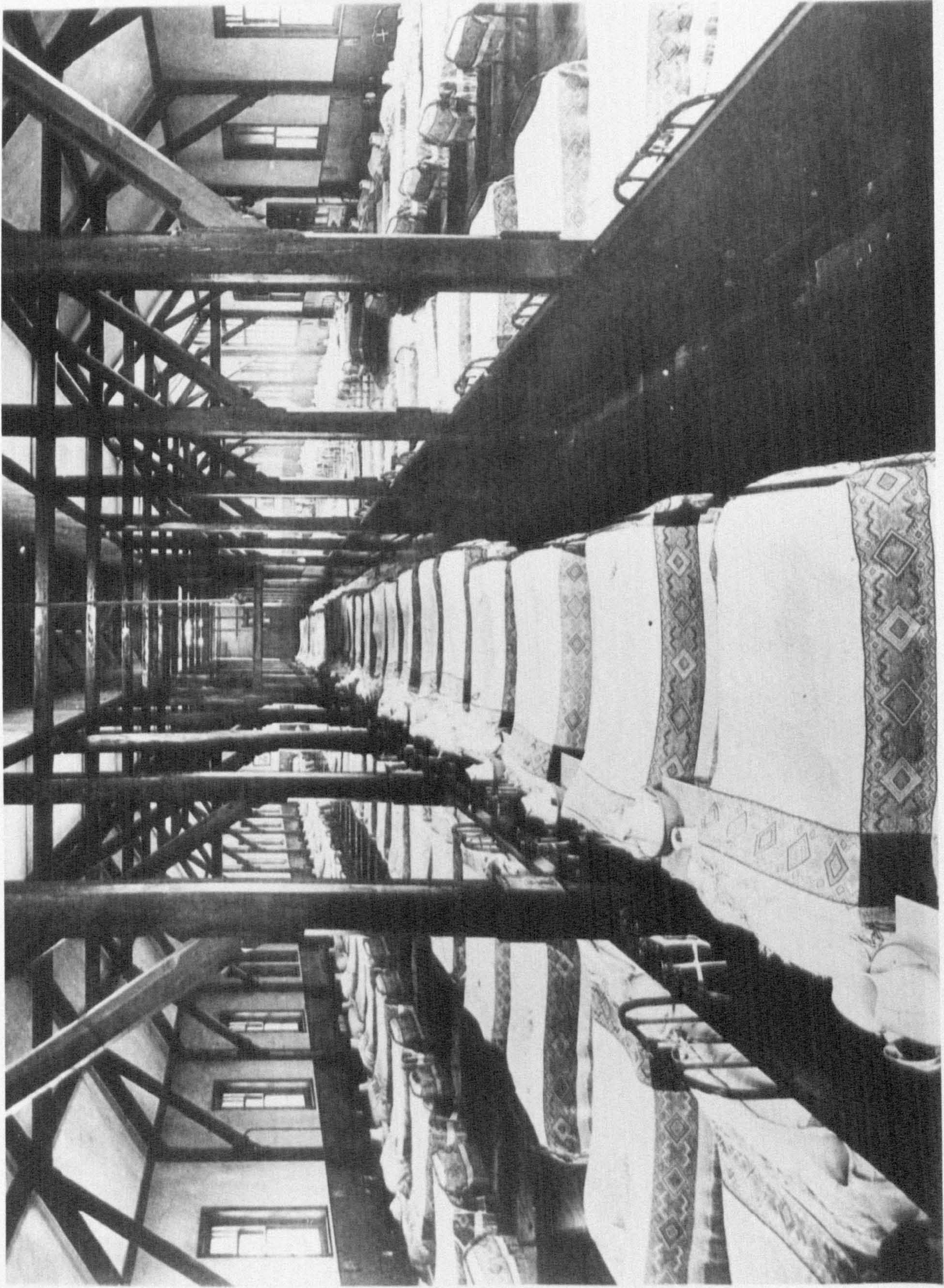
The preponderance of younger women among the penitents may be construed in several ways. It may simply reflect the concentration of prostitutes in the 15-25 year old age group. Such an interpretation would be entirely consistent with the aims of an institution primarily directed to the reclamation of prostitutes, and provides some statistical confirmation for the principle of Specificity of Commitment. It confirms Finnegan's study of prostitution in nineteenth century York and Tait's (79) 1842 analysis of similar women in Edinburgh at that time. In part, it may also reflect an admissions policy that viewed the younger group as more amenable to re-socialisation; but this has to be set against the high number within the age group who left within three or four months. On balance the presenting age pattern is one that might have been expected in such an institution, simply because it reflects the nature of the target population.

It remains to see what evidence the statistical data affords on the actual work of conversion and reformation. In the first place,

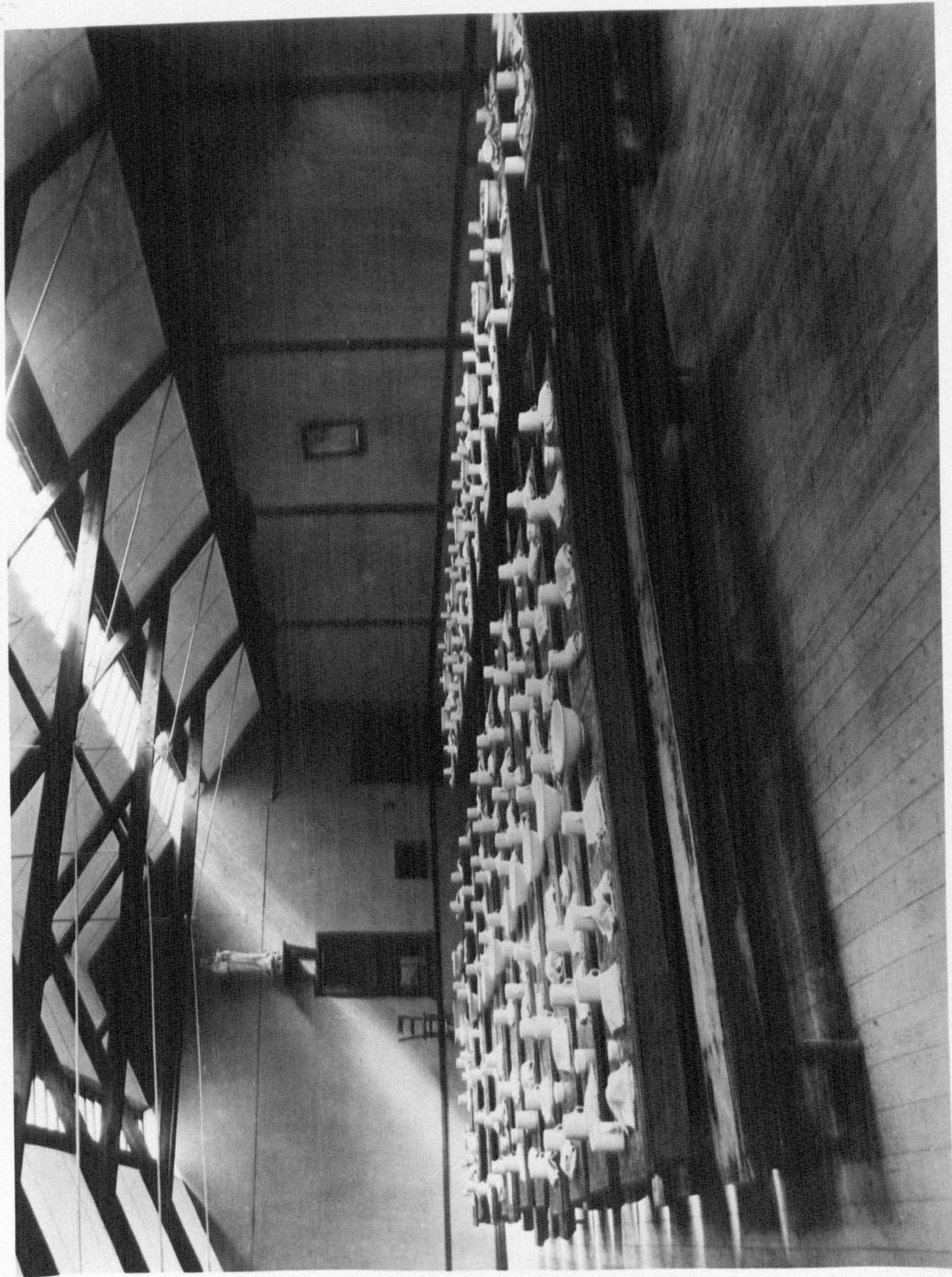
there are the records of baptisms, confirmations, and first communions - the christian initiation ceremonies. Among the pre-1866 group, over a half had received one or more of these sacraments. For the most part they were women from a nominally roman catholic background. Some, often additionally recorded in the convent annals in ebullient style, were protestants who had converted. About a third of the 1866 entry had undergone similar ceremonies while in the magdalen asylum. Quite apart from the difficulty of interpreting events which are theologically understood to represent inner states of change, there is the possibility of an implicit compulsion to conversion. Common prayer and daily attendance at mass were compulsory. There would have been strong pressures towards religious normalisation intrinsic to institutional life; not only in terms of the formal rules, but also in terms of the penitent's own perception of her standing in the eyes of 'the Mothers' and among the other penitents. Perhaps the most that can be said on this type of evidence is that the overwhelming majority of the penitents had been brought at least to the overt routine practice of their religion. It is probably safe to assume, with a few exceptions, that the penitents who did not receive these initiation sacraments in the magdalen asylum had already received them in their home churches. None of the women in the 1866 admission cohort who left in the same year received these sacraments during their stay in the magdalen asylum. It may have been that they were devoid of any particular interest in the matter, or not in residence sufficiently long for any influence to be effective. It may have been that the constant emphasis on chastity and conversion, conveyed by symbols and arrangements as much as by the direct words of the preacher or the mistress's instructions, deepened a sense of shame and precipitated their departure from the magdalen asylum. We can only speculate.

A more reliable indication of religious progress may possibly be derived from the record of the consecrated penitents. In December 1866 20% of the class were consecrated penitents, all drawn from the pre-1866 admissions, and 17 of them had been there for ten years or more. Their role and status has already been described in Chapter 2. It is considered further in Chapter 6 and analysed sociologically in Chapter 8. Suffice it to remark here that they were the stable core of the class. Quite apart from the social status to be derived from the organisational and ideological function, becoming a consecrated penitent may be viewed as valid evidence of moral and religious progress within the terms set by the magdalen asylum. These women committed themselves for life and many persevered in that commitment, despite the freedom not to renew the annual vows. Nineteen of them eventually died in the magdalen asylum: all had been there at least 10 years and one for as long as 58 years. They lived under a more rigorous religious rule than the other penitents, and they were spared none of the harsher realities of the institutional regime; the hard work and the total lack of privacy occasioned by collective eating and sleeping (Photographs 1 - 3). There may have developed among them a certain institutional inertia, but this is more likely to have been the case with those long-stay penitents who did not aspire to consecrated status. A further six of the pre-1966 group went on to become consecrates, and one from among those admitted in 1866. Four women had tried themselves in the Magdalen Convent, which then numbered about 15 professed magdalen sisters; two had returned to the class as consecrated penitents and two left altogether. Out of the whole class, 2 women went on later to become magdalen sisters.

The eventual outcome has been traced for nearly all the women in the class on 31st December 1866. The two largest groups, each accounting for approximately 25% of the class, were those who remained



Photograph 1: The Dormitory at Ford (Liverpool) c.1895



Photograph 2: The Refectory at Wavertree (Liverpool) 1902



Photograph 3. The Class at Ford (Liverpool) c.1895



in permanent residence and those who simply left of their own volition. This does seem, in practice, substantially to confirm the voluntary principle. The next largest group, about 14%, were placed in employment found for them by the sisters, usually domestic service. Among the remainder, 9% returned to their families, 7% were dismissed, and 4% were transferred to other Good Shepherd establishments. We do not know what happened to the large group who departed voluntarily. They must have been generally satisfactory in their conduct and work, at the very least of tolerable behaviour, and holding to the sisters the possibility of a more sustained transformation. Otherwise, the sisters would have dismissed them. They all remained for at least a year, many for up to four years. In those circumstances it is unlikely that the nuns accounted their departure a success in the same way as those who remained indefinitely, safe from secular temptation; or like those who had been placed in employment or with their families. They remain a puzzle. The sisters must have come to know them well, yet their departure is marked in the entrance book with a perfunctory 'left' and the date. It may have been that at a certain point room had to be made for new admissions. In that situation this group of penitents, who may have been showing no particular progress, may have been influenced to leave in a manner that fell short of open dismissal. On the other hand, they may have been women who were influenced to leave because their increasing institutionalisation was inimical to any further progress. Yet it is doubtful whether a nineteenth century nun would have perceived institutionalisation in the same way as a twentieth century observer. These women may have preferred the physical security and the limited comforts of the institution to the greater rigours to be faced outside; only leaving when they perceived better chances for themselves in the secular world, or when they could tolerate

the quasi-monastic existence no longer. In which case they would have been basically no different from those who had left much more quickly. These are plausible possibilities but we cannot know for sure.

Finally, we may note that 30% of the women in the 1866 class remained in the magdalen asylum for a quarter of a century or more. Most of them died there. Nearly 20% stayed between 10 and 25 years, and 6% between 5 and 9 years. The picture remains that of a class with a predominantly long-term membership, and with a core group permanently committed to helping the sisters in the running of the magdalen asylum. They could not have managed the establishment without them. At this stage only four nuns were directly responsible for the conduct of the magdalen asylum, and a further four were employed in the laundry; eight nuns to run a class of 102 women in all its  
(80)  
different institutional aspects.

All in all the statistical analysis seems to reveal substantial success within the objectives to which the nuns were committed. Neither we nor they can know the long-term fate of those who left to go to their families or into pre-arranged employment, but in the context of the event it is likely to have been adjudged by the sisters as a satisfactory outcome. Together with those who were transferred to other Good Shepherd houses, usually to help as trusted penitents, and the permanent residents, they comprised over 50% of the 1866 class. Judged within its own terms, and mindful of the many difficult factors involved in any attempt to reform prostitutes in the victorian context, that appears to have been a considerable achievement. However it has to be said again that we are dealing with external quantified traces of an essentially inner transformation. The manifest change to social conformity of those whose departure the sisters arranged only testifies to that fact, and permits no more than an assumption

that the nuns thought that their religious faith and practice was strong enough to enable them to resist worldly temptations. For many of those who remained, the evidence is persuasive, but we can never know the true degree of their inner conversion. In any case, for the sisters themselves that would have been a matter of hope, even though they occasionally succumbed to the entirely human temptation to adjudge spiritual progress by observable events. They cannot be held to account for that when the facticity and objective effectiveness of the sacraments was a central feature of traditional roman catholic theology.

The convent annals and the private correspondence of the nuns gives us much direct evidence of the ways in which they perceived the life of the magdalen asylum. For the penitents themselves there is little; only two of their letters have been recovered. As sparse as it is, this evidence still gives us an interesting insight into two quite different perceptions of the magdalen asylum.

The earlier one was written in 1869 by a 39 year old woman. She had first been admitted to the magdalen asylum at Hammersmith in 1848, when she was 18 years old, on the recommendation of a priest; having come to London from rural Hertfordshire. Late in the fourth year of her stay Rose, as she had been named in the magdalen asylum, started her probation as a consecrated penitent but left six months later at her own request. Within another six months she had returned and remained in the class as Marianne for seven years, eventually returning to the home of her aunt in 1860. Later, she must have gone back to London for the letter of 1869 was written from the Magdalen Hospital, a protestant charity for 'penitent prostitutes' founded in 1758.

Her letter, of singular punctuation and spelling, was addressed

to Pope Pius IX and begged him to get her re-admitted to the magdalen asylum. It is a remarkable letter which completely captures the religious spirit of the Good Shepherd work. 'I chose to be hidden again from this perfidious world', she says, and concludes with a request for the Pope's prayers that she may become an anchoress. The letter is reproduced fully in Appendix 2, with a modern rendering. Pius IX sent the letter on to Archbishop Manning and Marianne was admitted for the third time in 1871 under the name of Petronilla - presumably an indexical reference to the Pope's hand in the matter. She was then 41 years old and the annalist recorded that her first words were 'Mother, may I go back to the Mangle as before.'

Three years later she was received into Perpetual Consecration and re-named Theresa of the Seven Sorrows; all the consecrated penitents were given the latter part of that appellation. It is said that on the day of her consecration she wanted to write to the pope as 'he will be so glad to hear it'. The nuns regarded it as a miracle in itself that she had never told any of the penitents of the pope's part in her admission. She was considered a good and faithful person, perhaps a little eccentric; no doubt an essential part of any hagiography. She wore her cap down over her face and the other penitents found it difficult to make her out. She died of heart disease in October (81) 1887 aged 55 years. The letter requires little commentary. It reveals an understanding of penitence and seclusion which is entirely consistent with the Good Shepherd ideology. Theresa's history gives a vivid picture of the struggle and setbacks that must have beset many penitents whose perseverance only gradually came to match the sincerity of their conversions. Perhaps her story tells us something of the large group of voluntary leavers. It might be thought that she tried to return to the magdalen asylum when the prospect of a

life of increasing penury and shame faced her starkly in middle-age.

The fact that she wrote that particular letter to Pius IX, a wholly exceptional action for an ordinary roman catholic, strongly suggests the sincerity of her spiritual motivation.

The other letter, also to be found in Appendix 2, was written in 1894 by a married or widowed woman of 35 years old. She had presented herself and remained only six weeks. The letter, written after she had left, is addressed to the eminent politician Joseph Chamberlain. Although she said that she intended to return to the magdalen asylum, she never did. The letter is well written and we can only speculate on her relationship with Chamberlain; she may have been one of his former domestic employees now fallen on bad times. 'Annette' asked Chamberlain to send her some money 'to buy some little things', although she would not have been allowed to retain anything personal, let alone money, once she had re-entered the magdalen asylum. She acknowledges that the nuns are kind to her but she had to leave in order to write the letter, adding as a postscript that the nuns read all the letters to the penitents before passing them on; or not presumably. The letter provides a minor vignette of another kind of penitent; a short-stay woman from a much more respectable background than usual; a woman who clearly had something to hide. Otherwise, it gives us specific evidence of the type of control the nuns exercised over the penitents' communication with the outside world.

From the penitents we turn once more to the nuns and the problems they experienced in the training and supply of adequate religious personnel for the many tasks in the magdalen asylum. Apart from the *tourière* sisters, who could be recruited and trained locally, Hammersmith depended entirely on Angers for its religious sisters. It was a basic part of Mother Pelletier's concept of the generalate that all the

nuns should receive a common training in the motherhouse. In terms of cohesiveness, loyalty to the centre, and rational deployment this had obvious merits. However, the very success of the congregation in establishing itself on a world-wide basis, even at this very early date, placed a great strain on the available nun-power. Already the concept of the central novitiate was being eroded in practice to meet the pressing needs at Hammersmith. By the end of 1844, 5 of the 12 sisters sent over since the first arrival of Mother Regaudiat and her companion were novices. Of one it is openly admitted:

'.... our very honoured Mother consented to send her a little before her profession in order to help in the laundry.'

(82)

This sister still had 6 months of a two year novitiate left. Three of the others were sent over with only one year of the novitiate training behind them. Sister Kearsley, who arrived in June 1841, had only been in the novitiate for six months. It was, of course, an accepted practice that part of the novitiate training included time with the penitents. This, though, was meant to be under the direct control of the novice mistress. The principle was breached even further early in 1845 when Mother Pelletier gave permission for two young women to enter at Hammersmith as lay-sister novices on the ground that the available nuns at Angers either lacked English or laundry management skills.<sup>(83)</sup> The following year Emma Raimbach, a recent convert and daughter of the famous engraver Abraham Raimbach, was admitted directly as a choir novice. This was a particularly interesting exception as she was allowed to remain in secular dress, even after her profession. Thus enabling her to maintain her influential protestant connections and to continue her profession as miniature portrait painter to the benefit of the convent income.<sup>(84)</sup> Even without denying the primacy

of the religious concerns for the sisters, it is already evident that the foundress herself is curtailing the basic training of the nuns in order to meet the staffing requirements of the magdalen asylum and the laundry.

