

Her parents were from Scotland. They lived at Montreal, and were both Protestants. She describes her father as an officer under the British Government. After an early training at a non-Catholic school, she was sent to the schools of the Sisters of Charity, at 10 years old, to learn French. Adjoining these schools was the *Hôtel Dieu Nunnery*, called 'the Black Nunnery' on account of the colour of the dress worn by the inmates. Labour, charity, and the care of the sick were their duties 'and the religious observances which occupy a large portion of their time. They are regarded (she adds) with much respect by the people at large.' [At that time, 1831 both these religious houses had been in existence for over half a century.] In the Black Nunnery there was a hospital for sick people. Once, when she was ill, she was sent there. 'A physician attended it daily; and there is a number of the veiled nuns of that convent who spend most of their time there. These would also sometimes read lectures and repeat prayers to us.' After two years spent at the school of the Sisters of Charity, Miss Maria left and 'attended several schools for a short time.' But she 'soon became dissatisfied,' and 'as my Catholic acquaintances,' she said, 'had often spoken to me in favour of their faith, I was inclined to believe it true, although, as I have before said, I know little of any religion. While out of the nunnery I saw nothing of religion.' At this time Maria (as she tells us) suddenly took it into her head to become 'a black nun.' She was introduced by an old priest, and after some preliminary delay she called to the convent one Saturday morning 'and was admitted into the Black Nunnery as a novice, much to [her] satisfaction.' And this at the ridiculously early age of 12 or 13 years, without the preliminary trouble of becoming a postulant, and before she had received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

She correctly states (p. 28) that the usual period of the novitiate is about two years and a half, but that it is sometimes abridged; but five pages further on (p. 33) she informs us that after she had been a novice for four or five years—twice the usual period—she expressed resentment at some trifling act of a nun which had displeased her. Maria was thereupon requested to beg the nun's pardon. 'Not being satisfied with this,' says she, 'although I complied with the command, nor with the coolness with which the superior treated me, I determined to quit the convent at once, which I did without asking leave. There would have been no obstacle to my departure. I presume, novice as I then was, if I had asked permission; but I was too much displeased to wait for that, and went home without speaking to anyone on the subject.' During all these 'four or five years' she had noticed nothing wrong in convent life. After this she next appears as assistant teacher in a school at St. Denis. Here, according to her account (pp. 35-36), she married a man of bad character after a very brief acquaintance, and despite fair and full warnings as to the reputation he bore. A separation became necessary. Having nothing else to do, she again resolves to become a nun. In order to shield herself from inquiry on the subject of her marriage she (by her own account) deliberately fabricates a false statement—in which she induces another teacher to join her—to say to the Lady Superior I had been under her (the teacher's) protection during my absence, which would satisfy and stop further inquiry, as I was sensible, should they know I had been married, I should not gain admittance' (We may here state that a marriage, without a proper separation sanctioned by the Church, is utterly inconsistent with the vows which a nun must make.) With this lie upon her lips she obtains permission to again reside in the convent as a novice. She then proceeds to give us a piece of information which, by her own showing, would be enough to disqualify her in any court of justice in the world. The money usually required for the admission of novices had not been required or even 'expected' from her. She nevertheless made up her mind to pay it. 'I therefore,' she says (or is made to say), 'resolved to obtain money on false pretences.' She procured it from 'the Brigade-Major' and from several of her mother's friends. She further tells us that on the day of her Confirmation she deliberately committed three shocking acts of sacrilege. She persevered in the same course of sin, and a year later took the veil, having still concealed the vital fact of her marriage, although she knew it was a bar to her admission as a nun, and consequently (by her own showing) thus committed a fresh sacrilege of an aggravated form. She was then initiated into the crimes which, she tells us, the nuns were in the habit of committing—immorality, infanticide, and murder. It is unnecessary to pursue the filthy course of the vile narrative further, beyond adding that Maria Monk confesses that even after she had taken the veil she twice quitted the convent, and that at last the need of preparing for her *accouchement* obliged her to run away altogether. She found refuge, as she informs us, in an alms-house in New York, where she is subject to terrific dreams and visions. And there, for the present, we leave her.

A GENERAL COMMENT.

Such is, briefly, the story of this abandoned woman, or rather the story attributed to her by the little knot of adventurers and conspirators whose tool she permitted herself for a time to be. Nobody who has the slightest acquaintance with convent life in the Catholic Church will need to be reminded that the story, on the face of it, deserves not the slightest credit. We might leave the work to its fate out of evidence furnished against the alleged author out of her own pages: her visions and hallucinations; the hopeless improbability of her story of being received as a novice at twelve or thirteen years old, and previous to receiving Confirmation; the 'four or five years' of her novitiate; her marriage with a man whose evil moral reputation was well-known to her; her wilful lying and conspiracy of lying; her obtaining money under false pretences; her life of uncalculated and shocking hypocrisy, double-dealing, and sacrilege in the convent; her departure from it and her admission of immorality; her confession of being a party to a foul murder which she never denounced to the King's Attorney-General or to any competent authority that would avenge it. And so on. The clumsy conspirators furnished in the text of their foul story abundant evidence of the thorough-paced

