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# THE ESCAPED NUN :

OR,

DISCLOSURES OF CONVENT LIFE;

AND

THE CONFESSIONS

OF A

# SISTER OF CHARITY.

GIVING A MORE MINUTE DETAIL OF THEIR INNER LIFE, AND A BOLDER  
REVELATION OF THE MYSTERIES AND SECRETS OF NUNNERIES,  
THAN HAVE EVER BEFORE BEEN SUBMITTED TO  
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.



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This Volume.  
IS  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
TO  
THE PROTESTANTS  
OF  
AMERICA.  
BY  
Their Obedient Servant,  
THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E .

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ELUCIDATIONS of facts, respecting the interior life and practices of those mysterious establishments called Nunneries or Convents, are of the utmost importance to the Protestants of America at this particular time, because now the struggle to establish these and other remnants of the dark ages in America is going on; therefore the public attention is called to them, and any information is anxiously sought which will throw light upon the subject.

In view of this laudable curiosity as to the true nature of the dark abodes called Convents, and for the purpose of warning parents and guardians against the wiles and cunning ways of Jesuits, the Author has given her own actual experience, as well as collected and put together the mass of testimony and reliable information set forth in this volume.

My sole design in publishing this book is to accomplish much good, by effecting the objects above named; and if I am successful in so doing, I shall consider myself well rewarded for the expense, pains, and trouble I have experienced in its preparation for the press.

The public's obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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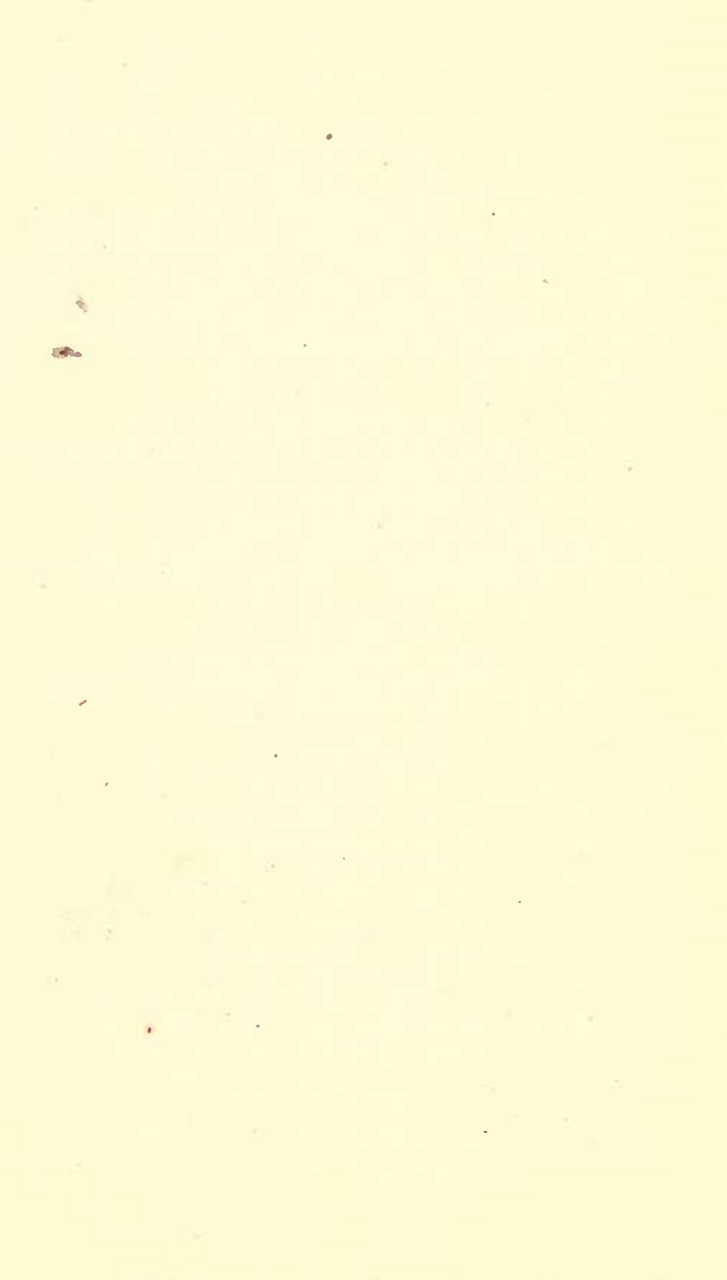
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# THE ESCAPED NUN.

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## CHAPTER I.

The Causes of my Perversion to Romanism—The Italian Teacher—The Poison Infused—The Bird and the Snake—The Convent of St. \*\*\*\*\*—The Archbishop—The Trap.

**B**ROUGHT up to believe in the general principles of Protestantism, and continually attending the services of either the Presbyterian or Episcopal denomination—as the pleasure of my mother, or the inclinations of my father moved them, or either of them—it has been a matter of wonder to many of my friends, that I became even temporarily attached to the Roman Catholic faith. But the wonder of my friends, will, I am sure, be greatly modified, when they are informed of the causes which led to a step seemingly so singular.

My father, like many nominal Protestants, was not as rigid or careful as he should have been, during my earlier church-going days, and my mother was too indulgent and easy in her training, while I was yet in my Sabbath school

nonage—to make me as firm in the faith of *their* fathers, as it became a daughter of Protestant parents and grandparents to be. But, perhaps, the more immediate cause of my being attracted towards the Catholic method of worship, was the romantic cast of mind with which I was endowed by nature.

The two influences mentioned, and the circumstances which I am called upon to relate in this connection, have all conspired to lead me into a series of false steps and misfortunes, which have embittered a portion of my life, and caused a great deal of unhappiness among the several members of my family.

It will be necessary, however, to “cast back,” in order to convey a proper idea of the cause and effect of my brief, but fatal, experience in the Catholic Church.

My father was slow in his movements, sluggish in his resolutions, hesitating in his determinations—but was quickly aroused when the *heart* was touched; rapid as the lightning’s flash when his generosity was appealed to, and lavish to extravagance in the indulgence of his children.

Indeed, the latter noble quality was displayed so constantly and so inordinately, that at last it led to my too generous father’s comparative ruin, and indirectly to much of our family’s misfortunes. But I must not anticipate. It was while my then indulgent father was in the heyday of his prosperity, that the determination was formed, to add the accomplishment of a musical education to the few other acquirements with which my mind was already stored.

With this object in view, my father advertised for a

musical instructor, whose time could be devoted almost entirely to myself, as he was desirous that I should make rapid advancement in my musical studies.

A teacher soon presented himself, in the person of an Italian, whose polished manners, affable address, and well-attested recommendations as a perfect master of his profession, at once secured him the position he desired. If I may believe my truly skillful teacher, the progress I made was far above the average of his former pupils, and he manifested the utmost pleasure at my "rapid strides towards a perfect knowledge of the divine art of harmony," as he extravagantly expressed himself.

It was not long before I discovered a disposition on the part of my Italian teacher to deviate from his legitimate sphere of instructions, and touch gently upon theological subjects, and I soon discovered his partiality for the Romish dogmas, although his opinions were most adroitly and delicately urged. His gentlemanly address, his winning manners, and his fluent, but still slightly broken accentuation of our language, combined to lend a charm to his conversation, which was far from being unpleasant, and which conspired to work upon my feelings to such a degree as to cause the most serious reflections respecting the nature of our connection, and his advancement of such peculiar doctrines as I had heretofore never heard propounded.

I had been revolving the subject over in my mind one day, while sitting at the window, and gazing listlessly at the passers by, when Signor Leguini (my teacher) entered, and drawing a chair towards the window, seated himself within a

few feet of me—at the same time opening a portfolio which he had brought with him, and producing therefrom a number of beautifully executed drawings of various subjects. There were sketches of ruins, interiors of cathedrals, Melrose Abbey, a moonlight view of the bay of Naples, and others of equal interest—all of which were duly criticised and admired ; but the one which seemed to have the greatest charm for him was the head of a Madonna, whose exquisite features wore an expression of mournful, yet benignant sweetness, which was well calculated to inspire a feeling of devotion, if not an irresistible inclination to fall down and worship it—so divine and saintlike did it seem.

While the rhapsodies of Leguini were like those of a lover addressed toward the object of his devotion, they were so diffused with sentiments of reverence and adoration, that I could scarcely tell where to draw the dividing line between his spiritual and his temporal passion of love, and I confess myself to have been strangely excited by his warm and glowing manner of adoring the picture of a lovely woman. On giving expression to my thoughts in a guarded manner, and requesting him to tell me wherein his adoration of the Madonna differed from the worship of an idol, he answered, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words :

“ Because an idol is a representation of that which either does not exist, or certainly is not such as that which is worshiped—but an image is the similitude of a thing which really exists, as that of a man : hence, the apostle says concerning an idol, 1 Cor. viii. 4 : ‘ Because we know that an idol is nothing in the world,’ nothing, certainly, in

its representation, because it is no divinity in itself or in its own prototype.”

I was not so blinded at that time by the fascinating splendors of the Romish system as to be deceived by such specious reasoning, and at once made answer that “although an idol, as demonstrated by such casuistry, might be well understood by intelligent men, and adored accordingly, as a representation divested of any attributes of deity, yet he could not deny that the ignorant were blind worshipers of images, as powers in and of themselves, and that thousands were simple enough to believe that such images or idols possessed certain miraculous abilities to reward or punish those who worshiped them or appealed to them when in trouble, or ‘confessed’ to them.”

My teacher was somewhat disconcerted at this direct blow at his theory of image-worship, and could not at once reply; but after a struggle to recover from the effects of my home-thrust, he said:

“It is proved by the Council of Trent, ‘that the images of Christ and of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be kept and retained especially in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be paid to them.’”

It may not be acknowledged, I immediately replied, that the Council of Trent is better authority than God, who has said: “Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or the likeness of anything which is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them,” &c.

“It is not,” said Leguini, “for others than God’s viceroy on earth, and those appointed under him, to give the word to men, as it is meet they should receive it.”

“So,” said I, “you would deprive the rational mind of its freedom; you would clip the soaring soul of its wings, as it struggles to reach the fountain head of mercy, and dash it a grovelling thing upon the earth, only to be raised for a stipend, by the polluted hand of a priest!” I shall never forget the demoniac expression of Leguini’s countenance as he arose and turned from me to hide it from my sight; but he was not quick enough to escape my rapid glance, and, conscious of having betrayed himself, he sought to repair the mischief by an honest confession of his emotions.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “you do not know Miss ——, how deeply we are wedded to our faith,—how sensitive we are when it is attacked,—how tenacious we are of its tenets. The intensity of our feelings cannot be understood, by those who are attached to the schismatic churches, which have departed from the glorious and only true church—the mother church, which derives its splendor from God himself, through his appointed Vicar, the king of earth, the Pontiff of the Eternal City of Rome.”

Warming with his subject, his voice rising where his lofty assumptions reached their climax,—where he claimed the earth as the Pope’s kingdom—he seemed the incarnation of presumptuous pride and arrogance, and resentment mingled with admiration of his enthusiasm, filled my breast. But I made no reply calculated to prolong the interview on this occasion; and perceiving his error in too zealously



advocating the cause of his "king of the earth," he had the tact to be more cautious and gentle in the future. He had gained one advantage, however, which he did not fail to avail himself of on all occasions presenting themselves, for a renewal of the consideration of theological topics.

My mind became perplexed and uneasy on the subject of religion, and after a few visits to the Catholic church, after witnessing the imposing ceremonies, the display of ornaments, and all the gorgeous paraphernalia of worship peculiar to the Romish Church, I felt as though I was about to be drawn within the mysterious but attractive pale of that church, from which I still shrunk as with an instinctive dread of its embrace. As the fluttering and terrified, but irresistibly attracted bird, flies in gradually lessening circles, around the venomous snake, as it lies coiled in its serpentine folds, so did I fly from, yet return to, the witchery of Romanism.

The insidious doctrines of the "Fathers," too, be it remembered, were being poured into my ears by the plausible Leguini, in the intervals of my attendance at church, while Father Riley, the priest residing in our section of the city, ever had a kind word and a fatherly "blessing," for his "dear daughter." To these Catholic acquaintances were soon added several ladies, whose profession of love, and little offices of friendship won upon my confiding nature, until I began to believe that the Catholics were the only good people in the world. On one occasion, being pressed to visit the community of St. —, with my friend Mary —, I was delighted with the seeming sanctity of the place and

the people, while the beautiful paintings, the music, and the air of romantic mystery surrounding the quaintly constructed edifice, so completely charmed me, that I was loth to leave a spot apparently so heavenly in its surroundings.

The Mother Superior urged me, with many expressions of interest in my welfare, to call again, and remain for a few days or a week, with the community, as a refuge from the cares and anxieties of the world. I promised to do so, and subsequently fulfilled a promise, which I was only too glad to make. My father's extravagant habits had now begun to affect his fortune, but not having sufficient decision of character to at once retrench his expenses, and manage his affairs with more economy, matters only went on from bad to worse, until he weakly took to dissipation as a solace for his troubled mind. It was now, too, that my mother's health gave way before the pressing cares which had long preyed upon her spirits, in consequence of my palpable leaning towards a faith which was repugnant to her principles, and owing to other family troubles. She rapidly declined, and early in the spring of 18— she died, tranquilly yielding up her spirit to Him who gave it, and calmly blessing those loved ones whom she left behind her in this vale of tears.

My sisters, my brother, and myself, were now placed in a different position towards each other from that which we had maintained during the life of our mother, and the change was anything but agreeable to me, as my father's straitened circumstances operated upon my pride with a force which was hard to bear, while the death of my mother

threw the whole responsibility of the household affairs upon my hands. So great was the reduction of my father's fortune that, on the event of my mother's death, he removed his family to a residence more humble in its pretensions, and more in keeping with his now limited income.

I at once perceived the change which was wrought in the feelings of those who had, in the sunnier hours of our fortune, called themselves my friends; and the bitter lesson was taught me that true friendship is a rare virtue.

It was while writhing under the conviction that I must suffer all the humiliating slights, and slurs, and insults, consequent upon the sad reverse of fortune, to which I was subjected by my father's folly, that one of my Catholic friends proposed the seclusion of a Convent as a panacea for all my woes, and at the same time, Legnini, who by this time had secured the friendship and confidence of my father, suggested to my parent the advantage of placing me in the community of St. —, until his property should be freed from its present incumbrances. He also urged the necessity of providing for me, while it was yet in my father's power to do so, at the time, with consummate skill, affecting a tender regard for the eternal welfare of my soul. My father thus worked upon, at last concluded to dispose of me as advised by Legnini; but while my wounded pride shrank from the rude touches of the unfeeling world, I could not reconcile myself to the thought of being immured, perhaps, for life, within the walls of a convent, and the more I reflected upon the momentous step, the more I dreaded its consummation. I could very readily perceive the selfish

motives which moved my Catholic associates in their attempts to seduce me into their institution of St. —, and well knew the most prominent one to be the use of my family name, to which was attached a wide-spread influence. I was, therefore, suspicious of the sincerity of their friendship, and only believed that it had lasted beyond the period of that of my Protestant friends, because, from the wreck something might be gleaned which would serve a purpose. Indeed, the more I pondered over the project, the more my mind revolted at the idea of being shut off for ever from the few remaining pleasures of the world which were left to me.

So desperate did I feel during this trying period of my life, that I should have married a fool, so that he had money, were I asked to do so. Those who are disposed to censure me for entertaining such an unwomanly thought, should bear in mind how indulgently I had been raised; they should remember that my every wish had been gratified—every taste administered to—that servants were always ready at my command; the luxury of believing I was possessed of unpurchased, priceless friendship, was mine; and now the reverse of this came so forcibly and suddenly upon me, that it seemed to change my very nature. Now I found that friendship had its price, respect its valuation, even love its estimate in gold, and parental devotion its calculation of the costs.

While in this frame of mind, I was prevailed upon to again visit the convent of St. —, but I did not suppose that measures so bold and coercive in their nature, would be used in order to *economize* the expenses of our unhappy

family. I observed, on taking leave of my father, that he was deeply moved; but my suspicions as to the real cause of his apparent grief did not then occur to my mind. We soon reached the village of —, and a short drive brought us to the gates of the nunnery, and presently we were shown into the parlor, where I was greatly surprised to find Legnini and the Archbishop of —. On beholding these men, I experienced an indefinable dread of some impending evil, and my instinctive fears of some terrible event were soon to be realized.

The Archbishop approached me with an illy-assumed tenderness of regard, and taking my hands in his own, said, "My dear daughter, it is your father's wish that you should assume the habit and duties of an inmate of this house, and I am sure your good sense will tell you how desirable it is to comply with his wishes and at the same time mark out a line of conduct for yourself, which will, if properly observed, redound to your eternal welfare."

I remonstrated against this strange proposition, and plainly declared to him that I had no taste for the convent. "So much the worse," said he to me, "for your father has so exhausted his means upon your sisters, that I cannot see what he can do for you in the narrow circumstances to which he is reduced. Consider, Miss, you must either enter for ever into this house, or go to some other convent, where they will receive you for a moderate salary, and from which you can only depart at the death of your parent, an event for which you may have to wait a long time." I complained bitterly, and shed a flood of tears. The Mother Superior

was informed of it, and waited my return from the parlor. I was in a confusion seemingly unaccountable. She said to me, "And what's the matter with you, my dear child?" (she knew better than I did what was the matter). "How you look! I never saw any distress equal to yours; you make me tremble. Is it because you have lost your mother?" I once thought of throwing myself into her arms, and saying, "Would to God!"—I contented myself with replying, "I have no father; I am an unfortunate wretch, whom he has forgotten, and whom he wishes to entomb alive." She let the storm pass over, and waited for the moment of returning tranquillity. I explained to her more clearly what had just been announced to me. She seemed to have pity on me; she embraced me; she encouraged me not to enter into a state for which I had no relish; she promised to entreat, to remonstrate, and to solicit on my behalf. O how these Superiors are enveloped in artifice! you have no idea of them. In fact, she wrote to my father. She well knew the answer which he would make her; she communicated it to me. It was a considerable time before I began to doubt her sincerity. In the meantime the period they had fixed for my declaring my resolution arrived; she came and informed me of it, with the most studied appearance of concern. At first she stopped without speaking, she then uttered a few accents of sorrow, after which I discovered the rest. This was still a distressing scene; I shall have few of a different kind to describe.

## CHAPTER II.

The Art of Hypocrisy—My Novitiate—The Mother Superior—The Mad Nun—Strange Doctrines—My Scheme—Painful Anticipations—The Mockery—The Forced Ceremony—The Failure—The New Prison.

THE art of hypocrisy is that in which, of all others, they most excel. The Superior then said to me (in truth I believe she was weeping at the time), “Alas! then, my child, you are going to leave us! my dear child, we shall never see you more!” and other ejaculations which I did not hear. I threw myself down upon a chair; I was silent, I wept, I was motionless; I walked about, sometimes leaning against the walls, at other times pouring forth my grief into her bosom. Conceive what I felt when she added, “But might you not do one thing? Consider, but do not you say that I advised you; you can keep a secret; I would not for all the world that there was any reproach upon my character. What is it that they desire of you? that you take the veil? Well! why not take it? What engagement does this lay you under? None; to stay two years with us. We do not know who may die in the course of that time, or who may live it out; two years is an inconsiderable period; some fortunate circumstances may intervene before the end of two years.” She accompanied this insidious proposal

with many caresses, protestations of friendship, and insinuating falsehoods. I knew where I was ; I did not know where they might put me ; and I suffered myself to be persuaded. She wrote then to my father ; her letter was very well : alas ! for this purpose it could not have been better ; my anxiety, my grief, my remonstrances were not dissembled ; I assure you that a girl of greater penetration than I was, would have been deceived by it. In the meanwhile the matter was concluded by my giving my consent. With what expedition everything was prepared ! the day was fixed, my dress was made up, the hour of the ceremony arrived without a moment's interval. I forgot to tell you that I saw my father—that I tried every expedient to touch his feelings, and that I found him inflexible. It was Father —— who exhorted me, and the Bishop of —— who gave me the dress. The ceremony was not gay of itself ; the day on which it was performed was one of the most sorrowful ; though the nuns thronged round to support me, twenty times I felt my knees shake, and was like to fall upon the steps of the altar. I heard nothing, I saw nothing, I was stupid ; they carried me, and I went ; they interrogated me, and they answered the questions for me. At length this cruel ceremony was concluded ; all the strangers withdrew, and I remained among the flock to which I had just been united. My companions came round me ; they embraced me, and said : “ Look at my sister, how handsome she is ! how this black veil relieves the paleness of her complexion ! how well this bandeau becomes her ! how it rounds her face ! how it extends her cheeks ! How



this habit displays her waist and her arms !” I listened to them with pain, although at the time I found it necessary to agree with them ; when I was alone in my cell I remembered their flatteries, and could not refrain from putting them to the test in my little mirror ; but I thought them not altogether false.

There were some honors attached to this day ; they increased them on my account. I paid little attention to them ; but they affected to think and say the contrary, though it was clear they had no reason. At night, on coming out from prayers, the Mother Superior repaired to my cell. “In truth,” said she, “after a little consideration, I know not why you expressed so much reluctance to assume this dress ; it makes you a wonder ; you are quite charming ; Sister —— is a very pretty nun ; we shall love you the better for that. Here, let us see you walk. You don’t keep yourself upright enough, it is not necessary that you stoop.” She set right my head, feet, hands, waist, and arms—it was almost as good as a lesson of De Grand Val upon the monastic graces, for every condition has its own. She then sat down, and said to me, “It is very well ; but let us now talk a little seriously. Before the lapse of two years your father may have altered his resolution ; and even you yourself may wish to remain here when he wishes to take you away ; this is not impossible.” “Madam, do not believe it.” “You have been amongst us, but you are still unacquainted with our mode of life ; it certainly has its pains, but it also has its pleasures.”