During the rest of the 1840's and well into the 1850's the question of a local novitiate, and by implication local control, became a matter of considerable dissension between Hammersmith and Angers. A dispute in which Bishop Wiseman, soon to be first Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, took an active and provoking part. The interplay of issues and interests during these ten years were very complex. At the higher level of ecclesiastical politics, it was a question of the newly restored English roman catholic hierarchy seeking to establish an adequate jurisdiction over nuns in their dioceses; a particularly contentious question where a religious order was organised on an international basis with a Superior General, often in another country. At the intermediate level of the congregation itself, it was a question of maintaining central control over both recruitment and finance, for novices normally took their assets to Angers. At the local level of Hammersmith itself, the imperative question, quite apart from Wiseman's constant pressures for his own ends, was to find sufficient funds and sufficient English recruits to meet an increasing demand for the admission of penitents; a demand exacerbated by the influx of Irish immigrants due to the famine.

These muted but deeply acrimonious negotiations became very intricate and closely involved the Roman authorities. Despite the fact that a normal diocesan organisation had been restored to England, the bishops still had to relate to the Pope through the Roman department concerned with missionary affairs. For present purposes it is sufficient to note that Hammersmith had its own novitiate from September 1849 and from then on the professions were controlled by Wiseman. Largely

as a result of episcopal lobbying led by Wiseman, the Roman authorities in 1855 decided that the Good Shepherd congregation should be divided into provinces roughly coincident with national boundaries. It would be fair to infer from the available evidence that Mother Pelletier resisted this development vigorously but finally accepted it with good grace. In the traditions of Angers a greater blame seemed to have attached itself to the Hammersmith nuns than the historical  
(85)  
evidence warrants.

During the period 1846-1855 and for some time after relations between Hammersmith and Angers were strained. From 1849 to 1856 Hammersmith sent no Community Letters and between 1850 and 1854 there is no record of any letter from Mother Pelletier to Mother Regaudiat or her successor. During these years Hammersmith not only set up its own novitiate but also made separate foundations in Glasgow and Bristol, and very nearly set itself up as a separate religious order. With the establishment of provinces, Hammersmith became the provincial house with a regular novitiate and its superior was also the provincial superior. The provincial superior had a considerable measure of local control and was answerable to the Superior General at Angers. Consequently, in describing the development and growth of the Hammersmith convent a description of the growth of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Britain is necessarily entailed.

So far as the laundry was concerned, the experience gained in the first years and the volume of demand quickly led to the building of a mangling room, a large drain from the wash house to the river,  
(86)  
and a new artesian well. The annual receipts for 1845 were £640  
(87)  
which was ten times the earnings from needlework in the same year.

Until 1877, when steam machinery was introduced, there were almost continual improvements to the laundry facilities and a steady growth of receipts. The annalist noted in 1847 that there was so much work to



be done in the laundry that the religious processions had to be restricted to Sundays only.<sup>(88)</sup> Perhaps an early sign that the means was encroaching on the sovereignty of the end. An appeal to Angers for further assistance led to the arrival of two more nuns:

'as so many of our dear Sisters suffered much from fatigue in the laundry'.

(89)

Towards the end of 1847 it was decided to launch an appeal for funds to enlarge the Magdalen Asylum. Until now 60 penitents had been supported:

'.... and in general there was full employment of work and washing for all'.

(90)

The decision to enlarge the asylum is sincerely attributed to the influx of Irish and the need of:

'the thousands in London, every large town is swarming with these poor victims of vice, and only one place of refuge is open to these erring children.'

(91)

Yet it is not inconceivable that the labour demands of the laundry were at least one factor in the decision. Institutions can develop their own logic of growth.

The success of the laundry is reflected in an interesting way at this time. For some years Mother Regaudiat had been trying to gain an exemption from the Poor Rate, or at least a reduction. Quite apart from the obvious financial advantage, it had become a matter of principle as the local authority seemed to impugn the charitable status of the magdalen asylum. At its meeting on 26th February 1847 the Hammersmith Vestry noted:

'Madame Regaudiat has appealed to the Quarter Sessions against the assessment of the premises in the Fulham

'Road known by the name of the Asylum of the Good Shepherd and that the Assistant Judge had decided against the assessment, considering she had no beneficial occupation in the same, but would give a case on the subject for the Queen's Bench.'

(92)

A motion to drop all proceedings against the Good Shepherd was defeated and it was agreed to take counsel's opinion. Sir Frederick Thesinger's opinion was not favourable to the vestrymen. Despite a substantial majority in favour of not enforcing the Poor Rate, the Parish continued to demand its payment. The convent, for its part, continued to withhold payment until the matter was resolved by agreement in 1856. Even then the convent insisted that it was no more than a concession from its established legal claim to exemption. It may have been simply the prejudice against roman catholics, typical of the day, that prevented the vestrymen from accepting a legal decision favouring the nuns. It may have been a reflection of the current hostility to the burdens imposed by the new Poor Law.<sup>(93)</sup> It is not improbable that there was an understandable degree of resentment against an application for exemption from a successful laundry, whatever else it called itself, which numbered among its customers many eminent and titled people. There would have been little acknowledgement, and possibly less sympathy, for the fact that the net revenue from the laundry supported the work of reclaiming fallen or destitute women and girls. This attitude is one that persists and is most evident in later attempts to apply the Factory Acts.

The appeal for funds to build additional accommodation for the penitents was extended to provide for a church to be designed by Pugin. As part of the fund-raising exercise Sister Raimbach wrote a novel called 'The Home of the Lost Child: A Tale of the Asylum of the Good Shepherd'. This book certainly helped to draw support for the magdalen

asylum but it was a source of dispute among the sisters themselves. One of the results of the attention attracted to the enlargement of the asylum and the building of the new church was the procurement of 'more permanent washing' i.e. a regular clientele:

'We have, thanks to God, much work, the laundry brings in a large revenue; as for the needlework it is the merest trifle.'

(94)

By April 1850 the laundry was bringing in about £30 per week  
(95)  
and there were 80 penitents in the house. In the same year the sisters were asked to make foundations in Bristol and Glasgow. These were successfully established in 1851, but not without considerable difficulty  
(96)  
in finding suitably experienced nuns to lead the new houses. A request for help from Angers was met with a curt refusal by the General Council:

'Doubtless we are not ignorant of the qualities necessary for a good Mistress of Penitents, and our very honoured Mother is better capable of judging them, than either you or ourselves, from the experience she has acquired and on which she has formed her daughters.'

(97)

It is interesting to note that the new Bristol foundation was having the same difficulties in setting up a laundry as Hammersmith had experienced in 1844:

'The new children whom they received had to be formed for the laundry; like all beginners they did not always succeed; bad management or accidents caused the linen not to look well or to please their employers, who were, we believe, very difficult to please.'

(98)

Life was not all conversions, laundries, and financial worries. There were other matters concerning the reputation of the house which throw light on the type of women and girls admitted to the magdalen

asylum. During this period the sisters had to cope with two very difficult penitents who brought them to the attention of the civil authorities.

Mary Harrigan, a sixteen year old Irish girl, was admitted in December 1846 on the recommendation of a Bristol priest:

'She was changeable in everything except naughtiness. One night, very late, she determined to leave, but as the next day was Sunday, and that it was already dark and too late to walk to London, this was refused and she became insulting and violent. A policeman was sent for and requested to take care of her for the night, and as she had no house or friends to go to he took her to the poor house. On the Monday she was taken before the Magistrate at Hammersmith, for in the poor house she had said many strange things about the Asylum and the Penitents being forced to the Catholic Religion.'

(99)

The sisters received a summons to appear at Hammersmith Magistrates Court where, among other things, Mary claimed 'they did put a stocking down my throat with the copper stick'. At this point the magistrate's credulity was stretched too far, whereupon the proceedings were stopped and the sisters exonerated.

(100)

In October 1851 Angelina Adams arrived with a letter from a London priest introducing her as a remarkable case of conversion. When she was taken to the class she was immediately recognised by some of the penitents as 'cracky Rose', a nickname they had given her three years previously for refusing food. It turned out she had been admitted to the magdalen asylum in February 1848, when she was 18 years old, under her real name of Mary Burke. She had left on her own initiative some eight months later and was described in the Entrance Book as incorrigible. She became difficult when her true identity was revealed and was dismissed the next day 'on account of her insincerity'. The day after she returned with two policemen demanding the return of her clothes and alleging that her hair had been cut off. The Hammersmith

magistrate committed her to the Old Bailey on a charge of perjury. According to a newspaper account, the evidence of the witnesses at her trial in November 1851 established her perjury, but the jury found her not guilty. Three months later she was admitted again under her real name. She eventually became a consecrated penitent and died  
(101)  
in the asylum in 1866.

What with managing a group of women and girls, who by any reckoning must have been very difficult; the problems with Cardinal Wiseman, Rome and Mother Pelletier at Angers; the financial difficulties; and the public relations problems with the parish vestrymen and the court cases; it is surprising that there was any progress at all. Yet in 1854 it was decided to make a second major enlargement of both the asylum and the laundry.<sup>(102)</sup> For the next twenty years there were about 100 penitents in the class and the annual laundry receipts increased from £1,804 to £2,459.<sup>(103)</sup> The class of Magdalen Sisters was also flourishing; there were about six novices of whom three made their vows in 1856. By the end of the decade a further foundation had been made at Liverpool.

A reformatory school had been established at the Bristol convent in 1856. It was soon in considerable demand as the only such school  
(104)  
for roman catholic girls in the whole of the country. To relieve this demand it was decided to start one at Hammersmith in 1857. To make space the Magdalen Sisters were moved into two rented houses adjacent to the convent; the nuns gave up their community room and some cells. Within a few months the new venture had been visited  
(105)  
and approved by Rev. Sydney Turner, H.M.I. of Reformatory Schools.

In August the first two girls were sent by the magistrates and by the end of the year there were 5 in St. Joseph's class, as the nuns called it. (106)

Clearly this work with girls under detention was among the categories developed by Mother Pelletier at Angers, but the motives for its introduction might appear somewhat mixed. About the same time the Glasgow sisters were also setting up a reformatory school. They frankly acknowledged that it was a development necessary to offset the difficulties in maintaining their 40 penitents. The reformatory school work was financed by the Treasury on a per capita weekly maintenance basis with parents liable to weekly charges up to five shillings. In 1858 the government grant for the reformatory girls at Hammersmith had brought in £413. <sup>(107)</sup> Furthermore, whereas the penitents were often initially unfit for the heavy laundry work due to malnutrition and living rough, the reformatory girls were in a much better condition on their transfer from prison. In addition, their availability for laundry work was far more predictable. They were sentenced to detention for periods between two and five years. The registers indicate an average stay of four years. <sup>(108)</sup> It is not denied that there were external ecclesiastical pressures on the sisters to take up this kind of work. Nor was it contrary to Good Shepherd practice. Yet the evidence is at least suggestive of the degree to which the laundry work was beginning to orientate policy on the kind of work to be undertaken by the sisters.

In 1858 the sisters at Hammersmith were confronted with a problem of a type that is recurrent throughout the history of the Good Shepherd convents in Britain. The convent grounds were surveyed for a proposed railway from Fulham to Hammersmith. The sisters, not unexpectedly, took a dim view of a business which:

'.... authorised men uninvited to come into our enclosure.'

(109)

The 'calamity of the Railroad', as they came to call it, hung over them until 1863 when they sought the help of Lord Petre and two

influential roman catholic lawyers, Mr. Hope Scott and Mr. Serjeant Bellasis. Mr. Hope Scott advised them to purchase neighbouring gardens to act as a kind of no-man's-land between the boundary wall and the proposed viaduct, which was to be 14 feet high. In the meantime they drew up a petition to Parliament where Mr. Charles Langdale M.P. appeared before a House of Lords Committee on their behalf. To their immense relief that particular Railway Bill was rejected.<sup>(110)</sup>

Time and time again this sort of danger to the enclosure recurs. It often arose from railway development, and later in the century from urban building adjacent to the convents. Although Mr. Hope Scott's remedy was not required on this occasion, the notion of a 'buffer zone' became a normal response to the threat of encroachment. At Cardiff and Bristol the height of the walls was increased. At Cardiff because a railway had cut across the property; and at Bristol to make it impossible for the top deck passengers on the newly introduced trams to see over a wall that had done well enough with pedestrians.<sup>(111)</sup>

The reformatory school class had increased to 25 by 1859 but the crowded conditions at Hammersmith made it increasingly difficult to keep the girls entirely separate from the penitents. There were now 100 penitents and 17 Magdalen Sisters.<sup>(112)</sup> When all was said and done, the separation principle was more fundamental than the indirect support that accrued to the magdalen asylum through the reformatory school. The difficulty was solved by transferring the reformatory girls to Bristol.<sup>(113)</sup> However serious the maintenance of separation may have been, within two years they were persuaded to run an industrial school by Cardinal Wiseman. This was transferred to the new convent at Finchley in 1864.<sup>(114)</sup>

After the departure of the industrial school, the Hammersmith convent settled back to the sole work of the Magdalen Asylum and to

the conduct of the inner class of Magdalen Sisters. It was to continue so for over 50 years until the property was sold in 1921 and the work transferred to Snaresbrook. The provincial administration and novitiate remained there until 1886 when they moved to Finchley. Finchley then became a very complex establishment similar to the Mother House at Angers.

Between 1864 and 1911 the Hammersmith community steadily developed its magdalen asylum in harness with an increasingly efficient laundry. The concern with the religious progress of the penitents continued a central feature of convent life; so did the perennial worries about the material aspects, about enclosure and separation, and about the other kinds of events already described. The sisters retained a sensitivity to new developments. The possibility of work with women prisoners they brought to fruition; while an attempt at running a penitents' class for women of higher social station failed. Prior to 1886 its achievements as the Provincial House had been formidable. Eight other convents had been founded, each with its own magdalen asylum. To these must be added the convict refuge, three reformatory schools, and an industrial school. When the move to Finchley occurred all but one of the convents with its magdalen asylum and two of the schools had survived as successful establishments. Despite its change of status the Hammersmith convent retained a primacy of honour in the province. In its church lay the body of Mother Regaudiat. Hammersmith remained the only house in the province with a class of Magdalen Sisters. A certain deference was expected and accorded.

During this period the main events on the laundry side were the introduction of steam powered machinery in 1877, the building of a brand new laundry in 1887 to which extensions were added within a few years, and the coming of Factory Act inspection in 1908. The laundry development was accompanied by the enlargement of the penitents' dormitory, refectory, and church. The magdalen asylum could now accommodate



200 penitents. <sup>(115)</sup> The important concern with transformation continued in a context which represented a strange amalgam of the old traditions with a new institutionalism and business efficiency. Given the special character of the Hammersmith convent it was all the more remarkable.

It is noteworthy in the novel 'Home of the Lost Child', which Emma Raimbach wrote to draw supportive attention to the work of the Hammersmith magdalen asylum, that the central character Rachel Ambrose is portrayed as a seduced middle class young woman. This image is consistent with a popular victorian belief that the basic cause of prostitution was seduction. Emma Raimbach must have known from her experience as a Good Shepherd nun that the overwhelming majority of penitents were of an entirely different social class; but doubtless the form of the story was a necessary convention enabling her to write of things that were unmentionable directly in the polite society of the day. These were misconceptions that Action, Mayhew, Dickens, and Greg sought to dispel. The general thrust of their views, albeit differing in emphasis, was that prostitution was the result of unemployment, low wages, and a degree of psychological instability. In any case, they argued, many prostitutes returned to ordinary society in the natural course of things and entirely of their own volition. Despite that last point each made a plea for a more general commitment to the reclamation of such women and suggested the means for that task.

W. R. Greg put the appeal in terms that any Good Shepherd sister would recognise as the heart of her endeavour. Writing of society at large he had this to say:

'Forgetting our Master's precepts - forgetting our human frailty - forgetting our heavy burden in the common guilt - we turn contemptuously aside from the kneeling and weeping Magdalen, coldly bid her despair, and leave her alone with the irreparable .... The more shame she feels, the more impossible

'is her recovery, because the more does she shrink  
from those who might have been able to redeem her.'  
(116)

Even though Acton and Dickens recognised that the religious refuges did attempt a task from which society at large stood apart, they were still highly critical of the large religious institutions. Acton was largely concerned with their financial efficiency and their methods of reformation. He was opposed to the notion of sudden conversion which he judged to be the central principle of the refuge, and sought a more gradual inculcation of self-respect and self-restraint; some means by which to accelerate the natural process of return to ordinary society. With a certain inconsistency he advocated the introduction (117) into the workhouses and poor schools of instruction in housewifery.

Whatever may have been the case in the protestant refuges, our account of the Good Shepherd magdalen asylum hardly accords with a picture of sudden conversions. For many of the women we have considered, a christian path seems to have been hard won and followed with difficulty. In any case, the outcome of conversion was not seen primarily in this-worldly terms. We do not know how many of the voluntary leavers returned to ordinary lives or to prostitution.

By the end of the 1850's Dickens had already set up Urania Cottage in collaboration with Baroness Burdett-Coutts. He disliked the existing institutions as more penal than christian. His programme of reformation in the house at Shepherd's Bush depended on a small family grouping with unobtrusive non-sectarian religious instruction and much training in a range of domestic skills and accomplishments. All was aimed at preparing young women for marriage in the colonies. Emigration was the goal and persuasion the method. Direct religious exhortation:

'.... would decidedly involve the risk of their refusing to come to us. The extraordinary monotony of the refuges and asylums now existing, and the almost insupportable extent to which they carry the words and forms of religion, is known

'to no order of people so well as to those women.'  
(118)

His was an extremely small venture compared to the Hammersmith magdalen asylum, only receiving 57 young women in five and a half years. In some ways his methods were very similar to the Good Shepherd Sisters; no mention of the past; the staff were to be kept in ignorance of individual histories; and acknowledgement of past errors was to be the pre-requisite for reformation. In other ways Urania Cottage was quite different. There were to be no uniforms and the inmates were not to be treated as children; work was to cover the whole range of household skills; and there was to be painting and singing as well. Yet Charles Dickens had his difficulties with Urania Cottage. Some of the women proved to be as ungovernable as the worst Good Shepherd cases. He had to face a major problem with staff turnover. In the Good Shepherd magdalen asylum there was a consistency in staffing born of the principle of specificity of commitment and the religious vow of obedience; and in any case there was the solid permanent cadre of consecrated penitents. Despite Dicken's laudable emphasis on persuasion and voluntarism, he took the view that no prostitute would willingly engage in the pursuit of a quiet and ordered domesticity. Consequently, he worked in direct co-operation with the government of Coldbath Fields prison, the Middlesex House of Correction. Most of his young women were sent straight to Urania Cottage after he had interviewed them in prison. Thus there was a strong element of compulsion. In some ways Urania Cottage was a proto-type of the intermediate refuge with which the next chapter is concerned. (119)

These contrasts are instructive and reveal the complexities of any attempt to reclaim women whose lives have fallen into disorder and disrepute. A task made more difficult by the general unspoken

tolerance of prostitution. In this respect the attitudes of the nineteenth century were probably more ambivalent, not to say fraught with hypocritical contradictions, than in any other historical era in Europe. The Good Shepherd Sisters had a long tradition of objective and method. It would be severely tested in the convict refuge and the certified inebriate reformatory. Even in the Hammersmith experience they had been driven to make modifications and accommodations in their customs and practices. The next two chapters show the struggles and limits of that process in a more acute way, and thereby serve to deepen our understanding of their central engagement in magdalen asylums.

CHAPTER 4:THE CONVICT REFUGE AT BROOK GREEN AND FINCHLEY

The Good Shepherd Sisters in Britain had worked in co-operation with the government since 1856. Their reformatory school work had not unduly raised any issues of principle, save a concern to reserve the inspection of religious education to the roman catholic authorities. It was to be another ten years before the nuns engaged in the management of a penal institution for women. The convict refuge at Brook Green was one of four female convict refuges; three of them being managed by voluntary bodies. The other being at Fulham Prison. The story of the Brook Green refuge, later transferred to Finchley, shows how the Good Shepherd Sisters were able to adapt the principles of the magdalen asylum to the management of an establishment directly within the purview of the Director of Convict Prisons. The adjustments and compromises made by the nuns at Brook Green throw considerable light on what they perceived to be the essentials of Good Shepherd work. Before we consider their motivations and the problems they encountered in that enterprise, it is necessary to recount how the convict refuges were developed within the penal system.

