

'escaped nun.' Her resolution, however, at last gave way, and Mrs. Monk tells how, a few days after Hoyte's interview, her daughter was staying with Hoyte at the house of a joiner named Johnson in Griffin-town (a suburb of Montreal), and how Hoyte had represented her as a nun who had escaped from the Hôtel Dieu Convent. On subsequent inquiry Mrs. Monk found that her daughter had disappeared with Hoyte. Maria's half-crazed brain was no match for the fox-like cunning and dog-like persistency of Hoyte and his pair of fellow-reprobates. Such poor scruples as the unhappy creature had were overcome at last. She lent herself, though evidently after a long struggle, to the spread of the savage anti-convent romance which was 'to make her a lady for ever.' And thus, for the sake of the wretched 'bawbees,' she became a professional sham nun—the evil prototype of some scores of impostors of the type of the woman Slattery. Her impresario and his guilty confederates licked into shape *The Gates of Hell* reopened by the alteration of a few proper names and other details. It was reprinted under a new title—*The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. The scene of the revised story was placed in the Hôtel Dieu nunnery in Montreal. Maria Monk posed at the same time as its author and as a nun who had escaped from the Hôtel Dieu. This was in October, 1835. And thus was set afloat that remarkable imposture which finds credulous believers down to the present time.

A WELL-TIMED IMPOSTURE.

Such were the auspicious beginnings of Mrs Slattery's evil trade—that of sham ex-nun. The moment of the publication of *Maria Monk* was well chosen. The Eastern States were at the time passing through one of those fanatical outbursts against the Catholic Church which were afterwards revived by the secret Know-nothing organisation in the fifties and by the A.P.A. during the course of the present decade. In August of the previous year (1834) the report had been circulated—the coinage of a foolish or malicious brain—that a nun was being detained against her will in the Ursuline Convent, Charlestown (Massachusetts), and was pining in an underground dungeon. It was the old, old story that, with a certain class of gullibles, has never lost its vitality and eternal freshness. The flame of feeling was fanned by infamous tales of vice on the part of those holy religious whose souls and lives were devoted to God's service. One or two preachers—may God forgive them—lent their wind-power on the Lord's Day, August 10, 1834, to rouse and strengthen the brewing storm of public hate against the Ursuline community. On the following night a ferocious mob, blinded by the foulest calumnies, enraged by the harangues of the clerical incendiaries, flung themselves without warning upon the dwelling of ten defenceless nuns and of the sixty helpless children under their care. A providential fear or panic gave momentary pause to the mob and allowed the defenceless women and children just time to escape. The rioters finding that, contrary to their fears, the place was undefended, entered the building. They spent several hours in carefully ransacking every room. They then deliberately set the building on fire. Broken furniture, books, curtains, vestments, and altar ornaments were piled up in the middle of the several rooms and set on fire. A copy of the Bible was thrown in derision on top of the first fire as it blazed up. When morning came the fine convent was a mass of blackened ruins. The rioters next burned down the bishop's house, farm buildings, and their contents. Not content with this 'they burst open the tomb of the establishment, rifled it of the sacred vessels there deposited, wrested the plates from the coffins, and exposed to view the mouldering remains of their tenants.' Such is the substance of the report of the Committee of Protestant gentlemen of position and influence who were appointed at a public meeting in Boston, and who publicly investigated this disgraceful outrage, cleared the nuns of an infamous charge, and endeavoured to bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice. In the last-mentioned purpose, however, they failed only one of the Charlestown miscreants was ever made amenable to the law. The rest were all acquitted by sympathetic jurors in the face of overwhelming evidence of their guilt.

This scandalous miscarriage of justice led to a swift spread of anti-Catholic fury, which extended from Charlestown, Massachusetts, to Charleston, South Carolina. There, too, an attack was organised on the local convent with a view to its destruction. Word went round of the preparations of the mob. A gallant band of Irishmen rallied to defend the menaced convent. They took up their positions, well armed and ready. An Irish bishop passed round their ranks at night. He coolly examined the flints and pans of their rifles to see that there should be no 'miss-fires' and that the cowardly assailants of defenceless women should, in South Carolina, at least, meet with their deserts. The mob were quite ready to fight women. They went home and stayed at home when, to their terror and disgust, they found that they had to deal with a stern and determined band of well-armed and chivalrous fellows who were prepared to shed their blood in defence of the noble and self-sacrificing women whom an American Protestant officer in the Civil War styled 'God's army on earth.'

It was in the near wake of this tornado of anti-Catholic feeling that the rogue Hoyte and his fellow-conspirators edited and republished as the work of Maria Monk an indecent old pamphlet that had appeared in its English dress 36 years before the birth of the notorious fallen woman of Montreal. This calumny long drawn out was, in its new shape, first published on October 14, 1835, in a vile muck-rake news-sheet in New York called the *Protestant Indicator*—a paper which was as great a disgrace to the decent journalism of the period as are, at the present day, those organs of the Orange Society, the *Victorian Standard*, of Melbourne, and the *Protestant Banner*, of Sydney. Three months later, in January, 1836, the story appeared in pamphlet form. As Hoyte and his fellow-reprobates had anticipated, the publication of the sensational tale created great excitement. The pamphlet had an enormous sale. The conspirators' pockets were well lined with the proceeds of their infamous swindle. They subsequently wrangled over the spoils, and two of them admitted the falsehood of the

whole story. It, however, suits the purpose alike of the prurient who revel in a filthy tale for its own sake, and of the happily diminishing number of blind and unreasoning bigots who would not believe good of Catholics were even the God of Truth to confirm it by special revelation. To these two classes the Slattery's appeal for the shekels which, as *Truth* points out, are the whole and sole object of their wandering crusade of slander. The lewd will relish their calumnies irrespective of their truth. As to the blind—the Slatterys can only make them a little more blind.