I shall not enter into a long detail respecting my

novitiate ; if it were a fair specimen of the austerity of the convent, one could not have so much objection to it ; but it is the most pleasant period of the monastic life. A mother of novices is the most indulgent sister that they can find. She makes it her study to divest the condition of every thing that is unpleasant : it is a course of the most artful and refined seduction. She thickens the surrounding darkness, she lulls you into tranquillity, she decoys you into her snares, she fascinates you. Ours was particularly attached to me. I do not believe that any young soul without experience could be proof against this fatal art. The world has its precipices, but I do not imagine that the descent to them is so easy. If I had a cold, my presence was dispensed with at service, at penance, and at prayers ; I went early to bed, I rose late, I was exempted from discipline. There were some days in which I would have sighed for the moment of sacrificing myself. There are no distressing occurrences in the world of which they do not speak to you ; they distort facts, they fabricate stories, and then it is praised without end, and the operation of the grace of God, which prevents you from incurring these humiliating disgraces. In the meanwhile, the period drew near which I had sometimes hastened by my wishes. Then I awoke from my dream. I felt the reluctance return with increased strength. I went to inform the Superior, or the mother of our novices. These women take ample vengeance for the trouble you occasion them ; for it is not to be thought that they have any amusement in the hypocritical part which they act, as from the foolish things they are under the neces-

sity of so often repeating to you, the task becomes, in the end, stale and disgusting to them, but they undertake it for the sake of bringing money into their house. This is the important object for which they lead a life of deceit, and prepare forty or fifty years of despair, and perhaps eternal misery, for young innocents ; for it is certain that of every hundred nuns who die before they reach the age of fifty, there are fifty ruined, exclusive of those who become foolish, stupid, or mad, in the prospect.

One day, a nun of the last description happened to escape from the cell in which she was confined. I saw her. I never saw anything so frightful. Her hair was dishevelled, and her body almost naked ; she dragged iron chains ; her eyes were wild, she tore her hair, she beat her breasts with her fists ; she ran, she roared ; she imprecated upon herself and others the most dreadful curses ; she wanted to throw herself out of the window. Terror seized me ; I trembled at every joint. I saw my fate in that of this unfortunate wretch, and I immediately resolved in my mind to die a thousand times rather than encounter it. They perceived the effect which this incident would have upon my spirits, and they endeavored to prevent it. They told me I know not how many absurd and contradictory stories about this nun ; that her intellect was deranged before she came to the house ; she had a terrible fright at a critical time ; she had become subject to visions ; she thought she held intercourse with angels ; some preachers of an extravagant morality had so terrified her about the judgments of God, that her disordered brain had been turned by the description ; she saw

nothing but demons, hell, and gulfs of fire ; that they had been very unlucky ; it was a thing quite unheard of before in their house, and I know not what. This made no impression upon me. Every moment the mad nun recurred to my mind, and I renewed the oath of never taking a vow.

The period arrived at which it became necessary for me to show whether I could keep my word. One morning after service, the Superior entered my cell ; she held a letter in her hand. Her looks were sorrowful and dejected. Her arms sunk ; it seemed as if she had not power to lift up the letter ; she looked at me ; tears stood in her eyes ; we were both silent ; she waited till I should speak ; I was tempted to speak first, but I constrained myself. She asked me how I did ; she observed that service had been long to-day ; that I had a little cough ; that I appeared to be indisposed. To all this I answered, " No, my dear mother." She still kept the letter in her hand which was hanging down ; while she was putting these questions, she put it upon her knee, and her hand in part concealed it ; at last, after having put some questions respecting my father, finding that I did not ask what this paper was, she said :

" Here is a letter."

When she uttered this word, I felt my heart quake, and I added, in a trembling voice, " Is it from my father ?"

" It is ; take and read it."

I recovered myself a little ; I took the letter ; I read it at first with tolerable firmness ; but, as I advanced, terror, indignation, resentment, contempt, succeeding one another in my breast, I displayed different tones and different emotions.

Sometimes I scarcely held the paper ; at other times I grasped it with violence, as if I had been tempted to tear it, or to twist it in my hand, and throw it away.

“ Alas ! my child, what answer shall we make to this ? ”

“ Madam, you know best.”

“ No, I do not. The times are unfortunate ; your father has sustained some losses ; it is impossible he can make any permanent settlement upon you ; you have assumed the habit ; he has been at some expense ; by taking this step, you have made him conceive some hopes ; he has announced to his acquaintances that you are immediately about to commence the profession. At all events, you may depend upon every assistance which I can give you. I have never enticed any person into a convent ; it is a state into which we are conducted by the voice of the Deity, and it is extremely dangerous to blend our voice with his. I shall never attempt to speak to your heart, if grace is silent ; hitherto I never have had to reproach myself with the misfortunes of any person, and I should not wish to begin with you, my child—you who are so dear to me. I have not forgotten that it was at my persuasion that you took the first step, and I will not suffer them to take advantage of this to bring you into engagements contrary to your inclination. Let us, then, consider together. Do you wish to make profession ? ”

“ No, madam.”

“ You have no relish for the the religious state ? ”

“ No, madam.”

“ What do you wish to be, then ? ”

“Anything but a nun ; I do not wish to be one—I will not be one.”

“Well, you shall not be one. Let us deliberate, and draw up an answer to your father.”

We agreed in some ideas. She wrote, and showed me the answer, which seemed to be very proper. In the meantime, they sent the director of the house to me ; they sent me the father who had pronounced the discourse in my praise when I assumed the habit ; they recommended me to the novices ; I saw the Bishop of —— ; I had to enter the lists with some pious women whom I did not know, but who took an interest in my affairs ; I had continual conferences with monks and priests. My father came ; my sisters wrote to me. In the meanwhile, the day was fixed for my profession. They omitted nothing to obtain my consent ; but when they saw that all their solicitations were to no purpose, they resolved to proceed without it.

They shut me up in my cell, and imposed silence upon me ; I was separated from all the world, and I saw that they were determined to dispose of me without consulting me any further. I did not wish to take the vows ; it was a settled point with me ; and all the false or real terrors which they inflicted upon me did not shake my purpose. In the meantime, I was in a most deplorable state ; I knew not how long it might last ; and if it ceased, I knew still less what was to become of me. Amid these uncertainties, I adopted a plan of conduct of which, you will form whatever judgment you please. I saw no person, neither the Superior, nor the mother of the novices, nor my companions. I sent

notice to the first, pretending to be reconciled ; but my design was to put an end to this persecution, by rendering it notorious, and publicly to protest against the violent measures which they had in contemplation. I said that she was mistress of my fortune ; that she might dispose of it according to her wishes ; that she might require of me to take the vows, and I should do it. Imagine the joy which was diffused through the whole house—the caresses renewed with every species of flattery and seduction. “God had spoken to my heart ; there was no person fitter than I for the state of perfection. It was impossible for this not to happen ; they had always expected it. Those did not discharge their duty with so much profit and constancy who were not really called. The mother of the novices had never seen, in any of her pupils, a call so truly characteristic ; she was quite surprised at the perverse fit that I had taken, but she had always told our Mother Superior to persevere, and that it would pass over ; the best nuns had moments of a similar kind ; they proceeded from suggestions of the Evil Spirit, who always redoubled his efforts when he was on the point of losing his prey ; that I was about to make my escape from him ; my path henceforth would be strewed with roses ; the restraints of a religious life would be more supportable, because I had greatly exaggerated them ; this sudden pressure of the yoke was a favor of Heaven, for the purpose of afterwards lightening it.” It appears to me rather singular that the same thing should proceed from the Deity and from Satan, according as they might think proper to view it. There are many circumstances similar to this

which occur in the convent ; and I have often been told by some, by way of consolation, that my thoughts were the imaginations of Satan, and by others, that they were inspirations from Heaven. Thus, the same evil proceeds from Deity by whom we are tried, and from the Evil Spirit by whom we are tempted.

I conducted myself with prudence. I thought I could answer for myself. I received letters of congratulation from my sisters and a great many others. I knew that it would be —— who would preach the sermon, and —— who would receive my vows. Everything went on well till the evening before the important day ; but after being informed that the ceremony would be private, that there would be few people there, and that the church door would be open only to my father, I invited, by means of a maid, every person in the neighborhood, my male and female friends ; I had permission to write to some of my acquaintances. All this company, whom they did not expect, presented themselves ; it was necessary to permit them to come in, and the assembly was almost as numerous as my plan required. O, what a dreadful night the preceding was to me ! I did not lie down. I sat upon my bed ; I raised my hands to Heaven, and called Heaven to witness the violence which they were going to offer me. I represented to myself the part which I was to act at the foot of the altar—a young girl loudly protesting against an action to which she seemed to have consented ; the scandal of the by-standers, the distress of the nuns, the fury of my Superior. “ O, Heaven ! what is to become of me ? ” Whilst I was pro-



nouncing these words, I was seized with vertigo ; I fell in a swoon upon my bolster ; a general coldness, in which my knees shook, and my teeth chattered, succeeded the swoon, and this coldness was followed by a burning heat. My mind was troubled. I do not remember undressing myself, nor going out of my cell ; but I was found nearly naked, stretched upon the ground, at the door of the Superior, motionless, and almost dead. I have learned these things since. In the morning I found myself in the cell with the Superior, the mother of the novices, and some of those whom they call assistants, round my bed. I was much distressed. They put some questions to me ; they saw from my answers that I had no knowledge of what had passed, and they did not tell me of it. They asked me how I did ; if I persisted in my holy resolution, and if I found myself in a condition to support the fatigue of the day. I answered in the affirmative, and, contrary to their expectation, no derangement of the plan took place.

Everything had been arranged on the preceding evening. They rung the bells to let the world know that they were about to add another to the list of the unfortunate. They came to dress me ; it was a toilette day. Now I recollect all these ceremonies, there seems to be in them something solemn and affecting to one whose inclination is not averse to them. They conducted me to the church ; they performed high mass. The priest who gave me credit for a resignation I did not possess, preached a long sermon, which was every word inapplicable to me ; there was a sad mockery in what he said of my happiness, my grace, my courage, my zeal, my

fervor, and all those fine sentiments which he supposed that I felt. In the meanwhile, the contrast between his eulogium and the step which I was about to take, troubled me : I was staggered for a few moments, but uncertainty did not last long. It only taught me better than I had learned before, that I was deficient in those qualities which are necessary to constitute a good nun. At last the dreadful moment arrived. When it was necessary for me to enter the place where I was to take my vows, I could not walk ; two of my companions took me by the arms, and, with my head leaning upon one of them, they dragged me along. I knew not what passed in the hearts of the bystanders ; but at the sight of a poor victim carried dying to the altar, on all sides sighs and sobbings burst forth, among which, I am sure, those of my father were not heard. The assembly rose up ; there were some young persons mounted upon the chairs, and hanging by the bars of the railing ; a profound silence was observed, and the priest who presided at my profession said to me :—

“ Do you promise to tell the truth ? ”

“ I promise.”

“ Do you come here of your own accord, with good will ? ”

I answered “ No ; ” but those who accompanied me answered “ Yes.”

“ Do you promise to God chastity, poverty, and obedience ? ”

I hesitated a moment ; the priest waited, and I replied, “ No, sir.”

He repeated, "Do you promise to God chastity, poverty and obedience?"

I replied in a firmer tone, "No, sir, no."

He stopped, and said to me, "Recollect yourself, my child, and listen to me."

"Sir," said I to him, "you ask me if I promise to God chastity, poverty and obedience. I understood you perfectly, and I answered you, No." And turning round to the bystanders, among whom considerable murmuring had arisen, I made a sign that I wished to speak; the murmurs ceased, and I said, "Sirs, and you in particular, my father, I take you all to witness"—When I uttered these words, one of the sisters let fall the veil over the railing, and I saw that it was to no purpose to speak. The nuns surrounded me, and loaded me with reproaches: I heard them without saying a word. They conducted me to my cell, where they locked me in.

Being left alone to my reflections, I began to take courage, and to consider my conduct, of which I did not repent. I saw that, after the notoriety I had occasioned, it was impossible I could long remain here, and that, perhaps, they would not dare to take me back into the convent. I did not know what they intended to do with me, but I was sensible there was nothing worse than for one to become a nun contrary to inclination. I lived in confinement without hearing a single word from any person. Those who brought me my victuals came in, put my dinner down upon the floor, and went away without speaking. In about a month they brought me a secular habit, when I put

off that of the house ; the Superior came and told me to follow her. I followed her to the door of the convent, and was then placed in a carriage, and we were rapidly driven away. We continued to sit opposite each other without saying a word ; I kept my eyes downward, and did not presume to look her in the face. I know not what passed in my mind, but all on a sudden I threw myself at her feet, and leaned my head upon her knees : I said nothing, but sobbed till I was almost stifled. She repelled me harshly, without speaking. I did not rise : the blood sprang from my nose ; I seized one of her hands in spite of her, and bathing it with a stream of blood and tears, putting my mouth upon her hand, I kissed it, and said to her, " Oh ! I pray you be a ' mother ' to me ; indeed, I need one, I need one ! "

She answered me, pushing me from her with great violence, and tearing her hand from between mine at the same time, " Rise, wretch, rise ! "

I obeyed her ; I rose up, and drew my hand over my face. She had assumed such an air of authority and sternness, that I dared not look at her. My tears and the blood which flowed from my nose mingling together, ran down my arms till I was all besmeared before I was aware of it. From some words that she dropped, I conceived that her robe and linen were stained with it, and that this offended her. We arrived at the house, where I was conducted to a small room which was prepared for me. I threw myself down upon my knees on the staircase ; I held by her clothes ; but all that I could obtain from her was a contemptuous cast of the head, with an expression of indigna-

tion from her mouth and eyes, which you can conceive better than I can describe.

I entered my new prison, where I passed six months, soliciting in vain the favor of speaking to her, or seeing my father, or of writing to him. I was served with provisions and attended : a domestic accompanied me to mass on holidays, and locked me up. I read, I worked, I wept, I sung, and in this manner did I pass my days. A secret sentiment supported me, and it was the consciousness that I was free, and that my lot, cruel as it was, might change. But it was decided that I was to be a nun, and I was one.

While I was confined in the house, I performed few exterior exercises of religion, yet I was always sent to confession on the eve of great holidays. I conversed with my confessor, I explained all the rigor of treatment which I had experienced from my father. He was acquainted with it all. I complained with bitterness and resentment. This priest had entered late into the religious state ; he was humane. He heard me with tranquillity, and said to me, " My child, pity your father ; pity still more than you blame him. His heart is good ; be assured that it is against his will that he acts in this manner."

" Against his will, sir ! and who can constrain him to observe this conduct ? Did he not give me birth, and what difference is there between my sisters and me ?"

" A great deal !"

" I do not understand the meaning of your answer."

I was proceeding with a comparison between my sisters and myself, when he stopped me and said, " Go, go ; inhu-

manity is not the vice of your parent : endeavor to bear your lot with patience, and, at least, to make it a merit before Heaven. I will see your father, and be assured, that to serve you I will use all the ascendancy I possess over his mind." That "great deal" which he had mentioned was a ray of light.

## CHAPTER III.

Father—The Good Superior—A Real Friend—Mysterious Influences—The “Misere-  
rere”—“Maceration”—Mother of the Novices—The Forced Profession—The  
Death of my Friend—Jesuits and Sulpicians—The Hair-cloths and Scourges—  
Mutiny—Suspicious Intimacy—The Old Well.

THE Saturday following, about half-past five in the evening, when the day was almost gone, the servant girl who was employed to attend me, came up stairs and said: “Miss ——, the Mother Superior says that you must dress.” An hour after, “Madam says that you must go down stairs with me.” At the door I found a coach, which the servant and I entered, and I learned that we were going to Father ——. He expected us, and was alone. My attendant retired, and I entered the apartment. I sat down, uneasy and curious to hear what he had to tell me. He spoke to me as follows:

“You refuse a convent; perhaps you will regret that you are not there.”

“That is impossible, sir; I ask nothing.”

“You do not yet know hardships, labor, indigence.”

“I know, at least, the value of liberty, and the importance of a situation which we are not called upon to embrace.”

“I have told you what I had to communicate ; it belongs to you, Miss, to make your reflections.”

He then rose. “Sir, yet one question more.”

“As many as you please.”

“Are my sisters themselves acquainted with what you have told me?”

“No.”

“How, then, could they have brought themselves to the resolution of plundering their sister?”

“Ah, Miss, interest ! interest ! They could not otherwise have obtained the considerable marriages they have formed. In the world, all consider themselves only, and I advise you not to reckon upon them if you lose your parent. Be assured they will dispute to a farthing, the little portion to be shared among you. They are married, and have children. This pretext will be sufficiently plausible to reduce you to beggary. Besides, it is no longer in your father's power to do anything. The bread of charity, too, Miss, is very unpalatable. If you trust to my advice, you will reconcile yourself to your condition ; you will enter a convent ; a small sum will be settled upon you, with which you will pass your days, if not happily, at least tolerably. Go, Miss, you are virtuous and considerate ; reflect upon what you have now heard.”

I rose, and burst into tears. I saw that the father himself had softened ; he mildly raised his eyes to heaven, and led me back. I rejoined the domestic who had accompanied me ; we entered the carriage, and returned to the house ; it was late ; I mused for a part of the night upon



that which had been said to me. I continued to think upon it in the course of the next day. But I was in a rigid domestic captivity, without hope, without resource. Perhaps some one might have been found to whom my character, my spirit, my figure, my talents, would have appeared a sufficient dowry. The thing was not yet impossible, but the observation I had excited in the convent, rendered it more unlikely. It was not easy to be conceived, that a girl of ——— years of age could proceed to such extremities, without a firmness very uncommon.

I shut myself up in my cell. I dropped down upon my knees ; I prayed the Deity to instruct me, I prayed long ; I remained with my face fixed to the ground. We seldom invoke the voice of Heaven, but when we are in a state of doubt, and it almost always advises us to obey. This was the alternative I embraced. “My father wishes me to become a nun ; perhaps, too, it is the will of Heaven ; alas ! I will be one ; since I am to be wretched, of what importance is it where I am ?” I immediately wrote to the Mother Superior, informing her of my determination, and requesting to be sent to another house, as a change of scene would, I thought, benefit me.

For a whole fortnight I heard nothing upon the subject ; I supposed that they had applied to different religious houses, and that the scandal my conduct had excited prevented my being received in the situation of a candidate. They were less scrupulous at ——, doubtless because it was insinuated to them that I understood music, and had a good voice. The difficulties which had been encountered, and

the favor I received in being admitted into this house, were greatly exaggerated ; I was even prevailed upon to write to the Superior. I was not aware of the consequences of the evidence furnished by writing, which was required of me ; they, too, were afraid, it would seem, that I might one day retract my vows ; they wished to have an attestation under my own hand that they had been voluntary. I was conducted to ———, accompanied by my father ; I did not even ask leave to bid adieu ; the thought of it, I confess, never occurred till I was upon the road. I was expected. I was introduced by my history, and by my talents. They said nothing to me of the one, but they were eager to ascertain whether the acquaintance they had made was of any importance. After they had talked of a variety of indifferent things (for after what had happened you may well imagine that they neither spoke to me of Heaven, nor of my cell, of the dangers of the world, nor of the calmness of a religious life ; and that they did not venture to utter a single word of that pious common-place talk in which these first moments are generally employed), the Superior said, “Miss, you understand music, you sing ; we have a piano-forte. If you please we will go to the parlor.” My soul was wrung with agony, but this was not the time to display reluctance ; my father went first, I followed, and the Superior closed the train, with some nuns whom curiosity had attracted. It was night. They brought candles. I sat down at the piano. I made a great many flourishes while endeavoring to recollect a piece of music, of which I had plenty, and yet I could not hit upon one ; the Superior, however, pressed

me, and by mere habit, because the piece was familiar to me, I sung "Sad array, flambeaux pale, day more dismal than the night," &c. I do not know what effect this produced, but they did not listen to me long; I was interrupted by praises which I was a good deal surprised to have merited so soon, and at so little expense. My father consigned me to the care of the Superior, gave me his hand to kiss, and departed.

I was now in another house; a nun, a candidate for admission, and with every appearance of soliciting this admission from the unbiased inclination of my own will.

The Superiors at ——, as well as in most religious houses, change every three years. It was a Madame —— who entered upon the charge when I was conducted to the house; it is impossible for me to speak too highly of her; yet her goodness proved my ruin. She was a woman of sense, and acquainted with the human heart. She could make allowances, though nobody had less occasion for it, for we all were her children. She never saw faults but those of which she could not help taking notice, or the importance of which could not be overlooked. I speak of her without interest. I discharged my duty with exactness, and she did me the justice to say that I committed no fault which she had to punish or to pardon. If she had any predilections, they were inspired by merit. After this I do not know if I ought to say that she loved me tenderly, and that I was not the least of her favorites. I know that is a high panegyric I bestow upon myself, greater than those can imagine, who never knew her. The name of the favorite is that

which the rest invidiously bestow upon those who are best beloved by the Superior. If there was any defect with which I could reproach Madame ——, it was that her taste for virtue, piety, candor, gentleness, talents, honor, induced her to give a marked preference to those who possessed them ; and that she knew well that those who could not pretend to these qualities were but the more humbled by her conduct. She likewise possessed the faculty, perhaps more frequent in convents than in the world, of a prompt discernment of minds. It rarely happened that a nun, who did not please her at first, ever proved agreeable to her afterwards. She quickly took me into her favor, and from the very beginning I reposed the most perfect confidence in her. Unfortunate were those from whom she could not extract it without effort ; they must have been bad without resource, and conscious of their misfortune. She talked to me of my adventure at St. Mary's. I related it to her with as little disguise as I now tell it. I told her everything I have now written ; nothing was forgotten. She lamented my fate, comforted me, and painted more agreeable prospects to my hopes. Meanwhile the period of my candidship elapsed, that of my assuming the habit arrived, and I took it. I performed my novitiate without aversion. I passed rapidly over those two years, because they contained nothing melancholy to me, but the secret feeling that I was slowly approaching a state for which I was not formed. Sometimes this feeling was renewed with violence, and whenever this happened, I recurred to my good Superior, who embraced me, who unbosomed my soul, who displayed

her arguments with force, and always concluded with saying, "And have not other situations their crosses? We are apt to be sensible only of our own. Come, my child, let us fall upon our knees and pray." She then knelt down and prayed aloud, but with so much unction, eloquence, mildness, elevation, and force, that you would have said that she was inspired by the Spirit of Heaven. Her thoughts, her expressions, her images, penetrated to the very bottom of the heart; at first you listened; by degrees you were elevated, you were united with her; the soul was filled, and you partook her transports. Her design was not to seduce, but certainly this she accomplished. We left her with a heart enraptured, our countenances displayed joy and ecstasy—we shed delightful tears. It was an impression which she herself took, which she long retained, and which those to whom it was communicated likewise preserved.

