

## REPORT.

---

The Select Committee to whom were referred the various petitions, asking further legislation for the protection of persons unlawfully confined in Convents and Nunneries, beg leave respectfully to report :

That they have given the subject that calm and deliberate consideration which its importance demands, and while they have been led unanimously to the conclusions they present, they will not be able to do more than state those conclusions, without furnishing all the reasons in detail, which have induced their adoption.

The Constitution and Declaration of Rights of our State, guarantee to every individual the right to worship God in such manner as he may think most acceptable to Him; and they also declare that no person ought, by any law, to be molested in his person or estate on account of his religious persuasion, or profession, or for his religious practice, unless under color of religion any man shall disturb the good order, peace or safety of the State. And, however persons may differ as to the propriety or necessity of establishing Religious Houses, Monasteries, or Convents, in which professors of religion may seclude themselves from the world, the *right* of any individual, under our laws, to enter such places, and there remain of their own free will, cannot admit of a doubt.

As to the propriety of persons entering such Institutions, your Committee are not called upon to inquire, nor is it made their duty to determine whether such Institutions are consistent with the spirit of the Age, with the "well established" and dearly cherished principles of our Government, or with the expressed sentiments of the American People.

The question to be determined is, whether, in reality, there are within the limits of this State Religious Houses in which persons are unlawfully deprived of their natural, civil or religious rights, and whether any case has been presented to this House properly supported, which justifies an examination or inspection of such places, or demands additional Legislative protection.

Mere complaints that there are religious institutions where such persons are *said* to be detained against their will, are not sufficient to justify legislative interference, for it is possible that unlawful restraints have been exercised in private houses, and many individuals deprived of their liberty and right, in the place recognized by the law to be their castle. Yet no one has thought because of such