The convict refuges had their origins in the development of the penal servitude system during the middle decades of the nineteenth century and can only be understood adequately in that context. By the 1840's the earlier system of convict disposal had fallen into disrepute. After some 50 years of systematic operation transportation was severely criticised by a parliamentary select committee in 1838 as uneconomical and failing in deterrent effect. Thereafter, various modifications were attempted but the system was effectively ended in 1852 when the colonial authorities in Van Dieman's Land refused to accept any more convicts. One important aspect of the last decade

of transportation was the introduction of a progressive stage system by which convicts could earn privileges culminating in release on licence for private employment in the colony. This <sup>(1)</sup> ticket-of-leave system, as it came to be called, had considerable influence on future penal developments.

With the rapid decline in capital offences and the ending of transportation, convicts could no longer be disposed of by way of social and geographical elimination. Consequently, the government of the day was forced to consider alternative methods. Fortunately, some basic resources were already in existence as the final modification of the transportation system had provided that the first 18 months of the sentence was to be spent in solitary confinement at Pentonville or Millbank. This was to be followed by a period of associated labour at the public works prisons. The length of the public works phase was determined by merit awards for industry and good conduct. Finally the convict was given a ticket of leave to any colony that would accept him, with the government guaranteeing public works employment if private employment could not be obtained. So there was not only in the U.K. an infra-structure of modern prisons but also some ten years' experience of operating a system of solitary confinement followed by associated hard labour. The first Penal Servitude Act 1853 built directly on <sup>(2)</sup> this resource and experience.

Almost immediately the new Act ran into difficulties for there was considerable public apprehension at the release of ticket-of-leave men into the U.K. itself. The re-absorption of criminals inevitably presented a spectre of increased crime and social danger. A fundamental problem of the penal servitude system was the absence of any effective means of enforcing the terms on which conditional liberty was granted. After the third Penal Servitude Act 1864, the ticket-of-leave men and women were subject to police supervision. Their licences could

be revoked if they failed to report monthly, or committed even minor offences, or if they were only suspected of doing so. By the 1870's, police supervision was admitted to be a dead letter due to the major administrative difficulties of any adequate liaison between the police, the prisons, and the courts. (3) Although the statistical evidence does not support the view that there was any marked increase in crime that could be attributed to release on licence, public disquiet was unabated and there were a number of 'ticket-of-leave scares'. (4) In the face of public opinion, penal toughness was a political priority of the government. The harsh policy took the form of allowing no remission of sentence to convicts under penal servitude. The Home Office reasoned, in the person of its permanent under-secretary, Horatio Waddington, that as the term of penal servitude was shorter than transportation it should be fully served in order to maintain an appropriate level of deterrence.

This policy led to a major problem of control within the prisons. The possibility of earning remission of sentence by industry and good conduct had been a potent factor in the control of prisoners, already effectively used with the transported convicts. Without remission, a prime incentive to good conduct was lacking. Such a deficiency in control resources was especially difficult in the case of women convicts for they served their full sentence in full confinement, public works being considered inappropriate hard labour for them. (5) Col. Joshua Jebb, one of the directors of convict prisons, eventually succeeded in persuading a reluctant Home Office that remission was essential. The second Penal Servitude Act 1857 made this possible and the system was further refined by the 1864 legislation.

Under the 1864 Act the convict progressed through four stages from solitary confinement to public works. The prisoner spent at

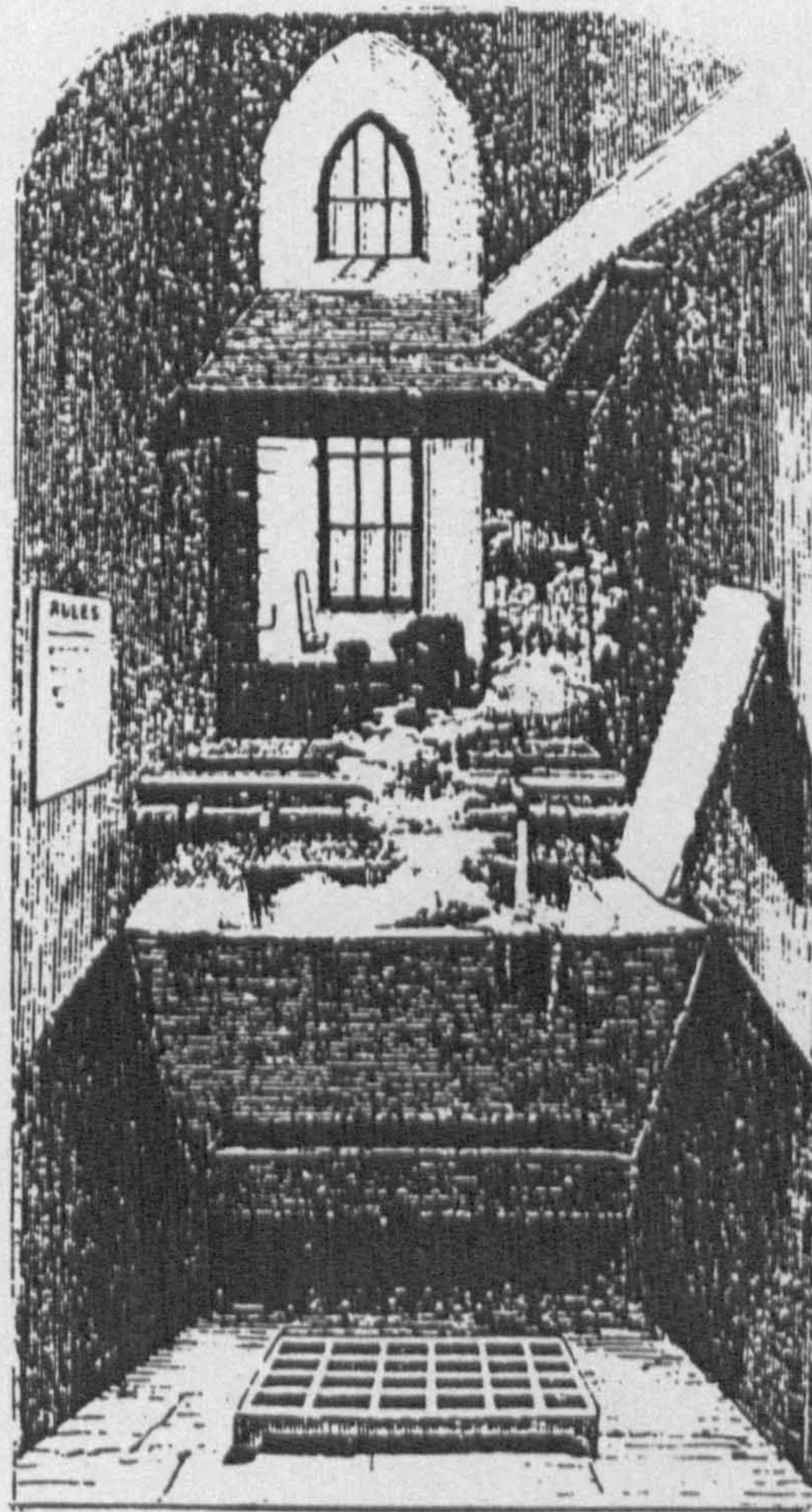
least one year in each of three classes following nine months of solitary confinement. He progressed through the system according to the marks he accumulated. The marks were earned by his actual labour and not for good conduct, although they were forfeit for bad conduct. The maximum remission that could be earned under this system was one quarter of the public works part of the sentence. The classes were kept quite separate and each was characterised by an increased range of privileges. The mark system was fundamental, the marks earned bearing no relation to the value of the work done but solely to the convict's degree of industry. Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise, Chairman of the Prison Commission towards the end of the nineteenth century, aptly described the system:

'The object aimed at was to devise a useful system of progressive reformatory discipline, based on a nice adjustment of the elements of hope and repression, but subject to the principle that the punishment due to the crime is the primary objective, and that, consistently with that, no effort to reform should be neglected.'

(6)

What had emerged since the end of transportation was a system which combined the evangelical stress on reformation through solitude with the utilitarian principle of inculcating habits of industry by enforced hard labour. This same hard labour fuelled, so to speak, the convict's progress through the system to an eventual conditional liberation. Penal servitude was further refined in Ireland where, under the influence of Sir Walter Crofton, an intermediate stage was inserted immediately prior to release on licence. The purpose of the intermediate prison was to accustom the convict to freedom through work under open but supervised conditions. Even such a trenchant critic of the progressive stage system as William Tallack, champion of cellular separation and secretary of the Howard Association, was moved to concede that the Irish system:





SEPARATE WASHING CELL,  
IN THE FEMALE PRISON AT THE CITY HOUSE OF CORRECTION, HOLLOWAY.

'.... attained a certain measure of special success, in so far as they gave prominence to the animating forces of reward and hope'.

(7)

The penal servitude system applied to both male and female convicts, but there was already a recognition that women might be more vulnerable on release from prison and that suitable help might be made available through philanthropic bodies. The Royal Commission on Transportation and Penal Servitude had acknowledged as much in 1863:

'We consider that the case of discharged female convicts is one that recommends itself peculiarly to the consideration of the benevolent; and we believe that charitable and religious societies are the only means whereby the dangers which always await a female convict on her discharge from prison can be lessened.'

(8)

Jebb had already made some provision by opening in 1856 a new prison at Fulham which was, in effect, an intermediate prison for women. But, as yet, there were no voluntary institutions. In Ireland, however, the intermediate prison for men was complemented by a voluntary establishment for women run by the Sisters of Mercy. Opened at the request of the government in 1856, the refuge, at Golden Bridge on the outskirts of Dublin, housed women for the concluding parts of their sentences under the supervision of the nuns. Their main employment during this time was washing and needlework and the government paid a per capita grant of five shillings per week. The nuns took particular care about finding the women suitable employment to enter on their discharge and provided a kind of after-care service. The Golden Bridge refuge was adjudged a success and a protestant refuge soon followed. It was not long before knowledge of these developments and the enactment of the 1864 Penal Servitude Act motivated the Reformatory and Refuge Union to approach the government.

The matter first came under serious consideration at the Home

Office in December 1864 when the R.R.U. submitted a Memorial to the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey. The Memorial cited the successful Irish System and, subject to government approval, offered to establish refuges 'under the care of competent ladies'. It was considered essential that the convicts should be received during the unexpired part of their sentences so that the voluntary societies might exert a legal as well as a moral influence. The Memorial concluded:

'The Committee desire to urge this matter strongly on Her Majesty's Government, as being the best way of effectively dealing with the most difficult of all social questions, the reformation of our female convicts.'

(10)

At a meeting with the Home Secretary early in 1865 the R.R.U. went so far as to guarantee 100 places within 3 months of the government accepting the proposal. Furthermore, they would agree to similar inspection arrangements as then pertained for reformatory schools.

(11)

Col. Henderson, one of the directors of convict prisons, had made a careful analysis of the proposal and concluded that as nearly 400 female convicts were discharged annually:

'.... refuges must become to a great extent prisons as a large number of these women cannot be kept together except under strict discipline.'

(12)

He felt that the only way around this problem was to select certain women for release prior to the end of their sentence on the basis of some criterion such as good conduct and industry. Henderson was certainly convinced that some system of early release to refuges would be cheaper than maintaining a woman in prison for the whole of her sentence. Moreover, the possibility of reducing the high female re-conviction rate would further enhance the potential savings. Henderson's enthusiastic espousal of the proposal did not remove all the doubts

of the Home Office hard-liner, Mr. Waddington. He noted:

'The money is nothing if the plan is feasible in other respects - but I fear the religious element is wanting here, which works very powerfully in the Irish Refuges.'

(13)

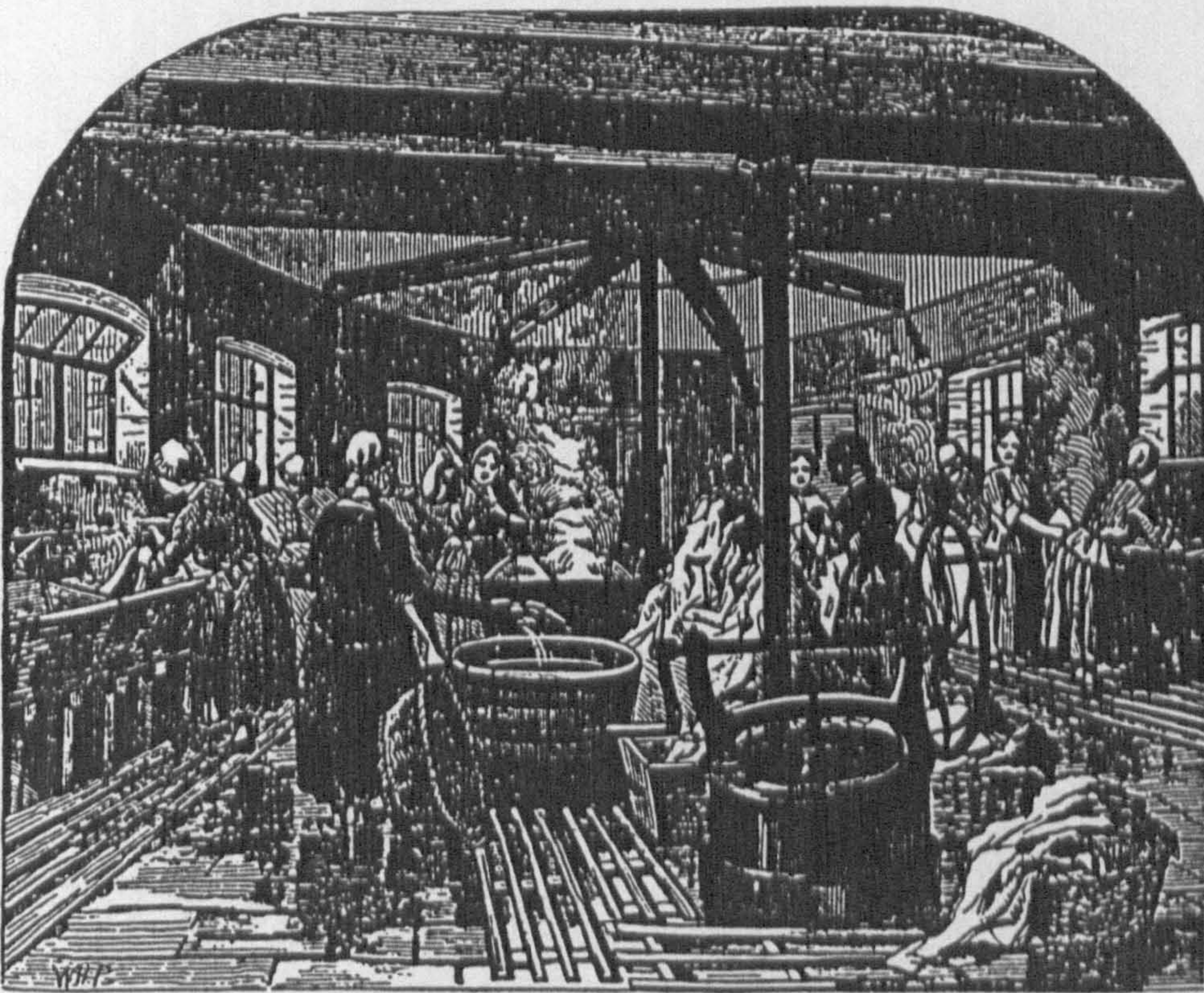
By April 1865 the government had approved a scheme which initially allowed women who had shown industry and good conduct in prison to be transferred to refuges six months before they became eligible for tickets of leave. It was intended that all women would eventually be discharged through refuges. The refuges were to be certified and regularly inspected by the Home Office. They would be grant-aided by the Treasury at the rate of seven shillings per capita per week, of which two shillings was to be saved towards the discharge gratuity. Where it was felt appropriate, certain women could remain in the refuge with grant-aid up to a further six months. The system thus allowed a flexible response to the differing needs and employment potential of each woman. The managers of a refuge might apply for a ticket of leave at any time if suitable employment could be arranged. On the other hand, if a woman misbehaved she could be sent back to prison to serve out her original sentence. All in all, it was considered that the scheme would be a powerful incentive to better behaviour in prison as it offered earlier discharge, a larger gratuity, and the prospect of employment. All that now remained was for voluntary bodies to come forward with specific proposals.

(14)

During May Sir Walter Crofton and a committee began planning a Protestant Refuge to be established in Bloomsbury for up to 50 women at any one time and with an anticipated annual turnover of 100 women. By the beginning of August the premises had been prepared and staff employed, all the arrangements had been inspected by Col. Henderson and the Home Office had given its approval. Towards the end of the

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month three women serving sentences of three years penal servitude left Brixton Prison for the Carlisle Memorial Refuge, as it had been named. These women had been very carefully selected, for whereas the overwhelming majority of women who would be sent to Eagle House were serving sentences of seven years penal servitude, Mary Mooney, (15) Mary Banfield, and Anne Molley had only been sentenced to three years.

Although Sir Walter Crofton's refuge was the first to be established, others had already approached the Home Secretary. The Dowager Marchioness of Lothian, an active figure in the field of philanthropy for roman catholic prisoners, had also approached the Home Office in May 1865. (16) As we shall see, it was nine months before her efforts came to fruition. Apart from Crofton's own reputation as a penologist, the significance of his refuge was that it served as a model for others, particularly in its administrative arrangements.

There is one other recorded proposal for a refuge at this time. Although the Home Office gave approval for a trial period, the work was postponed as Bloomsbury was taking all the available protestant women convicts. The way in which the proposer, Miss Susan Meredith of Bayswater, submitted her project is worth noting as typical of the general tone of this rehabilitative movement:

'.... (the refuge movement) seems to be a special call to Christian women to assist in the work of reforming them. Some ladies have agreed to join me in forming a household in which to receive some of the convict women and in trying what womanly charity and influence can do for them .... We should give religious, moral and industrial training to the women, and make an effort to supervise them on their re-entrance into social life.'

(17)

An arrangement and philosophy remarkably similar to that of the first refuge at Caen which marked the beginnings of the order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge.

The Irish experiment had been much admired by penal reformers in England. Roman catholics were well acquainted with Golden Bridge and as early as 1863 Lady Lothian had approached the Good Shepherd Sisters at Hammersmith on the possibility of establishing a convict (18) refuge in England, should parliament approve such a scheme. There was also a particular urgency as the roman catholic women prisoners transferred from Millbank to Parkhurst had rioted because of the lack of a chaplain and religious facilities. Troops brought in to quell them refused to fire on the convicts who were:

'.... only subdued after the fire-engines had played on them for three or four hours'.

(19)

Mother Radcliffe, the Provincial Superior, reluctantly declined the request because of her difficulty in finding sufficient and suitable staff. The nuns had not long opened an industrial school at Hammersmith in addition to their reformatory schools at Bristol and Glasgow. The Hammersmith school had been set up at Cardinal Wiseman's specific request, for this was a period marked by a sustained roman catholic campaign to remove any of their children in workhouses and bring them into their own denominational education. This extra demand on the Good Shepherd Sisters was exacerbated by serious organisational and staffing difficulties in the Bristol school and riots by the girls (20) in the Glasgow school. Refusing Lady Lothian must have been a very difficult decision for not only were the Good Shepherd Sisters ideologically committed to extending their work of rehabilitation, but the roman catholic community as a whole had come to an increased awareness of the plight of their convicted and imprisoned co-religionists. The Parkhurst rioting was but one dramatic episode in a long fought struggle to provide roman catholic chaplains in the workhouses

and prisons. A very convincing statistical case had been made out in 1859 by a roman catholic layman, who also asserted:

'It cannot be, and is not, I believe, doubted that the maintenance of order and discipline, and the reformation of character and conduct among the poor are best obtained by religious impressions and influences being brought to bear on them, and that the most effectual impressions and influences must be based on their existing faith.'

(21)

By 1862 Jebb was concerned to put the roman catholic chaplains at Millbank and Fulham on a regular footing. Thus, there were a complex of pressures and demands at work in the roman catholic community.