It is not to my own experience that I refer, it is to that of all the nuns. Some of them told me that they have felt the want of her consolation as the absence of an exquisite pleasure; and I believe I required only a little more experience to reach that point. Nevertheless, at the approach of my profession, I experienced a melancholy so profound that it exposed my good Superior to severe trials. Her talents forsook her; she herself acknowledged it to me.

"I do not know," said she, "what passes within me; it seems when you come as if the Deity retired, and His spirit were silent. It is in vain that I animate myself, that I seek ideas, that I attempt to exalt my soul; I feel myself an ordinary and humble woman. I am afraid to speak."

“ Ah ! my dear mother,” said I, “ what presentiment ! if it were Heaven that rendered you dumb ! ”

One day that I felt myself more uncertain and more depressed than ever, I went to her cell ; my presence at first rendered her speechless ; it seemed that she read in my eyes, in my whole person, that the profound sentiment I carried within me was beyond her strength, and she was unwilling to struggle without the certainty of being victorious. Nevertheless she made the attempt ; by degrees she warmed ; in proportion as my sorrow subsided, her enthusiasm increased. She threw herself suddenly upon her knees ; I followed her example, I imagined that I was to partake her transports ; I wished it. She pronounced some words, then all at once she was silent ! I waited in vain, she spoke no more ; she rose, burst into tears, took me by the hand, and squeezing it between hers :

“ Oh, my dear child,” said she, “ what a cruel effect have you produced upon me ! Observe the consequence, the Spirit has withdrawn—I feel it ; go, let the Deity speak to you Himself, since it is not His pleasure to communicate Himself by me.”

In reality, I know not what had passed within her ; whether I had inspired her with a distrust of her powers which had never been removed, whether I had rendered her timid, or really broken her correspondence with Heaven, but the talent of consolation returned to her no more. Upon the eve of my profession I went to see her. She labored under a melancholy equal to my own. I wept, and so did she ; I threw myself at her feet, she blessed me,

she raised me up, she embraced me, and again sent me away, saying :

“ I am weary of life, I wish to die ; I have asked of the Deity never to see this day, but it is not His will. Go, I will pass the night in prayer ; pray also, but go to bed, I command you.”

“ Allow me,” answered I, “ to join you.”

“ I allow you from nine o'clock till eleven ; no more. At half-past nine o'clock I will begin to pray, and you will begin also ; but at eleven o'clock you will allow me to pray alone, and you will take repose. Go, dear child, I shall watch before Heaven the remainder of the night.”

She wished to pray, but could not. I slept, and in the meantime this holy woman went through the passages, knocking at every door ; she awoke the nuns, and made them go down without noise to the church. All of them repaired thither ; and when there, she invited them to address themselves to Heaven in my favor. This prayer was made in silence ; then she extinguished the lights, all repeated together the *Miserere*, except the Superior, who, prostrate at the foot of the altar, macerated herself in a cruel manner, saying :

“ O Heavenly Father, if it is for any fault which I have committed that you have departed from me, grant me forgiveness ! I do not ask you to restore me the gift of which you have deprived me, but that you would address yourself to this innocent, who sleeps while I here invoke you in her favor. Oh ! Father speak to her, and forgive me.”

The next day, early in the morning, she entered my cell.

I did not hear her, being not yet awake. She sat down by my bed-side, and laid one of her hands gently on my forehead. She gazed upon me; disquietude, agitation, and sorrow succeeded upon her countenance, and such was the appearance she exhibited to me when I opened my eyes. She did not mention to me what had passed during the night, she only asked, "If I had gone to bed early?" I answered, "At the hour you commanded me." "If I had rested?" "Profoundly." "I expected so. How was I?" "Very well. And you, my dear mother?"

"Alas?" said she, "I never without disquietude saw any person take the vows; but I never experienced so much anxiety about any one as about you; I wish sincerely that you may be happy."

"If you continue to love me, I shall be happy."

"Ah! did it but depend upon that! Have you thought of nothing during the night?"

"No."

"You have had no dream?"

"None."

"What passes at present in your mind?"

"I am stupid; I yield to my fate with repugnance; I feel that necessity hurries me on, and I allow myself to go. Ah! my dear mother, I feel none of that mild joy, that thrilling sensation, that melancholy, that gentle perturbation, which I have sometimes remarked in those who stood in my present situation. I am weak; I cannot even weep. That it is the desire of my father it must be done is the only idea which occupies me. But you say nothing to me."



“I am not come to discourse with you, but to see and to hear you. Endeavor not to agitate me; allow my feelings to work up in my mind; when it is full I will go away. I must be silent, I know myself; I have but one impulse, and I must not waste its strength with you. Repose while my visit lasts; say only a few words, and allow me to find here what I am come to seek. I will go, and God will perform the rest.”

I was silent; I leaned upon my pillow, and held out to her one of my hands, which she took; she seemed to meditate deeply; she studiously kept her eyes shut; sometimes opened them, raised them to heaven, and again settled them upon me; her soul was filled with tumult; she became composed, and again her agitation returned. In truth, this woman was born to be a prophetess; she had the countenance and character of one. She had been beautiful, but age, while it rendered her features heavy, and painted large wrinkles upon her face, had still added dignity to her physiognomy. She had small eyes, but they seemed either to look inwards upon herself, or to soar above the objects by which she was surrounded, and to expatiate beyond them—into the past or into the future. She abruptly asked what o'clock it was.

“It is near six.”

“Adieu! they are coming to dress you; I do not wish to be present, it would distract me. My only care is to preserve moderation in the first moments.”

She had scarcely gone out, when the mother of the novices and my companions came; the mother stripped me

of the religious habit, and dressed me in the clothes common in the world ; it is the custom, as you know. I heard nothing of what was said around me ; I was reduced almost to an automaton. They told me what it was necessary to do : they were often obliged to repeat it to me, for I never heard the first time, and this proceeded not from my thinking upon some other subject, but because I was absorbed. My head was fatigued, as if it had been by excessive reflection. In the meantime, the Superior was conversing with my father ; I never knew what passed at this long interview ; I was told only that when they separated, my father was so embarrassed that he could not find the door by which he came in, and that the Superior went out with her hands locked, and fixed against her brow.

The clock struck ; I went down. The assembly was not numerous. A sermon was preached, but I did not hear a word of it. They disposed of me all this morning as they pleased, for I was insensible of its lapse. I neither knew what was done nor what was said. They no doubt interrogated me ; I no doubt answered. I pronounced some vows, but I have no recollection of them, and I became a nun as unconsciously as I was made a Christian. I no more comprehended the ceremony of my profession than that of my baptism. I was in such a state of profound melancholy, that some days after, when they announced to me that I belonged to their order, I did not know what they meant. I asked if it was really true that I had made profession. I wished to see the signatures of my vows. Not contented with these proofs I made them bring the

attestation of the whole community, and that of some strangers whom they had invited to the ceremony. Addressing myself several times to the Superior, I said to her,

“Is this then really the case?”

I expected always that she was going to answer, “No, my child; they deceive you.” Her repeated assurances could not convince me. I could not believe that in the space of a whole day, so bustling, so varied, so crowded with singular and striking circumstances, I could not remember one, not even the countenance of those who attended me, nor that of either the priest who preached, or of him who received my vows. The changing of my religious dress for that of the world is the only thing which I recollect; from that moment I was insensible. It was some months before I recovered from this state, and it is to this protracted kind of convalescence that I ascribe my profound forgetfulness of what is past; like those who in the course of a tedious illness have talked insensibly, and received the Sacrament, but who, after they have been restored to health, have no memory of the circumstances. I have seen many instances of it in our house, and I have said to myself, “This is, probably, what happened to me on the day of my profession.” But it remains to be inquired whether these actions are really performed by the person, though they appear to be so. \* \* \* \* \*

I was soon destined to suffer a severe affliction in the loss of my dear friend, the mother Superior. She had long felt her hour approaching; she condemned herself to silence; she ordered her coffin to be brought into her chamber. She

had lost her power of sleeping, and had passed her days and nights in meditation.

At the approach of death she ordered herself to be dressed ; she was laid upon a bed ; they administered to her the last Sacrament ; she held a crucifix in her hands. We were around her ; we shed tears ; her cell resounded with cries. All on a sudden her eyes sparkled, she raised herself up hastily and spoke ; her voice was almost as strong as it was when she was in health. She reproached us for our tears, which seemed to envy her eternal felicity. “ My children, your grief is mistimed ; it is there, it is there,” said she, pointing to the heavens, “ that I shall be of service to you ; my eyes shall rest perpetually upon this house ; I will intercede for you, and I shall be heard. Come nearer, all of you, that I may embrace you. Come and receive my blessings and last adieus.” When she was uttering these words this singular woman, who has left behind her never-ending regrets, departed.

“ Sister Saint —— succeeded Mother —— . But oh ! what a difference between the one and the other ! I have told you what a woman the latter was. The former held an insignificant character, her mind was narrow and superstitious, she gave in to new opinions, she conferred with Sulpicians and Jesuits. She took an aversion to all her predecessor’s favorites : the house instantly became a scene of disturbance, animosities, calumnies, slanders, accusations, and persecutions ; we had to discuss theological questions which we did not understand, to subscribe to formulas, and to conform to singular practises. Mother —— did not

approve of those penitential exercises which concerned the body ; she macerated herself only twice in the course of her life—once on the eve of my profession, and another time on a similar occasion. She used to say of these penances that they corrected no fault, that they only served as a ground of pride. Her desire was that her nuns should behave well, and that they should keep their bodies sound and their minds tranquil. The first thing she did when she entered upon her charge was to make them bring her all the hair-clothes and scourges, and to forbid them to spoil their food with ashes, to lie on hard beds, or to provide themselves with any of these instruments. Her successor, on the contrary, sent back to every nun her hair-cloth and her scourge. The favorites of the former were not the favorites of the succeeding reign. The existing Superior was indifferent to me, to say no worse, because I had been beloved by her predecessor, but I was not long in embittering my lot, by some actions which you will call either imprudent or spirited, according to the light in which you view them. In the first place, I wholly abandoned myself to the grief which I felt for the loss of our former Superior, praised her upon all occasions, and suggested comparisons between her and the present governess, which were not favorable to the latter ; described the state of the house for years past, recalled to their recollection the peace we enjoyed and the nourishment, both spiritual and temporal, which was then administered to us ; everything, in fine, which tended to exalt the morals, the feelings, and the character of Sister —— . Secondly, I cast my hair-cloth into the fire, threw away my scourge,

preached to my friends upon the subject, and engaged some of them to follow my example. The third thing I did was to provide myself with the Old and New Testament ; the fourth to renounce all parties and to abide by the name of Christian. The fifth was, strictly to regulate my conduct by the rules of the house, without either wishing to do more or less than they required, and consequently not to perform any work of supererogation, those of obligation appearing to me to be more than sufficient ; not to mount to the organ except on holidays ; not to sing except when I was of the choir, and no longer to suffer them to abuse my complaisance and my talent, by setting me to do everything at all times. I read their constitution over and over again ; I learned it by heart ; if they ordered me to do anything which was either not clearly expressed or was omitted, or which appeared to me to be contrary to what was there enjoined, I would firmly refuse to comply. I would take the book and say, 'These are the engagements that I have taken, and I have taken no others.' My discourses made some converts. The authority of the mistresses was limited ; they could no longer dispose of us like slaves. Not a day passed without some scene of notoriety. In cases of uncertainty, my companions came to consult me, and I always took part against despotism. I had soon the air of a factious person, and perhaps I acted the part of one. The agents of the Archbishop were continually called in. I appeared, I defended myself, I defended my companions ; and it never once happened that they were condemned, such care did I take to have reason on my side. It was im-

possible to attack me on the score of discharging my duty ; that I scrupulously performed. As for those little favors which a Superior is always at liberty to grant or to withhold, I never asked them.

I did not appear in the parlor, and, with regard to visits, not knowing any person, I never received any. But I had burnt my hair-cloth and scourge ; I had advised others to do the same. When they asked me if I acknowledged submission to the constitution, I replied that I did to the church ; and if I received the bull, that I received the gospel. They visited my cell ; they found the Old and New Testament in it. I had let escape some imprudent expressions about a suspicious intimacy of some of the favorites. I omitted nothing which could make myself feared, hated, and undone, and I accomplished it at last. They no longer complained of me to the Superior, but they did everything in their power to render my life uncomfortable. They forbade the nuns to come near me, and I soon found myself deserted. I had a few friends who contrived by stealth to get the better of the restraint which was imposed on them, and now that they could not pass the day with me, they visited me at night, or at forbidden hours. The Superior set spies upon us ; they surprised me sometimes with one, sometimes with another ; this sort of imprudence was all they wished for, and I was punished for it in the most inhuman manner ; they condemned me for whole weeks to pass the service on my knees, apart from the rest of the choir ; to live upon bread and water, to remain shut up in my cell, to perform the meanest offices in the house. Those whom they called my accom-

plices were no better treated. When they could not find me in fault they took one for granted ; they sometimes gave me orders which it was impossible to execute, and punished me for not obeying them ; they changed the hours of service, and of eating ; they deranged, without my knowledge, the whole cloistral order ; and with all the attention I could bestow I was every day culpable, and every day punished. I had courage, but there was no degree of fortitude that could support desertion, solitude, and persecution. Things came to such a height that they made a sport of tormenting me ; it was the amusement of a band of fifty persons. It is impossible to enter into a minute detail of their malicious tricks ; they prevented me from sleeping, from watching, and from praying. One day they stole some of my clothes ; another day they carried off my keys and my breviary ; my lock was spoiled ; they hindered me from doing my duty, and what I did they never failed to derange ; they ascribed to me actions and speeches of which I was not the author ; they made me responsible for everything, and my life was one continued scene of real or pretended faults, and of chastisements. My health was not proof against such long and severe trials ; I fell into a state of dejection. At first I had recourse to the altar for energy of mind, and I found some at times. I wavered between resignation and despair, sometimes submitting to all the rigor of my fate, at other times meditating my deliverance by violent means. There was a deep well at the foot of the garden : how often have I looked at it ! There was by the side of the well a stone seat : how often have I sat upon it with my head leaning upon the



brink ; how often, in the tumult of my ideas, have I suddenly got up and resolved to put an end to my sufferings. What prevented me ? Why did I then prefer lamentation, crying aloud, trampling my veil under my feet, tearing my hair, and macerating my face with my nails ? If Heaven prevented me from destroying myself, why did it not also put a stop to these acts of violence ? I am going to tell you a thing which will perhaps appear strange, but which is not the less true ; it is that I have no doubt but my frequent visits to the well were observed, and that my cruel enemies flattered themselves that I would one day execute the purpose which was conceived in the bottom of my breast. When I went that way, they affected to part with me, and to look in a different direction. I have several times found the garden door open when it ought to have been shut, particularly on those days when they had multiplied the causes of my chagrin, and when they had roused the violence of my temper to such a pitch that they thought my intellect was deranged. But as soon as I discovered that they presented this form of death to my despair, that they led me as it were by the hand to this well, and that I found it always ready to receive me, it ceased to employ my thoughts ; my mind turned to other means of ending my existence.

## CHAPTER IV.

Thoughts of Suicide—Fire and Convents—Contemplated Escape—My Manner betrays my Purpose—I am Watched—My Journal—Another Friend—The Search—A Close Prisoner—Cruelty—Another Project—My Firmness—Immoral Practices in Convents.

I WENT through the galleries and measured the height of the windows, at night, when I was undressing myself, I tried, without thinking of it, the strength of my garters; another day I would not eat; I went down to the hall and remained there leaning against the wall, my hands hanging down by my sides, and my eyes shut; I would not touch the meat they set before me, and in this state I so completely forgot myself that I would stay after all the nuns had gone out. They affected to withdraw without making a noise; and leaving me there, they afterwards punished me for neglecting the exercises. They disgusted me with almost all means of ridding myself of my existence, because, far from opposing my intentions, they put the instruments of executing them in my way. We do not like the appearance of people pushing us out of the world, and, perhaps, had they seemed eager to keep me in it, I should now have been no more. When we take away our life it is perhaps for the purpose of occasioning distress to others; and we preserve it when

we think that they would be pleased at our taking it away. These are the secret workings of our minds. In truth, if it is possible for me to recollect what passed within me by the side of the well, I think I called upon those wretches who kept at a distance for the sake of favoring the commission of a crime: "Take but one step towards me, show the smallest desire of saving me, run to prevent me, and be assured you shall be too late." In fact, I lived only because they wished my death. The savage passion for tormenting and destroying decays in the world; in the cloister it is indefatigable.

I was in this situation when, reviewing my past life, I conceived the design of renouncing my vows. At first I thought of it slightly. Alone, deserted, without support, how could I succeed in a project so difficult, though seconded by all the assistance of which I was in want. Yet this idea tranquilized me, my spirit settled, I was more myself. I avoided some evils, and I supported more patiently those by which I was assailed. This change was remarked, and it excited astonishment; malice stopped short, like a cowardly foe, who pursues, and against whom you make a stand when he does not expect it. There is one question, which I should wish to propose; it is, why, in spite of all the gloomy ideas which pass through the mind of a nun reduced to despair, that of setting fire to the house never occurs to her imagination? I never entertained the design, nor did the others, although the thing would be very easy to execute. Nothing more is necessary than, upon a windy day, to apply a flambeau to a garret, a pile of wood, a passage. No convents are set fire to, yet upon such occasions the doors are

thrown open, and they save themselves who can. May not the reason be, that they fear the danger that might overtake themselves and those they love, and that they disdain a relief which is common to them with those they hate. The last idea is, perhaps, too subtle, to be true.

From occupying ourselves greatly with any object, we feel its justice, and even believe its possibility; we are very strong when we have reached that point. It was to me the business of a fortnight; my mind is rapid in its movement. What was the object? To keep a journal of my life in the convent, and to escape, if possible; both were attended with danger. Since this resolution had taken place in my mind, I was observed with greater attention than ever; they followed me with their eyes. I never took a step that was not traced—I never uttered a word that was not weighed. They insinuated themselves about me, they endeavored to sound me, they questioned me, affected compassion and friendship, reviewed my past life, faintly blamed me, devised excuses, hoped for more correct conduct, flattered me that the future would be more serene; at the same time they entered my cell every moment, by day, by night, upon some pretext or other; abruptly and cautiously they drew aside my curtains, and retired. I had contracted the habit of going to bed in my clothes. I had another practice, that of reducing my experience to writing. I asked for ink and paper from the Superior, who never refused me. But I committed three absurdities; the first was, telling the Superior that I should have a great many things to write, and upon this pretext asking of her more paper than is

allowed; the second, occupying myself with the journal, and neglecting my confession; and the third, having made out no confession, and remaining at the confessional but a single moment. All this was remarked, and they concluded that the paper I had asked for was employed in a different manner from that I had mentioned. But if it had not served for my confession, as was evident, how had it been used? Without knowing that they were impressed with these disquietudes, I felt that it would not do for them to find upon me a writing of this importance. At first I thought of sewing it in my bolster, and in my mattress; then of concealing it in my clothes, of burying it in the garden, of throwing it in the fire. You cannot believe how strongly I was urged to write, and how much I was embarrassed with it when it was written. First, I sealed the paper, thrust it into my bosom, and went to service to which the bell summoned. I was oppressed with an alarm which my emotions betrayed. I was seated by the side of a young nun who loved me; sometimes I had seen her gaze upon me with pity, and shed tears. She did not speak to me, but certainly she was unhappy. At the risk of every consequence, I resolved to entrust her with my paper. At the moment of the prayer, when all the nuns fall upon their knees, bend forward, and are sunk in their pews, I gently drew the paper from my bosom, and held it out to her behind me; she took it and thrust it into her bosom. This was the most important service she had done me; but I had received many others. She had labored whole months, without being discovered, in removing the little obstacles with which they had encum-

bered my duties, and, upon my failure, to have an opportunity to chastise me. She came and knocked at my door when it was time to go out; she put to rights everything they had deranged; she had gone and rung the bell, and made responses upon all the proper occasions; she was in every place where I ought to have been. Of all this I was ignorant.

I did well in employing this expedient. When we left the choir, the Superior said to me, "Sister ——, follow me." I followed her; then stopping in the passage at another door, "This is your cell," said she; "Sister Saint —— will occupy yours." I entered, and she along with me; we had both sat down without speaking, when a nun appeared with some clothes, which she laid on a chair, and the Superior said, "Sister ——, undress and take these clothes." I obeyed in her presence; in the meantime she was attentive to all my motions. The sister who had brought the clothes was at the door; she re-entered, carried away those I had quitted, and went out, followed by the Superior. I was not informed of the reason of these proceedings, nor did I inquire. During this interval, they had searched every part of my cell; they had unsewed my pillow and mattress; they had displaced and rummaged everything. They traced my footsteps; they went to the confessional, to the church, to the garden, to the well, to the low seat; I saw part of these searches, and I suspected the rest. They found nothing, but they remained as fully convinced as ever that there was some foundation for their anxiety. They continued to watch me with spies for many days. They went wherever

I had gone ; they looked everywhere, but in vain. At last the Superior believed that it was impossible to know the truth, but from myself. She one day entered my cell and said to me, "Sister ——, you have faults, but that of lying is not among the number. Then tell me the truth ; what have you done with all the paper I gave you?"