A SWIFT EXPOSURE.

Such is, briefly, the history of the remarkable swindle, *Maria Monk*. But even on the face of it, and apart from all knowledge of the details of the Hoyte conspiracy, the *Awful Disclosures* are not, as we showed last week, deserving of the slightest credit. The lie had, unhappily, a start. But it was a short one. We give a brief record of subsequent proceedings in connection with it, chiefly with a view to point out and gratefully acknowledge the leading and triumphant part which respectable Protestants of every creed took, and took promptly, in investigating the story and proving to the world that it was from beginning to end a tissue of as malignant falsehoods as were ever penned or spoken. Within a few days after its first appearance it was denounced as a gross calumny by the whole of the Montreal Press—the *Montreal Herald*, the *Montreal Gazette*, also by the *Rocher Mercury*, the *Quebec Mercury*, etc., in words which are before us. In our last issue we referred to the many affidavits by respectable Protestants of Montreal—including Maria Monk's mother—declaring the unfortunate stroller's story (or rather Hoyte's new edition of an old tale) a baseless calumny. Independent investigations were made, with the same result, by Dr. Robertson: by Colonel Stone (editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*), assisted by Mr. A. Frothington (President of the Bank of Montreal) and Mr. Duncan Fisher, another Protestant gentleman of the same city; by Mr. W. Perkins, of Montreal; and by other prominent Protestants as well. And Appleton's *Cyclopædia of American Biography* (Ed. 1888, vol. iv.)—a standard Protestant publication—tells us that 'the Protestant residents of Montreal thought it necessary to deny her allegations in a public meeting held for that purpose.' 'Her imposture,' it continues, 'considering the internal improbabilities of her story, is one of the most remarkable on record.' The same publication tells us that 'her stories met with no credence in Montreal, and she was shown to be a woman of bad character.' A few lines further on Appleton's tells us that her malicious tale 'was conclusively proved to be a falsehood.' Chambers's *Encyclopædia* (Ed. 1891) briefly tells us that she was 'a woman of bad character who pretended, in 1835, to have escaped from the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal,' and that, coming to New York, she 'found a good many credulous adherents.' The findings of the various investigations into the *Awful Disclosures* may be summarised as follows—

A USEFUL SUMMARY.

1. The various affidavits already referred to, and of the investigations regarding the story of Maria Monk being an ex-nun, may be summed up in the words of Col. Stone: 'The result [of our investigation] is the most thorough conviction that Maria Monk is an arrant impostor; that she never was a nun, and was never within the walls of the Hôtel Dieu; and consequently that her disclosures are wholly and unequivocally, from beginning to end, untrue—either the vagaries of a distempered brain or a series of calumnies unequalled in the depravity of their invention and unsurpassed in their enormity.' The evidence of her mother and other residents of Montreal has already been given.

2. (a) On November 9, 1834 (as already shown), she declared to Dr. Robertson, J.P., that she had been 'confined and chained in a cellar for the last four years' by her parents. (b) Under pressure of Hoyte's persuasions and entreaties she afterwards told the more profitable tale that she had passed the *very same four years* as an inmate of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery. (c) As a matter of fact both stories were equally rank falsehoods. Dr. Robertson, in his affidavit, deposes that, after due inquiry, he learned where Maria Monk had been 'residing a great part of the time she states having been an inmate of the nunnery. During the summer of 1832 she was at service at William Henry; the winters of 1832-3 she passed in this neighbourhood of St Ours and St Denis. The accounts given of her conduct that season corroborate the opinions I had before entertained of her character.' Mrs. Duncan Cameron McDonnell, manager of the Magdalen Asylum at Montreal, testified on oath that Maria Monk was an inmate of that institution for fallen women from November 1834 till March 1835. And the pamphlet, *An Awful Exposure*, etc. (published by Jones and Co., of Montreal, in 1836), traces step by step and authenticates with eighteen affidavits from her successive employers, etc., the places where the unfortunate creature resided during the years when, according to the story attributed to her, she was in the Hôtel Dieu at Montreal.

3. Appleton's *Cyclopædia*, referred to above, says: 'She (Maria Monk) had even gone so far as to publish a plan of the interior of the nunnery, which was shown by careful examination to be incorrect in every particular, and in her second publication she described an island in the St. Lawrence River that had no existence.' The absurd falsity of the plan was fully demonstrated by Col. Stone and the Montreal Protestant committee of investigation, likewise by Mr. W. Perkins, another Protestant. With the episcopal sanction, they searched the place from garret to cellar, and found the passages, doors, etc., described by her in the account of her second 'escape' to have no existence, and to have never existed. Mrs. Duncan Cameron McDonnell's affidavit throws a flood of light upon this famous 'plan.' She deposes that it is nothing more or less than 'an incorrect description of the apartments of the said [Magdalen] Asylum, of which the said Maria Monk was for some time an inmate, as is hereinbefore mentioned.'

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