In the meantime Mother Radcliffe had died and had been succeeded by Mother Weld, a remarkable woman with high connections in church and society alike who would lead the Good Shepherd Sisters in England until 1886. Mother Weld was more sensitative to the situation, and in April 1865 she wrote to Lady Lothian re-opening the question of a roman catholic convict refuge, preferably at Bristol. Lady Lothian's reply was courteous but hardly encouraging. She pointed out that Cardinal Wiseman had been in negotiation with another religious order at the time of his recent death, and that she had been advised to make no further moves until parliament should sanction the intermediate system. Lady Lothian had considerable experience in visiting roman catholic female convicts and she noted:

'There is one difficulty about the Good Shepherd. The prisoners have a most decided objection to being under their care, as they think it will stamp them as being Good Shepherd cases.'

(24)

That is, as drunkards, vagrants, and prostitutes. A comment that must have been rather hard for Mother Weld.

That must have appeared to have been the end of the matter so





*Women prisoners working in the laundry of Stafford Gaol, 1869*

far as the Good Shepherd Sisters were concerned, but not so for Cecil, Dowager Marchioness of Lothian. By November she had set up a committee of influential roman catholics who agreed to negotiate a ten year lease on a property called Eagle House at Brook Green. This was a large Queen Anne mansion with a substantial garden which had been successively used as a boys' school, a girls' reformatory school which had failed, and finally as a private school for roman catholic girls under the direction of a Miss Mary Ferrars. Its past uses meant that any basic institutional alterations to the property had already been made. (25) All that would be required for its use as a convict refuge

would be the construction of a laundry for the prisoners' employment. The committee concluded their agreement with Miss Ferrars and informed the Home Office that they would be ready to receive prisoners at the end of February 1866. (26)

It seems extraordinary that the committee had completed the arrangements, including the adoption of Sir Walter Crofton's rules and dietary, without making any secure provision for staffing the refuge. The minutes of the meeting of 16th February, the self same meeting that agreed to accept prisoners at the end of the month, merely note that the Good Shepherd Sisters would have temporary charge. (27) However, the private correspondence reveals a much more unsettled state of affairs.

Towards the end of 1865 Dr. Manning, the new Archbishop of Westminster, had asked the Bishop of Namur in Belgium to provide some suitably experienced nuns to staff the projected refuge. The request was well received but the bishop, through his representative Canon Jacques, felt that certain issues needed clarification if the best selection of nuns was to be made. These were matters concerning the freedom of the nuns to conduct the temporal and spiritual affairs of the refuge in accordance with their own rules and customs, and

the source of financial support. Some of the questions raised by Canon Jacques showed that he had not adequately understood that a refuge

(28)

was not a prison. The replies returned to him clearly spelled out the nature of the intermediate system. Almost as an afterthought Manning's secretary, John Morris, enquired whether the Belgian sisters spoke English and, if not, how they proposed to conduct a refuge for

(29)

English speaking women. By the end of January 1866 the private letters between some of the committee members indicate that this had become a major stumbling block. Writing to Mr. Galton, one of the more active members of the committee, Canon Morris remarked:

'....the way is clear through our gravest anxieties respecting the Refuge .... the nuns of the Good Shepherd will send two religious to start the good work, while the Soeurs de la Providence are learning English and getting into our ways. The Convent of the Good Shepherd will make the Belgian sisters very welcome when they come over to superintend the fitting up of their house; and a stay at the Good Shepherd, where a great laundry is now at work, and where there are so many women of much the same class as theirs, cannot fail to be of service to them.

I shall be very ready to go with you to Col. Henderson, if you think it well. It seems to me that we have nothing to tell him but that this house is taken and the managers ready, - when, in fact, they will give us the first prisoners and how many we are to expect during the first six months. Two thoroughly experienced English nuns are our first managers, and no objection can be raised to foreign nuns taking their place when fitted to do so. All that we have to do is to tell Col. Henderson the plan: there is nothing he can object to, or that needs defence.'

(30)

Such a suppression of the staffing difficulty was scarcely an honest approach to the Home Office, but the matter was now very pressing. Protestant women convicts had been eligible for transfer to a refuge for the past six months so that roman catholic convicts suffered a grievance at their apparent exclusion from the advantage of the inter-

mediate system. They were becoming unsettled in the prisons and difficult to control. The government, having provided the means, were complaining that the roman catholics were making no effort to begin. Mother Weld was persuaded by the committee to take possession of Eagle House on behalf of the Belgian nuns and to manage the refuge for a year while they were trained. Financial management was to be retained by the committee and sufficient was now agreed to invite Col. Henderson to  
(31)  
inspect the premises.

The forthcoming inspection precipitated the Good Shepherd nuns into a frantic preparation of the house. Two nuns and sixteen penitents were sent over from Hammersmith together with the convent workmen. The penitents completed the task in one day:

'.... Having worked with their whole hearts and done double the work of ordinary charwomen, besides enjoying the fun of the thing'.

(32)

Col. Henderson had expressed a wish to visit the magdalen asylum first. This he did in company with his wife and her sister, and his deputy Major McHenry. They were escorted round by Canon Morris, expressed themselves very impressed by the organisation and atmosphere there, and then went on to Eagle House. After due inspection Col. Henderson certified the refuge for the reception of female prisoners, presumably under the impression that the work was to be conducted by the Good  
(33)  
Shepherd Sisters.

On the same day the advance party of three Sisters of Providence arrived from Belgium and it soon became apparent that the problems would be far more extensive than the language difficulty. Despite the previous correspondence, the nuns actually sent were solely experienced in managing Belgian prisons. They were used to a system where the prisoners were locked in their cells at night, after which

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they expected to have nothing further to do with them. The fact that there would be considerable intercourse between the staff and inmates, especially in the laundry work of which they were entirely ignorant, (34) seemed to be 'a terror to them'. Even so, they were persuaded to remain at the Hammersmith Convent and to set about learning English:

'.... this they did indefatigably and certainly no one could have given less trouble or been more cordial, simple and nice than they were. They took their meals after the Community and followed their own rules, generally coming to the evening recreations and occasionally visiting the classes particularly the Magdalens - The only thing which surprised us was that they evinced no desire to learn the English manner of cooking, washing etc., although they would have to teach this if the Refuge was entrusted to them.'

(35)

The committee's anxieties inevitably re-asserted themselves, but this time Galton managed to convince Manning of the true state of affairs. He agreed to send the Belgins to Golden Bridge where, according to Galton, they would have:

'.... an opportunity of studying Sir Walter Crofton's system at the fountain-head. I hope they have never studied geography sufficient to know the width of the Irish Channel, or politics to the extent of understanding the Fenian movement and the consequent suspension of Habeas Corpus; or I fear these might terrify them more than even London bugs.'

(36)

Pressure was now put on the Home Office to send some women and it was agreed to transfer seven convicts from Fulham Prison. Galton was told:

'.... the Fulham women are the best conducted prisoners they have and therefore will be good, as tame elephants, to begin with.'

(37)

This is hardly surprising as Fulham was operating as a de facto refuge

within the formal penal system. Now that the start was imminent, Mother Weld was concerned to be as economical as possible:

'.... no really efficient Laundry could be carried on without building everything afresh, which makes us the more anxious not to spend 6d. that can be done without. But dryness and cleanliness are essential for health, and therefore the white-washing and pipes could not be done without. No washing tubs have yet been sent, though we are ready to take a little washing as soon as the Prisoners arrive, which we are earnestly hoping will be soon.'

(38)

Two days later her hope was fulfilled when Mary Robinson, Eliza Flood, and their five companions arrived under escort from Fulham Prison.

(39)

The sisters who received them commented:

'They seemed well inclined, but the great difficulty will no doubt be to get a good solid principle into them.'

(40)

The annalist prudently noted that recall to prison would be the main punishment for relapse, and concluded:

'The great object then is to convert them.'

(41)

The nuns and the committee were, naturally enough, very concerned to make a success of the work, for not only was the refuge under 'the eyes of the government' but there was also a tremendous drive by roman catholics to show themselves equal to protestants. In such an atmosphere the energetic Lady Lothian was only too likely to busy herself behind the scenes. She arranged for Sir Walter Crofton to visit Hammersmith and concerned herself with practical matters such as wallpaper and books - prayer books, catechisms, and reading books:

(42)

'They will want to have copy books too, for their education will have to go on I suppose.'

(43)

Later on, by persistent questioning, she forced Mother Weld to admit that the sisters' present resources made it impossible for them to manage both the industrial school at Finchley and the prisoners' refuge at Brook Green. Having secured this reluctant admission, the Marchioness (44) pressed hard for the priority of the work with the convicts.

The Good Shepherd Sisters now felt themselves to be in a very difficult position. On the one side, Archbishop Manning, their ecclesiastical superior, wanted the Belgian nuns to take over as soon as they were familiar with the language and the work. As far as he was concerned, the Good Shepherd Sisters were only undertaking a temporary holding operation. He had ascertained privately that the Belgian superior was a woman of very high standing and experience in the management of women's prisons. She had successfully conducted refuges for (45) released prisoners, and for prostitutes, in Rome. On the other side, the Good Shepherd Sisters were becoming increasingly aware that the government and the committee would not readily hand over the refuge to foreigners. To make matters worse:

'Our own wish for the work had naturally revived, though we tried to think that we should be ready to give it up in six months .... it was difficult not to betray this feeling, especially when one or another interested in the Refuge came and loudly expressed their opinion that the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd alone could undertake the work.'

(46)

These feelings were intensified by the news from Angers that Mother Pelletier wanted them to have charge of the prisoners as the Good Shepherd Sisters already managed prisons in Germany, Italy, and South America.

The matter finally came to a head for the committee when the Belgian nuns submitted a long and detailed list of their material requirements for the chapel and the convent. These ranged from altar



(47)

fittings to bed linen, from choir stalls to saucepans. The committee asked Manning to return the nuns to Belgium on the grounds that their religious rule was irreconcilable with the English government regulations for the conduct of the refuge; that they had been trained to the Belgian system which was totally at variance with present English ideas; and that there were insufficient funds to meet their requirements. (48)

Manning merely commented that the proper course was for the committee to directly approach the Bishop of Namur, but at the same time he conveyed his strong aversion to the idea by means of informal comments to Lady Lothian. In contrast to his frosty courtesy towards the committee of titled and influential laypeople, Manning descended in a fury on the convent at Hammersmith. Pacing up and down the convent parlour, he asserted the capabilities of the Belgians and accused the Good Shepherd Sisters of acting 'the cuckoo's part'. Fury was evidently his manner of capitulation, for he strongly advised the closure of the industrial school at Finchley and the transfer of its staff to Eagle House. (50)

An attempt was made to use the Belgian sisters for the industrial school but this failed when the government inspector refused the certificate. (51) The Belgians returned home, with Jacques alleging, like Manning, that the Good Shepherd Sisters had acted in an underhand manner to oust them. (52)

Despite all this uncertainty, the committee had already arranged for the cultivation of the garden and the purchase of laundry equipment. Towards the end of April it resolved to ask the Good Shepherd Sisters to undertake the work permanently. Thus far the committee's almost bumbling amateurism had contrasted markedly with the experience, professionalism, and speed of Sir Walter Crofton's establishment of the Carlisle Memorial Refuge nearly a year earlier. Mother Weld's response heralded the entry of realism and competence into the affairs of the new roman catholic refuge:

'In answer to the proposal you have done us the honour of making to us, we accept the charge of the Refuge for women prisoners .... Certainly, we have no reason to fear any inconvenience arising from leaving the future management in your hands, of this business, nevertheless as a double management is necessarily somewhat complicated, and such does not exist in any of our establishments, we think it better to accept your proposal to put the whole charge in our hands.

We will, for this, ask nothing further for the Religious, but only that the furniture and bedding still needed, should be provided for as many women as the house will accommodate .... That the rent and taxes should be paid for the first year. That the Laundry should be left complete. We should wish to know exactly what our liabilities will be, in the event of not being able to purchase the House at the end of the lease.'

(53)

By the middle of May all was agreed and a permanent staff was put in charge by Mother Weld.

Throughout the negotiations there had never been any doubt that the provision of a laundry was imperative. Lady Lothian informed the Treasurer:

'I think you must put me down for another £100 - We must have our Laundry and it must be paid for.'

(54)

Nevertheless, Mother Weld felt that the committee's expectations of commercial viability to be somewhat excessive:

'Our only fear is that your expectations of the profit of a Laundry may rather exceed the reality, as your practical experience will not show you that the outgoings must always be considerable, and that the class of women we have to deal with are the most reckless and extravagant; consequently that the strictest surveillance will not prevent a certain amount of waste and extravagance. It is true that ours here now pays well; and that, at the Refuge, will probably do so much sooner, as the women are more likely to be steady; but on the other hand, their time of residence will be shorter, and they may be leaving just as they have become good work-women.

I mention this merely to prevent disappointment during the first few years, but as our Houses are independent

'of one another as to Funds, whatever money is made by the Refuge will go exclusively to its own support, and the number of the community will never be very large, as it will consist of a single class which would require no considerable number of Religious to conduct it.'

(55)

Although Mother Weld's comparison of the two types of women is not wholly substantiated by the statistical evidence, her general caveat was wise. To begin with, the laundry was nowhere near complete. Much of the committee business during the remainder of the year was taken up with raising the necessary funds, approving estimates, and chivying the builders. It was a substantial laundry modelled on that at the Hammersmith magdalen asylum. As well as the wash house, there were separate mangling, sorting, and drying rooms. The minutes indicate that quite advanced consideration was given to the problem of work-

(56)

flow and ventilation. When it was finished in November 1866 it had cost over £1,500. Together with the 10 year lease and the alteration of the house to accommodate 60 prisoners, the total sum expended by

(57)

the committee was over £2,300. The laundry was not finished until nine months after the first prisoners had been admitted and it was exceedingly difficult to secure sufficient work, despite the fact that the numbers transferred from prison had been far less than expected.

The first, and only, annual report of the committee had remarked on three particular difficulties that beset the refuge during this early period. The presence of the contractor's workmen was a special source of anxiety. Although this was not an uncommon occurrence in Good Shepherd institutions at times of expansion, in this instance the responsibility was felt more keenly as the sisters had formal custody of the convict women. Fortunately, nothing untoward happened, but the anxiety was none the less for that. The second main difficulty was really an unintended consequence of the initial very cautious selection of convicts by the prison directors. At the start, to allow

the sisters to build up experience, they transferred women who were very near to the end of their sentences. The result of this policy was much to reduce the length of stay in the refuge. This, in turn, made it very difficult to develop an adequate laundry expertise. The committee argued that the self-supporting potential of the refuge depended on the laundry supplementing the government grant. This contention will be examined more closely later in the chapter. The third difficulty, in the opinion of the committee, lay with the disadvantages of a short stay to the prisoners themselves. The amount of gratuity that could be accumulated was inadequate for its purpose. Moreover, a longer period of detention was considered essential to work any significant reformation. Women who had served long periods of penal servitude in closed conditions needed a longer transition (58) to freedom if they were to settle into stable lives after release.

Both the Carlisle Memorial Refuge and Eagle House experienced these difficulties, in which logistic and ideological factors so neatly interlock. By the end of 1867 they were putting conjoint pressure (59) on the Home Office to increase both the grant and the period of detention. The grant was increased from 8/- to 10/- per capita from January 1868 for, as Col. Henderson put it:

'Under the guidance of such Institutions as these it cannot be doubted that many prisoners are led to honest courses, and, if it be so, a very important service is rendered to the public.'

(60)

But it was not until the end of 1872 that the government agreed to increase the period of detention to 9 months, which was much less than the sisters had requested. On that occasion Sir Edmund Du Cane, Chairman of the Prison Board, advised the Home Secretary:

'There can be little doubt of the beneficial effect on the women's characters of a well managed Refuge, nor of the

'assistance in their subsequent career which they may derive from the interest taken in them and the care bestowed on them by those benevolent people who endeavour in this way to prevent their returning to criminal careers.'

(61)

The sanguine satisfaction of these comments is somewhat puzzling, especially in senior civil servants whose special concern was to monitor the effectiveness of penological measures. The committee and the sisters, despite their belief in the beneficial effects of the refuge, were rather more guarded about the long-term results.

A statistical analysis of the registers shows the recidivism rate for 1866 and 1867 to be 40% and 38% respectively, and 20% in 1872. For the period 1866-1890 the average rate was 33.7%. If one includes the women who were returned direct to prison for bad behaviour then the rate is slightly higher. (See Appendix 3 Table 9) The sisters would have been fully aware of the recidivism of the women as they kept such good follow-up records. It was already an established part of Good Shepherd practice to try and keep in touch with former magdalen asylum inmates, so there was a natural propensity to do the same with the prisoners. In the latter case it became a regular and heavy burden as the sisters had persuaded the Home Office to let them take over the police role in the supervision of these women while on ticket of leave. This had come about because of the sisters' traditional conviction that a complete break with the past was an essential basis for reformation:

'It may be well to explain the cause of so much correspondence. The term of imprisonment for these poor women does not expire till 6 or 9 months after their dismissal from the Refuge. They are only out on Ticket of Leave and during these 6 or 9 months they are compelled to present themselves at the Police Court each month to be examined respecting their place of abode, manner of life etc., thus frustrating

'our great good designed for them, that of raising them from the degrading position of prisoners and removing them from Police Courts and all such former associations. Convinced that the work of the Good Shepherd would be incomplete in their regard unless this evil were remedied, our good Canon Morris undertook to negotiate the matter with the Prison Authorities and prevailed on them to be satisfied with the women presenting themselves at the Police Court on the day of their leaving the Refuge and afterwards sending their monthly statement of conduct etc. through us - Thus a constant correspondence with the liberated women is the result of this most desirable grant in their favour.'

(62)

Given the detail of the post-discharge entries in the registers, it is inconceivable that the sisters would not have had an accurate on-going perception of the extent of recidivism among their former charges.

(See Appendix 4 for examples of these entries.) While the sisters naturally hoped for success in the ordinary sense of the term, the documentary evidence suggests that they realised the dangers occasioned by a return to old haunts and associations. Indeed, they were explicit that the best hope was to be found in emigration to Canada or the United States of America, to which end they were able to use the network of Good Shepherd convents already established in those countries.

(63)

One might say transportation by another name, but they were certainly not alone in that view. It was an eminently Victorian remedy. It was an explicit policy, for example, with Dr. Barnado. Charles Dickens much favoured it as the ultimate solution for the women in the magdalen

(64)

house he started at Shepherd's Bush. Yet, if one examines the registers, only 45 of the Good Shepherd women emigrated out of the 1,368 who had passed through the refuge by the end of 1890. (See Appendix 3 Table 9)

The sisters spared no effort to improve the post-release support and supervision of the women. In general they tended to recommend them for employment as servants-of-all-work, as this would isolate

them from the curiosity of other servants. In addition they stressed to the prospective employers that under the ticket of leave system:

'.... an actual breach of the law is not needed to justify the return of the woman to prison, as her ticket is forfeited by gravely suspicious circumstances. Much, therefore, of the influence that helps so materially to maintain good order in the Refuge is at the disposal of the mistress of the household ....'

(65)

Despite this extensive, almost draconian, supervision provided under the Penal Servitude Acts, the nuns met with Lady Lothian in 1871:

'.... to talk over the expediency of organising some system of Catholic surveillance and patronage for our poor children on leaving the Refuge. The lamentable fact that forty of those who had been in the house had already returned to the Prison at Millbank seemed to call for charitable efforts of secular ladies, in the large towns and districts in England, to provide these poor women with some means of obtaining an honest livelihood .... This apparently large amount of reconvictions seemed appalling at first sight, but when it is remembered that 293 of them have already passed through the Refuge .... we cannot wonder, that a compulsory submission, for so short a time should be followed by a sad and fatal reaction on the part of some when unfortunately thrown again into the midst of former evil companions and associations.'

(66)

By 1878 the Society for the Relief of Discharged Catholic Prisoners had bought out an established laundry at Notting Hill. There they would accept women from the Good Shepherd refuge, Millbank, Woking, and Fulham prisons, 'provided they had exhausted the means given them on leaving those places to start with'. It was meant to be the final safety net for those who had failed to find employment. This particular venture was an unmitigated failure. There was no supervision after working hours as the women did not live on the premises. They soon fell into their old ways, often stealing or pawning the linen they were given to wash in order to buy drink. Lady Georgina Fullerton,

(67)

the novelist and philanthropist, implored the Good Shepherd nuns at Hammersmith to incorporate the work into their own laundry. The Hammersmith annalist was quite scathing in her observations on this doomed attempt to reform the most difficult of the ticket of leave women, especially as Lady Fullerton's committee was divided on whether it was correct to 'shut up' liberated prisoners. For their part, the Good Shepherd sisters were quite insistent, from experience, that a much longer term in the refuge would help, even if the women were technically free. (68) The nuns certainly could not be accused of failing to explore all the practical means of preventing recidivism among their charges. Nevertheless, the licence revocations and the reconvictions were rarely below 40% between 1875 and 1885.