"Madam, I have told you."

"That is impossible, for you asked me for a great deal and you were only a moment at the confessional."

"It is true."

"What then have you done with it?"

"What I told you."

"Well then, swear to me, by the holy obedience you have vowed to Heaven, that such is the truth, and, in spite of appearances, I will believe you."

"Madam, you are not permitted to exact an oath for a slight matter, and I am not at liberty to take it ; I cannot swear it."

"You deceive me, Sister ——, and you are not aware to what you expose yourself. What have you done with the paper I gave you?"

"I have told you."

"Where is it?"

"I have it not."

"What use have you made of it?"

"Such as is made of those writings which are useless after they have served their purpose."

"Swear to me, by the sacred obedience you owe, that it

has all been employed in writing your confession, and is no longer in your possession."

"Madam, I repeat, the second point being no more important than the first, I cannot swear."

"Swear," said she to me, "or"——

"I will not swear."

"You will not swear?"

"No, Madam."

"You are then guilty?"

"And of what am I guilty?"

"Of everything—there is nothing of which you are not capable. You have affected to praise my predecessor, in order to depreciate me, to contemn the customs she had abolished, and which I considered it my duty to re-establish; you have endeavored to destroy the principles of subordination in the community; you have infringed its laws; you have sown division among its members; you have failed in the performance of every duty which your situation required; and what to me is of all the most painful consideration, you have compelled me to punish you and those whom you have seduced. While it was in my power to enforce against you every severity which the most rigorous measures could inflict, I yet treated you with indulgence; I imagined that you would acknowledge your faults, that you would resume the spirit which befits your situation, and that you would solicit with anxiety your reconciliation with me; but I have been mistaken. Something is in agitation in your mind, which is not good; you are occupied with some projects the interests of the house demands that I should know, and I



will know them, depend upon it. Sister ——, tell me the truth.”

“I have told it you.”

“I am about to leave you ; dread my return ; I will again sit down ; I allow you yet a moment to determine. Your papers, if they exist ?”

“I have them not.”

“On your oath, they only contained your confession ?”

“I cannot swear it.”

She remained a moment in silence, then she retired and returned with four of her favorites. The appearance of them all was distracted and furious. I threw myself at their feet ; I implored their mercy. They all exclaimed in concert, “No mercy, Mother ; do not allow yourself to be moved by her supplications ; she must give up her papers or go quietly.”

I embraced the knees first of one, then of another ; I addressed them by their names, saying, “Sister Saint Agnes, Sister Saint Julia, what have I done to you ? Why do you incense my Superior against me ? Was it thus that I ever acted ? How often have I interceded for you ? You then remember my kindness no more. You were in fault, but I am not.”

The Superior, unmoved, looked at me and said, “Give me your papers, wretch, or disclose what they contained.”

“Madam,” said they to her, “do not ask her for them any more ; you are too indulgent ; you are not sufficiently acquainted with her character ; she is an untractable spirit, with whom it is impossible to succeed but by proceeding to

extremities, she compels you to embrace that alternative and she must suffer for it. Give us orders to strip her, and let her be consigned to the place destined for those who pursue a similar conduct."

"My dear mother, I swear I have done nothing which can offend either Heaven or man."

"That is not the oath which I exact. She may have written against us, against you, some memorial to the Pope, or to the Archbishop. Heaven knows the description she may have given of the internal state of the house ; accusation easily obtains credit."

"Madam, you must dispose of this creature, unless you would have our fate to be determined by her."

The Superior added, "Sister ——, consider."

I rose abruptly and said to her, "Madam, I have considered every consequence. I feel that I am undone, but a moment sooner or later is not worth the trouble of a thought. Do with me whatever you please, yield to their fury, consummate your injustice." Immediately I held out my hands to them ; they were seized by her companions, who tore away my veil, and stripped me without shame.

They found in my bosom a miniature picture of my old Superior ; they seized it ; I entreated permission to kiss it once more, but the favor was refused. They threw me an under garment, they took off my stockings, covered me with a sack, and led me, with my head and feet uncovered, along the passages. I wept, I called for help ; but they had sounded the bell, to give warning that nobody should appear. I invoked Heaven ; I sunk to the earth, and they dragged

me along. When I had reached the bottom of the stairs my feet were bloody, my limbs were bruised, my situation would have softened hearts of flint. With large keys, the Superior opened the door of a gloomy subterranean cell, where they threw me upon a mat half rotted by the damp. I found there a slice of black bread and a bason of gruel, with some coarse necessary utensils. The mat, when rolled up, formed a pillow. Upon a stone lay a scull and a black wooden crucifix. My first impulse was to put a period to my existence. I applied my hands to my throat, I tore my clothes with my teeth, and uttered hideous cries. I dashed my head against the walls, and endeavored to take away my life till my strength failed, which very soon happened. In this place I remained three days; I imagined myself condemned to it for life. Every morning one of my executioners visited me and said, "Obey your Superior, and you shall be liberated from this place."

"I have done nothing. I know not what I am required to perform. Ah! Sister Saint Mary, there is a Deity in heaven." The third day, about nine o'clock at night, the door was opened by the same nuns who had conducted me to the dungeon. After a panegyric upon the goodness of the Superior, they announced to me her forgiveness, and that they were going to set me at liberty. "It is too late," said I, "leave me here; I wish to die." Nevertheless they raised me up, and dragged me away; they led me back to a cell, where I found the Superior.

"I have consulted the Deity," said she, "upon your situation; He has touched my heart; it is His will that I

should take pity on you, and I obey. Fall upon your knees, and ask His pardon."

I fell upon my knees, and said, "My Creator, I entreat your forgiveness for the faults I have committed, as upon the cross you asked forgiveness for me."

"What presumption!" exclaimed they; "she compares herself to Jesus Christ, and us she compares to the Jews by whom he was crucified."

"Do not consider my conduct," said I, "but consider yourselves and judge."

"This is not all," said the Superior to me; "Swear by the sacred obedience you have vowed, that you will not speak of what has happened."

"What you have done, then, is certainly very criminal, since you exact from me an oath that I shall never reveal it. None but your own conscience shall ever know, I swear."

"You swear?"

"Yes, I swear." This being concluded, they stripped me of the clothes they had given me, and left me again to dress myself in my own.

I had been affected by the dampness; I was in a critical situation; my whole body was bruised; for some days I had only taken a few drops of water, and a little bread. I imagined that this persecution was to be the last I should have to suffer. From the temporary effect of these violent shocks, which demonstrate the extraordinary power of nature in our persons, I recovered in a very short time; and when I again made my appearance I found all the community persuaded that I had been sick. I resumed the

exercises of the house and my place at church. I had not forgotten my journal, nor the young sister to whom it had been confided ; I was sure that she had not abused the trust, and that she had not kept it without anxiety. Some days after my liberation from prison, while in the choir, at the same moment when I had given it to her (that is, when we fall on our knees, and when, inclined towards each other, we disappear in our seats), I felt myself pulled gently by the gown ; I stretched out my hand and received a billet, which contained only these words, " What terrible anxiety you have occasioned me ! and what am I to do with that cruel paper ?" After reading this, I twisted it up in my hand, and swallowed it. All this happened at the beginning of Lent. The time was approaching when the curiosity of hearing the musical performances attracts much company. My voice was exceedingly fine, though now a little injured. In these religious houses, attention is paid to the most minute circumstances that concern their interests ; I was, therefore, treated with more attention and indulgence ; I enjoyed a greater portion of liberty. The sisters whom I taught to sing were allowed to visit me ; she to whom I had confided my journal was of the number. In the hours of recreation which we spent in the garden, I took her aside ; I made her sing, and while she sang, I addressed her as follows :—" You have a great many acquaintances, I have none ; I do not wish you to expose yourself to the danger of detection ; I should prefer dying here, rather than expose you to the suspicion of having served me. I know, my friend, that it would occasion your

ruin, without obtaining my deliverance ; and, although your ruin would accomplish my safety, I should not accept it at such a price." "Do not speak of that," said she ; "what is the service you wish to have done?" "I wish to have that journal conveyed to some able lawyer for consultation, concealing, at the same time, the house from which it comes, and to obtain an answer, which you may put into my hands at church or elsewhere." "But what have you done with my billet?" said she. "Let that give you no uneasiness ; I swallowed it." "You, likewise," said she, "may keep your mind at ease ; I will attend to your business." You will observe, that I sung while she spoke to me, and that she sang while I replied, and that music was mingled with our conversation.

She did not fail very soon to keep her word, and she communicated to me the information in our usual manner. Holy week arrived ; the concourse of spectators to —— was numerous. I sang so well as to excite those tumultuous and scandalous marks of approbation which are bestowed upon the comedians at the theatres, and which ought never to be heard in the temple of the Deity, especially upon those solemn days devoted to the memory of the Son nailed to the Cross for the expiation of the sins of the human race. My young pupils were well prepared ; some of them had good voices, almost all had expression and taste ; and it seemed that the public had heard them with pleasure, and that the community was satisfied with the success of my cares.

You know, that upon Maundy Thursday the Holy Sacrament is transported from the tabernacle in which it is kept

to a particular altar, where it remains till Friday morning. This interval is employed in adoration by the nuns, who repair to the altar successively two and two. There is a list, which points out to each her hour of adoration. With what pleasure did I read, "Sister St. — and Sister St. Ursula, from two o'clock in the morning to three!" I repaired to the altar at the appointed hour—my companion was there. We placed ourselves together on the steps of the altar; we prostrated ourselves, and worshiped for half an hour. At the end of this period my young friend stretched out her hand to me, and pressing mine said, "Perhaps we shall never enjoy an opportunity of conversing so long and so freely. Heaven knows the constraint in which we live, and will forgive us if we share for our own concerns that time which should be wholly dedicated to its service. I have not read the journal, but it is not difficult to guess its contents. The lawyer will answer to it immediately, but if that answer should encourage you to commence a suit to be enabled to renounce your vows, do you not observe that you must necessarily consult with other gentlemen of the law?" "True."

"That for this purpose liberty is requisite?"

"I know."

"And that if you act wisely, you will avail yourself of present circumstances to procure it?"

"I have reflected upon that subject."

"You will do it then?"

"I shall consider."

"One thing more; if your business should be opened,

you will remain here, abandoned to all the fury of the community ; have you foreseen the persecutions to which you will be exposed ?”

“ They cannot be more severe than those I have already suffered.”

“ I do not know that.”

“ Excuse me, they will not dare, at first, to deprive me of my liberty.”

“ And why not ?”

“ Because I shall be, as it were, placed between the world and the cloister. I shall possess the opportunity to speak, the liberty to complain. I will summon you all as witnesses ; they will not venture to commit injuries which might furnish me with subject of complaint ; they will beware of doing any act which might render odious the cause they maintain. Nothing would be more acceptable to me, than the ill-usage they might inflict ; but they will not act in this manner ; be assured they will pursue a very different course. They will beset me with solicitations, they will represent the injury I am about to do myself and to the house ; and, depend upon it, they will not recur to menace, but they will discover that mildness and insinuation are employed without success, and that, at all events, they will forbear to put in practice any violent measures.”

“ But it is incredible that you can have such an aversion for a situation, the duties of which you perform with so much facility and exactness.”

“ I feel that aversion in my own breast ; it was engraved on my mind at my birth, and it never will be erased. I



shall end by being a bad nun, and I must anticipate that moment."

"But if, unfortunately, you should prove unsuccessful?"

"I will request liberty to change my house."

"And if you do not obtain this favor?"

"I will die."

"We suffer much before we choose the alternative of death. Ah! my friend, I shudder at the conduct you pursue; I tremble lest your vows should be adjudged to be broken, and lest they should not. If they are, what course are you to follow? What will you do in the world? You have figure, wit, and talents, but these, they say, are of little service when they are connected with virtue, and I know you will not swerve from that."

"You do justice to me, but not to virtue; upon that alone I depend; the less frequently it is to be found among mankind, the more it ought to be valued"

"It is praised, but it is neglected."

"It is virtue alone, however, that encourages and supports me in my design. Of me, at least, it will not be said, as of many others, that I was seduced from the state to which I belonged, by a criminal passion. The immoralities practised around me, do not affect me. So that I am pure, it is enough. But I grieve for those who weakly yield to those temptations which are held out to them by the prowling wolves in sheep's clothing, who, under cover of the night, roam about this convent's dark and winding passages. I see them sometimes, when they little think they're noticed.

“Dear sister,” said sister Ursula, “are you, too, aware of many scenes that are transpiring within these convent walls, when night has thrown the veil of darkness over its inmates, and over transactions which may well appal us, who have contrived to preserve, amid all our temptations, that purity of heart and motive which a merciful God has implanted in our natures, and which our early education and culture, before we entered these accursed abodes, had fostered and strengthened. How falsely has this place been supposed to be the abode of purity, of seclusion from the vanity and wickedness of the world, where an innocent and confiding girl might, with pure and trustful heart, turn her thoughts towards heaven, and prepare herself for a blissful hereafter. Is it not terrible that such a place, consecrated to holiness, should be made the spot to pander to the base passions of those placed by heaven as our spiritual guides and directors? Last night, the weather being warm, and the air of my room oppressive and confined, I could not sleep, but lay for some time tossing uneasily on my pillow, at last I arose, and lightly stepping out of my bed, sat down by the window, and watched the beautiful stars which glittered in the heavens, and a lovely moon which shed its soft light into my room. As I sat and meditated on the past scenes of my short but unhappy life, in spite of myself, dark thoughts and gloomy forebodings of the future filled my mind, over which I was silently brooding, when I was aroused by hearing a light footstep in my room. I was concealed by the curtains of the window, and from my hiding-place saw distinctly the face of Father S——, who

evidently expected to find me asleep, but was surprised to find my couch empty, and startled by a slight noise I unavoidably made, turned and glided noiselessly out of the room. I had before noticed that this man often regarded me with a peculiar look, which sometimes almost made me shudder, and once, as if by accident, he placed his hand upon my bosom instead of my head, while I was kneeling to him for his blessing, and upon my suddenly rising, he seized my hand and gave it what was meant for an affectionate pressure. He was always my detestation, for when it was my turn to kneel to him at confession, he always asked me questions which, though I did not exactly understand their import, yet my inherent purity of heart shrank from answering, and I could not divest myself of the idea that he was actuated by some sinister and improper motives. How terrible, my dear sister, is the power of these men, who pry into the most secret recesses of our hearts, and endeavor to turn our innocent thoughts in such a direction, as to minister to their base ends. And I fear with good reason, that in some instances they have succeeded. I have frequently heard noises and whisperings in the rooms below ; I could distinctly hear the sounds of male and female voices, and once I saw Father K—— stealing past my door in his dishabille, in the direction of the further corridor. I have endeavored to shut my eyes and ears to these things, but they are too palpable, too plain, to be misunderstood. I am sick at heart, and wish that I was out of this horrible place.”

“ Yes, my dear sister Ursula, I, too, have seen and heard

all that you state; the other night I saw a basket of Rhenish wine carried to Father ——'s door, and being detained rather late in the refectory to complete a task that the Mother Superior had given me to do, for some imaginary dereliction of duty, I was passing Father ——'s door, when I heard distinctly several male and female voices, evidently in high glee, and as I gained my room, the last notes of what appeared to be a bacchanalian song reached my ears, accompanied with Father ——'s peculiar laugh. Such are the doings within these walls, supposed by the world to be 'sacred.' But, my dear sister, we must now part, or we shall be observed and punished; but if I can obtain the opportunity, I will talk more with you on this subject." Alas! that time never came, for other and more troubled scenes were in store for me.

My mind was, by this time, a little soothed, and the brief conversation I was allowed to have with sister Ursula had diverted my thoughts from the painful train in which they had been indulged of late. My friend prayed in an erect posture, while I prostrated myself with my forehead leaning upon the lowest step of the altar, and my arms extended upon the upper steps. I do not believe that I ever addressed Heaven with more consolation and fervor. I am ignorant how long I remained in this position, or how much longer I might have continued, but, doubtless, I presented a very affecting spectacle to my companion, and the two nuns who arrived at the spot. When I rose, I thought myself alone; I was mistaken, all three were behind me, standing, and bathed in tears. They had not ventured to

interrupt me ; they waited till I should return to myself from that state of transport and effusion in which I appeared. When I directed my looks to that side on which they stood, my countenance must, doubtless, have possessed a very commanding character, if I may judge from the effect which it produced upon them, by the resemblance they told me I bore at that moment to our former Superior, when she used to impart to us spiritual consolation. Had I felt any bent to hypocrisy or fanaticism, and had been disposed to play a distinguished part in the house, I have no doubt that I should have succeeded. My soul was easily inflamed, exalted, transported ; and a thousand times our good Superior, embracing me, has said, that no person would have loved Heaven with an ardor like mine ; that I had a heart of flesh, while others had hearts of stone. Certain it is, that I experienced an extreme facility in sharing her ecstasies. In the prayers which she uttered aloud, it sometimes happened that I would become the speaker, follow the train of her ideas, and catch, as it were from inspiration, a part of what she herself would have said. My companions heard her in silence, or were contented merely to follow, while I interrupted her effusions, soared into a higher flight, and joined my voice to hers, in accents of adoration. I very long preserved the impression I had taken, and it seemed as if some part of it was destined to be restored, for it used to be observed of others, that they had conversed with her, while it was perceived of her, that she had conversed with me. But what signifies all this, when the call no longer exists ? The period of our watch-

ing being expired, we resigned our place to those who succeeded. My young companion and I embraced each other very tenderly before we separated.

The scene which had taken place at the altar, excited considerable attention in the house. The success of our musical exercises on Good Friday, likewise had its share. I sung ; I played upon the organ ; I was applauded. O giddy nuns ! I had scarcely any difficulty in reconciling myself to the entire members of the community ; they met me half-way, and among the first, the Superior herself. My acquaintance was desired by some people of the world, a circumstance which corresponded too well with my project to permit me to decline their advances. I was visited by the —, by Mrs. —, and a number of other persons, by priests, magistrates, pious women, and by ladies of fashion. I cultivated no acquaintances but those which were unexceptionable ; the rest I resigned to the nuns who were not so particular.

I forgot to mention that the first mark of kindness I received, was my re-establishment in my cell. I had the courage to demand the restoration of the little picture of our former Superior, and they did not venture to refuse the request. It has assumed its place at my breast, where it shall remain as long as I live. Every morning, my first care is to raise my soul to heaven, my second is to kiss the portrait. When I am desirous to pray, and when I feel my heart cold and languid, I take it from my neck and place it before me. I gaze upon it, and receive inspiration. It is much to be regretted that we never were acquainted with

the holy persons whose images are displayed for our veneration ; they would then strike us with very different impressions. They would not allow us to remain at their feet or in their presence, with those cold and lifeless feelings which we often experience.

I received the answer to my letter, from Mr. —, which was neither favorable nor unfavorable. Before pronouncing upon this affair, a great many explanations were required, which it was difficult to furnish without a personal interview. I then invited Mr. — to come to —. These gentlemen are not easily drawn from home ; he came, however. We had a very long conversation, and adjusted a plan of correspondence by which he was to convey his questions with safety, and to receive my answers. On my side, I employed the whole interval, during which he kept my business under consideration, in conciliating favor and kindness, in disposing people to take an interest in my fortune, and in endeavors to obtain protection. I told my name, I disclosed the circumstances of my conduct in the first religious house in which I lived, the hardships I had suffered, the severity with which I had been treated in the convent, my remonstrance at St. —, my stay at —, my taking the habit, my profession, with the cruelties that had been exercised against me, after my vows were consummated. My tale was now heard with pity, and accompanied with offers of assistance ; without further explanation, I reserved the kindness that was expressed in my favor for an occasion in which it might be necessary. Nothing transpired in the house. I had obtained permis-

sion from —— to protest against my vows ; the action was on the point of being instituted, without the remotest suspicion on the subject being entertained. You may, then, conceive the surprise of my superior, when she received the intimation of a protest in the name of ——, against her vows, with a request to be allowed to quit the religious habit, leave the cloister, and regulate her future life as she might think proper.

I had readily foreseen that I should experience various kinds of opposition from the religious house to which I belonged, should I regain my freedom. I wrote to my sisters, and entreated them to give no opposition to my leaving the convent. I appealed to their conscience to bear witness to the little freedom with which my vows had been made. I omitted no argument that could persuade them that the step I had taken was dictated neither by interest nor by passion. I was not sanguine in the hopes of inspiring them with sentiments favorable to my design.

Scarcely had the Superior received my application in form, when she ran to my cell. "How, sister," said she to me, "you wish to leave us?"

"Yes, madam."

"And are you going to renounce your vows?"

"Yes, madam."

"Have you not acted without restraint?"

"No, madam."

"And what has constrained you?"

"Everything."

"And why did not you remonstrate at the foot of the altar?"



“I was so little myself, that I do not recollect even having stood by it.”

“How can you say so?”

“I speak the truth.”

“What! did you not hear the priest ask you, ‘Sister —, do you promise to God obedience, chastity, and poverty?’”

“I have no recollection of it.”

“You did not answer yes?”

“I have no recollection of it.”

“And you imagine that people will believe this?”

“They may or may not believe it, but it is not the less true.”

“My dear child, if such pretences were listened to, what dreadful abuses must be the consequence! You have taken an inconsiderate step, you have suffered yourself to be misled by a revengeful feeling; the chastisements which you have obliged me to inflict upon you, still rankle in your bosom; you think they are sufficient to make you break your vows. You are wrong; it is an excuse which cannot be sustained, either by heaven or man. Consider that perjury is the greatest of all crimes; that you have already committed it in your heart, and that you are about to consummate it.”

“I shall not be perjured, I have never been sworn.”

“If you have suffered some injuries, have they not been repaired?”

“It is not upon these injuries that I ground my determination.”

“What is it, then?”

“Upon the want of a call, upon my want of liberty in taking my vows.”

“If you had no call, if you acted by constraint, might not you have said so in time?”

“And what purpose would it have answered?”

“Might you not have displayed the same firmness that you did at Saint ——?”

