

March 10, 1883; * and that on the following June 29 she 'received the white veil or habit of novice' (p. 42), and the name of 'Sister Mary Elizabeth' (p. 43). There were, moreover, in the same convent—so we are told—a Mother Joseph (p. 35); a Sister Loyola (p. 36)—on p. 38 she is called Mother Loyola, but, then, Mrs. Slattery is strong in matters of detail; a Sister Ursula (p. 54); a Sister Justine (p. 19); and an Hon. Blanche Coote, known in religion as Sister Mary Frances (p. 59, etc.).†

4. We are next asked to believe that, after staying some time in the convent, 'Sister Mary Elizabeth' was 'rescued' from it by her cousin, Lady Morton, who, she tells us, was wife of the Right Rev. Sir Robert Morton, who 'was a bishop in the Episcopal Church in Devonshire, England, and also a baronet.'‡ Like the other sham nun, Margaret Shepherd (*alias* Parkyn, *alias* Edgerton, *alias* Egan, etc.) Mrs. Slattery is 'of excellent family'—so her handbills assure us. Both exhibit the same weakness for titled connections. In the tenth and eleventh chapter we are told of her voyage to America in March, 1885, of her 'conversion' by the notorious Maonamara,§ and of her marriage, at an unspecified date, to expriest Slattery, whom she now accompanies on his tours. So much for Mrs. Slattery's story. And now for the facts.

Facts versus Fiction.

1. Mrs. Slattery's bold lying begins with the very first sentence of her autobiography—the story of her birth near Cootehill on March 2, 1867. Here is the copy of a document which the editor of the *Glasgow Observer*—who did so much to expose this paripatetic pair—has kindly offered to place at our disposal. It was published in the *Observer* of October 28, 1898 (p. 14), during the visit of the Slatterys to Scotland:—

'Union, Cootehill, County Cavan.
'Workhouse, Cootehill,
'21st January, 1898.

'I hereby certify that I have examined the Register Books in this office from 1st January, 1864, to the present date, and that they do not contain any entry of the birth of Mary E. MacCabe, daughter of James MacCabe and Catherine O'Neill.

(Signed) JAMES J. HENNESSY,
Assistant Superintendent Registrar.
'(Countersigned) THOMAS MACKAY.'‖

2-4. The remaining statements extracted from Mrs. Slattery's story are easily disposed of. In so far as they relate to her alleged life within the Catholic Church they are, like the opening sentence of her history, rank falsehoods: the trail of the serpent runs through the whole of her evil tale. The following correspondence has appeared in secular or Catholic papers or in pamphlets along the whole track pursued by the Slattery combination in England, Scotland, and Australia. It sufficiently explains itself. The vital positions of it have also been published by the *Auckland Observer* of January 20, 1900. The following is extracted from a letter by Dean Lynch (now of St. Winifred's, Hulme, Manchester), which appeared in the *Manchester Courier* of January 1, 1898:—

'When they [the Slatterys] began their lecturing tour, naturally people sought at once to verify the lecturer's statements. No James MacCabe could be found to have lived in the neighbourhood of Cootehill with a daughter named Mary E. MacCabe, the "escaped nun." No Mrs. John Brandon lived in Cavan. Various other people mentioned in Mrs. Slattery's autobiography were all found to be fictitious. The Bishop of Kilmore, who lives in Cavan, officially certified that no Mary E. MacCabe, from the neighbourhood of Cootehill, ever entered the Convent of Poor Clares, Cavan. The present Lady Superior, who entered the convent as a nun in 1867, the year in which Mrs. Slattery was born, officially denies that Mary E. MacCabe entered the convent, and that no nun could be in it within the last 31 years without her knowledge. The nuns mentioned by Mrs. Slattery—Mother Joseph, Sister Justine, Sister Ursula, etc.—were all fictitious. No nuns with those names were ever in the Cavan Convent. Just like her husband, she invented names, and was careful not to mention the name of a single real nun. If she did the whole truth would very speedily and summarily be made known before a Lancashire jury.'

Father Lynch, Mr. Britten, and others also published the following letters which have ever since been upon the tracks of the Slattery pair, and have never met with even the pretence of disproof. The following is from the lady who has been for 32 years in the convent where the Slattery woman claims to have been a postulant and novice. It was written as far back as 1892, in

* *Convent Life*, p. 35. For the information of non-Catholic readers we may state that a *postulant* is merely a candidate or petitioner who enters a religious house. She does not wear the religious garb of the Order, and the object of her stay is to give her an opportunity of getting acquainted with the rules and routine of the religious life before she decides to become a *novice*, that is, to enter upon the period of probation—varying from one to three years—before being accepted and taking the required vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience which constitute her a *nun*. During this period of probation—which is termed the *novitiate*—the Order is in no way bound to a novice, nor the novice to the Order. At its close the Order is in no way bound to accept the novice, and the novice on her part, is free to depart at any time.

† These names are mentioned with great frequency throughout the book. We have merely indicated some of the pages on which they are to be found.

‡ P. 119. On p. 12 she tells us that her cousin was married 'to the Reverend Robert J. Morton, an Episcopal clergyman, who afterwards became a bishop of the Anglican Church, and inherited the baronial estates of the Morton family in Devonshire, by both of which he became, according to English law, the Right Reverend Sir Robert Morton, and his wife Lady Morton.'

§ See p. — above.