In addition to the problem of recidivism, the sisters had major difficulties of control within the refuge for the women were prone to vicious quarrels and violent outbursts of temper. These were common enough in prison and known as 'breaking out'. It should not be forgotten that the women, unlike the men, had spent the whole of their sentence in the convict prison prior to transfer to the refuge. The sisters would normally have been inclined to deal with most of these cases themselves but other factors were now involved:

'The propriety of lenient measures .... was a matter of doubt, the women not being free like the penitents, but under Government authority to whom in the event of any serious outbreak we might be amenable and exposed to censure for connivance at the violation of peace and order.'

(69)

The nuns were still left with the problem of containing refractory convict women while the official recall papers were drawn up. This matter was solved when an arrangement was made with the Metropolitan Police to remove such women and detain them in police cells until



(70)  
 the issue of a warrant. One such incident, typical of a number of others, is recorded in 1880:

'About this time it was found necessary to send two of the class of St. Joseph back to Prison for defiance of Authority; they supported each other in obstinate resistance to what was required of them, and this could do no good for themselves, while their example was very bad for all the others. As we are not permitted to punish them, the only recourse in desperate cases is to apply to the officials for their removal. Happily it is rarely that we have to do this, but the occasional application invariably meets with the promptest attention. In this case two officers came at once and, as usual, handcuffed the unfortunate women who, when they realised what they had brought on themselves, got very desperate and were taken away screaming vengeance on some of the women whom they considered their enemies.'

(71)

The registers indicate that these recalls happened about once a year.

The evidence seems to build up a picture of an institution far removed from the magdalen asylum. The whole enterprise was circumscribed by the formal requirements of the penal system to a degree manifestly inimical to the most fundamental principles of a traditional Good Shepherd establishment. The notion of voluntary admission had gone in any overt sense, although Mother Pelletier had already made this possible by her amendment to Clause 1 of the Constitutions in 1835. The management of reformatory schools for delinquent girls could hardly be regarded as a valid precedent for work with convict women. One might argue that an element of voluntarism remained, in so far as the women had determined their own eligibility for admission to the refuge by good conduct in prison. On the other hand, it might not be unreasonable to hold that the women were largely motivated by a desire to finish their sentences under less harsh conditions, rather than by any real wish for christian conversion. In the same way that the penitents might have regarded the magdalen asylum as a preferable alternative to the workhouse.

The most striking difference seems to lie in the acceptance of public control over the flow of inmates, the disciplining of refractory women, and post-release surveillance. That the sisters were acting in place of the police for the best intentions does not mitigate the fact that they were exercising a formal penal function under the Penal Servitude Acts. Such a full co-operation in prison and police procedures seems a far cry from the traditional perception of a Good Shepherd house as a hospital for the care of sick souls. The sisters were uncomfortably aware of this. They were also aware of the high failure rate. Why, then, did they continue?

The question is answered, in part, by the strong public pressure in the roman catholic community that this work should be undertaken:

'The reformation of our prisoners is the greatest social duty incumbent upon us.'

(72)

The fumbling and bumbling beginnings of the Good Shepherd participation in the refuge work indicate how strong were those pressures. Within a few months of their temporary involvement, the sisters were quite willing to risk the wrath of the Archbishop of Westminster in their pursuit of a permanent commitment to the work; no mean risk in the institutional structure of nineteenth century English roman catholicism. Within 18 months they had taken over full responsibility from the committee which had initiated and funded the work. A partial answer is to be found in the impetus among the Good Shepherd Sisters to establish themselves as a credible and co-operative agency in the vanguard of social provisions for all kinds of women and girls in difficulty. By managing the refuge they were seen to be involved in a very progressive aspect of the new penal measures. Such an eminent social reformer as Mary Carpenter had waxed eloquent about the intermediate refuges and their capacity for 'moral control'. Yet external and internal

(73)

pressures would hardly constitute, in themselves, a sufficient ground for persevering in a work which seemed so ineffective by any conventional standard of rehabilitation, and so alien to the received reformative practices of the Good Shepherd establishments.

A more adequate answer is probably to be found in the other-worldly aspects of the institutional ideology. Recidivism was, in the last analysis, only a criterion of secular hopelessness. Although the sisters seemed to have done everything in their power to combat it by secular means, they were ready to settle for any contact with a group of women they perceived as so desperately in need of reclamation. Any chance of exerting a religious influence in the direction of conversion was to be taken. Despite all the difficulties, some women remained in the refuge as 'free women'. This may have been because no suitable employment had yet been found, but this would also incline the sisters to view them as women whose perseverance in the christian life could only be guaranteed by a more or less permanent incarceration. When the government grant for a free woman expired she would be allowed to transfer to the magdalen asylum, for by 1869 a penitents class had been established at Brook Green. Later, such women would be allowed to remain in the refuge. The convicts' class became known as St. Joseph's class and the possibility of achieving consecrated status was extended to its members. That the sisters settled for lower standards in the case of the convict women is evident from the following account of a consecration:

'(We) received the first three Women of St. Joseph's Class (Convicts) to make their Consecration on the Feast of St. Joseph. They had all lived as free children several years in the House, had gone through the usual time of probation, and now earnestly desired the favour of being allowed to devote the remainder of their lives to the service of God under the protection of their great Patron St. Joseph. Their dress consists in a dark-brown dress and cape, with a neat and close-fitting cap, and we hope they will do much

'good in their Class, as their influence, even during their time of probation, has been beneficial among their companions; though we do not expect or look forward to their conduct being as edifying as that of the consecrated penitents usually is, for their long habits of vice and crime, and their many years of prison life, leave sad traces behind, which are not easily effaced.'

(74)

The convict refuge annals, like those of the magdalen asylum, abound with accounts of 'happy deaths', for these were seen as sure evidence of ultimate success. The rationale is quite simple. A contrite death with all the sacramental benefits of the church ensures salvation, and this is infinitely to be preferred to the risk of damnation to be faced in the world; especially the risks to which ex-convict women might be exposed.

Margaret Wilkinson had entered the convict refuge from Fulham Prison in 1881. She was then 26 years old, having been a spinner at Leeds. She is described in the register as being very scarred about the face and of good conduct in prison. She had six previous convictions ranging from drunkenness, larceny, neglect of family, to prostitution. Finally, she had received 7 years penal servitude for larceny from the person. During her nine months at the refuge she was often troublesome and violent:

'She was the wife of a very bad man from the time she was sixteen, a convict like herself, and whose sentence was for life on account of attempts he had made on the life of the Governor and two other Prison Officials! On going to prison this man entered himself as a Protestant, 'not to disgrace his religion'!

(76)

When Margaret was discharged on licence she immediately went to Bradford to rescue her sister from a life of street crime and prostitution, and succeeded in bringing her back to Finchley, where they both entered St. Joseph's Class as 'free children'. Although there were a number of occasions when both wanted to leave, they always stayed in the



Women Convicts Nos. 1128 & 1254

end. Margaret became ill in 1883 and died from consumption aged 28 years. On her death bed she made her sister promise to remain in the refuge for life, which she did. It is cases like these which give insight into the struggles of the convict women to persevere in the style of penitential possibilities that the sisters put before them.

There were, of course, other perceived successes which were not quite so ultimate, such as baptisms, return visits by settled former inmates, and even emigrations. Writing of one woman who had been brought up to a life of crime by her mother, picking pockets, and stealing from lodging houses under the protection of a remarkably innocent face, the annalist noted:

'How much are such of these to be compassionated and how common are such cases among our poor children.'

(77)

This woman found it difficult to accept baptism because she could not believe God was pure spirit. This caused the nuns some worry:

'It was some days before she yielded belief to what seemed to her so extra-ordinary and incredible.'

(78)

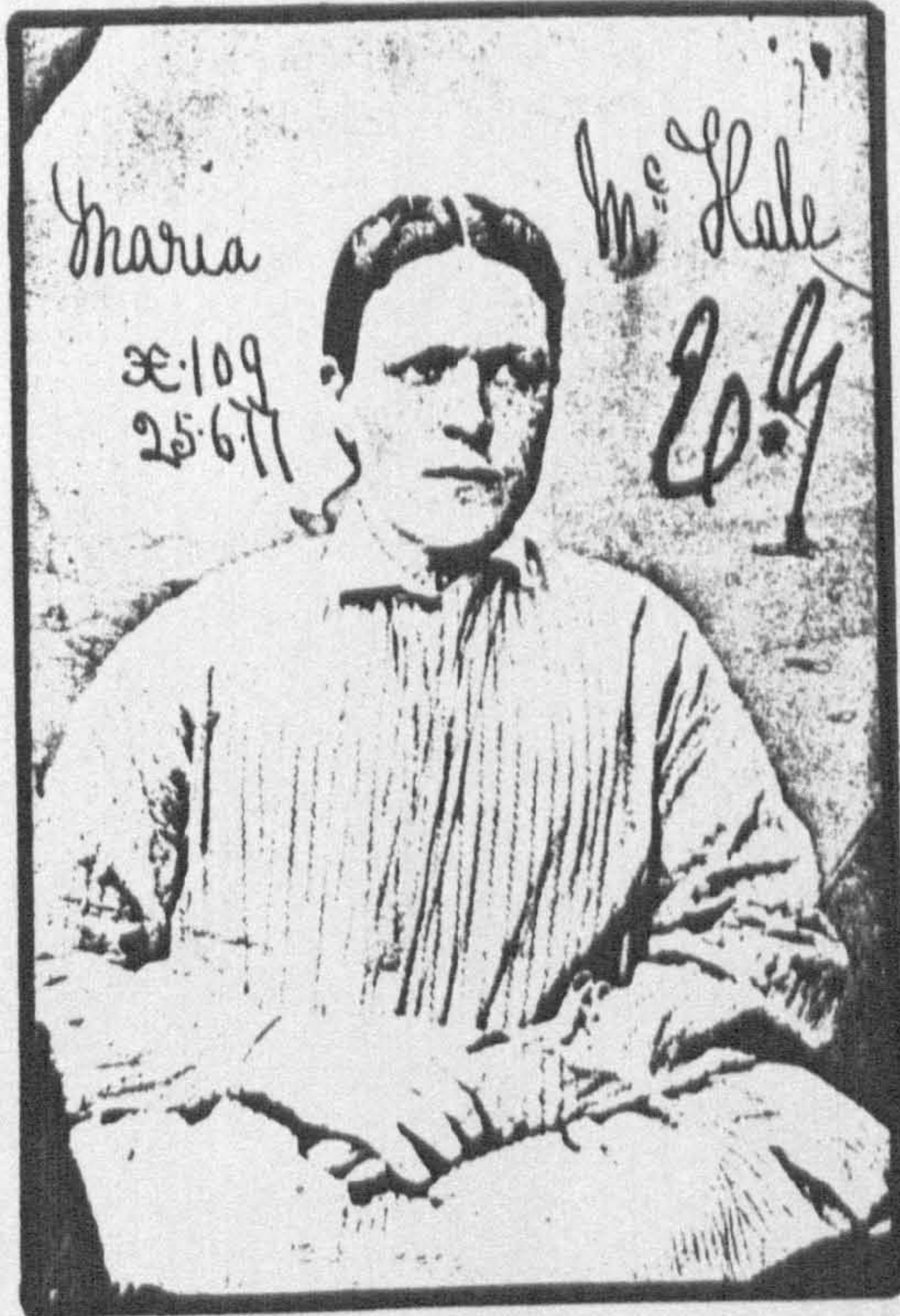
Even so, she was baptised on Good Shepherd Sunday 1883 and admitted to Holy Communion.

On another occasion, a former 'free child' returned on a visit after several months of successful work in domestic service, bringing some presents for the First Mistress of the Convicts' Class. She was accompanied by the teenage sister of her mistress, a protestant, who could not understand how she could care so much for the nuns. To which she is said to have replied:

'Why, I'd let myself be stabbed in the heart any day for one of the mothers'. (79)

Incidents like these, and accounts of emigrations, abound in the annals. But primacy is always given to deaths and baptisms as the true guarantees of personal salvation and institutional success.

In her initial caution about the laundry Mother Weld had suggested that the convent women would be more 'steady' than the penitents, though one had to set against this their shorter stay. It was certainly the case that the convict women were in a better physical condition than the penitents. Four or five years in prison would have ensured a regular diet and a balance of work and sleep. The penitents, on the other hand, often entered the refuge after living rough, with all the physical deterioration that such a life-style entailed. Not only were the convict women generally more robust, but they would also have had the experience of hard labour in the prison laundries, as the illustrations in this chapter depict. Most of them would have entered the refuge with the basic laundry skills of washing and mangling, and some may well have been able to do plain ironing. This rather suggests that Mother Weld's contention that the women were obliged to leave just when they were trained to good productivity was without any real foundation in the event. What their experience of managing the refuge did reveal was that the women were not nearly so steady as Mother Weld had anticipated. The annals make frequent reference to outbursts and quarrels, occurrences which must have been disruptive to the orderly and productive conduct of the laundry. The provincial superior also seems to have been mistaken in her supposition that the length of stay would be shorter than that to which the Good Shepherd Sisters were accustomed. In 1861 47.9% of the women admitted to the Hammersmith magdalen asylum had left within 6 months. In 1866, the year in which Mother Weld was writing, over 50% left well within 6 months. (See Appendix 2 Table 5) She was overlooking the dependence of the magdalen asylum laundry on the build-up of long-stay penitents



Women Convicts Nos. X109 & 78X



since 1841. Even after one year, out of 38 women in the refuge, 14 were free women; and in 1887 there were 40 free women out of 67 penitents. (See Appendix 3 Table 1) So the same trend towards the development of a long-stay core group seemed to have occurred.

Prisoners were received at the refuge until 1921, but after 1890, with one exception, the number of annual admissions dwindled to single figures. During its entire operation 1,496 women passed through the refuge, 1,368 of them between 1866 and 1890. The statistical analysis set out in Appendix 3 is based on that 25 year period. During that same period the national total of women committed to convict prisons declined from over 1,000 to under 700. (80) Although the registers are full of detailed information from which it is possible to build an accurate profile of the women, it is very difficult to establish the precise number on roll at any specific date. This difficulty is explained in the statistical appendix. From other sources it can be determined that the number of prisoners on roll had ranged from 15 to 46, and that of free women from 4 to 40. The total for both categories ranged from 21 to 67. From the available evidence it seems a fair inference that the numbers were always far lower and more erratic than in any of the magdalen asylums. In 1887, 27 women were admitted to the refuge, by then at Finchley, compared to 93 who entered the penitents' class there. At the end of 1887 there were 67 convicts and free women in the refuge and 175 in the magdalen asylum. (81) In the same year the refuge required a staff of eight nuns compared with the 10 employed to supervise a much higher number of women in the magdalen asylum. As early as 1867 five nuns were required for the prisoners compared with 7 in the thriving Hammersmith penitents' class. So Mother Weld's expectation that only a small number of sisters would be required was proved to be false throughout the entire history of the refuge.

As for the convict women themselves, an overwhelming majority had been convicted of stealing; taken together with other property offences the proportion rose to 79%. A fairly typical prisoner was Ellen Smith who received four years penal servitude for stealing a purse and money. She had 50 previous convictions for prostitution, drunkenness, obscene language, and vagrancy. She was only 26 years old at the time of her transfer from Millbank to the refuge. Just over 7% of the women had been sent to convict prisons for crimes of violence against the person. Ellen Smith was luckier than most as over 63% were sentenced to 7 years penal servitude. More than half the convicts were between 25 and 39 years old, and a similar proportion were either married or widowed. The total range of occupations is an interesting reflection of women's employment in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the time of their conviction some 37% were unemployed, factory work accounted for 15%, and 8% found a living as street hawkers. At 5% or below were charwomen, needleworkers, laundry workers, and domestic servants. The origins of the women, as revealed by the statistics of places of conviction, reflect the distribution of the Irish population in England and Wales at that time. Over 50% of the women came from the North West of England, of which 24% came from Liverpool. Some 17% came from London and the Home Counties, with the North East following closely behind. (See Appendix 3 Tables 1 - 9)

Given the problems of the control of the work force and its small size, it is not surprising that after a few years experience the sisters decided to open a penitents class at Brook Green. The same laundry was worked by both classes on different days of the week. One advantage of the laundry process was that its sequential process permitted the complete separation of the classes that was so fundamental to the Good Shepherd methods.

In the early days of the refuge the sisters and committee had argued that the self-sufficiency of the refuge depended on the laundry income supplementing the government grant. The amount allowed for the actual maintenance of each prisoner was 6 shillings per week in 1866, or £7.80 for six months. The sum actually expended on the penitents' food and clothing at the Hammersmith magdalen asylum in 1866 came to £7.79 over six months for each woman. The government grant for the prisoners was increased to £10.40 per capita over six months in 1868 compared with an actual expenditure of between £8.99 and £8.48 for each woman in the magdalen asylum. (83) It seems that even without laundry net income, the sisters could run at a small profit on the inmate maintenance grant paid by the government; provided the inmate maintenance expenditure in the magdalen asylum is accepted as a valid base for comparison. Economies of scale would have reduced costs at the asylum, but even so the refuge was at least running at par. These calculations do leave out of account capital expenditure and building maintenance, but the committee had provided the premises and laundry at no cost to the Good Shepherd Sisters. Financially, the venture started on a very secure foundation.

It is odd that in all the documents relating to the convict refuge there is no mention of work as a means of transformation. It is difficult to know whether that aspect was simply taken for granted, or whether the sisters quickly lost hope of establishing a viable laundry solely with the labour of the women convicts. The introduction of a tandem penitents' class in 1869 would have off-set the difficulties, and this solution was developed in an interesting way when the sisters moved the refuge to Finchley in 1872.

In 1870 the nuns had decided to develop the Finchley site by building an architect designed refuge for 100 convicts with a laundry attached. The capacity is surprising given their awareness that numbers



Women Convicts Nos. X19 & K35

at Brook Green, which was built for 60 women, were always below capacity. The problem had been slightly assuaged in 1869 when the sisters agreed to accept a small number of women on their discharge from the local prisons:

'.... whom we hope will be preserved from the degradation of penal servitude in a Convict Prison'.

(84)

This policy had been extended after 1880 when prisoners were received from Westminster Prison for a few years.

(85)

Lady Lothian was active in support of the Finchley venture and by 1872 the new establishment was ready for occupation. The architect, Mr. Goldie, seems to have inadequately grasped the central importance of the laundry in this enterprise. Consequently, when the new building was inspected by Mother Weld and the superior of Brook Green, although they expressed pleasure at the bright tiles and the numerous windows of the cloister:

(86)

'.... both were alarmed at seeing how small and dark the laundry was, and that there was no packing room at all, the place for the ironing stove so little that no long shovel could have been used in it, and every bit of coal for all the fires would have to be brought there through the beautiful cloister, consequently the whole house would fill with steam etc. The doors were all double ones, stained and very highly varnished, and even the beams of the wash-house were the same. It looked like a model and it was much the same upstairs. There were large ventilators over the doors, and the cell doors opening into the dormitory instead of on the staircases. But on the other hand everything was beautifully finished off, and on the whole looked really well done and good workmanship, so that we were able with truth to express satisfaction, and we could not blame the smallness of the laundry for we ought to have seen that in examining the plans. It is a comfort to think in realising these great mistakes that our good God will not take us to account for being bad architects, contrivers etc., etc., since He did not call us into religion for that, although we must do our best when this becomes part of our duty to our

'poor children'.

(87)

The prisoners, numbering about twenty, were transferred from Brook Green to Finchley in October 1872. Glazenwood was closed at the same time and its penitents transferred to Brook Green. Eagle House remained as a magdalen asylum until 1877 when the lease ran out. (88) Settling in was not without its problems; the hot water system remained unfinished for several weeks, and there was a shortage of needlework to keep the prisoners employed. To add to the difficulties, the Prison Commissioners had not transferred any more prisoners. However, in January 1873, as a result of the government extending the compulsory period in the refuges to nine months, there was a sudden influx of 29 convict women. Fortunately, this major increase in numbers was (89) matched by a greater availability of needlework.