“Can we be answerable at all times for the firmness of our hearts? The first time I was firm; the second time my weakness overcame me.”

“Might not you have entered a protest? You had four-and-twenty hours in which you might have shown proofs of reluctance.”

“Did I know anything about these forms? Though I had known them, was I in a state to practise them; was it in my power? What! madam, were you not yourself sensible of my derangement? Were I to call you as a witness, would you swear that I was sound in mind?”

“If you call me, I will swear it.”

“Well, then, madam, it is you, and not I, who are perjured.”

“My child, you are going to make a very needless noise. Recollect yourself, I conjure you, by your own interest and that of the house; such affairs are always attended with scandalous discussions.”

“That will not be my fault.”

“The people of the world are wicked; they will make suppositions the most unfavorable respecting your under-

standing, your heart, and your morals. They will think"——

"Whatever they please."

"But speak to me ingenuously ; if you have any secret discontent, whatever it may be, it is capable of a remedy."

"I have been, I am, and shall be, dissatisfied with my condition, as long as I live."

"Could the seducing spirit which is continually watching us, and who lies in wait to destroy us, take advantage of the liberty which we have granted you lately, to inspire you with some fatal propensity?"

"No, madam ; you know that I never took an oath without reluctance. I take heaven to witness, that my heart is innocent, and that it never knew a dishonorable sentiment."

"This is inconceivable !"

"Nothing, madam, is easier to be conceived. Every one has a character of her own, and I have mine ; you love the monastic life—I hate it ; you have the graces of your condition, and I do not possess them ; you would be undone in the world, and here you secure your salvation ; I shall ruin myself here, and I hope for salvation in the world ; I am, and always shall be, a bad nun."

"And wherefore ? There is no person who performs her duty better than you."

"But it is with pain and reluctance."

"You have the greater merit."

"No person can know better than I do myself, what I merit ; and I am compelled to acknowledge that, in submitting to everything, I merit nothing. I am tired of the pro-

fession of a hypocrite ; in doing that which is the salvation of others, I render myself an object of detestation and condemnation. In a word, madam, I know no true nuns, but those who are destined so by a taste for retirement, and who would remain here though they were confined neither by rails nor walls. I am far from being of this number ; my body is here, but my heart is not—it is roaming at large ; and were I to be under the necessity of choosing between death and perpetual confinement in this place, I would not hesitate to die. These are my sentiments.”

“ How ! could you quit, without remorse, this veil, and these vestments, which have consecrated you to Jesus Christ ?”

“ Yes, madam ; because I assumed them without reflection, and under constraint.”

Further on, in this, the relation of my convent life, I allude to certain papers which my dear sister Ursula had left to me as a memento of her friendship, and in the hope, as the sequel proved, that they might be made serviceable in showing to the world how much of gross deception there is in the system of convents and nunneries ; how many abuses exist among them ; how much of misery they cause. I have selected from among the papers of sister Ursula the history of “ Coralla, or the Orphan Nun of Capri,” for the purpose of introducing it at this point of my story as a relief and change from the exciting character of my own sad experience. With the MSS. history of Coralla, I found the following account of the manner in which it fell into the hands of sister Ursula :

## SISTER URSULA'S PAPERS.

“Whilst I was an inmate of the convent of St. ——, I formed a friendship with one sister Morali, a young lady whose uncle plotted with the Jesuits for the possession of her person and fortune, and succeeded only too well. But before they had resolved upon the desperate step of securing her person by force, she obtained the story of Coralla from her own lips, while on a visit to a small town near Naples, where Coralla had retired with her faithful friend Onofrio. Soon after this, the extreme measure of coercion resolved upon by the wicked uncle of sister Morali and his Jesuit accomplices was carried into effect, and thinking that Sister Morali might either escape or convey the story of her wrongs to her friends by some means or other, they resolved upon carrying her out of the country. They first conveyed her to France, thence to this country, and thus it was that I chanced to meet with sister Morali, whose melancholy history I have not written, but there are other papers besides those relating to Coralla, which I hope will be published to a deluded world.

LOUISA C——,

*called ‘Sister Ursula.’*”

# CORALLA;

OR THE

## ORPHAN NUN OF CAPRI.

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### I.

Earliest recollections—An Ospizio—Manner of life there—Father Filippo takes me to Capri—Description of that Island—The Bay of Naples—Reflections of young females abandoning home and friends—The Ursuline Convent of Capri.

AT my earliest recollection I was dwelling among a great number of girls, in a large building, under the care of several women, on the borders of the Bay of Naples, but at some distance from the city. I have very little to say about the years I spent in that place, as there was very little variety in my life, and nothing of particular importance occurred. We were trained to the various kinds of labor required in the care of the institution, which was one of the kind called *Ospizio de' Orfani*\* in Italy; and received a

\* *Ospizio* is a word derived from *Hospitium* in Latin, which signifies not like that, an inn, but an orphan asylum, or rather a foundling-hospital. Institutions of this kind are very common in Popish countries, and they are often connected

little education in the rudiments of learning. But this was not much more than sufficient to enable us to read our prayer-books, which were almost the only books that were allowed us. We were regularly catechized by priests who visited the house, were taught to treat them with humble respect and reverence, and required to obey them as being authorized by God to teach and direct us, and to submit to every penance which they imposed.

There was a certain Padre Filippo (Father Philip) who occasionally visited the house ; and one day, when I was about sixteen years of age, I was informed that I was to leave the place and go away to another residence. Arrangements were accordingly made, which took but little time ; I was got ready, and then placed under the care of Father Philip, without having any explanations made to me, or any information given from which I would learn what was to become of me. Indeed, I cared little, having no particular attachment to any of the inmates of the house, and nothing to give me much regret at parting. In the Ospizio I had

with convents. They are often pointed at as highly creditable to the Roman Catholic religion, but their principal objects and uses are generally understood by intelligent travellers, and even by the people among whom they exist. The immorality of priests requires special means of concealment ; and they who are ready to applaud precautions necessary for the preservation and care of orphans should be careful not to encourage the exposure of children by those who are ashamed or afraid to acknowledge them. It is doubtless true that some of the many children annually left at night in revolving cradles usually constructed in the walls of such establishments, are consigned to the care of the inmates by honest and affectionate parents, who are unable to provide for their subsistence ; and therefore there are proper objects of charity among the thousands of children always found in them. Of this number probably was Coralla.—*Note by the Editor.*

been much confined within doors, but sometimes had opportunity to enjoy a little of the beautiful weather which prevails in that part of Italy through a great part of the year, and the peculiar scenery of the surrounding country and adjacent sea-views. I was then so young and ignorant, that I knew not of any other part of the world, and how much that region is esteemed for its beauty and charming climate over most other countries. I had heard of strangers coming every year to spend some time in the island, but I knew little or nothing of their character, objects or origin. They are principally English, as I since have learned, and they are attracted by the Springs, which are places of much resort for invalids, and also for some who travel only for pleasure.

The island of Capri, I believe, was the place of my birth, though I have never been able to obtain any information concerning my parentage, and have never seen any person who claimed to be a relative. This fact I can hardly mention without giving expression to some of the feelings of sadness, which have always filled my heart when I thought of my friendless condition. I have seen the affection of children for their parents, and the love with which the members of a family generally regard each other, with a peculiar interest, because, although I have never been allowed to enjoy it myself, I feel that I have a nature fitted for it, and that I should have been happy in their condition. I have seen girls leaving their homes and friends to live in a convent, and wondered how any one would ever do so willingly, or how parents could be so cruel as to compel



them. It is true that I have known what such a life is, while they have taken such steps before they had experienced it. To me it was a matter of indifference whether I left the Ospizio or not, and I cared little whither I went, having nothing to expect in the whole world, but the same want of friends, the same vacuity of heart, which had always been my portion.

The island of Capri is only a few miles long, and is high and rocky; in some parts rough, precipitous, and impassable. From many points, and especially the ridge, you may see on one side far out to sea, to the very horizon; while on the east is the coast of Italy, with the long range of mountains stretching up to Vesuvius, from which the smoke of the volcano is always rising; and the city of Naples can be dimly discovered in the north, on the opposite side of the bay, at the distance of thirty miles.

While on my way in company with Father Philip, I learned from him that I was going to live in the Ursuline Convent, where he would introduce me to the Superior; and we at length came in sight of that edifice. It is situated on the *Punta del Monico*, or Monk's Point, near the sea; and the whole appearance of the place is rough and rude, showing great antiquity. Having reached the door, my companion desired to see the Superior, who soon appeared, and cast on us a very austere look, and gave me a very chilly salutation. Father Philip, however, spoke a few words to her aside, in a low voice which I could not hear, and her manner immediately softened, so that she addressed me in a somewhat kind and condescending tone.

## II.

The Superior of the Convent—Her Opinion of me—Condition and Appearance of the Nuns—The Drudges—Change of my Position—Trials and Sufferings—Causes of it—Reflections on the Cruel Bondage of Nunneries—Who bring young Women into Convents—Some of the reasons why they are desired—Schemes and Conspiracies to inveigle them.

I FOUND myself soon introduced into the community—a number of nuns of different ages and appearance, some of whom I hoped I might soon count as friends. They at first regarded me with what I interpreted as kindness, and I engaged with readiness in the duties imposed upon me. We had our regular hours for everything, differing in some respects from convents of other orders of which I since have had any knowledge, but, on the whole, much like them all. That is, a great part of the time was spent in prayers, singing, listening to the reading of the lives of saints, and solitary reflection; while we had to make frequent confession, and perform not a few penances. We had some little instruction in the rudiments of knowledge, but very little; and there was nothing in the manners of our instructresses or their methods of teaching that made study agreeable. Like all nuns generally, they were ignoramuses, and neither loved learning themselves, nor were able or willing to communicate it.

But I had soon reason to wish that my lot might have

been destined to be no worse than that of my companions at large, of which I had not formed any agreeable opinion. There were a few of the nuns who performed the laborious and menial duties of the convent, whom I had looked upon with pity. At first, I was unable to account for the great distinction made between them and others. From the ideas I had previously formed of a nunnery, I had supposed that all nuns were equal, sharing in the same duties, partaking of the same food, and treating each other as sisters, united in the closest bonds of affection, for the sake of religion and the service of God, to whom they had devoted their lives. But here I found some separated from others, kept continually at work in serving the rest, and treated with contempt and harshness, without being allowed the same comforts, or to receive any instruction whatever.

From some indirect hints I received, I at length ascertained that this difference was made because they were poor and friendless. They either had brought no money into the convent, or had no property or rich friends from whom anything might be expected in future. Among the others were some who had the best of everything, and were always treated with favor. Partiality was plainly shown to them by the superiors and the priests on all occasions. They were allowed favors denied to their companions, and were in a great measure exempt from disagreeable tasks and severe penances. They were at the same time encouraged with the idea that they were regarded with favor by the bishop and the patron saint, and were making advances in holiness.

These discoveries not only surprised and pained me, because they indicated a very different state of things in the convent from what I supposed to exist, and shocked me with the suspicion that all was hypocrisy, but they also excited in me a horrible fear of being doomed to the hard fate of the poor and friendless nuns ; for I well knew there was not in the convent, or even in the world, a girl poorer or more entirely friendless than myself. Ah, poor Coralla ! what are you coming to ? what shall I do ? how can I ever endure what these poor creatures have to submit to ? But how can I avoid it ?

And all my forebodings proved too true. It was but a short time before I learned, by the change of treatment I received, that my fatal secret was known. Whether Father Philip had intended to act a friendly part or an unfriendly one I never knew ; whether the Superior had at first supposed me to have an estate in expectation, or to belong to a rich family, and afterwards had ascertained that I was destitute, the fact was, that I was suddenly condemned to the lowest grade in the convent, and required to perform a large share of the most menial and laborious work in the house. With a heavy heart I bowed to my fate ; but the wretchedness which I endured was great indeed. The Superior seemed to be destitute of all compassion—not a sign of commiseration did I perceive in her, and although the nuns had no reason to dislike me, they seldom showed me any sympathy, or appeared to entertain any of the regard for me which I had always supposed was felt by those who called each other “ sisters.”

It is true that they were generally engrossed with their own troubles, for they seemed almost all unhappy, having not found the convent what they had expected to find it, and bitterly repenting that they had ever entered it. Those who had become nuns from choice, had discovered that their ideas of convent life had been entirely erroneous, and that they had been deceived. Such as had been actuated by a desire to gain heaven by a life of self-denial, saw evidence around them that there was very little increase in holiness in their companions, and that the Superior and older nuns were further from the kingdom of God than the innocent and artless novices. The priests who came in to confess them, they found no reason to respect ; and they found themselves becoming less and less content with the tiresome and unintermitting rounds of prayers and ceremonies, and less and less capable of those holy meditations and enjoyments in which they had been taught to expect a state of happiness like that of heaven. In short, they had found themselves to be victims of a gross system of deception, and were in despair, because they knew that escape was impossible.

Those who had families, had the sad reflection to make, that they were separated from them for ever ; and although like other nuns, they had been kept in ignorance of almost every useful kind of knowledge, and often entertained the most erroneous and even childish and ludicrous notions of things in common life outside of the convent walls, they were thoroughly taught enough of the laws of the country and practice towards fugitive nuns, to understand that there was no hope of escape. They knew that the civil laws give

all their support to the priests to secure to them the entire control of the convent and their inmates ; and that the public officers are always ready to assist in re-capturing those who leave their confinement. They are ever ready to raise a hue and cry, and to track, follow, and seize a fugitive nun, wherever she may seek concealment, and for whatever cause she may have fled. They know that they have no friends outside who would dare to concert measures for their safety ; and even if such might exist, forgiving enough to pardon their voluntary abandonment of their parents, brothers sisters, and friends, and daring enough to risk the severe punishment threatened by the laws, who could open correspondence with them ? But there were some of the nuns who had not indeed occasion to reproach themselves with ingratitude towards their parents and other relations ; there were those who had not entered the convent from choice, but had been sent there against their will. Some of them had been inveigled there by false pretences, and then incarcerated at the desire of persons who wished to obtain their property. This is a very common thing, as I have reason to believe, in other parts of Italy, and in all other countries where convents exist. No two cases may be exactly alike ; but many resemble each other in this, that a helpless girl is made the victim of the avarice of some person or persons in or out of the convent. The bishop or other ecclesiastic, secretly ascertains the amount and position of her expected estate, and then resorts to every possible means to obtain it. If she is accessible to the influence of any of his spies or emissaries, he sends to her an insidious agent, in the shape of

a confessor, an applicant for charity, a servant, a teacher of music, a gentleman of pleasing manners, who flatters her with his attentions, or a grave and courteous lady, of middle age, who expresses a great and motherly interest in her trials and her pleasures. She is gradually drawn towards the convent, as a visitor, and there finds impressive scenes prepared for her, which are carefully adapted to her peculiar character or state of mind. She is induced (perhaps as she supposes through mere accident), to witness a procession of nuns proceeding to vespers, at the hour of twilight, through the distant galleries leading to their chapel; or she comes unexpectedly in view of a beautiful young lady at her solitary devotions, before an image of the Virgin, in a lovely attitude, which has been studiously fixed by the Superior, expressly for the occasion; or she *happens* to hold an interview with such a nun, in which the enchanting attractions of convent life are described in terms which she has been taught by heart, for the very purpose of deceiving her, and which are repeated, it may be, under the fear of some severe punishment, and within the hearing of the Superior, or the bishop, or both, concealed behind some of the holy objects around them. If the young heiress is found to be impressed by means like these, she is probably present at the next reception of a nun, when a great public display is made, and everything prepared calculated to make an impressive effect.

## I I I .

Inveigling Girls into Convents—How Friends are Treated who Oppose or Object—  
 Their Characters Aspersed—Business Injured—Imprisoned—Lives Destroyed—  
 Unhappiness of the Nuns in the Convents—Prayer my only Solace—Hopes and  
 Fears for the Future.

IF any friend is likely to oppose obstacles in the way of bringing a victim into a convent, any necessary expedient is resorted to, to prevent and counteract his influence. False reports are raised against a father, an uncle, a brother, or a guardian, by which his character is injured, his business impaired or ruined, his courage is overcome. He is prosecuted for debt, by some one who has lent him money, or made a contract with him for that express purpose ; he is, perhaps, written to from a distance, to make a journey on business, for pleasure, or for the comfort of some person in distress, and is detained or imprisoned far from home ; or wounded or killed on the road. The Inquisition has often given its assistance in cases of this kind ; and the father or friend most disposed to defeat the designs of the rapacious persecutor of a young heiress, has, in many instances, been denounced by an unknown accuser, and then seized at midnight by a band of familiars, "*in the name of the Holy Office,*" put into a secret dungeon, never to be heard of



again, until the sound of the last trumpet. Thousands of such cases have occurred, I have no doubt, in the kingdom of Naples, and in other parts of Italy ; and numbers of our nuns, I had reason to believe, had been brought into the convent by somewhat similar plots. Other objects more nefarious, are certainly very often the motives ; but modesty forbids me to speak of them.

It sometimes happens that more than one person is concerned in the enterprise, who agree and share in the plunder of the property taken from the victim. A priest and a lawyer, or a profligate relation, or family friend, combine their infernal arts, and afterwards divide the spoil. As every nun is required to renounce her worldly possessions, under the fiction of giving herself to the service of God, devoting her life to the saving of her soul, and being “ married to Jesus Christ,” she is regarded by the civil laws of Popish countries, as well as by the canon law of Rome, as having no power to hold property, and her estate goes to her husband—the church. It is taken from her control and possession, and nominally given to the convent, but usually, in whole or in part, in some way or other, is so disposed of, that it passes into the hands of her robbers. When too late, the poor girl, though born and reared in comfort, abundance, or perhaps, in the highest ranks of opulent society, soon finds herself left to sink to the degraded level of common nuns. She may, perhaps, incur the displeasure or dislike of the Superior ; and then woe to her ! She will find she has a tormentor near at hand, with full power to wreak her vengeance on one whom she may hate for her

beauty, or her birth, or the favor temporarily shown her by the bishop, or others in power above her.

But I have dwelt too long on the trials and sorrows of nuns, though I might go on for many hours in recounting the numerous other troubles and wrongs to which they are exposed, varying in a thousand ways, according to cases and circumstances. I saw enough, as I have said before, to be convinced that the poor Ursuline nuns at Punta del Monico were so wretched themselves, that they deserved to be excused for not showing me much sympathy or interest. After the first shock, produced by my change of position in the convent, I began to accommodate myself somewhat to my fate ; and, as I found some of my poor fellow drudges disposed to be kind, and to render me some assistance in my labors, I began to think my life not quite intolerable, though still the most painful that I had any idea of. I had one great relief, being excused from a considerable portion of the prayers, meditations, and other religious exercises to which the other nuns were daily subjected. I had still enough left to occupy a part of my time every day ; and I was permitted to enjoy a release from my domestic labors at fixed hours, in order to perform them. Partly because I then enjoyed repose from severe and often disgusting work, and partly because I had quietness, and opportunity for prayer, I really enjoyed some of these exercises ; and I now look back upon the time I then spent in the chapel, as the only moments when I had any peace or pleasure. I was impressed with deep melancholy by my loneliness, friendlessness, and helplessness ; and felt that I had no help or hope in this world.

All around me were destitute of disposition or ability to make me happy ; and the ideas I had of God, imperfect as they were, inclined me to seek his protection and hope in his mercy. I was taught to offer petitions to the saints, especially to the Holy Virgin and St. Ursula, the patron of our convent and order ; but I felt that the Almighty must be my great reliance ; and it strengthened and encouraged me to think of his power and will to help and save.

I sometimes dwelt so much upon the uncertainty of my birth and family, that I found myself forming conjectures about my parents and relatives, and indulging hopes, and even expectations, of some day having the mystery solved. I would imagine that some happy circumstance had brought it to light, that all was explained, and that my parents presented themselves and claimed me as their child ; or, that I sought and found them, and was acknowledged with joy, and received with a warm welcome into a happy family circle. Love, such as I imagined that of a daughter and a mother, was what I longed for, and prized more highly than any other good ; and my ardent desire for it led me into many reveries. They were, however, by no means, always of the agreeable kind which I have mentioned. I more frequently anticipated the sorrows of a long life of friendless orphanage, of which I had already had so bitter experience. And the worst of my forebodings I think I often realized ; for my labors were unintermitted from morning till the hour of "*Ave Maria* ;" and I daily suffered harsh treatment from the Superior, and some of the nuns ; and the contempt and arrogance of the priests. When exhausted, as I often was at the close

of day, by my severe toils, and desponding under the load of sad reflections which usually burdened my heart, I often felt that I had not a ray of hope to cheer me, and was glad to sink to sleep, that I might find a temporary relief in unconsciousness.

I must here, however, particularly mention a chief source of my wretchedness, which was altogether mental, and which would have been quite as severe, I have no doubt, if I had been situated in more agreeable circumstances in other respects ; at least, during so much of my time as I should allow my thoughts to dwell upon it. This was the dread of purgatory. It may be that some Roman Catholics may view that awful place differently from myself, though I cannot understand how any person who believes in it can possibly endure to think about it. For my own part, I often had before me the dread of the terrible pains which all must suffer there after death. I had great horror at the thought at previous times, but then I was not able to avoid, so much as before, to think of them. In those days, having very little opportunity to converse, as our time of silence was strictly observed in the nunnery, I had no way to divert my mind from the dreadful topic ; and I often spent a great part of the day in fancying that I was actually in the midst of the flames of purgatory.

## I V.

Frightful Pictures—Souls in Purgatory—The Impressions they make on Children—  
Dread of Purgatory—Culpability of Parents in sending Daughters to Nunneries.