‖ Every Poor-law Union is subdivided into districts. Each district has its locally resident registrar. These make out their returns quarterly and forward them to the superintendent-registrar of the district. The registers are carefully preserved and may be inspected and extracts copied from them on payment of a small fee. Parents, or in their default certain others, are bound under a penalty to notify the district registrar of every live birth within 42 days, and the registrar is, in his part, bound to see that this is done and to register all births in his district free within three months, with full particulars as to sex, name, parentage, etc.

reply to an inquiry, from an American gentleman, Mr. Michael Lynam, of St. Louis College, Atchison, Kansas:—

'St. Joseph's Abbey, Poor Clares,
Cavan, Ireland, December 16, 1892.

'Dear Mr. Lynam,—The receipt of your kind letter this morning has given me a strange surprise, and I hasten to give you the desired information. It gives me much pleasure to state that the supposed lady Elizabeth has *never* been an inmate of St. Joseph's Convent, Cavan. We *never* had a Sister of that name, and no member of community came to us at eight years of age, or brought us £6000. . . . No professed Sister has *ever* left our Convent, and the few novices who left are all living edifying lives in the world or in the cloister elsewhere. We know where all are, and keep-up a correspondence with them. No one is ever pressed to stay in our Convent; it is a very great favour to be kept. I can prove this if necessary, and the 120 inmates in our institution can do the same. . . . Should you take any means to put a stop to such an abuse, I will give you all the proof you require against the M. Elizabeth, if the Americans have any law to punish persons guilty of libel. I would be most gratified if you would kindly send me the papers in which the lectures are published; perhaps we could do something to prevent further scandal

'I remain, dear Mr. Lynam,
'Sincerely yours,
'SISTER MARY BAPTIST,
'Abbess.'

The following further testimony was given in reply to an inquiry from Maachester at the time that the Slatterys were disturbing the peace of that city with their inflammatory harangues:—

'St. Joseph's Abbey,
'Poor Clares, Cavan,
'December 18, 1897.

'Dear Father Lynch,—Mrs. Slattery, otherwise Mary E' MacCabe, from near Cootehill, otherwise Sister Mary Elizabeth, was never in this Convent as postulant, novice, or nun. No postulant entered this Convent on 10th March, 1883. No one received the white veil in the month of June, 1883. There never was a Mother Joseph Superior here, nor a Sister Loyola, nor a Sister Justine, nor a Sister Ursula.

'I am, dear Father Lynch,
'Yours faithfully,
'SISTER MARY BAPTIST,
'Abbess.'

We have in our possession an equally emphatic repudiation of 'Mary F. McCabe, *alias* 'Sister Mary Elizabeth,' in the handwriting of Sister Mary Baptist. The following declaration of the Bishop of Kilmore, in reply to further inquiries, disposes of a good many of Mrs. Slattery's fables:—

'Cullies House, Cavan,
'December 18, 1897.

'Dear Father Lynch,—I have already contradicted the statement that Mary E. MacCabe, from the vicinity of Cootehill, was in the Convent of Poor Clares, Cavan, as postulant or novice. I repeat that contradiction. There never was a Sister Mary Elizabeth there. No postulant was admitted on March 10, 1883. No novice got the white veil in June, 1883. There never was a Superior called Mother Joseph. There never was a Sister Justine, nor a Sister Loyola, nor a Sister Ursula, nor an Hon. Blanche Coote, otherwise Sister Mary Frances. I have made inquiry in Cootehill about the alleged family history of Mary E. MacCabe. It is an invention pure and simple. It is alleged that a John Marlowe, J.P., lives at Tullavin. No such person lives there; no such person ever lived there. No Mrs. John Brandon lives in Cavan.

'I am, dear Father Lynch,
'Yours faithfully,
'✠ EDWARD MCGENNIS,
'Bishop of Kilmore.'

A Missing Bishop-Baronet.

All this sets at rest the mad tale of the 'rescue' of 'Mary E. McCabe' from a convent under the roof of which she never lived in any capacity. But the story of Lady Morton, the gallant female 'rescuer'—who, she informs us elsewhere in elegant phrase, had the courage to (metaphorically) 'sit down upon' the wicked superior—remains to be told. Lady Morton was, as we are told, the wife of the Rev. Robert J. Morton, who afterwards became 'the Right Reverend Sir Robert J. Morton.' And this Right Rev. Sir Robert J. 'was a bishop in the Episcopal Church in Devonshire, England, and also a baronet.*' These names are printed in full in the American edition of *Convent Life*. But lo! in the English edition the names are quietly suppressed and represented by mere initials. They became 'Lady M—' and 'Sir Robert M—,' etc.† The reason is manifest. Like 'Mother Joseph,' and 'Sister Loyola,' and 'Sister Justine,' and 'Sister Ursula,' and 'Sister Mary Frances,' and 'James McCabe,' and 'Mrs. John Brandon,' and 'Mr. John Marlowe, J.P.,' 'Lady Morton' and her husband 'the Right Reverend Sir Robert Morton' are fictions pure and simple of Mrs. Slattery's imagination. These names were good enough to pass current in a far-off country where investigation by letter would have been slow and by cable message costly. They were judiciously suppressed in England, where the story of the Devonshire bishop-baronet could not have stood the light of publicity for half an hour. The *Blue Book* has been ransacked; official lists have been closely scanned; Burke and Debret have been turned inside out; annuals such as *Who's Who* have been searched; but all to no purpose. The reason is very simple: *there is no baronet named*

* *Convent Life*, p. 119.

† English edition, pp. 9, 22, 128.