In 1877, when Eagle House was closed, the sisters opened a magdalen asylum on the Finchley site. The principle of separating the classes is vividly illustrated by the arrangements made for the arrival of the penitents:

'As the dear children arrived our dear Mother took them to the Church for Our Lord's blessing; there they sang a hymn and said a few prayers and passed through to their own abode; this was the only way we could get them there without the prisoners seeing them.

(90)

Separation was carried to the length of providing a second laundry. Not unexpectedly then, the year 1877 was one in which laundry difficulties predominated. There were delays in fitting up the coppers and the ironing stove in the new laundry, which meant that no laundry work could be taken in by the penitents' class for over a month. (91)

The supply of water was a major problem:

'The children did the washing of the house as best they could; for water they depended on the hugh rainwater

'tank underground in the quadrangle, or the ponds and pump .... the rain water would supply the laundry sufficiently, but it was soon used up, and then they had to carry from the pump etc; the labour was great, the water was scanty, and bad and discoloured; so that our dear lay-sisters in the laundry had their patience well tried, not only for weeks but for months.'

(92)

The water company pipes were at such a distance that the cost of connection seemed prohibitive. In the end, the new wash-house was provided with a steam pump to bring water from the well at the prisoners' refuge. This cost over £100 but, unfortunately, it exhausted the well, thereby depriving the convicts' laundry of water as well:

'None was to be got but from the ponds in our fields, to which our dear sisters and the children had to trudge and get what they could whilst negotiations went on with the water company.'

(93)

Finally, agreement was reached with the company to supply water to the convent and to both laundries. There was no shortage of custom and the two laundries were working to full capacity within a few months.

The co-existence of the two laundries at Finchley provides an interesting example of the integration of two different classes into a unified system. It was redolent of the complementary system in pre-revolutionary Angers described in Chapter 1. The prisoners' laundry consisted of a washroom and very simple laundry facilities extending to no more than mangling and plain ironing, with two sisters in charge. The penitents' laundry, by contrast, comprised a washroom, calender room, and ironing room, with a staff of three nuns. The sorting and packing room was common to both laundries but manned only by penitents

(94)

under another sister. Unfortunately, there are no accounts extant prior to 1903, but in that year the joint net income of the integrated laundry system was in excess of £4,000 compared with £2,000 at Liverpool

(95)

and £3,300 at Hammersmith.

As time went by the number of prisoners admitted declined in pace with national trends. In 1917 there were only 78 women under sentence of penal servitude in the whole of England and Wales, and the last convict was admitted to the refuge in 1924. (96) The last of those prisoners who remained in the refuge died at Finchley in 1971 aged 97 years. She had been admitted in 1913 after serving part of a life sentence of penal servitude. She had been reprieved from a death sentence for the wilful murder of her new born child. (97)

The gradual replacement of the Eagle House Committee by the Good Shepherd Sisters recapitulates in modern times one of the early features of the Magdalen Movement. That point of historical interest apart, the crux of the problems that the sisters encountered lay in the ambiguities of classification and transformational objectives created by their engagement in a primarily secular penal system. The classification of the convict women as suitable for the intermediate system was pre-given by the prison authorities, who controlled the flow of admissions. The sisters compensated for this by applying the principle of separation with greater rigour. In the end, they could only make sense of their involvement in this work by providing a clear possibility for the transfer of some of the convicts to a penitents class in the magdalen asylum. In other words, the convict refuge became an access point to the magdalen asylum; a way into the specifically Good Shepherd transformative process. It was a way powered by a kind of first stage hope. This was a strange inversion of the prison authorities concept of the refuge as a last stage transition. By this means they were able to hold their own transformational objectives clear in an ambiguous institutional situation. Ultimately, as we have seen, they went the same way as Angers and created a penitents class, St. Joseph's, especially for the women who had previously been



in a convict refuge. As time went by the diminishing convict refuge was itself incorporated into St. Joseph's Class. In brief, they legitimated the whole enterprise in terms of their own ideology, while simultaneously rendering to the prison authorities a penal function which was entirely acceptable to them. Given that there already existed a charter for the nuns in the first clause of the Constitutions, their struggles to find a suitable organisational form reflects the strength of their specific commitment to the work of the magdalen asylum.

CHAPTER 5:THE CERTIFIED INEBRIATE REFORMATORY AT ASHFORD

The Certified Inebriate Reformatory run by the Good Shepherd Sisters at Ashford, Middlesex, from 1899 to 1906 is the third type of adult institution with which this study is concerned. The undertaking was fraught with difficulties from the start and ended in failure. The Ashford C.I.R. was one of four such institutions in England established by philanthropic bodies as a result of the 1898 Inebriates Act. (1) In 1905 the system reached a peak of 10 C.I.R.'s, of which 3 were run by local authorities. By the 1920's the Act had fallen into disuse. The product of considerable public and professional concern, the C.I.R.'s were beset by functional ambiguities from the very start. The differing expectations of the Home Office, the magistrates, the police, the prison authorities, and the philanthropic bodies, not to mention the women themselves, could only compound the radical stresses which the nuns experienced in this work. Consequently, some account of the public circumstances leading to the establishment of the certified inebriate reformatory system is essential.

Through many decades the Victorians were consistently concerned with drunkenness as a social problem. Whatever the differences of approach to its eradication, there was widespread public agreement that drunkenness lay at the root of all other evils. James Greenwood, though himself a critic of the more rhetorical claims of the temperance movement, considered drunkenness the 'Crowning Curse' and was moved to comment:

'No sane man will contest that drunkenness has wrought more mischief than all other social evils put together. There is no form of human sin and sorrow in which it does not consistently play a part.'

(2)

By the 1860's the temperance movement, while still concerned with the struggle to restrict the sale of alcohol, had increasingly turned its attention to finding appropriate measures for the proper control and treatment of individual drunkards. (3) This burgeoning concern had coincided with the peaking of public interest in the reclamation of prostitutes which had led to the very controversial Contagious Diseases Act of 1869. There was, in fact, considerable cross membership between the temperance movement and the agitation to repeal the 1869 Act. (4) Within the same decade new measures for the rehabilitation of women criminals, such as the intermediate system of convict refuges, were also being put into effect. Prostitution and female criminality were closely associated with drunkenness in the minds of the Victorians and there was a growing body of informed and reputable literature to support that view. Although there was no agreement whether drink was the cause or effect of prostitution and crime, writers such as Acton, Logan, Tait, and Mayhew were unanimous in asserting a fundamental association. (5)

Despite the welter of empirical observations and the growth of a scientific literature on the subject, the temperance movement's understanding of drunkenness as largely a personal and moral failing persisted. Indeed, it was often incorporated in the medical literature through the use of such terms as 'moral depravity'. (6) The temperance movement, for its part, found no difficulty in assimilating the disease concept of drunkenness to its emphasis on moral responsibility. These two concepts persisted in ambiguous, if not contradictory, co-existence to the end of the century and beyond, causing considerable confusion in the development of measures to counteract drunkenness. Two main contradictions lay at the heart of the confusion. If individual moral failing was the prime ground of drunkenness, then will-power would

be the basis of transformation. Yet, to treat drunkenness as a physical or mental disease, often viewed as hereditary, seemed to imply a contrary deterministic model. Secondly, along with the notion of habitual drunkenness as disease went the idea of compulsory treatment, precisely because:

'the power of will, of sane decision .... is the first stronghold to be attached by alcohol',

(7)

as one temperance reformer put it. Even a careful researcher in criminal matters such as Pike could comment that:

'the habitual drunkard is a person deficient in will and self-restraint, and the deficiency may have existed before he became what he is.'

(8)

But if reformation is to be effected by a change of will, then voluntary treatment and moral persuasion were to be preferred to compulsory intervention. The ambiguity about compulsion is also related to organisational objectives. The temperance movement could not achieve its aims without some assistance from the state. Other moral reformers like those working on prostitution wished the state to withdraw from

(9)

intervention. Harris has aptly noted:

'With drink as with prostitution, nineteenth-century England saw a singular reversal of public policy: but whereas with prostitution, the government moved from regulation to free-trade, with drunkenness it moved in the reverse direction.'

(10)

The tensions between medical pathology and moral responsibility, and between voluntary and compulsory methods of rehabilitation, were to have serious adverse effects on the success of the measures eventually enacted. Especially would this be the case with the Good Shepherd Sisters, whose fundamental commitment was to voluntary transformation

and moral responsibility, and therefore to conversion from sin rather than to cure for disease.

Quite apart from the specific philanthropic interest in the effect of the drink problem on the rehabilitation of prostitutes and women criminals, there was mounting public concern about the limited and ineffective means available to deal with ordinary drunken offenders. Magistrates, police, prison authorities and public alike recognised the inefficacy of repetitive small fines or short prison sentences, but nothing else was available. It was no small problem. Summary proceedings against drunk, and drunk and disorderly offenders in England and Wales had increased from 88,361 in 1860 to 131,870 in 1870. (11) In the period 1850-1860 as many as 41,954 disorderly prostitutes, most of them drunk, had been taken into custody in the Metropolitan Police Area. (12) Even this was but one aspect of the drink problem. There were no means at all for dealing with the non-offending drunkard who was seen as constituting a private nuisance and distress to his family.

Having accomplished a substantial measure of restriction through the passing of the 1872 Licensing Act, the temperance movement was able to spearhead public pressure for adequate means of dealing with drunken individuals. (13) Official roman catholic interest in the drink question dates from the same period. Cardinal Manning took the pledge in 1872 at a public meeting of Southwark working men, held to launch a new catholic temperance organisation, the League of the Cross. (14) Throughout his life he was involved in issues of social reform such as child care, housing, labour conditions and poverty but, as one biographer notes:

'Manning's most striking stand in social politics was on temperance .... Temperance was his theory, but Prohibition his practice.'

(15)

For thirty years he campaigned, alongside protestant organisations, for total abstinence. His successor Cardinal Vaughan, who was to precipitate the Good Shepherd Sisters into managing a certified inebriate reformatory, took a more moderate view.

The House of Commons Select Committee on Habitual Drunkards reported in 1872 and concluded from its evidence that:

'drunkenness is the prolific parent of crime, disease and poverty .... (in which) self control is suspended or annihilated and moral obligations are disregarded'.

(16)

Although some drunkards might seek treatment voluntarily, the Committee recognised that for most cases a compulsory element would be necessary. Consequently it recommended two types of institution. The first type, to be provided by private individuals or philanthropic bodies would be for the non-criminal habitual drunkard who was able to pay his own maintenance costs. The second type, to be provided by the local authority or the state, would be for convicted habitual drunkards committed by the magistrates in their criminal jurisdiction. This second type would also be used for non-criminal drunkards who could not pay their own maintenance costs.<sup>(17)</sup>

The Report was not well received by Parliament nor by public opinion. When a Bill was presented to the Commons, six years later, no provision whatsoever was made for the criminal institution and all the compulsory elements in the other type were deleted during the Bill's passage. The 1879 Habitual Drunkards Act <sup>(18)</sup> - subject to review after 10 years - merely permitted the establishment of licensed Retreats, subject to Home Office inspection, for the treatment of habitual drunkards who consented to apply to the magistrate for detention therein. The application was signed in the presence of two magistrates (later one) and two witnesses (usually relatives) who affirmed that

the applicant was an habitual drunkard within the meaning of the Act. Such a person was then committed for up to one year, which period was increased to two in 1898. In practice, it became a form of covert compulsion by families no longer able to cope. The Act was extended indefinitely and slightly amended by the Inebriate Act 1888. (19) Between 1879 and 1908 32 such Retreats were established treating about 500 people each year. (20) Given the contradictions that have been noted already, the failure to grasp the compulsory issue should not be surprising.

Those most concerned with law and order were quick to point out the deficiencies and omissions of the Act so far as drink and crime were concerned. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge was in no doubt:

'Judges were weary with calling attention to drink as the principal cause of crime, but he could not refrain from saying that if they could make England sober they would shut up nine-tenths of the prisons.'

(21)

Yet it had already been asserted by some writers that the rate of detected drunkenness was more than the rate of increase in alcohol consumption and that areas with high drunkenness showed no particular correlation with a high crime rate. The explanation for the increase in convictions for drunkenness and related offences was seen to lie in more efficient policing, both in terms of manpower and police awareness of public opinion. (22)

Attention continued to be focussed on women. Although there was undoubtedly an association between drink and prostitution, (23) there was also the distinct possibility that strong enforcement policies against drunk and disorderly offenders were used as a means of controlling prostitution. (24)

Towards the end of 1887 the Good Shepherd Sisters were considering the possibility of engaging in work with inebriate women, possibly that of a licensed retreat. They went so far as to enquire about

similar work that had been undertaken by the Good Shepherd Sisters in New York since 1872. There the 'Home for Inebriates' was voluntary, but although the American nuns replied with encouragement, they also gave a realistic picture of the high relapse rate. (25) This enquiry came to nothing. The English sisters were not to become involved in this kind of work for another ten years when they were more or less coerced to do so by the roman catholic bishops.

In 1891 there were renewed outcries about the absence of effective measures to deal with those habitual drunkards who came before the courts. The Metropolitan Chief Magistrate, Mr. John Bridge, wrote to the Home Office suggesting a new power for magistrates to order confinement for 12 months without drink. (26) Lord Herschell moved in the House of Lords for an inquiry into better methods for dealing with habitual drunkards. The basis of his case was that committals for drunkenness had reached 160,000 per annum in England and Wales and 250,000 in the United Kingdom as a whole. Moreover, 33% of the women committed had served 10 or more previous sentences of imprisonment for the same offence, compared to 14.5% in the case of men. He pointed out that most committals of women were for drunkenness and associated offences; many were returned to Millbank the day after their release. Such women frequently became pregnant and as drunkenness was believed to be hereditary this was a 'national disaster'. (27) The Reformatory and Refuge Union, to which the Good Shepherd Sisters were affiliated, added grist to the mill with a memorial to the House of Lords advocating long term remedial and reformatory treatment for such women rather than repeated short term imprisonment. (28) The emphasis on women was an increasingly important element in public concern and social reform movements related to the drink question. The literature on the criminality of women stressed an explanation in terms of innate characteristics, more readily adapted to the disease model than in the case of men.



Above all, it had become virtually a criminological truism that the criminality of women if left unchecked was more vicious and depraved than that of men.

(29)

Not unexpectedly, the outcome was an inter-departmental Committee on Habitual Drunkards. It reported in 1893 and recommended the establishment of reformatories for the reception of criminal habitual drunkards committed by the courts. (30) The Government was under considerable pressure during the drafting of the new Bill. At the end of the year the Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, received a deputation ranging from the British Medical Association and the Society for the Study of Inebriety to the British Women's Temperance Association, all pressing for compulsory detention. Prior to this Dr. Norman Kerr of the B.M.A. had already written privately to Dr. Farquharson, a medical member of the Commons, pointing out that:

'other bodies are at work, magistrates, reformatory managers, and general philanthropists, and if they or any of them, play 1st Innings with the Home Secretary, the disease aspect will have a chance of getting the go-by'.

(31)

As it turned out, neither medical nor philanthropic interest got their entire way with the Home Secretary. He had vigorously asserted to the deputation that the deprivation of liberty 'was not for doctors and clergymen but a matter for judicial authority'. (32) Thus the long standing contradictions in the question persisted. Parliamentary opposition to compulsion and to public funding led to the defeat of the Bill in 1895. The matter would not rest and a few months later the case of Jane Cakebread led to renewed public and parliamentary pressure on the Government.

The matter of Jane Cakebread is worth recounting in some detail as she was archetypical of the worst cases eventually admitted

(33)  
 to Ashford. In August 1895 she had been convicted of drunkenness and committed to prison for the 278th time. According to Mr. Holman of the London Police Court Mission she was the despair of the magistrates, an annoyance to the public, and a nuisance to the police. She was 65 years old and slept rough the whole year round being 'demented and of weak intellect'. The medical officer at Holloway described her as slowly drifting into dementia but she could not be sent into a lunatic asylum. The prison chaplain considered her an incorrigible drunkard for whom everything had been tried. In his view the most merciful disposal would be long term of imprisonment as she was of good behaviour and quite happy in prison. In the end Jane was discharged into the care of Lady Henry Somerset, the evangelical leader of the British Women's Temperance Association, who ran a licensed Retreat in Surrey. There is an interesting resonance here with one aspect of Good Shepherd ideology. The sisters had always allowed for the possibility that some women might wish to remain permanently in the institution. They saw this as not only the most effective way of preventing a relapse into a disordered life but also as the surest means of penance and transformation. Others had also noted the paradox, especially in relation to drink, that permanent detention was the only cure. The idea was quite acceptable to Lady Somerset who, rather unexpectedly, ran her retreat on high church principles with a chapel adorned in catholic fashion. She considered recourse to a chapel  
 (34)  
 as an essential aspect of the work.

The Jane Cakebread case was orchestrated by the press, notably  
 (35)  
 the Daily Chronicle. There was yet another deputation of medical and temperance people, prominent among whom was Cardinal Vaughan. Unlike Manning, Vaughan had declared for moderation rather than total abstinence; a difference of view which by no means detracted from his full acceptance of the contemporary view of habitual drunkenness as the source of

other social problems. Writing to the Manchester Guardian in 1890 Vaughan had commented:

'You may spend hundreds and thousands of pounds for refuges, shelters and colonies, but if you placed a drink shop in the midst of every forty families, refuges, shelters and colonies will be needed for many generations to come.'

(36)

Taking a more moderate position than Manning, he advocated, among other things, a reduction in the number of licensed premises and an increase of taxation on all alcohol other than light beers. It was a policy of control rather than prohibition and Cardinal Bourne would take the same attitude when he succeeded Vaughan in 1903. Vaughan did not mince his words when the deputation met the Home Secretary and came out strongly in favour of compulsory detention for a lengthy period of treatment. He thought it particularly necessary for women whom he considered especially difficult to reform. Already the die was being cast for the Good Shepherd Sisters.

Despite the furore created by the Jane Cakebread case it was another three years before the recommendations of the 1892 Committee were enacted into law, a delay of six years in all. The Inebriates Act 1898 rested on two principles. Firstly, inebriates were less responsible for their behaviour and therefore it was more appropriate to send them to reformatories than prison; and secondly, the right of the community to protect itself from their behaviour justified detentive measures. These twin principles would best be served by a prolonged rather than a short repetitive period of detention.

Section 1 provided for the detention of habitual drunkards found guilty of indictable offences committed whilst under the influence of drink. The assizes or quarter sessions then had an option to send such offenders to a State Inebriate Reformatory or to a Certified

Inebriate Reformatory for up to 3 years. Section 2 provided for the detention of habitual drunkards convicted of drink offences for a fourth time in 12 months. In this case the magistrates had no option but to order detention in a Certified Inebriate Reformatory for up to 3 years. In both cases the managers of C.I.R.'s had the right (41) to refuse admission but this came to be rarely exercised.

The C.I.R.'s were to be provided by voluntary religious or philanthropic organisations, with central government and local authorities sharing the maintenance costs of the inmates. The Reformatory and Refuge Union had already given an assurance that the bodies they (42) represented had the capacity to establish C.I.R.'s. The State Inebriate Reformatory would be part of the prison system. However, the Government dragged its feet for over two years because of the estimated cost and because the Prison Commissioners were reluctant to manage what Mr. Ruggles-Brise predicted would be a 'Broadmoor type of institution'. This, despite the fact that he strongly urged that a State Inebriate Reformation would be an effective strategy, especially (43) if it were to start off with cases like Jane Cakebread.

Save for some minor amendments the Act re-enacted the provision for licensed Retreats and retained the 1879 definition of an habitual drunkard for all aspects of the legislation:

'A person who, not being amenable to any jurisdiction in lunacy, is notwithstanding, by reason of habitual intemperate drinking of intoxicating liquor, at times dangerous to himself or herself or to others, or incapable of managing himself or herself, and his or her affairs.'