YOU have, I presume, somewhere seen the pictures of Hell and Purgatory. They are shown, I believe, at some time or other, to every child who is taught by nuns or priests ; and I am sure that the sight can never be forgotten during one's life. The horrible faces and writhing forms of the souls in purgatory, as they were painted in our Convent pictures, were frequently before my eyes, as, indeed, they now appear to be. I know not how it is in Catholic countries generally, but in those parts of Italy which I have seen, pictures of the souls in purgatory are daubed on the walls of the hermitages, churches, and the corners of streets—wherever the monks and priests take their stations, whose business it is to ask for contributions to pay for masses and prayers, to be offered for the shortening of the terrors of the wretched sufferers who have not finished the period required to purge them from their criminality. I presume that the frequency of such pictures so habituates the people to the subject, that they lose much of the horror with which I was so long overwhelmed, by the impressions of the few,

but well-executed paintings of purgatory which I occasionally saw, and the absence of other things to divert my mind from them.

I might go on and enlarge much more on my sufferings in the convent, and the causes and aggravations of them, but I must pass to other topics, after expressing my feelings on one subject on which I often have made solemn reflections. I have often felt the strongest desire to remonstrate with parents, and especially mothers, on the injustice and cruelty of sending their daughters to nunneries. Could they see what I have seen, they never would take such a step ; could they have felt what I have heard others express, and what I have known by my own experience, nothing on earth could ever induce one of them to permit a child so much as to approach a convent, or hold any intercourse with the priests or their emissaries, who go about to inveigle the inexperienced and unsuspecting. Many a fond parent, who has a daughter in a convent, deceives herself with the hope that her child is happy, in the enjoyment of a holy seclusion, safe from the temptations and dangers of the world. She confides in the promises made, and the assurances given, thinking that all must be right, and that everything is as it seems. How sad is generally the reverse, how different is the tale which the poor girl would tell, if allowed, as she ought to be, to speak the truth freely ! I was, by no means, the only melancholy and broken-hearted nun at Punta del Monaco. Others were sad and gloomy ; in fact, it was rare in that convent, as I believe it is in all others, to find any of the inmates

cheerful, or to see a smile, except those affected ones which are put on by some in the presence of visitors. Under the strict rules for the occupation of time, the forced silence during most of the hours when the nuns are assembled for work, at meals, &c., and the system of mutual espionage, and prevailing suspicion of each other, there is but little opportunity for any one to become acquainted with the real feelings of her companions. I know enough, however, to be assured that the convent was a place of misery, a perfect prison, and house of punishment, and I might say of torture, moral and mental. So I am sure almost every nun would have declared, if allowed the freedom of speech ; and I am confident that every one would have been glad to leave it in a moment, if she had known of any place of refuge, and secured from the dreadful severity of the laws, which, to the imagination of the poor, timid nun, always hang, like a dark thunder-cloud, all round the convent outside of the walls. And to her everything beyond is gloom, danger, and fear. Her friends, if she ever had any, she has renounced, or they have renounced her ; and there is not a ray of hope, not a way of escape, or a place of refuge on earth. }

How wonderful, it has seemed to me, that friends, and especially parents, do not duly consider this, before they place young girls in convents, or allow them to be exposed to be inveigled into them ! If I could speak with any who contemplate such a step, I am sure I could persuade them to abandon so foolish, so unnatural, so ruinous an intention. I could tell them truths which they could not resist, and give them reasons which they could not withstand. To go

further than I have yet gone, I could tell mothers what I can only intimate to others. I could show them that their daughters would be exposed to any treatment to which the men who have control within the walls might choose to subject them, and those men, often the most degraded and vicious of the human race, trained to iniquity, accustomed to hear sin justified by false reasoning under the cloak of religion, and encouraged by the general example of others, and emboldened by the entire secrecy which they can draw around them. Such are bishops and priests ; and, as they have power to remove and replace the Superiors of convents, and control over the old nuns, who are the officers under her, there is nothing wanting to render a nunnery, such as I have known, not only an unfit place for a virtuous young woman, but the most unfit on earth. O parents ! parents ! How can you be so blind to the worst enemies of your daughters ? } *Remember.*



## V.

Ciporatello—His equivocal Position in the Convent—An accidental Discovery—  
Forced to leave the Convent at Midnight—My life threatened—The Cave of the  
Sea-wolf—Description of it—My Life there—Its Advantages and Dangers.

THERE was an old man who lived in the convent, who had the care of the garden, and was often in the kitchen, having but little real business or labor of any kind. He had resided there long before my acquaintance with the convent, and, after I had been there several years, was taken sick and died. Another man, much younger, was soon put in his place, who appeared to me of a doubtful character. There was something sinister in his aspect, and his behavior excited suspicion in me that he was not worthy to be trusted. Yet I had never seen anything in his conduct that was positively wrong, and I sometimes thought my dislike of him might perhaps be unjust. As I was required to spend much of my time in the convent kitchen in the long winter evenings, I saw more of Ciporatello than I wished; but although he probably had long been watching for an opportunity to commit some depredation, he had so much concealment, that I never suspected him of having laid a daring plot, in which I

afterwards found, to my surprise, that I was to be an unwilling associate.

It happened, by some accident, that I opened the door into the court-yard, one night, at a very late hour, when everything was quiet, and I supposed no one was awake. To my surprise, I discovered Ciporatello, in the act of breaking open a box containing a large sum of money belonging to the convent, of which he obtained possession. Seeing me appear, he told me that I must on no account make any noise, threatening me if I dared even to speak a word. He said he was resolved to leave the convent after getting the money, and that I must accompany him. He would not leave me behind, because I would certainly be a witness against him. Then, as soon as he had opened the box and taken possession of the contents, which he put into his pockets, he took me with a strong grasp, led me to the wall of the yard, where he had hung a rope-ladder from the top, and insisted on my climbing up and passing over and down into the street. Although I objected and resisted as much as I dared, he succeeded, partly by lifting and pulling me, and partly by threats of killing me, in getting me up the ladder and down on the opposite side.

On reaching the ground he peremptorily commanded me to hasten away without a moment's delay, and I could do nothing but obey, for he was excited in a high degree, and I had no doubt that he would sooner murder me than leave me behind him alive, to bear witness against him in case of his arrest, of which he evidently was in the utmost fear. We hurried along through the darkness, by a rough and

rocky way, until we reached a wild and solitary spot on the sea-shore, when I found we were at the entrance of a cavern, called the Grotta della Ungria Marina, or Cave of the Sea-wolf; and there he insisted that I should enter and remain. No objections that I would make, no petitions that I would offer had the least effect upon him. He ordered me to go in, and I was compelled to obey. He threatened me again, in order to make me keep close, but told me that he had no wish to do me any harm, and that I might rely on his taking care of me, if I would avoid observation, and do nothing to betray his retreat. He knew that a strict search would be made for him, as soon as his absence should be ascertained, and the robbery of the chest discovered, and that, if arrested, he would find no mercy. He knew that I had much reason also to fear for myself, because appearances were very strong against me, and I could have no assurance that I should not be condemned and punished with him, in spite of any protestations I might make of my innocence. In truth, this was so evident to me, and I was so much affected by the fear of punishment on the one hand, and by the desire of liberty on the other, that I was willing, after recovering a little from my agitation, to promise him to keep close in the cave, and to use every precaution against our mutual exposure.

Ciporatello was as good as his word in providing for my subsistence, and in treating me with kindness. He proved that he was well acquainted with the neighboring parts of the island, and knew where to procure necessary food without exposing himself to detection. He went away and

returned before daylight, and brought back a supply of provisions, which he shared with me, and allowed me to leave the cave and go to a short distance whenever he thought it prudent, keeping a strict watch to prevent my exposing myself, except when assured beforehand that no stranger was in the vicinity. He always took the utmost caution also in surveying the neighborhood before he ventured out himself; and I had no doubt that he used great sagacity in all his excursions, though I was not able to learn whither he went, or of whom he obtained the various articles with which he returned. I know he had money enough to last a long time if he purchased them at the low prices current on that rude and lonely island; and I was suspicious that he had some accomplice not far off, with whom he might be engaged in crimes, and a partner in these and other ill-gotten gains. However, these were merely conjectures, of which I had no direct confirmation. My subsequent acquaintance with him convinced me that he was experienced in crime, and that he was capable of any wickedness when stimulated by necessity, though by no means destitute of natural good feelings when circumstances allowed them uninterrupted action.

I soon learned that we had a safe retreat, and that we might probably long remain undisturbed in the Sea-wolf's cavern, unless some very extraordinary misfortune should befall us. The few fishermen who visited that retired part of the island, seemed to feel no interest in our wild and secluded nook, and perhaps shunned it on account of some of those superstitious fears with which such persons are often

influenced. I enjoyed myself in some respects very highly, being exempt from labor and care, and freed from the presence of my late companions in the Punta del Monico, whose walls I had often longed to be removed from for ever. The pleasure I daily derived from my deliverance from them, and the labors and discipline to which I had so long been subject, was greater than I could express. Being so near the water, on which I could gaze in peace, I spent much of my time in the open air, meditating as I pleased, under the clear and mild sky of that delightful climate. The weather is so temperate, even in winter, that fire-places are never to be seen in the houses, not even in the vast luxurious city of Naples, which is in sight from the island of Capri. Of course, I had no suffering from cold to endure, or to apprehend; and in storms or hot weather in summer, I had an excellent shelter to retreat to, in my wild and lonely cavern.

## VI.

Ciporatello's Disappearance—My Danger and Projects—Departure from Capri—  
 Naples — Caserta — Capua — Arrested — Imprisonment — Release—Sufferings—  
 Onofrio—His Kindness—Life with my New Friends—Ciporatello Appears—  
 Wandering Life—Appeal to Mothers against Convents.

AND thus I remained, not without some fears of discovery, arrest and punishment, or at least of being taken back to the convent, until almost three months had passed, when I was suddenly left alone, without any warning, and without being able to divine the reason. Ciporatello went away one evening as usual, without giving me any intimation of his intentions, or even of the direction of his excursion ; and I remained, as usual, quietly expecting his return the next day. But the sun rose and set, and I saw nothing of him. The following day and the next passed, without any news of him ; and then I began to feel anxious. While a stock of provisions remained, I felt no great anxiety, but as it soon grew small, my apprehensions were seriously excited, and I began to ask myself how I should avoid dying of hunger. There were fish in the sea which washed the rocks near the mouth of the cavern ; but Ciporatello had seldom made any attempt to catch them, and then had but little success ; and, while I feared to

expose myself to observation by appearing on the shore, I had no skill in fishing, and could not expect to obtain my livelihood in that way. The barren rocks around me yielded no vegetables fit for food, and I feared to approach any inhabited part of the island, lest I should be seized and taken back to the convent. I therefore felt greatly at a loss, and remained in the cave as long as I could make my provisions hold out : but I at length found it necessary to go somewhere in search of food, or starve on the spot. Although the dread of the convent was before me, I reflected that I had some prospect of escaping from the island without detection or even suspicion. My clothes had long since been changed : for, while Ciporatello had plenty of money, he had been liberal with it, and had purchased for me a supply of such garments as I wished, so that I was now able to dress myself like the women of the island, without wearing any mark of a nun. I had also a little money, with which I might buy food enough for at least a short time ; and, what to me appeared a thousand times more important, I might pay my passage to Naples, or to some nearer part of the coast, in one of the little boats which daily sail to different points, to carry fish and other articles from Capri to market.

I proceeded accordingly, dressed myself in such a manner as best suited to my object, destroyed every remnant of what I did not need, took with me the few articles I had in the world, especially every *grano* of my little store of money, and took leave of the only home of my own that I had ever possessed, not without regret and many fears and

sad forebodings. I cautiously passed along the way that I thought most distant from the convent, and at length entered a small village, where I assumed as much as possible an air of indifference and familiarity, resolving to speak as little as possible on any subject that might excite curiosity, and, as soon as possible, to find a boat and leave the island. Being a native of the place, I had no fear of attracting attention by any peculiarity of dialect, which in Italy often distinguishes the inhabitants of different parts of the country, and even those of adjoining districts and villages ; and I was fortunately successful in my plan ; for after a little conversation with a few persons, I found a boat ready to sail for Naples, and was soon on board. The fishermen, at the signal of the master, raised their sails, we had a favorable wind, and away we flew, over the beautiful Bay of Naples. Such boats I had often admired from a distance, as they have long, white, curving sails like birds : but I felt far happier at being carried by one of them away from the place where I had suffered so much and so long, than I had ever done in allowing them pass and repass the island.

As we proceeded, the city of Naples rose before us ; and I was filled with fears at the thought of entering such a great city as a perfect stranger. I had heard many tales of crimes committed there, and shrunk from approaching it. But when I reflected that I was now far from any enemies, and could not meet with worse treatment than I had experienced in the convent, I felt more reconciled ; and, on reaching the shore, landed and walked up the first street,



with affected indifference, as if I were an inhabitant, and proceeding to my home.

I shall now pass over a long period of my life with a few lines. I remained but a short time in Naples, indeed I rather passed through the city, having a longing desire to find some retired place in the country, as the crowd, noise and confusion of such a city appeared to me intolerable. This may have been owing to my habits of seclusion. I took the road to Capua, and walked alone along the way through several villages and between open fields, where the poor peasants were employed at their labors among the vineyards, gardens, and flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle. I shall not stop to speak of the king's splendid palace at Caserta, which I passed, or its beautiful gardens, which extend for several miles. The contrast between such magnificence and my own lonely, friendless and hopeless condition sadly impressed my heart. I walked on unnoticed, and unknown, until I had passed by the immense walls of white marble, and the green groves, flower-beds, fountains, parterres, and artificial rivers and waterfalls, which appeared beyond the garden-fences, directing my steps towards the hills before me, which appeared pleasant and retired, among which I saw the ruins of the ancient and long deserted city of Capua. At the foot of the high ground was the modern city of the same name, which I was approaching when I was accosted by a man, who asked me several questions, and then told me to follow him, for I was a prisoner. To my dismay I found that I had been suspected, for some reason or other, as a fugitive nun ; and now was in the

power of the very enemies from whom I had supposed myself safe. As I intended to speak only of the convent, and have already extended my narrative to a greater length than I intended, I must dismiss the remainder of my long history in a few words. I was taken back to Naples, shut up in a prison, brought before judges whom I did not know, confronted with some of the old nuns brought from the convent, who recognized and reviled me, and then, without a friend or counsellor, I was condemned to imprisonment for ten years !

The next thing I knew, I awoke, as it were, in a small and solitary prison, where, without comfort, friend, or hope, I remained what seemed like a century. At length, however, I was released, and came again to see the clear light of day, and the faces of my fellow-creatures. The crowds of Naples were around me, my ears were stunned by the confusion of the city, my eyes stared wildly about, and it was long before I could collect my bewildered senses. I had kept no account of time, but afterwards learned that I had completed the term of my sentence—“ *Imprisonment for ten years !*”

The first return of real consciousness was caused by the distressing sensation of extreme hunger. I found myself one day near the shore of the Bay of Naples, in a spot where fishermen occasionally passed. There I sat, too feeble and wretched to move, and not knowing where to turn, recalling some confused recollections of my life, when a poor man approached me, and with the first expressions of gentleness ever addressed to me, inquired whether I was in

want. How to reply I scarce knew, so unaccustomed had I been to kindness, and so strongly was I impressed by a look of compassion and a word of sympathy. He soon learned that I was in want, extreme want. In fact I must have been near death from starvation ; my state of mind having been such, ever since my release, as to draw off my thoughts even from hunger itself, and my long habits in the prison having accustomed me to depend entirely on my jailor for my daily supplies.

The good man tied his mule, took his two little children from the baskets or panniers which hung from his saddle, and then kindling a fire of sticks, on the beach, took several little fish from a stock which he was carrying to Naples to sell, cleaned and cooked them in a few minutes, and brought them to me with a piece of coarse bread. He bade me to be of good cheer, said he would not leave me to suffer, but take care that I should not want. My hopes began to revive, I felt a glow of gratitude to my new friend which I had never experienced before—alas ! for the want of all occasion for it ; and I partook of the food which he had kindly prepared, with a relish of the highest kind. I gave him a brief account of my life, to which he listened with an expression of sincere sympathy ; and he then told me his own story in few words.

His name was Onofrio ; he was a native of Tuscany ; and this immediately accounted to me for some remarkable peculiarities which I had noticed in his language. He had been for some years a fisherman on the shores of the Bay of Naples, having married a poor woman of that vicinity,

who had died some time before, leaving the two little children, whom he usually took with him when he went to the city. He told me that if I would accompany him and take care of his little ones, to whom he was affectionately devoted, he would provide for me, and be my protector. I accepted his kind invitation, and, under his care, my strength returned and my health improved, and I was soon able to relieve him of the cares of his little family. The children easily learned to love me, and I began to think myself the happiest person I had ever known. Onofrio was poor, but industrious and economical, and always had bread enough for us all, with a supply of fish always ready. A few *grani* or even *carlines* were always at my service if I needed anything for the children or myself, for he usually had a little treasure laid up, amounting to several *pezzi duri*, or hard dollars.

But a sad reverse one day overtook me. I was passing in a street in Naples among a number of persons, when I was rudely accosted by a rough man, wretchedly clad, who seemed to recognize me. He had a sinister expression of countenance which was quite repulsive, yet there was something in his voice and aspect which seemed familiar to me.

"Don't you know me?" said he, in a rough, though suppressed tone.

In a moment I shrunk back, perceiving that he was Ciporatello. He informed me that he had undergone many sufferings since we last met, that he had been driven to commit robbery by want, arrested and imprisoned, and after a long time released. He was now in the utmost

danger of detection for other crimes, and especially feared to be recognized and punished for robbing the convent. He begged me not to betray him, which I solemnly promised ; and he then seemed about to leave me, when observing that I was in company with Onofrio, he, with his usual sagacity, immediately saw that he could gain some advantage from it, and he asked for money. Onofrio gave him a little ; but he desired more ; and, calling me aside, began to threaten that unless I would give him five *pezzi duri* he would have me arrested and imprisoned, and accuse me of robbing the convent. I did not stop to tell him that I had already suffered a long and terrible punishment for that crime of his own, fearing that he would invent some worse way of injuring me. I knew that, when in real distress, he was like a mad-man, and therefore desired to pacify him by supplying his pressing wants. Poor Onofrio, on my earnest request, gave him the five dollars, which was the whole of his store ; and we were happily rid of the dreadful Ciporatello. He, however, made his appearance some weeks after, when he renewed his threats, and obtained another supply of money. I then proposed to Onofrio to leave him and seek a subsistence I knew not where, to prevent his being thus robbed in future ; but he would by no means allow me to go, and adopted a roving life to avoid the search of Ciporatello. We accordingly abandoned the poor, but to me pleasant little habitation we had occupied near the shore, packed all the household establishment on the back of the mule, having room enough for a good load of fish in the panniers, and letting the children trot and play along by

our side, daily moved from one lonely spot to another, sleeping in the open air in clear weather, which, in that mild climate, is comfortable during a large part of the year, and living as before, on the products of the fishery, procured by Onofrio.

Ah! How well it might be for many innocent and lovely girls, if their guardians, or at least their mothers, but knew as well as I do the immense difference there is between the purity of character, the sincerity of affection, the truth, honor and real nobility which are found in the family circles, even of the poorest and humblest ranks of society, and the false, hypocritical, hard-headed, and cruel tyrants who rule in those misnamed abodes of religion,—convents! { Is there not some way in which my sorrowful story may become known? are there not some means by which at least one innocent young girl may be saved from the snares into which so many fall? Ah! I have not told the worst. The crimes, the shameful crimes of the priests, modesty forbids me to tell. I would go to the ends of the earth, and incur any amount of trial and persecution, to rescue one victim from my ancient enemies. They are the enemies of the human race—the deadly enemies of woman! The Bishops, Priests, Superiors and other tyrants like them establish convents for themselves, and then they rule, oppress and destroy. Oh! if but one of my own sex could be saved from a fate like the fate of thousands, I should feel some reason to rejoice in the name and the story of CORALLA. }

## CHAPTER V.

The Passion of the Superior—The “Forsaken” Nun—“Veni Creator”—Alive in a Coffin—“Requiescat in Pace”—“The Apostate”—Semi-starvation—The Stolen Portrait—More Persecutions—Pious Lies—A Nocturnal Visit—Refined Cruelty—The Bitterness of Death Anticipated—The Nun—Fiends.

I WILL now resume the thread of my own narrative. I replied to my hypocritical and tyrannical Superior with a great deal of moderation, though it was not what my heart suggested. My answer threw her into a state of violent agitation; she turned pale; she wished to speak, but her lips trembled, and she did not know what to say to me. I walked at a quick pace backward and forward across my cell, and she cried out:

“O Heaven, what will our sisters say? O, look down upon her with an eye of pity. Sister ——”

“Madam?”

“Is this, then, the part which you are to act? You mean to disgrace us, to render us the subject of common talk, and to become the object of it yourself—to ruin yourself?”

“I mean to go out of this place.”

“But if it is only the house with which you are displeased”——

“It is the house, it is my condition, it is the convent ; I will not be confined either here or elsewhere.”

“Child, you are possessed with the devil ; it is he who agitates you, who makes you speak so, who distracts you ; it is an absolute truth ; see in what a state you are !”

In fact, I viewed myself, and I saw that my robe was all in disorder, that my neckerchief was almost turned round, and that my veil had fallen back upon my shoulders. My patience was quite wearied out with the talk of this wicked Superior, who had always spoken to me in a mild, deceitful tone, and I said to her in indignation, “No, Madam, no ; I wish no more of this clothing, I’ll have no more of it.” In the meanwhile I attempted to adjust my veil ; but from the tremor of my hands, the more I attempted to put it right, the worse I made it, till at last, out of all patience, I seized it with violence, tore it away, and threw it upon the ground, remaining in the presence of my Superior, with all my hair dishevelled. In doubt whether she ought to stay, she walked about, saying :

“O Heaven, she is possessed ; it is an absolute fact, she is possessed !”

And the hypocrite, at the same time, crossed herself with her rosary. It was not long before I came to myself ; I felt the indecency of my situation, and the imprudence of my discourse ; I took up my veil and put it on ; then turning to her, I said, “Madam, I am neither mad nor possessed. I am ashamed of my violence and I ask your pardon ; but judge from this circumstance how ill the religious state becomes me, and how much I am justified to



withdraw from it if I can." Without attending to me she repeated :

"What will the world say? What will our sisters say?"