unreliability of its writers. We shall in due course see the strong points of resemblance between the tale attributed to *Maria Monk* and the equally mendacious production which bears on its title-page the name of that other gross impostor, Mrs. Slattery. Mrs. Slattery's story is, in fact, built upon the plans and specifications of that of *Maria Monk*. There are, however, two important modifications (1) *Maria Monk's* reputed story has it that the period of the novitiate was marked by strict propriety of conduct, and even by a degree of piety. In Mrs. Slattery's tale, the novitiate is brim-full of horrors. The blood flows and the full flower of high tragedy is abloom from the first act. (2) *Maria Monk* has it that she was perfectly free to walk out of the convent at any moment without consulting or asking permission of anybody. This is too tame and life-like for Mrs. Slattery. Besides, had she not the stories of the escaped nun 'and of the rescued nun' before her? She combines the two, makes a non-existent 'Lady Morton' 'rescue' her from captivity, and on the Slattery handbills appropriates the title 'escaped nun,' of which Edith O'Gormaa was the sole inventor and patentee. In a notice of a recent anti-convent romance the *London Spectator* has this sarcastic remark: 'When nuns want to leave a nineteenth century convent, a far more convenient method of escape is to walk out of the front door and not (as represented on the cover of this book) to take an open window and a ladder.'

AUTHORITIES.

Happily for the cause of truth and decency the publication of that remarkable imposture, *The Artful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, was fast followed by overwhelming evidence, official and non-official, which triumphantly proved it to be from beginning to end a tissue of abominable falsehoods. The chief authorities that deal with the story of *Maria Monk* are: (1) The universal testimony of the Protestant Press at Montreal. (2) The thorough investigation of the whole affair carried out by Colonel W. L. Stone, editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser* and some leading Protestant gentlemen of Montreal, and published in the *Refutation of the Fabulous History of the Arch-Impostor Maria Monk* (Art and Book Company, Leamington, 3d); (3) the affidavits of many persons of good character and reputation residing at the time in Montreal. Among them is that of *Maria Monk's* own mother, who appears to have been always a respectable woman, and who was housekeeper at Government House Montreal. A number of these affidavits are contained in *The True History of Maria Monk*, reprinted from the *Dublin Review* of May, 1836, by the Catholic Truth Society (London, 28 pages, 1d). Eighteen valuable additional affidavits are to be found in *An Artful Exposure of the Atrocious Plot formed through the Intervention of Maria Monk*, published by Jones and Co., of Montreal, in 1836. (4) To these we may add the information contained in the *Boston Pilot* of the period, and in sundry other publications, to some of which brief reference will be made in due course. We give the salient facts of the vile conspiracy of defamation hereunder in brief and summary form, and refer our readers for fuller information to the pamphlets published by the Art and Book Co. and the Catholic Truth Society. These can be obtained through any Catholic bookseller.

THE TRUE STORY.

1. *A half-anted Lady*.—*Maria Monk* was the daughter of Scottish parents—both Protestants. They had settled at Montreal, where her father, before his death, held a minor position as a prison official. She was brought up a Protestant, and, so far as she professed any creed, she remained a Protestant to the end. Her mother, as already stated, became housekeeper at the local Government House. According to the mother's affidavit, sworn before Dr. Robertson, J.P., of Montreal, on October 24, 1835, *Maria Monk*, when about seven years old, 'broke a slate pencil in her head,' and, whether from this or other cause 'was frequently deranged in her head,' that 'since that time her mental faculties were deranged, and by times much more than at other times, but that she was far from being an idiot, that she could make the most ridiculous but most plausible stories.' Similar evidence of the mingled insanity and mendacity of *Maria Monk* is given in the affidavit of the above-mentioned Dr. Robertson (a Protestant physician), sworn at Montreal before Benjamin Holmes, J.P., on November 14, 1835. He deposed that, on November 9, 1834, she was prevented by three men from committing suicide by drowning herself, and that she—although quite unknown to Dr. Robertson—had represented herself as his daughter. His subsequent inquiries into her evil career led him to declare in his affidavit that he 'considered her assertions upon oath were not entitled to more credit than her bare assertion, and that he did not believe either.' Subsequent investigations amply justified his total unbelief of her unsupported word.

2. *Not a Nun*.—Like Mrs. Slattery, *Maria Monk* never was a nun. In her affidavit referred to above, her mother says that 'As to the history that she had been in a nunnery, it was a fabrication, for she was never in a nunnery; that at one time I wished to obtain a place in a nunnery for her, that I had employed the influence of Mrs. de Mont-nach, of Dr. Nelson, and of our pastor, the Rev. Mr. Esson, but without success.' The fable of her life in the convent is further contradicted by the affidavit of Dr. Robertson, of Mrs. Duncan Cameron, McDonnell, manager of the Magdalen Asylum, Montreal; by Col. Stone and the nuns of the *Hôtel Dieu*; by the Montreal Press; by the contradictory statements of *Maria Monk* herself, to which further reference will be made later on; and by the affidavits of eighteen of her employers published in the pamphlet referred to above. *An Artful Exposure of the Atrocious Plot*, etc.

3. *What Maria Monk really was*.—*Maria Monk* was, and remained to the end of her days, a prostitute. This melancholy fact is testified to in the lengthy affidavit of her own mother, which is given in full in the *Dublin Review* of May, 1836. Mrs. Tarbert, friend of Mrs. Monk, deposed on oath that when sent by the latter to fetch *Maria* home, she found the unfortunate creature 'in a house of bad fame.' Dr. Robertson gives similar testimony as to the immoral life of Mrs. Slattery's heroine. He deposes that on one occasion he, 'as a Justice of the Peace, sent her to gaol as a vagrant.'

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