(44)

The Act was due to come into effect on 1st January 1899, but to the very last the Home Office documents abound in the kinds of confusions about drunkenness and its treatment which have been already

noted. Moreover, although it was perfectly feasible to incorporate control into reformation, the two principles of the Act tended to be regarded as separate and contradictory. Inevitably the courts and the police came to view the matter primarily from a 'law and order' perspective, while the temperance movement and the medical profession (particularly the Home Office inspector Dr. Branthwaite) came to stress the reformatory aspect. The first group would tend to undermine the reformatories, especially as their failure to reduce recidivism became apparent. The latter group would come to favour more the model of Broadmoor or the county lunatic asylums as the intractable nature of the problem revealed itself both in 'hopeless cases' and in re-conviction rates. It took eight years of very tough experience for Dr. Branthwaite to concede what Ruggles-Brise had already predicted:

'The more experience we have of detention of committed inebriates the more we are finding a close relationship to the conditions which ordinarily apply to the detention of lunatics. Inebriate asylums (sic) are little other than modified asylums for the detention of mentally defective persons, and the end of each year finds us more closely approximating the routine of our institutions to the routine of lunatic asylums.'

(45)

Cardinal Vaughan was deeply committed to the 1898 Act and had approached the Good Shepherd Sisters in the autumn. Being concerned with the lack of response - perhaps the sisters were mindful of the difficulties expressed to them by the American nuns in 1887 - Vaughan wrote again in November urging that:

'this is a work that must be undertaken and no Community is as well fitted to deal with such a work as yours'.

(46)

He acted as a go-between with the Home Office and was able to inform the sisters of the outcome before Christmas:

'I have been to the Home Office about your Inebriate Home. They will gladly give you a certificate for a home:-

1. The number not to exceed 150.
2. There should be one acre of land for every 20 inmates - for walking in etc.
3. The place should be somewhat in the country, i.e. not in the town.
4. They will be very easy and accommodating and not persecute the Managers with red tapism.
5. The Homes will not really be filled before March 25th i.e. committals will begin on that date.
6. It is thought that 12/6 & perhaps more may be secured per patient out of public monies.
7. The Home Office Regulations will be out in the course of a week or so and they will send me an early copy of them.

I am not encouraging the foundation of other female homes in this part of England wishing you to have the first start, and to secure your success, before more come into the field.'

(47)

In writing to Rome for formal permission, the sisters put the order of their involvement somewhat differently, suggesting that as the Government was so satisfied with the work of the Convict Refuge they had been asked to undertake a C.I.R., and Cardinal Vaughan was anxious they should so so.

(48)

Be that as it may, the sisters again turned to their New York province for advice. The Good Shepherd sisters at Brooklyn replied to the effect that they still ran an inebriate retreat, mainly for the wives of professional men, but that in the period since 1887 they had also begun to accept women committed by the courts. They were housed in the same building as the voluntary penitents but employed separately in the laundry. They felt it a disadvantage that under New York State law the women could only be detained for up to six months. Consequently they thoroughly approved of the 3 years possible under the new English legislation. Nevertheless, the letter pointed to the high rate of recidivism and the difficult behaviour that occurred

(49)  
 during the first period of withdrawal from alcohol. Later in January the Assistant Mother General at Angers wrote to express approval, referred to the American experience, and commented that:

'these are wayward and not wicked children'.

(50)

The provincial administration of the Good Shepherd Sisters, now at Finchley, set about finding a suitable property in the West Middlesex area. Eventually they settled on 'Ecclesfield' a large Georgian house with lodge and cottages set in 46 acres of farm land.

As soon as the purchase had been completed a team of seven very experienced sisters was sent to establish a new community and to prepare for the reception of the inebriate women. Sister Morton, the Superior, had been superior at both Bristol and Glasgow and had been the First Mistress of Penitents at the former house. Sister Carney, appointed to be First Mistress of the Inebriates, had been First Mistress of the Prisoners at Finchley. The other five sisters had long experience in the type of charges to which they were now appointed. It could not have been a stronger team. A little later a mistress and four women from the Magdalen Asylum at Finchley were sent to start up a temporary laundry in the lodge at Ecclesfield. Although the house was suitable for use as a convent after only minor alterations, a substantial building programme had been put in hand to meet the Home Office specifications for a certified inebriate reformatory. In addition to this a proper laundry was being built. Subject to the addition of bars to the windows of the first floor dormitory in the house itself, the Home Office inspector, Dr. Branthwaite, approved the establishment in April. It was to be known as 'St. Joseph's'. Although the building work was not complete, it was agreed to receive the first women in May.

(51)

Hannah Regan, Margaret Conway, and Joanna Driscoll arrived on May 8th, having been committed by various courts in the London area. Hannah, a 46 year old hawker, had been sentenced to 18 months for being drunk and disorderly. She remained as a voluntary penitent at the end of her sentence. Margaret was 36 and a laundress with 100 previous convictions. She was committed for three years for drunkenness and riotous behaviour. Joanna, another hawker of 33, had 203 previous convictions and had been committed for one year for wilful damage and being an habitual drunkard. (52) They were typical of the type of woman against whom the new legislation was directed. By any reckoning they were a tough bunch. It is not surprising that the annalist recorded that the sisters;

'were glad the building men were steady because they had to work in the midst of the women who being most of the very lowest class of society would try to attract their notice and even ask for tobacco and snuff'.

(53)

By August there were 25 inmates and despite the approval of Dr. Branthwaite on his second visit there were already signs that the laundry work would be problematic. For a start, many of the women were unfit due to excessive drink and living rough. After such irregular and disorderly lives it was difficult to form them to even the simplest routine drudgeries of the washroom:

'When they first came to us, they used to sit down on the floor, with their backs to the wall and go to sleep (a habit they brought from prison). By degrees they had to be induced to leave this off and have a nice walk in the garden.'

(54)

The laundry work was still being done in the lodge and the washing in its small garden. Consequently only a small amount of work could be taken in and many of the women were not employed:



'We hear them remark among themselves more than once,  
"They bring us here, and shut us up, and give us  
nothing to do."'

(55)

In the Inebriate Retreats the problem of work had always been somewhat fraught as the inmates were very largely middle class and:

'objected to any general enforcement of labour'.

(56)

Yet good food and physical work had long been considered an essential element in any 'cure'. The matter never satisfactorily resolved itself, partly because the fee-income was generally sufficient and partly because the numbers were too small to make a co-ordinated work system possible. Ultimately the Home Office only permitted the imposition of work for health reasons or as a penalty for breach of rules. Even so, some retreats introduced a graded fee system whereby those who paid less engaged in the domestic tasks of the house. (57) This system was later adopted by the Good Shepherd Sisters when they replaced their C.I.R. by a licensed retreat.

In the case of the C.I.R.'s the difficulties were of a different order simply because all the planning and theoretical assumptions would flounder on the incapacity of the work force. There was certainly no doubt about the central importance of work as a means of improving the physical condition of the inmates and in promoting a spirit of industry among them. At the same time regular labour was not solely in the interest of the patient but also for the controlled and self-sufficient operation of the institution. (58) Nevertheless, there were ambiguities. Open-air work was considered to be especially desirable as a reformative measure for inebriates and intending managers were instructed by the Home Office to choose agricultural sites with a provision of at least one acre per 20 women. (59) The Ashford site

consisted of 46 acres of farm and market garden. The 1898 Departmental Committee appointed to give effect to the Act considered that the inmates should be encouraged to follow their ordinary occupation. This could only have been the case with 23% of the women who passed through Ashford. Yet the same report went on to comment:

'In some reformatories for women laundry work will no doubt often be the staple occupation, if not indeed almost universal, but experience has shown that in some localities at least inmates of such institutions can be advantageously employed in many other occupations.'

Laundries became universal in the C.I.R.'s and for the Good Shepherd Sisters it would have seemed the form of work most consistent with nearly 60 years experience of managing reformatory institutions. They were going against experience in meeting the Home Office stipulation that C.I.R.'s must be sited away from large towns. St. Leonard's in 1840 and Glazenwood, Essex, in 1872, had both failed because sufficient laundry work could not be solicited in rural areas. Laundries, whether private or institutional, only thrived as businesses in urban contexts. Quite apart from the Home Office's own inconsistencies, the sisters were clearly flying in the face of their own long experience. It may be that this is best understood in terms of the pressures to participate in the work placed on them by Cardinal Vaughan, the untypical speed with which they established themselves at Ashford, and the hurried public implementation of the Act itself.

That laundry work became a central feature of the C.I.R.'s has a certain irony for it was well known that drunkenness was very common among laundry workers. Indeed, some women received part of their wages in beer, and the connection between laundry work and excessive drinking had been a matter of concern among other groups of reformers.<sup>(61)</sup> There was a greater proportion of needlework than was common in the

other Good Shepherd establishments in Britain. Some needlework had been obtained from a leading London firm for some of the tailoresses in the class but this was a wholly inadequate source of maintenance.

Quite apart from these very real practical difficulties it is evident that there was a certain misunderstanding about the status of the women committed to the care of the sisters. With some amazement the annalist had noted that the women were referred to as patients in the official reports. Nevertheless:

'the (women) felt they were being detained against their own will, for what in their eyes was a slight offence, for they considered drunkenness as of very little consequence. Everything was done to make the house as comfortable to them as possible. Their beds had spring mattresses with wool ones on the tops - bolster and pillows; each (women) had her own little washing stand beside her bed with a box below in which she could keep whatever she liked. The clothing was in keeping with this; everything including the food was good and plentiful. All this did not convert the poor women, whose long years of self-indulgence had rendered most difficult to manage. Some of them had violent tempers and it took very little to rouse them. At such times they seemed not to be accountable for what they said or did. For their own safety and that of their companions, it was necessary at times like this to separate them and place them in isolation rooms until their passions had subsided. This was done under the sanction of the doctor, who fortunately was not only a clever man but also a kind friend to us.'

(62)

This extract clearly indicates some of the contradictions in the new enterprise so far as the Good Shepherd Sisters were concerned. In the first place, the voluntary principle was breached by the court committal of the women, of whom most were resentful. Although this principle had already been eroded by the work with women convicts, there was a substantial degree of difference between the two categories. The prisoners, it could be claimed, had come to the pre-release convict refuge as a consequence of good conduct in prison. There existed some degree of voluntary entrance and intention to reform. The inebriate

women, on the other hand, were committed directly from the courts with no preparatory period nor any evidence of a capacity or willingness to reform. In the second place, the legislative intention was that the women were to be viewed primarily as patients suffering from various degrees of alcoholism (then known as dipsomania) rather than as criminal prisoners. So far as the Home Office was concerned the C.I.R.'s were to provide a disciplined and compulsory treatment comprising good diet, hygiene, and hard work, all under medical supervision. The sisters would certainly agree to the centrality of work in the penitential task of transformation and self-maintenance, but totally misjudged the capacity of such women to engage in that task. The hospital model was a familiar enough concept to the sisters, but in its medical mode it had no ideological priority in their practice. The standards of provision expected by the Home Office would have seemed an indulgence which weakened the disciplinary and penitential aspect. The constant recourse to medical help must have undermined their conviction in the self-sufficiency of their own well-tried methods of reformation and its ultimate grounding in religious belief. Perhaps it is not without some significance that the first C.I.R. to close, after barely a year, was that provided by the Church Army, whose founder Carlisle had informed the Home Secretary that:

'we rely on personal and religious influence combined with hard work .... we would achieve better results than a State Reformatory because of religious motivation.'

(63)

For the sisters a way out of the dilemma might have been to accept that these women were unsuitable subjects for the Good Shepherd methods due to their sickness and their incapacity to give voluntary consent. In January 1900 it was already clear that:

'many difficulties arose with this class, as Government

'sent us many cases quite unsuited for our work. We were willing to do all in our power for those who were sane, but when women arrived more fit for a lunatic asylum than for any home, what could we do?'

(64)

Despite this early evidence of a deep-rooted challenge to their methods the sisters persevered for some years, having extracted from the Home Office an understanding that the women to be sent to Ashford would be selected with greater care and that there would be more freedom to use their own methods of management. (65)

At the sisters' insistence the Home Office amended the official medical history form to include new questions on mental disorder, chronic invalidism, and employability, as a means of improving admission procedures. (66)

During 1899 there had been over 10,000 committals to Holloway of women convicted of drunkenness, of whom more than 4,000 had six or more previous convictions. (67) Not surprisingly the class had increased rapidly and by this time the number of women in St. Joseph's was over 50. Their management presented increasing difficulties. Three individual cases will suffice to give a vivid picture of life in the institution during this period. Beatrice Valentine, (68) a 43 year old woman of no previous occupation had been convicted by the West London Police Court of being riotous, drunk and disorderly, and committed for two years. Quite soon after her admission she had begun to behave rather oddly and:

'it came to a climax one day when the women were out for a walk in the fields. She ran away from her companions, and infuriated the cows trying to make them attack us. We had to take the women into the orchard as quickly as possible, till our men came and put the cows in the shed .... Both the magistrate and the relieving officer who came to remove Beatrice treated us with the greatest kindness. We were also glad that this poor woman went by herself to the isolation room, because we have had to call in policemen with some violent cases. Sometimes the sight of the men was sufficient, but one woman who resisted had to be carried there by two men. The doctor visits them every

'day while they are in solitude and is most careful in his examination of them to make sure they are in a fit state of health to undergo this punishment. Dr. Anderson (is) .... always quiet and respectful in his manner even to the most violent, always taking the part of the mistress, but in such a way as to take the responsibility on himself with regard to the effect of punishment on the health of the patient.

(69)

Compared to even the worst outbursts in the other Good Shepherd institutions this kind of behaviour must have been exceptionally disruptive to the control of the class and positively dangerous were it to occur within the laundry. It is however of much deeper import. The periodic necessity to call in policemen to remove fractious women to the isolation room was a marked reminder of the loss of institutional autonomy, even in matters of internal control. The isolation room was itself a potent symbol of failure. For the nuns it enclosed an ideological vacuum. For the inmates it was variously a way out, a sanctuary from institutional routine, and an ideological oasis. At the same time there is an evident relief, albeit contradictory, that the doctor has taken responsibility. The register records that Beatrice Valentine was transferred to the lunatic asylum, which outcome may have assuaged the sisters sense of failure on the grounds of her irrationality. Meaning is put out of play. On the other hand, the admission of irrationality only further undermined the voluntary principle and intensified a sense of hopelessness in the work. This seeming failure of hope would have been a most radical and inward thrust against the integrity of Good Shepherd ideology. A number of the sisters had raised this issue with the priests who advised them on their spiritual lives and as early as December 1899 Cardinal Vaughan had taken up the same theme:

'He spoke most beautifully about the work of the Good Shepherd, and he urged us to take the supernatural view

'of our work in spite of seeming failure. Religious were the soldiers of Christ. We should think of the hardships and sufferings of the British soldiers in the terrible war now waging in Africa and consider Who is the Master we serve.'

(70)

An intriguing appeal to imperial jingoism as well as to religious conviction!

The case of Beatrice Valentine had caused some consternation in the Home Office as well. It was agreed she should be transferred to a lunatic asylum but the Poor Law authorities in Middlesex were already objecting that it was financially unfair on them to admit such cases as ordinary pauper lunatics. Moreover, the Secretary to the Lunacy Commissioners pointed out that such women might feign insanity in order to gain release and this would make it hard to maintain discipline in the reformatory. He considered it would be more appropriate and a greater deterrent to treat such cases as criminal lunatics. Although the Law Officers agreed that they were originally committed as criminal habitual drunkards under the 1898 Act, they were quick to point out that the inmates of C.I.R.'s were committed for reform and not punishment. They could hardly be regarded as prisoners as they were not within the jurisdiction of the Prison Commissioners. In the end it was decided that they would be classed as criminal lunatics who would be returned to the C.I.R. on regaining their sanity. (71) With such confusion and ambiguity at official level it is not surprising that the sisters were at a complete loss as to the actual status of the inmates. It was not that the sisters had no previous experience of insane inmates. In the magdalen asylum they simply dismissed them as unsuitable. In such circumstances the Lunacy Commissioners had advised them to inform the Relieving Officer or the local police in advance of dismissal. In those cases, however, the nuns were in no doubt about the status of the dismissed penitents. (72)

Mary Howe, (73) a woman of similar age and background to Beatrice Valentine, also ended up in a lunatic asylum:

'(She) went raving mad. She was very dangerous and intent on committing murder .... She had not been many minutes in the isolation room when she was seized with frenzy, tore up a large heavy wooden seat and splintered it into fragments, so that it was not safe for any of us to go near her. When Dr. Anderson came she tried to push him out of the room and hurt Dr. Morris' finger, so they told us to leave her absolutely without food till 9 o'clock at night, when fasting had subdued her a little - this will give those who succeed a little idea of what we went through! Especially as we had some difficulty in getting her removed to the Asylum. In the end she went quietly, breaking her heart at having to leave us.'

(74)

The third case is that of Mary Jones (75) admitted in 1901 for two years. She was also in her 40's, an ironer with 46 previous convictions for drunkenness. Mary's behaviour was less dramatic than the other two but was of a kind which gave the sisters a great deal of trouble. She had been difficult from the day she was admitted and:

'made a great disturbance in the dormitory, after smashing a handsome globe, and the glass of a holy picture, with great difficulty she was got down to the isolation room where for some days she seemed possessed. One night she declared that no-one in Ashford should sleep that night and she certainly did all in her power to disturb the peaceful slumbers. She banged the door for hours with the lid of a pan - sang and made as much noise as possible till 12 o'clock when she seemed to have spent herself.'

(76)

This particular event took place in 1903 some eighteen months after Mary had been committed. By that time the Government had established a State Inebriate Reformatory for women at Aylesbury and she was transferred there.

These cases illustrate a further general obstacle in the way of conducting the inebriate reformatory according to the received traditions and general practices of the Good Shepherd Sisters. The Sisters had no control over dismissal. In the magdalen asylum the



penitent was free to leave at any time and the sisters were free to dismiss penitents. In the convict refuge a prisoner could be returned to prison for difficult behaviour more or less at the sisters' request. The situation was quite different in the C.I.R. There were only two ways of removing a fractious woman before the completion of her detention; either by certifying her a lunatic or by transfer to the S.I.R. The latter facility was not available until 3 years after the C.I.R. was opened, and the former proceeding was much discouraged by the Home Office. Both procedures were subject to external decision. Not that the Home Office was unwilling to stretch a point in the years before the S.I.R. was opened:

'The only remedy was to apply for the immediate discharge of 4 children who were the ring leaders and seemed hopelessly intractable. Government at once granted this, but we had to let the other women think that they had gone out on licence, or it might have been an encouragement to them to mis-behave in order to secure their liberty .... We felt greatly the need of a State Reformatory where we could send rebellious and incorrigible cases and then give the better disposed the chance of living here in peace.'

(77)

There was a further imponderable. Women who fell again into drunken ways after they had been released on licence could have their licences revoked by the Home Office. In which case they would be recalled to their original C.I.R. and the superintendent had no say in their re-admission. In terms of the laundry enterprise this meant an extremely volatile and unmanageable workforce and a management with no powers of dismissal, few sanctions, and an obligation to receive back difficult former inmates.

Although the C.I.R.'s had started to accept committals in May 1899, the S.I.R. for women had not opened until September 1901, a delay of over two years. During this period the Section 1 cases, originally destined for the S.I.R.'s because they were expected to

be more difficult, were necessarily sent to the C.I.R.'s. In practice it was found that the Section 2 cases were far more trouble, (78) and the curative and reformatory emphasis expected of the State institutions had given way to the penal restraint and treatment of the worst and most incorrigible cases transferred from the C.I.R.'s. (79) By the end of 1903 Dr. Branthwaite was to consider this group of inmates:

'the very worst that could be imagined, in fact, I know of no similar collection of human beings, either in prison or asylum.'

(80)

The fact that the women's S.I.R. was established at all was entirely due to the manner in which a few women gave continual trouble and totally upset the smooth growth of the certified inebriate reformatory system. (81) Well before the opening of Aylesbury the sisters at Ashford had felt the need of an S.I.R. as an ultimate sanction in much the same way as the prison stood to the convict refuge. (82) Despite this, Branthwaite was asserting in 1899 that there was no need for an S.I.R. The truth of the matter was that the government was reluctant to commit capital funds to the establishment of an S.I.R. and the Prison Commissioners, with a strong sense of realism, were reluctant to undertake the work. Be that as it may, it left the sisters detaining cases so violent and irreformable as to hit hard at the practical organisation of the establishment and its fundamental ideological commitments.