"Madam," said I to her, "do you wish to avoid an exposure? there is one way of doing it. I only ask my liberty. I do not desire you to open the gates to me, but take care only that to day, to-morrow, or the day after, they may be ill guarded, and do not discover my escape till as late as possible."

"Wretch! how dare you make such a proposal as this to me?"

"It is advice which a wise and good Superior ought to follow, with respect to those for whom a convent is a prison, and it is one to me; if the laws to which I have appealed disappoint my expectation, and if, urged by the pangs of despair with which I am already but too well acquainted—there are windows in the house—there are walls before me—I have a robe which I can tear in pieces—I have hands which I can use."

"Stop, wretch! you make me tremble, what! you can"——

"I can, on failure of the means of putting a sudden end to the evils of life, refuse nourishment; we may eat and drink or not, as we please. If it should happen after what I have told you, that I should have the courage, and you know in this I am not deficient, and that it requires more sometimes to support life than to encounter death; tell me, conceiving yourself at the judgment-seat of Heaven, whether you or I would appear in its sight the most guilty? Madam,

I desire nothing to be returned, I never will require anything from the house, only spare me a crime and spare yourself the cause of long remorse ; let us concert together."

"Do you believe, Sister ——, that I can fail in my first duty, that I can be a party to crime, that I can take a share in sacrilege?"

"It is I, Madam, who am guilty of sacrilege every day, in profaning by contempt the sacred habit which I wear. Take it from me, I am unworthy of it ; send me out into the village in quest of the rags which cover the poorest person ; let the door of the cloister be opened for my escape."

"And where will you go in order to be better?"

"I know not where I shall go, but evil is confined to those situations in which Heaven does not intend that we should live ; and it never intended that I should live in this convent."

"You have nothing."

"True, but poverty is not what I fear most."

"Dread the evil to which it leads."

"The past is my guarantee for the future ; had I wished to listen to criminal solicitations, I should now have been at liberty. But if I am to get out of this house, it shall be either with your consent or by the authority of the laws. Take your choice."

This conversation lasted for a considerable time. When I recollected what had passed, I blushed at the imprudent and ridiculous things I had done and said ; but it was too late. The Superior was still repeating her exclamations :

“What will the world say? what will our sisters say?”

When the clock, which summoned us to service, reminded us to separate. She said to me at parting :

“Sister ——, you are going to church ; pray Heaven to sanctify you, and to give you the spirit of your condition ; ask your conscience, and believe its dictates ; it is impossible but it must reproach you. I dispense with your singing.”

We went down almost together. Service began. When it was finished, all the sisters were about to separate ; she struck the breviary with her hand and stopped them.

“My sisters,” said she to them, “I desire that you will throw yourselves at the foot of the altar, and implore the mercy of Heaven for a nun whom it has forsaken, who has lost the spirit of devotion, all taste for the exercise of religion, and who is on the point of committing an action, sacrilegious in the sight of Heaven, and disgraceful in the eyes of man.”

I cannot paint to you the general surprise ; in an instant every one, without stirring, looked round at the countenances of her companions, expecting to see the guilty person betrayed by her embarrassment. They all prostrated themselves, and prayed in silence. After a very considerable space of time, the Superior thundered, in a bass voice, the “*Veni Creator*,” in which she was followed by the rest in the same tone. After a second interval of silence, she knocked upon her desk, and they all went out.

You may easily suppose the murmurs which were created in the community.

“Who is this? What has she done? What does she intend to do?”

These doubts were not of long duration. My application was beginning to make a noise in the world. I received endless visitors, some bringing me reproaches, others advice; I had the approbation of some and the censure of others. I had only one way of justifying myself in the view of all, by informing them of the treatment I had received; and you may conceive what management was necessary upon this point. There were only a few persons who continued sincerely attached to me beside Mr. —, to whom I had committed my case, and to whom I had entirely disclosed my sentiments. When I was afraid of the torments with which I was menaced, and when the dungeon into which I had been once dragged represented all its horrors to my imagination (for I always knew the fury of the nuns), I communicated my fears to Mr. —, who said to me:

“It is impossible for you to avoid every species of punishment, and you must lay your account with them; all that you can do is to arm yourself with patience, and to support them in the hopes of their termination. As for the dungeon, I promise you that you shall never return thither; I will take care of that.”

In fact, he brought an order to the Superior in a few days to bring me forth as often as she should be required. Next morning after service I was recommended to the public prayers of the community; they prayed in silence, and repeated the same hymn in a low voice that they had chanted the preceding night. The same ceremony was per-

formed on the third day, with this difference, that they ordered me to place myself in the middle of the choir, while they recited the prayers for the dying, and the litanies. The fourth day there occurred a piece of mummery which strongly remarked the capricious character of the Superior. At the conclusion of the service, they made me lie down in coffin, which was set in the middle of the choir. She set candlesticks by my side, with a pot of holy water; they covered me with a napkin, and recited the service of the dead; after which every nun in passing threw some holy water upon me, saying, at the same time, "*Requiescat in pace.*" It is necessary to understand the language of the convent, in order fully to comprehend the sort of menace contained in these last words. Two of the nuns took off the napkin, put out the candles, and left me drenched to the skin with the water which they had maliciously sprinkled upon me. My clothes dried upon me, as I had not any others to change them. This mortification was followed by another. The community was assembled; they considered me as a reprobate. My conduct was treated as apostasy, and all the nuns were prohibited on pain of disobedience to speak to me, to assist me, to come near me, or even to touch the things I used. These orders were rigorously executed. Our passages were so narrow that in some places two persons could scarcely pass abreast. If I met any of the nuns, they either returned, or stood close with their backs to the wall, holding their veils and their clothes for fear they should touch mine. If they had anything to receive from me, I put it upon the ground, and they took

hold of it with a cloth ; if they had anything to give me, they threw it at me. If they were unfortunate enough to touch me, they believed themselves polluted, and they went to confess, and to get absolution from the Superior. It has been said that flattery is mean and contemptible ; it is also extremely cruel and very ingenious when it proposes to please by the mortifications which it invents. I was deprived of all employment as unworthy. At church they left a pew empty on each side of that which I occupied. I sat at table alone in the hall. They would not serve me ; I was under the necessity of going to the kitchen to ask for my allowance ; the first time I did so, Sister Cook called out to me :

“ Do not come here.” I obeyed her. “ What do you want ?”

“ Food.”

“ Food ! you do not deserve to live.”

Sometimes I returned, and spent the day without nourishment ; sometimes I urged my demand, till at last they would place upon the threshold meat which it would have been shameful to have offered to a dog ; I wept while I took it up and went away. If at any time I happened to arrive last at the door of the choir, I found it shut ; I knelt down on my knees, and there waited the conclusion of the service. My strength declining from the little nourishment I received, from the bad quality of what I partook, and still more, from the difficulty with which I endured so many reiterated marks of inhumanity, I felt that if I persisted in suffering without complaint, I should never see my suit

brought to a conclusion. I resolved, therefore, to speak to the Superior. Although half dead with terror, I went and knocked at her door. She opened it, and seeing me, shruok back several steps, saying, "Apostate begone." I withdrew. I returned once more.

"What do you want?"

"Since neither God nor man has condemned me to die, I request, Madam, that you would give orders that I should be supplied with the means of supporting life."

"Life!" said she, repeating the observation of the cook, "are you worthy to enjoy that blessing?"

"Heaven alone knows that, but I warn you, if nourishment is denied me, I shall be compelled to carry my complaints to those who have taken me under their protection. Here I remain only as a deposit, till my fortune and my state be decided."

"Begone," said she; "do not pollute me with the sight of you; I shall attend to your request."

I went away and she shut the door after me with violence. She probably gave orders, but I was treated with hardly any more attention. They deemed it a merit to disobey her; they continued to send me the coarsest victuals, and they would even render them more disgusting by mixing them with ashes, and every species of filth.

Such was the life I led while my suit was pending. I was not entirely discharged from appearing in the parlor; they could not deprive me of the liberty of conferring with my judges and with my advocate, although the latter was often obliged to employ threats to obtain an interview with

me. Even then I was attended by one of the sisters, who complained if I spoke low, raged if I stayed too long, interrupted, contradicted me, gave me the lie, repeated to the Superior my conversation, altered its import, misrepresented its tendency, and, perhaps, imputed to me language which I had never employed. They even went so far as to rob me ; to strip me of everything I possessed ; to carry off my chairs, my coverlids, and my quilt. I received no more clean linen, my clothes were in tatters, and I was almost destitute of shoes and stockings. I had the utmost difficulty to procure a little water, and often have been obliged to bring it from the well which I have already mentioned ; they broke my utensils, till at last I was obliged to drink the water I had drawn, without the possibility of conveying it to my apartment. If I passed under the windows, I was forced to run or expose myself to the insults with which I was assailed from the cells. Some of the sisters have even spit in my face. I became careless of my person to a degree that rendered me hideous. As they were apprehensive of the complaints I might make to our directors, I was prohibited from confession. One great festival day, I believe it was that of the Ascension, they contrived to derange the lock of my door. I could not appear at mass, and perhaps should have been absent from all the other services, had I not received a visit from Mr. —, whom they told at first that they knew not what was become of me, that I was no longer fit to be seen, and that I performed no action which christianity required. After a great deal of trouble, however, I removed the lock, and repaired to the door of the choir,



which I found shut, as usually happened when I did not arrive among the first. I then laid down upon the ground with my head and back leaning against one of the walls, my arms across my breast, while the rest of my body extended closed up the passage. When the service ended and the nuns presented themselves in order to retire, the first stopped short, the rest followed immediately behind her. The Superior suspected the matter, and said :

“ Walk over her, it is nothing but a dead body.”

Some of them obeyed and trod upon me, others were less inhuman ; but none of them ventured to offer their hand to raise me up. During my absence, they had carried off from my cell my little prayer desk, the portrait of our foundress, the rest of the pious images, and the crucifix ; I had nothing left, but that which I carried at my rosary, and this, too, I was not long allowed to preserve. I then lived between four bare walls, in a room without a door or without a chair to sit down upon, standing, or stretched on a pallet of straw, deprived of the most necessary utensils, and therefore compelled to go out by night, while next day I was accused of disturbing the repose of the house, of wandering about, and reproached with having lost my understanding. As my cell was now unlocked, they would enter tumultuously during the night ; they shouted, displaced my bed, broke windows, and did everything which could inspire me with affright. The noise seemed to mount up, and then to descend, and and those who were not in the plot said that strange things passed in my apartment ; that they had heard dismal sounds, cries, clanking of chains ; that I held converse with ghosts

and wicked spirits ; that I must needs have made a covenant with Satan, and that it was high time to leave the part of the house where I lived. There are in every community a number of weak heads ; they even compose a majority. They believed every word they heard, were afraid to pass my door ; their perturbed imaginations represented my form to them as hideous and frightful ; when they chanced to meet me they made the sign of cross, and retired with the utmost speed crying, " Away from me, Satan ! Oh, Heaven, come to my aid !" One of the youngest happening to be at the bottom of the passage, I was advancing to her, and there being no possibility of avoiding me, she was seized with the utmost fright ; first she turned to the wall, muttering in a tremulous tone, " Oh, Heaven, Heaven ! Jesus ! Mary !" I continued to advance. When she perceived that I was near her, she covered her face with her hands, and springing forward, precipitated herself into my arms, exclaiming, " I am lost ! Sister Saint ——, do not hurt me ! have pity upon me !" And with these words, she dropped half dead upon the floor. Her cries assembled a number of the sisters, she was carried away, and it is impossible for me to describe how this accident was misrepresented. Were I to pursue the detail of my persecutions, my story would never end. Ah ! you who have children of your own, learn from my fate the sufferings you prepare for them if you permit them to embrace the life of a nun. How unjust, how inconsistent is the conduct of people in the world ! A girl is allowed to dispose of her liberty at an age when she would not be allowed to dispose of a dollar. Put your daughter to

death rather than imprison her in a cloister against her inclinations, put her to death without hesitation. How often have I wished that my mother had stifled me at my birth. Could you seriously believe that I was deprived of my breviary, and forbidden to pray to Heaven? You may well imagine that I did not obey this injunction. Alas! it was the only consolation I possessed. I would raise my hands to Heaven—I breathed the accents of suffering, and I ventured to hope that they were heard by the only being who witnessed the whole extent of my misery. They listened at my door, and one day when I was praying in the anguish of my heart, and imploring Divine assistance, they said to me, “You implore the Deity in vain; die, desperate wretch, and be lost for ever.” Others added, “Amen; such be the lot of the apostate; Amen, such be hers!”

But the following is an incident that you will deem more extraordinary than any other. I cannot determine whether it was the effect of malice or of illusion. The circumstance, however, was this:—Although no part of my conduct discovered a disordered mind, much less a mind possessed by the infernal spirit, they held a deliberation whether it was not necessary to exorcise me, and by a plurality of voices they concluded that I had renounced my baptism, that I was possessed by the demon, and that his influence estranged me from divine services. Another added, that at certain prayers I gnashed my teeth, shuddered in the church, and twisted my arms during the elevation of the Holy Sacrament. According to some, I trampled upon the cross, no

longer carried my rosary (which by the way they had stolen), and used blasphemies too dreadful to be repeated. All agreed that there was something unnatural about me, of which the ——— must be apprised. This was accordingly done.

The ——— was Mr. ———, a man of age and experience, blunt in his character, but just and enlightened. He was informed in full detail of the disorder which prevailed in the house ; certain it is, that it was not inconsiderable, and that if the cause could be imputed to me, it was of a nature perfectly innocent. You may easily imagine that, in the memorial which was laid before him, they did not omit my nocturnal perambulations, my absence from the choir, the tumults which happened in my apartment, the strange sights which some had seen, the extraordinary sounds which others had heard, my aversion to spiritual exercises, and the blasphemies of which I was guilty.

The adventure of the young nun they represented in any light which their imagination chose to supply. The accusations were so strong and so numerous that with all his good sense, Mr. ——— could not help, in some measure, considering them in a serious point of view, and believing that they contained a great deal of truth. The affair appeared to him of so much importance as to require a personal examination. He announced his intended visit, and actually arrived, accompanied by two young ecclesiastics, who had been appointed to attend him, and who relieved him by their assistance in the discharge of the laborious part of the duties he had to fulfill.

A few days before his arrival I heard a person softly enter my chamber at midnight. I remained silent while I was addressed in a low and tremulous voice :

“ Sister Saint ——, are you asleep ?”

“ No. Who is there ?”

“ A friend of yours, who is overwhelmed with terror, and who exposes herself to ruin to communicate to you a piece of intelligence from which perhaps you can derive some advantage. Attend ; to-morrow or next day a visit from the —— is expected ; you are to be accused ; prepare for your defence. Adieu, have courage, and Heaven be with you !”

Saying this, she glided away with the swiftness of a shadow. You see, there are everywhere, even in “religious” houses, hearts of a compassionate disposition which no circumstances can harden. All this while my suit was prosecuted with vigor. Crowds of people of both sexes, and all conditions, interested themselves in my favor. I was not permitted to converse with Mr. —— . He was told that I was sick. He suspected that they meant to deceive him, and trembled lest they had thrown me into the dungeon. He applied to the Archbishop, but he did not deign to give him a hearing ; he had been prepossessed with the idea that I was mad, or something worse. He had recourse to the interposition of the civil court, and insisted upon the execution of the order intimated to the Superior to present me, dead or alive, when she was summoned to that effect. I availed myself of the advice of my friend to implore heavenly assistance, to collect my spirits,

and to prepare for my defence. Of Heaven I only entreated the happiness of being interrogated and heard with impartiality ; I obtained this request ; but I am now to inform you at what price. If it was my interest to appear to the Bishop innocent and rational ; it was of no less importance to the Superior that I should be considered vicious, guilty, distracted, possessed by the infernal spirit. Accordingly, in proportion as I redoubled the fervor of prayers and the exercises of devotion, they redoubled the mischievous tricks with which I was tormented. I received no nourishment but what was barely necessary to prevent my dying of hunger ; I was exhausted with mortifications ; terrors of every kind multiplied around me ; of sleep I was utterly deprived. They put in practice everything which could destroy my health and derange my mind. Judge of the rest from the following instance : One day, when I was going from my cell to church or elsewhere, I saw a pair of tongs upon the ground across the passage. I stoop to pick them up, and place them in such a manner that they might be easily found by the person who mislaid them. The light prevented me from observing that they were almost red ; I took hold of them, but in dropping them again, they carried along with them all the skin of the inside of the hand. In the places through which I had to pass, they continued to throw in my way something or other either to catch my feet or to strike my head. A hundred times have I been wounded severely ; I wonder how I escaped with my life. I was not allowed any light, and was obliged to proceed trembling with my hands before me. They used to scatter

broken glass under my feet. I was fully determined to disclose all these circumstances, and I kept my word.

Ah ! what malicious creatures are these recluse women, who know well that they second the hatred of their Superior, and who imagine that they serve Heaven by tormenting you to death ! The time had now arrived when the visit of the Archbishop was to take place, and when my suit was to be terminated.

In reality, this was the most terrible moment of my whole life ; for consider, that I was absolutely ignorant of the colors under which I had been represented to this ecclesiastic ; and that he came with the curiosity of seeing a girl possessed of the infernal spirit, or counterfeiting that situation. My persecutors imagined that nothing but a violent fright could display me under this appearance, and they adopted the method related in the following chapter to effect their purpose.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Ordeal—The Victory—The Archbishop and the Superior—Convents above the Laws—Their Characteristics—My Despair—Penance—The “Scourge” Applied—I Walk on Broken Glass—“A Ministering Angel”—Sister Ursula—Death in Life—Another Angel in Heaven—A New Prison—My Departure—A Daguerreotype of my New Superior.

UPON the day the visit was expected, the Superior entered the room very early in the morning, accompanied by three sisters, one carrying a vessel of holy water, the other a crucifix, the third a bundle of cords. The Superior said to me, in a harsh and threatening tone :

“Rise.”

I rose.

“Kneel down upon your knees and recommend yourself to Heaven !”

“Madam,” said I, “before I obey your command, may I ask you what is to be my fate? what are the sufferings to which you have doomed me? and what requests ought I address to Heaven?”

A cold perspiration overspread my body, I trembled, I felt my knees sink under me ; I gazed with fright upon her three companions. They were standing in a row with gloomy, ill-boding countenances, their lips closed and their



eyes shut. Terror had disconnected every word of the question I asked ; from the silence they preserved I imagined that I had not been understood. Again I began to repeat the last words of the question, for I had not courage to go over the whole ; in a feeble and half-extinguished voice I then said, "What petition must I address to Heaven?"

They replied, "Implore its forgiveness for all the sins you have committed in the course of your life, in the same manner as if you were going to appear for judgment."

At these words I believed that they had determined upon my destruction. I had heard, indeed, that similar practices sometimes occurred in the convents of certain religious orders of the male sex : that they tried, condemned to death, and consigned to punishment. I never had conceived, however, that this inhuman jurisdiction was exercised in any convent of women ; but there were many other things which never entered my imagination, that were there practised. At the idea of immediate death I advanced to the Superior in a suppliant posture, but my body refused its service, and I sunk backwards. I lost all sense and feeling. I only heard around me a burst of confused and distant voices, either of persons speaking, or arising from the ringing in my ears. I am ignorant how long I remained in this situation, but I was recovered from it by a sudden sensation of cold, which occasioned a slight convulsion, and drew from me a deep sigh. I was immersed in water, which streamed from my clothes to the ground ; it was the contents of a large vessel of holy water, which they had dashed over my body. I lay upon my side stretched out,

with my head leaning against the wall, my mouth half open, my eyes almost set, and quite closed. I endeavored to open them, and to look at objects, but it seemed to me as if I had been enveloped in a thick atmosphere, through which I discovered nothing but a floating robe, of which I attempted to lay hold, but without success. My extreme weakness subsided by degrees ; I raised myself up, leaning my back against the wall, my two hands immersed in the water, my head reclining on my breast. In this situation I uttered a deep-drawn note of complaint, in faltering accents, rendered inarticulate by the pressure under which I struggled. These women gazed on me with an expression of countenance so obdurate, as left me no courage to solicit their compassion. The Superior said, "Place her upright." They took me by the arms, and raised me up. The Superior added, "Since she will not recommend herself to Heaven, so much the worse for her ; you know what you have to do, complete your task." I imagined that the cords they had brought with them were intended to strangle me ; I looked at them whilst the tears started into my eyes. I craved permission to kiss the crucifix, but my request was refused. I asked leave to kiss the cords, which were immediately presented ; I leaned forward, took the Superior's scapulary, kissed it, and said, "Oh ! Heaven, have compassion upon me ! Dear sisters ! endeavor to spare unnecessary pain." I then presented my neck. It is impossible for me to describe the state into which I was sunk, or in what manner they now treated me. I only remember their binding my hands with the cords, and dragging me along the floor. When I

recovered the use of my senses, I found myself seated upon a pallet of straw, which formed my bed, my hands tied behind my back, and a large iron cross was upon my knees.

It was at this time that I experienced the superiority of Christianity. In the situation in which I was placed, what consolation could I have derived from the contemplation of a fortunate legislator, covered with glory? I set Him before me who was, without offence, crowned with thorns, His hands and feet pierced with nails, and expiring in agonies; I then would say to myself, "Behold the situation of my Saviour! and dare I complain?" I dwelt upon this idea, and felt consolation springing up again in my heart. I knew the vanity of life, and thought myself too happy to lose it, before I had time to multiply my transgressions, yet I reckoned my years, and I found that I was hardly twenty. I was too much weakened, too much depreseed, to allow my mind to rise superior to the terrors of death. In perfect health, I believe that I should have been able to take my resolution with greater fortitude.

In the meantime, the Superior and her satellites returned, and found me possessed of greater presence of mind than they expected, and would have wished. They raised me up, and put on my veil; two of them supported me under the arms, a third pushed me from behind, and the Superior ordered me to walk. I went, without knowing whither I was going; under the apprehension, however, that I was about to be punished, I said, "Oh, Heaven have pity upon me! support me! do not forsake me! Pardon me, if I have offended thee!"