By the middle of 1901 the Home Office had opened a file on 'Hopeless Cases' in which pride of place was taken by Julia Lyons an inmate of Ashford. (83) Like Mary Howe she had displayed homicidal and suicidal behaviour during her detention, having been committed in February 1900 for 3 years. Within two days of the Superior at Ashford asking Home Office authority for an urgent committal to the lunatic asylum, the Home Secretary had arranged for her complete discharge by warrant.

For Dr. Branthwaite, the case opened up the important issue of control as opposed to reformation. He argued that the first batch of women committed to the C.I.R.'s had been uncontrollable drunkards for many years. They were bound to have come first as the magistrates tended to commit the worst cases. The 1898 Act was meant to provide control for these cases as well as reformation for the majority. It would remain a difficulty that cases could not be brought under the Act before they had become virtually irreformable. (84) It was Braithwaite's view that:

'if we discharge hopeless cases then we might as well turn out half of all those detained'.

(85)

Julia Lyons' case provides an important insight into the endemic difficulty encountered by the sisters. The ideological *raison d'être* of the Good Shepherd Sisters was moral transformation and religious conversion. The architects of the Act, from the very start, had considered control of irreformable cases one of its central provisions (and certainly the magistrates and police were quite clear about this), yet it was the reformatory aspect that was stressed in the terminology of the Act and in public rhetoric. The sisters had engaged in the work as primarily reformatory at the request of the bishops. The work was constantly assessed in terms of the reformation of the inmates, and the difficulties of this aspect were only too apparent. The law itself enacted an ambiguity. The police and the courts had wanted an effective method of disposing of petty drunken offenders, while the Temperance Movement had wanted a compulsory method of treatment. Longer term containment and control with no hope of a transformative outcome had become confused with detention for compulsory treatment. The two became inextricably mingled to the detriment of both. As Dr. Branthwaite later remarked:

'The difficulty of dealing with reformable cases is no argument against controlling the irreformable.'  
(86)

'Controlling the irreformable' was precisely what the Good Shepherd Sisters did not consider themselves to be about, yet they were confronted with such cases continually. The experience struck at the very heart of their ideology. Nevertheless they persevered for another two years, taking admissions until December 1903 which were not finally worked through until 1906. The class reached a peak of 72 in 1902. Over three years the work had also taken its toll of the sisters, and in September 1903 the Mother General had written from Angers expressing her regret that:

'the good Mother of Ashford was totally exhausted and broken down in health. If you really believe that it will be too much for her to go on until the next election, and if you had anyone in mind who could replace her, then (I) readily agree that you make the change before that time, as (I) would not want to have the total breakdown of Mother St. Thomas on my conscience.'

(87)

By the autumn of 1903 the sisters were negotiating with the Government on the possibility of establishing a 'Reward Home' analogous to the convict refuge. The idea had been suggested to them by the Home Office. The Reward Home would receive inebriate women of the more reformable kind after they had been assessed at a classification centre. (88) This concept was obviously far more conformable to Good Shepherd ideology, but the sisters were unwilling to start this work until the current inmates of St. Joseph's were transferred elsewhere. The archbishop hoped that the sisters would keep on the work in some form as there was no other religious order to do it:

'I am sure the present Mothers of Ashford will make it a success and in the end you will be glad to have kept

'Ashford. Surely that work is not worse than the prisoners the Good Shepherd used to have at Eagle House, Brook Green, especially if you can turn Ashford into a Reward Home.'

(89)

The bishops seem to have misunderstood the ideological difficulties as much as the government, possibly due to their anxiety to support the Temperance Movement. It may even have been that they were seeking to ingratiate themselves with the government in order to secure the public funding of roman catholic schools, a consuming issue about this time. However, the government would not agree to the removal of all the existing inmates and the certificate of St. Joseph's was surrendered when the last women were discharged in 1906.

In submitting to the government their conditions for a Reward Home the sisters had made the following statement about the C.I.R. work:

- '1. It hardly seems work for enclosed Religious on account of having so often to go out on business connected with it.
2. The constant strain on sisters' nerves caused by the violent and uncontrollable temper of the women who break out frequently and suddenly into fits of passion often ending in fighting.
3. Their low bad language in presence of the sisters.
4. So little permanent good can be effected because their brains are injured by intoxicating liquors and they are often bordering on insanity. In many cases they seem to have no wish to be better, and in nearly every instance they have returned to their old habits on leaving.

On account of the foregoing difficulties there has frequently been question of giving up this work; but we have hitherto hesitated to do so.'

(90)

More from the heart, the annalist recorded that:

'for us to abandon this work, if only we can help to save one soul, seems hard to face, and yet we see

'more and more that to deal with the half-insane women that Government sends us is hardly the work for enclosed religious - the Inspector considers that the measures we employ with these poor "children" are not strong enough, yet as religious we cannot take any other line, or use more violent means, when they resist us, which is now often the case.'

(91)

But even the idea of a Reward Home presented the sisters with difficulties which they did not mention in their discussions with the Home Office. These revolved around the procedure of prior classification in another institution for:

'it implied our work being controlled by another Protestant official (and so) we declined.'

(92)

In the end Dr. Branthwaite himself persuaded them not to proceed with the scheme and the government eventually abandoned the idea. (93) These statements are very clear affirmations of the problems and attest to the sisters recognition that the management of a C.I.R. was, at best, a work radically divergent from their ideology and experience, and at worst, gravely disruptive of the ordered life and objectives of a Good Shepherd convent.

The clarity of the affirmation was, however, lost on Dr. Branthwaite who was equally clear that the work was really abandoned for financial reasons. Reviewing the financial arrangements for C.I.R.'s after the 1908 Departmental Committee had recommended that they should be funded entirely by central government, he commented:

'Philanthropic Societies have been less successful still. Even with the original grants, supplemented by payments from local authorities none of them have been able to make ends meet. The Roman Catholic Sisterhood lost so much money over Ashford that they had to give up ....'

(94)

The capital cost of setting up the establishment had been £24,000, of which the Good Shepherd Sisters raised all but a few hundred pounds by loans at between 3% and 4%.<sup>(95)</sup> These loans had to be serviced and repaid out of income, mainly from a laundry which was not showing a profit. Maintenance of the inmates was met by local and central government on a weekly per capita basis of 10/6d., yet by January 1901 with 56 inmates Ashford was showing a deficit on maintenance of £1,740.<sup>(96)</sup> It was generally agreed that the institutions were hampered by the initial outlay which could not be met from public funds. The average weekly cost of inmate residence in 1900 was 16/10 and this figure increased to 24/11 when rates, taxes and repairs were included. The loan interest at Ashford was £825 per annum which was equivalent to 6/- per capita per week. The government accepted that Ashford ran inmate residence more economically than other institutions,<sup>(97)</sup> yet by 1904 its maintenance costs had become the most expensive. As early as 1901 there was conclusive evidence of the struggles faced by managers in starting up a C.I.R. and of the crippling cost of maintenance thereafter. At the time the Home Office was taking a sympathetic view.

Despite Branthwaite's assertion of the primacy of financial factors in the decision to close Ashford, he had made a connection between financial failure and management ideology. At the end of 1904 when Ashford was beginning to run down, he had written a memorandum to the Treasury in which he divided the C.I.R.'s into three groups: those of calculable low cost, those of unknown total cost, and those conducted at a totally unjustifiable cost. He went on:

'it is also significant that this somewhat arbitrary division is also marked by other principles mostly relating to the constitution of the governing body.'

(98)

The first kind was conducted by one man mainly for the benefit of the state, the second was conducted by local authorities on the same principles as asylums, while the third, such as Ashford were:

'purely philanthropic, the reformatories therein being conducted by persons whose sole object is the good of mankind; the fact that by thus interesting themselves they are conducting a public work is of secondary importance.'

(99)

It has already been noted that Dr. Branthwaite himself was not clear whether that public work was control or reformation. Going by past experience the sisters might have been expected to weather the financial storm with support from Good Shepherd central funds, and then gone on to establish an institution whose self-sufficiency would be assured by an efficient laundry. However, both the ideological conditions and the quality of the labour force made this impossible.

Although an analysis of the statistical data derived from the official admission register confirms the general pattern of events revealed by the documentary sources, it does throw into question the nature of the group of women with whom the sisters had been dealing. The admission figures given at Appendix 5: Table 1 reveal the degree of the problem faced by the nuns. Whereas the magdalen asylum and the convict refuge had developed slowly in their early years, the Ashford C.I.R. had been inundated with cases from the start. At the end of the first six months there were already 41 inebriate women in the establishment; and as time went by the total number on roll was substantially increased by the steady flow of re-admissions. All the women were well established in a pattern of drunken behaviour, often associated with petty crime, which had brought them to the attention of the police and the courts. Some 22% of the women were between 35 and 39 years old and they comprised the largest single age group;



the majority of the women were between 25 and 45 years old. (Appendix 5: Table 2) It is noteworthy that the women of the C.I.R. generally tended to be of a much older age group than those admitted to the magdalen asylum, and older than the convict women as well. At that age their rehabilitation from drunkenness, and a degree of alcoholism, would have presented any institution with a formidable re-socialisation problem. The question of a stable christian conversion within the Good Shepherd tradition could hardly have realistically entered into the matter.

The picture is compounded when one becomes aware of the number of previous convictions. To be in the C.I.R. at all, the women committed under Section 2, and they were the vast majority, must have had at least three previous convictions for drink-related offences. In fact, about a half of the women had between 11 and 40 such previous convictions, and nearly 20% had many more. (Appendix 5: Tables 4 and 5) There were likely to have been many occasions when their drunken behaviour did not come to the attention of the police, or instances in which the police took no formal action. It is probable that their problem with drink was far more deeply established than even that which the official statistics convey. Furthermore, information on previous convictions is not entered in the register for the first 96 women admitted, and they were the group whom the Home Office and the magistrates recognised to be the most difficult and incorrigible. St. Joseph's, Ashford, was the only C.I.R. in the county for roman catholic women, yet unlike the convict refuge (occupying a similar position within the intermediate refuge system), most of the women came from London. The admissions to the convict refuge most accurately reflected the population distribution of roman catholics across the entire country. The fact that most of the C.I.R. women were convicted in London and committed

by magistrates courts probably reveals the greater awareness of the London magistrates of their new sentencing powers under the 1898 Act. In any case, they had been a leading pressure group for legislation of that kind. Drunken petty offenders are a nuisance to any court. The Ashford C.I.R. very quickly became little more than a disposal facility for the London courts.

Despite the foregoing, it would be an error to conclude that the Ashford women were totally dissolute and incapable. Entries in the register indicate that about three quarters of them had received at least an elementary school education. Unlike the penitents and the convict women, most of the inebriate women were in gainful employment at the time of their conviction; only 16% were unemployed, compared with 37% in the convict refuge. (Appendix 5: Table 3) It should not surprise us that the second largest group at St. Joseph's were laundry women for they were notoriously heavy drinkers of beer, a habit developed from the physical need to compensate for the extremely hot conditions in which they worked. The largest group had been in domestic service which could well have included laundry work; and for the less lowly servants there may have been an opportunity to pilfer drink from their employers. The other substantial group were the street flower-sellers and hawkers whose work would have afforded ready opportunity for visiting public houses. Drunk and disorderly convictions by no means necessarily imply a problem with alcoholism; they could simply be the product of a different life-style and employment. In any event, these lower working class women were more vulnerable to police control than other social groups who tended to drink at home. Apart from the very extreme cases, who were undoubtedly sick women, their rowdy and ungovernable behaviour in the C.I.R. was more likely to have been occasioned by a real resentment at their incarceration for habits long engrained in their life-style. An impression confirmed by the fact that the

nuns found them far more difficult to control than the small proportion of women committed for indictable offences under Section 1 of the Act.

Over one half of the inebriate women were committed for 3 years, and over the period 1899-1903 there was a tendency for this proportion to increase. (Appendix 5: Table 6) In 1903, 80% of the new admissions were sentenced to the maximum 3 years compared with 35% in 1899. As the magistrates had quickly become dissatisfied with the efficacy of the C.I.R.'s, the longer sentences may simply express their irritated wish to clear the streets for as long as possible. However, the sentencing statistics bear little relation to the amount of time the women actually spent in the reformatory. Appendix 5: Table 7 shows that most of the women remained for less than 18 months, with over a half leaving within 12 months. This was substantially determined by the regulations, which allowed the managers to release inmates on licence after 9 months, with 12 months being recommended as the norm. Anyone still remaining after 18 months was to be the subject of a special report justifying the fact. The architects of the Act had always been convinced that a very long period of detention would be necessary; the licensing system militated against that possibility.

The women released on licence accounted for 66% of the total admissions. The remainder either completed the full period of detention, were discharged by the Home Secretary before the full period elapsed, or were transferred elsewhere; some 13% going direct to the State Inebriate Reformatory for women at Aylesbury. Nearly 40% of the licensees had their licenses revoked and were recalled to Ashford. (Appendix 5: Tables 8(a) and (b)) Apart from anything else, this must have created an entirely unpredictable class size and a serious problem of control for the sisters. They had been warned long before, by

the American Good Shepherd nuns, that the success rate was very low. We do not know the ultimate outcome for these women or the true degree of recidivism. Ashford was so short-lived that there is no record of persistent returning to the establishment either by licence revocation or by entirely fresh re-committal.

The statistics we do have hardly provide an encouraging picture. (Appendix 5: Table 8(c)) We may reasonably infer that the 24% who were placed in domestic service or released to their families were adjudged by the sisters to hold some hope of reformation, of 'going on steady', as they liked to express it. That being remarked, there were 20% who returned to their old haunts, presumably to take up their former life-styles. A quarter of all those admitted were transferred directly to the State Inebriate Reformatory, the lunatic asylum, prison, the temperance hospital, or else discharged by the Home Secretary as totally irreformable during the period when no transfer policy had yet been formulated. The register gives no disposal information for 51 women, nearly all admitted from sometime in 1902. They may have completed their period on licence without mishap, as only 9 returned on revocation in 1903. If the licences of any woman initially admitted in 1903 had been revoked, they would have been recalled to other C.I.R.'s. It is difficult to interpret the overall evidence on disposal, but it does suggest a failure rate of between 50% and 75%, which at the lower range is comparable to the outcome for the convict refuge.

It could be argued that the women's drinking behaviour was no different from many of those admitted to the magdalen asylum or to the convict refuge, given the endemic pattern of drunkenness reported in this alienated and lowly group of women throughout the nineteenth century. We have already noted the strong association between drink and street prostitution, and the high proportion of women who left

the magdalen asylum quite quickly. The detailed entries in the convict registers often reveal previous convictions for drink offences, or a later loss of employment due to drinking behaviour. It has already been suggested that the undoubtedly severe control problem that the nuns encountered in the C.I.R. was just as likely to be the result of the women's resentment at being deprived of liberty as of their withdrawal from alcohol. That the sisters perceived the women's intractability in terms of the latter may be seen as a reflection of the degree to which they were influenced by the prevailing medical, judicial, and moral orthodoxies concerning drink and its effects. They had not previously experienced a group of women who displayed such a deep-seated and ungovernable reaction to compulsion. They were faced starkly with the true opposite to the principle of voluntary admission upon which their transformative endeavours were traditionally based. The secular orthodoxy concerning intemperance provided them with a short-lived rationale for engaging in work that they had been reluctant to start in the first place.

The developments at Ashford after the closure of the C.I.R. to new admissions are quite revealing. There were 59 women in St. Joseph's Class at the end of 1903. As the very last had been admitted in December, the institution could not be totally closed until sometime in 1906. By the end of 1904 the size of the class was much reduced. During this year the sisters had inconclusively explored possibilities of selling the property. They managed to keep the residual members of the class occupied by taking mending and washing from a local orphanage at nominal charge. (100) The transitional problems were quite substantial:

'We hear there is also a question of taking girls here to train for service, in the meantime we are all trying to earn money to meet the debt, as the number of children is steadily decreasing and in our present state of uncertainty we are not receiving any new cases. We have had another

'trial as we are losing the needlework of the London County industrial school which has been such a help to us.'

(101)

They had built a modern laundry which had not been very successful for the reasons already considered and they had a large farm to run. However inadequate the inebriate women had been that source of labour was now coming to an end. They were saddled with a large capital debt as a result of accepting the C.I.R. work and their revenue finances were running at a loss.

Early in 1905 the sisters opened an Inebriate Retreat for fee paying ladies 'of a better class' which was licensed under the 1898 Act. This was called the Sacred Heart Class by the sisters and to the outside world it was known as 'Ecclesfield'. These women did not engage in manual work. St. Joseph's Class was opened to inebriate women who desired treatment voluntarily but who could pay little or nothing towards their maintenance. These other women earned their keep by doing the domestic work for the Sacred Heart Class. The problem of the laundry, and therefore of institutional self-sufficiency, was solved by opening a traditional type class of voluntary penitents, a magdalen asylum, and this was styled Our Lady's Class in May 1905.

The establishment had thus converted from a certified inebriate reformatory to a three class institution in which the voluntary principle had been totally re-asserted. When Dr. Branthwaite made a formal inspection in April he was well satisfied with the arrangements for  
(102)  
the licensed inebriate retreat.

The transformed institution was not without its problems and these still centred on the laundry. The women who had been sent from Finchley to be the initial group of Our Lady's Class could not settle but by July the Class stood at 27, most of whom were direct admissions.

These women were unable to work the modern laundry machinery and an experienced sister was sent to teach them. She fell ill and left and so did her pupils. Consequently a new sister and new women were required. (103) Again it is difficult to resist the conclusion that laundry requirements rather than the specific needs of the penitents in Our Lady's Class were dictating to management. It is worth noting that while all the earlier convents, like Hammersmith, Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow, had initial difficulties with the quality of the laundry work, all had developed contemporaneously with the development of laundry technology. A continuity of expertise had been built up, especially through the lay-sisters and consecrated penitents. In the case of Ashford a modern laundry had been installed but the inebriate women constituted a very inadequate workforce, both physically and temperamentally. When the traditional penitents class was set up there was no expertise available to maintain quality while the new women were being taught laundry skills. It took until 1908 for the laundry to work to capacity when there were some 60 penitents in Our Lady's Class. By that time there were 35 fee-paying women in the Sacred Heart Class, and brush and mat-making had been introduced into St. Joseph's Class.

In 1935 the Ashford property was sold and the work moved to Kent where the Sacred Heart Class still survives as a home for alcoholic women run by the Good Shepherd Sisters. It had ceased being a licensed retreat in 1925. St. Joseph's Class did not survive the move, doubtless because their work was taken over by the more trusted members of Our Lady's class of penitents which lasted until 1948. By that time 1,646 women had passed through the class. (104) Out of the initial debacle of the Certified Inebriate Reformatory, the voluntary principle had been completely re-asserted.

The Good Shepherd Sisters had been able to legitimate the work of the convict refuge in terms of their own ideology, despite the ambiguities of classification and transformation; indeed, they effected their own institutional transformation. They totally failed to achieve this with the C.I.R. In the former case, the prison authorities quite specifically applauded a religious influence as the prime means of reformation. There was, at least, that degree of congruence between the nuns and officialdom. Moreover, the women convicts were nearing the end of their sentences and were actually outside the prison; a factor which enhanced control and gradually eliminated the compulsory element. The work with the inebriate women was quite the contrary. Whatever its shortcomings in concept and justice, the C.I.R. was intended by the Home Office as a secure quasi-medical provision for a highly specific group of women. Also, they came to the Good Shepherd Sisters at the beginning of their detention and direct from the courts. The compulsory aspect could not be denied, nor the medical model of the official rhetoric. It may be an arguable view that the progressive intentions of the medical and penal reformers regarding petty drunken criminality were distorted by the immediate law enforcement needs of the police and the magistrates. Despite the humanitarian intentions of the reformers, the C.I.R. system seems to have been operated as a not very creditable mode of policing a highly specific group of women. Inevitably, the nuns had become embroiled in all the confusion and resentment created by the situation. A few years experience was sufficient to convince them that there was a total clash of ideologies. They protected their own ideological commitment by a complete withdrawal from the work. Thus pre-figuring the demise of the whole system of C.I.R.'s during the 1st World War. The Home Office finally commenting:

'The compulsory provisions of the Inebriates Acts



'have practically failed in this country. They were designed for the purpose of reformation, but when inebriates were compulsorily deprived of drink it was discovered that most of them were the subject of neuropathic disability which rendered reformation difficult or impossible in most cases.'

(105)

Thus they insisted to the last on interpreting the whole question as an insoluble medical problem.