I entered the church. The —— had celebrated mass, the community was assembled. I forgot to tell you, that when I had got the length of the church door, the three nuns who had the charge of me, seized me fast, pushed me with violence, and seemed to struggle with me ; those who held my arms, dragging me on, while the rest, who were behind, kept me back, as if I had been resisting, and showing signs of repugnance to enter the church, which was by no means the case. They conducted me to the steps of the altar ; I had scarcely ascended them, when they pulled me down upon my knees, as if I had refused to kneel ; they held me, as if I had an intention of making my escape. They chanted the "*Veni Creator,*" laid out the Holy Sacrament, and pronounced the blessing. At that part of the blessing, where they testify veneration by an inclination of the body, those who held my arms, affected to use compulsion in making me bow, and the rest leaned their hands upon my shoulders. I was sensible of all these various movements, but it was impossible for me to devise their object ; soon after, however, everything was developed.

After the blessing, the —— divested himself of his chasuble, put on his albe and his stole, and advanced towards the steps of the altar, where I was upon my knees. He was between two ecclesiastics, with his back turned upon the altar, and his face directed to me. He approached me and said, "Sister ——, rise." The sisters who held me, suddenly raised me up, others came round me, and seized me by the middle, as if they were afraid lest I should make my escape. He added, "Let her be untied." They did

not obey, pretending to be aware of the danger of setting me at liberty. But I have told you that this was a spirited man, and he repeated, in a firm and severe tone, "Let her be untied." They obeyed. Scarcely were my hands at liberty, when I uttered a woeful, piercing cry, which made him turn pale; and the hypocritical nuns who were about me, ran away as if affrighted. He recovered himself; the sisters returned with trembling steps; I remained motionless, and he said to me, "What ails you?" I made no reply, but showed him my two arms; the cord with which they had bound me, had entered almost entirely into the flesh, and the blood which had been prevented from circulating, gave them a purple hue. He conceived that my cry arose from the sudden affection occasioned by the blood resuming its course; he said, "Let her veil be taken off." They had stitched it in several places, without my knowledge, which rendered this a more difficult and violent operation, than it would otherwise have been. From the force employed in tearing it off, the threads gave way in some places, and the veil or my habit being rent in others, he had an opportunity of seeing me. I had an interesting figure; deep sorrow had altered, but not destroyed its character; the tones of my voice were pathetic, and they were sensible that my expressions were undissembled. The union of these qualities made a strong impression of pity upon the young attendants of the Archbishop; as for him, he was entirely ignorant of such sentiments; just, but possessed of little susceptibility, he was one of those who have the misfortune to be born to practice virtue, without expe-

riencing any pleasure in it ; they do good from a principle of fitness, as they call it. He took the sleeve of his stole, and putting it upon my head, he said to me, "Sister ——, do you believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?" I replied, "I do."

"Do you renounce Satan and his works?"

Instead of answering, I moved suddenly forward, and cried out, and the stole fell off my head. The Archbishop was troubled ; his companions turned pale ; some of the sisters ran away, others of them, who were in their stalls, left them in the greatest confusion. He made a signal to them to compose themselves ; he looked earnestly at me, expecting something extraordinary to take place. He took courage on my saying to him, "Sir, it is nothing ; it was one of these nuns who pricked me with something sharp ;" and raising my eyes and my hands to heaven, while I shed a flood of tears, I added, "It is because they hurt me at the very moment when you asked me if I renounced Satan, and his works, their reason for which I well know." They all protested, in the voice of the Superior, that they had not touched me. The Archbishop replaced his stole on my head, and the nuns were again drawing near, but he made a signal to them to keep at a distance, and repeated the question to me, if I renounced Satan and his works, to which I replied with firmness, "I renounce them." He made them bring a figure of Christ, which he presented to me to kiss ; I kissed it upon the feet, upon the hands, and the wound in the side. He commanded me to worship it with a loud voice ; I fell upon the earth and upon my

knees I said, "My Saviour, thou who didst die upon the cross for my sins, and those of the human race, I adore thee ; apply to me the merits of those torments which thou hast endured ; touch me with a drop of that precious blood which thou hast shed, and I shall be purified. Pardon me, as I pardon my enemies. He then said to me, "Make an act of faith." And I made it. "Make a deed of love." And I made it. "Make a deed of hope." And I made it. "Make a deed of charity." And I made it. I do not recollect the terms in which they were conceived, but I think they must have been pathetic, for I drew sighs from some of the nuns ; and two of the ecclesiastics shed tears. The Archbishop asked me, with astonishment, where I got the prayers which I had just now recited. I said, "They came from the bottom of my heart, and I take heaven to witness, that they are my thoughts and sentiments. I am a Christian, I am innocent ; if I have been guilty of some faults, the Deity only knows them, and none but he has a right to ask for an account of them, or to punish them." When I uttered these words, he cast a terrible look upon the Superior. The rest of the ceremony being finished, in which things the most sacred were profaned, all the nuns retired, except the Superior and the young ecclesiastics. The Archbishop sat down, and taking out a memorial which they had presented to him, against me, he read it aloud, and questioned me upon the articles which it contained.

"Why," said he to me, "don't you confess?"

"Because they will not permit me."

"Why don't you attend at the sacraments?"

"Because they will not permit me."

"Why don't you assist at mass and at divine service?"

"Because they will not permit me."

Here the Superior wished to speak, but he said to her, in the same tone, "Be silent, madam. Why do you go out of your cell at night?"

"Because they have deprived me of water, and every necessary accommodation."

"How comes there to be a noise in your bed-room and in your cell?"

"Because they will not allow me to take repose."

Here the Superior attempted a second time to speak, and he said to her, "Madam, I have told you to be silent; you will have an opportunity of answering when I interrogate you. How happened it that they were obliged to extricate a nun from your hands, whom they found thrown down in the passage?"

"It is in consequence of the horror of me with which they had inspired her."

"Is she your friend?"

"No, sir."

"Were you never in her cell?"

"Never."

"Did you never do anything improper either to her or to others?"

"Never."

"Why did they bind you?"

"I do not know."

"Why is not the door of your cell shut?"



"Because I have broken the lock."

"Why did you break the lock?"

"To get out, in order to assist at service on the Ascension-day."

"You were at church then on that day!"

"Yes, sir."

The Superior said, "Sir, it is not true, all the community"——

I interrupted her, and said, "Will testify that the door of the choir was shut; that they found me prostrate at this door, and that you ordered them to trample on me, which some of them did; but I forgive them and you, madam, for having ordered them; I am not come to accuse any person, but to defend myself."

"Why have you neither a rosary nor a crucifix?"

"Because they have taken them from me."

"Where is your breviary?"

"They have taken that also."

"How can you pray then?"

"I pray from the heart, though they prohibit me from doing it."

"Who is it that issued the prohibition? Madam"—— here the Superior was still going to speak—"Madam," said he; "is it true or false that you have prohibited her from praying? Say yes or no."

"I believed, and I had reason to believe"——

"This is not to the purpose; have you prohibited her from praying; yes or no?"

"I have prohibited her, but"——

She was about to continue, when the Archbishop resumed,

“But, sister, how come your feet to be naked?”

“Because they do not furnish me with either stockings or shoes.”

“Why are your linen and your clothes so old and dirty?”

“Because they have refused me linen for more than three months, and I am obliged to sleep in my clothes.”

“Why do you sleep in your clothes?”

“Because I have neither curtains, mattress, blankets, sheets, nor night-dress.”

“Why have you not them?”

“Because they have taken them from me.”

“Do you get food?”

“I ask for it.”

“You do not get it, then?”

I was silent; and he added,

“It is incredible that they can have used you with so much severity without your having committed some fault to merit it.”

“My fault is having no call to the religious state, and recalling my vows, which I never made voluntarily.”

“It is for the laws to decide upon this affair; and however they may pronounce upon it, it is incumbent on you in the meantime to discharge the duties of the religious life.”

“No person, sir, is more punctual than I am.”

“You must share the lot of all your companions.”

“That is all I ask.”

“Have you no complaint to make against any one?”

“No, sir ; I have told you that I am not come here as an accenser, but for the purpose of defendjng myself.”

“Go away.”

“Where shall I go, sir ?”

“To your cell.”

I took a few steps, then returned and prostrated myself at the feet of the Superior, and of the Archbishop.

“Well,” said he, “what is the matter ?”

I answered, “You see,” showing him, at the same time, my head bruised, my feet bloody, my arms livid and without flesh, my clothes dirty and torn. I think I hear those who read these memoirs say, “Horrors so multiplied, so varied, so continued, a series of atrocities so monstrous engendered in the hearts of nuns ! It is not very probable.” I grant it. But it is true ; and may Heaven judge me with the utmost rigor if I have suffered calumny to darken one of my lines with its slightest shade. Though I have long experienced how much the aversion of a Superior can stimulate her natural perversity, particularly when it is such as to make a merit of crime, resentment shall never prevent me from being just. Providence, whose views are unknown to us, has been pleased to heap upon a single unfortunate individual, all the cruelties divided in its inscrutable decrees among an infinite multitude who have preceded, and who shall succeed her in the cloister. I have suffered much ; but the lot of my persecutors seems still more deplorable than mine. I would rather die than give up my situation on condition of accepting theirs. My pains will be brought to a conclusion ; the remembrance, shame, and remorse of crime

will live with them till their latest hour. In the meantime, my situation is deplorable ; life is committed to me as a charge. I am a woman, and subject to the weakness that is common to my sex. Heaven may abandon me. I feel that I have neither strength nor courage long to bear up under what I have hitherto supported.

“Retire,” said the Archbishop. One of the ecclesiastics presented his hand to raise me up ; and the Archbishop continued, “I have heard you ; I am now about to hear your Superior ; and I will not leave this place till order is re-established.”

I withdrew. I found the rest of the house in alarm. All the nuns were at the doors of their cells conversing across the passage. As soon as I appeared, they retired, and their doors, which they had shut with violence, one after the other, resounded through the mansion. I entered my cell, dropped upon my knees against the wall, and prayed Heaven to consider the moderation with which I had spoken to the Archbishop, and to impress his mind with a conviction of my innocence, and of the truth.

I was engaged in prayer when the Archbishop, his two companions, and the Superior entered my cell. I have mentioned that I had neither prayer-desk, chairs, curtains, mattress, sheets, utensils, lock to my door, and hardly a single whole pane of glass in my windows. I rose, and the Archbishop, stopping short and turning to the Superior, with eyes full of indignation, said :—

“Well, now, madam ?”

She replied, “I was ignorant of this.”

“You were not ignorant of it! it is false: have you passed a single day without visiting this apartment? and do you not descend to your own chamber after you have been here? Sister, speak; was not madam, the Superior, here to-day?”

I made no answer, he did not urge me; but the young ecclesiastics, with their heads reclined, and their eyes fixed upon the ground, discovered their surprise and distress. They all went out together, and I heard the Archbishop say to the Superior in the passage:—

“You are unworthy of the office which you fill—you ought to be deposed. All this disorder must be repaired before I quit this house. This is horrible—Christians, indeed! Nuns! human beings! It is horrible!”

After this I heard no more of the subject; but I was supplied with linen and other articles of dress; with curtains, sheets, blankets, furniture; my breviary, books of devotion, rosary, and crucifix were restored; my windows were repaired; in short, I received everything necessary for my accommodation like other nuns. I was again admitted to the parlor, but only when my business required. My petition met with little success. M—— published his first memorial, which excited little interest. It contained too much wit, too little of the pathetic, and scarcely any argument. Yet the fault must not altogether be charged to this able lawyer. I required that he should forbear to scandalize the religious order, and especially the house in which I lived. In my favor I had only the first protestation I had made, a solemn one indeed, but taken in the first convent, and in no shape

renewed since that period. When such narrow limits are assigned to a defence against those who assume the utmost latitude of attack, who trample, without distinction, upon what is just and what is unjust, who are deterred by no blush of shame in the imputations which they charge, and the calumny which they invent, it is difficult to come off victorious in the contest, especially before courts where habits of business, and the irksomeness which practice is apt to produce, almost always preclude a scrupulous examination, even in matters of the highest importance, where disputes like mine, too, are always regarded with an unfavorable eye by the politician, who dreads that, upon the success of one nun reclaiming against her vows, an infinite number of others might be induced to prosecute a similar measure. They are conscious of a secret feeling, that if the prison doors were allowed to be thrown open to restore an unfortunate inhabitant to liberty, the crowd would be stimulated by the precedent to attempt to burst them asunder by force. The prevailing policy is to discourage similar proceedings, and by the difficulty of a change in our situation, to induce us to be resigned to our fate. It appears to me, however, that in a well-regulated state, a course directly the reverse ought to be followed; the religious life ought to be rendered difficult to enter, and easy to abandon. And why ought not this case to be placed upon the same footing with so many others, where the smallest defect of formality invalidates the proceedings, though in other respects just? Are convents then so essential to the constitution of a state? Did Christ institute the orders of monks and nuns? Is it

absolutely impossible for the church to dispense with these appendages? What need has the bridegroom of so many foolish virgins, and human species of so many victims? Will the necessity never be felt of narrowing the mouth of these abysses into which future races of mankind are about to plunge and be destroyed? Are all the hackneyed rounds of devotion performed within their walls worth a single farthing which pity bestows upon the poor? Does the Deity who created man a social being approve his seclusion? Can He, who formed him frail and inconstant, authorize the temerity of his vows? Can those vows which outrage the general propensity of nature be ever well observed, except by a few ill-constructed beings, in whom the germs of passion are injured, and who properly should be referred to the class of monsters, if our knowledge permitted us to discern with equal facility the internal structure of man, as to perceive his outward form? Are all these gloomy ceremonies that are observed on the taking of the habit, and at the time of profession, when a man or woman is devoted to the monastic life and to misery—have they the power of suspending the animal functions? On the contrary, do they not awake, amid silence, constraint and sloth, with a violence unknown to those who live in the world, whose attention is varied and occupied by the number of objects which occur? Where is it that we behold the imagination haunted by impure phantoms which pursue and agitate the mind? Where is it that we discover that profound discontent, that pallid look, that meagre countenance, those symptoms of wasting, declining nature? Where do you observe nights consumed in groans,

days spent in melancholy for which no cause can be assigned, followed by tears for which no reason can be found? Where does it occur that nature, outraged by a constraint for which she is not formed, breaks down every obstacle by which she is opposed, and throws the animal economy into a disorder for which no remedy can be found? In what place have peevishness and discontent erased every social quality? In what society is it that there exists none of the endearing relations of father, brother, sister, parent, friend? In what situation is it that man, considering himself only a being that appears for a moment and passes on, treats the sweetest ties by which mortals are united as a traveller views the objects that fall in his way—without interest, without attachment? Where is the region which hatred, and spleen, and vapors inhabit? Where do you meet with animosity that is never extinguished? Where do the passions brood in silence? Where do you place the abode of cruelty and of curiosity? Where, but in the mysterious seclusion of the convent?

It is a rule in the convent that you can neither write nor receive letters without the Superior's permission, and those you write, as well as those you receive, are submitted to her inspection. I was, therefore, obliged to carry her mine. For this purpose I rose and proceeded to her apartment; I thought I should never have reached it. A prisoner who leaves his dungeon to hear his sentence of condemnation pronounced, could not have walked either more slowly or more dejectedly. At length I arrived at her door. The nuns surveyed me at a distance; they were unwilling to



lose the smallest circumstances of my sorrow and humiliation. I knocked at the door, which was opened. The Superior was within, with some other nuns. This I perceived by the skirts of their robes, for I had not courage to raise my eyes. I presented my letter with a trembling hand. She took it from me, read it, and again put it into my hands. I returned to my cell, threw myself on the bed, the letter beside me, where I remained without reading it, without rising to go to dinner, without stirring till the afternoon service. At half past three, the clock warned me to go down. Some nuns had already assembled ; the Superior was at the entrance of the choir ; she stopped me, and commanded me to kneel behind the door upon the outside ; the rest of the community arrived, and the door was shut. After service they all went out ; I allowed them to pass me, then rose and followed last in the train. From this moment I began to condemn myself to endure whatever they were pleased to inflict. I was discharged from appearing at church, and I voluntarily forebore going to the hall or to enjoy recreation. I viewed my situation in every way, and I discovered no resource but in submission, and in the necessity which they felt in employing my talents. I should have been contented with that kind of oblivion in which for several days they allowed me to remain. The visits of different persons were announced, but of these Mr.— was the only one which I was permitted to receive. When I entered the parlor, I found him precisely in the situation in which I was when his messenger was introduced to me ; his head reclining upon his hands, and leaning upon the grate.

I recognized him, but said nothing. He was afraid either to look at me or to speak.

“Miss,” said he, at last, without changing his posture, “I wrote to you ; did you not receive my letter ?”

“I received it, but have not read it.”

“You don’t know, then ”——

“I know all, I conjectured my fate, and I have met it with resignation.”

“How are you treated ?”

“They have not yet begun to think of me, but I learn from the past what I must expect in future. I have only one consolation, that deprived of the hope by which I was supported, it is impossible for me to endure so much as I have already suffered ; death will put a period to my misfortunes. The fault which I have committed is one which, in religious houses, is never forgiven. I do not ask of the Deity to soften the hearts of those to whose discretion He has been pleased to abandon me, but I implore Him to grant me strength to support my sufferings, to save me from despair, and speedily to call me to Himself.”

“Miss ——,” said he, weeping, “had you been my own sister I could have done no more.” This man’s heart overflows with sensibility. “Miss——,” continued he, “if in any respect it is in my power to be useful to you, command my service. I shall visit the ——, whose good opinion I enjoy ; I shall likewise wait upon the —— and the Archbishop.”

“Sir, do not give yourself the trouble to speak to any one upon the subject ; it is all over ”——

“But if it were possible to obtain permission for you to change your house?”

“It is attended with too many obstacles.”

“But pray what, then, are these obstacles?”

“The difficulty of obtaining permission, the necessity of depositing a new dowry, or of withdrawing the former one from this house; and besides, what should I find in another convent? that inflexibility which characterizes my heart would still accompany me. I should meet with Superiors equally pitiless, and nuns equally unkind as here. I should have the same duties to perform, and the same sufferings to endure. It is better that I should end my days in this place; at least, the period of my misery will be less tedious.”

“Miss ——, you have interested in your favor many worthy persons.”

“But those people of worth, you mention, think no more of me. Why do you imagine that people of the world are more ready to contribute to rescue from the cloister a nun, who has no call for the religious life, than pious persons are to introduce into the convent those who are really called to embrace that situation? Alas! sir, I am forsaken by all the world; I now see nobody.”

“Only commit that affair to me, Miss ——, and I shall be most happy.”

“I ask nothing, I entertain no hopes, I give no opposition to anything you think proper, the only spring I had left is now broken. Could I only promise myself that Heaven would produce a change in my heart, and that the quali-

ties of a religious state would succeed to the hope of quitting it, which I have now lost ; but that is impossible ; this dress I wear has attached itself to my skin, to my bones, and yet only sits the more uneasy upon me. Ah ! what a fate is mine. To be compelled for ever to be a nun, and to feel conscious that I must ever remain unfit for that state, to pass my whole life in beating my head against the gratings of my prison." Here I began to cry aloud. I endeavored, but in vain, to suppress my voice. Mr. —, surprised at this appearance, said,

"Miss —, may I venture to ask you a question ?"

"You may, sir."

"Must not grief so violent be excited by some secret motive ?"

"No, sir ; I hate a life of solitude, I feel that I detest it ; I am conscious that I shall detest it as long as I live. I cannot submit to all the miseries which fill up the day of a recluse ; it is a tissue of puerilities, which I despise. I would have accommodated myself to them, could my exertions have succeeded. An hundred times have I endeavored to impose upon my understanding to overcome my repugnance, but in vain. I have implored Heaven to grant me that happy imbecility of mind which my companions possessed, but I have not obtained it, it will never be bestowed upon me. Every action I perform is wrong, every expression I utter is vain ; the defect of my vocation penetrates to every part of my conduct, and it does not pass without observation. Every moment I insult the monastic life ; my incapacity is called pride ; it is the employment of

those with whom I live to expose me to humiliation ; faults and punishments multiply to infinity ; and I spend every day in measuring with my eye the height of the walls."

"Miss——, it is not in my power to level them with the ground, but I can do something else."

"Sir, do not make any attempt."

"You must change your house; it shall be my business to enable you to put it in execution ; I shall return and pay you another visit. I hope I shall have access to you ; you shall hear of me without delay. Be assured that if you agree to the attempt, I will succeed in effecting your liberation from this place. If you are treated here with extraordinary severity, do not fail to give me information."

It was late when Mr. —— went away. I returned to my cell. Almost immediately we were summoned by the bell to evening service, and I was among the first who appeared. I allowed the nuns to pass me, and I took it for granted that I was to remain at the door, and accordingly it was shut against me by the Superior. At supper, as she entered, she made a sign for me to sit down upon the ground in the middle of the refectory ; I obeyed, and was only served with bread and water. I ate a little, while I bedewed my portion with my tears. Next day a council was held, and all the members of the community were assembled to hear my sentence. I was condemned to be deprived of recreation, to attend service for a whole month at the door of the choir, to receive my food sitting upon the ground in the middle of the refectory, to undergo some ignominious punishment three days successively, to renew

the assumption of the habits, and to repeat my vows, to use the hair cloth, to fast during two days, and to macerate myself every Friday after the evening service. I was placed upon my knees, with my veil dropped, while this sentence pronounced. Next morning the Superior came to my cell, accompanied by a nun carrying upon her arm a hair cloth, and that robe of coarse stuff in which I was dressed, when I was conducted to the dungeon. I perfectly understood the meaning of these preparations. I undressed myself, or rather they tore off my veil, stripped me of my clothes, and gave me the robe I have mentioned. My head was uncovered, my feet were bare, and my whole garb consisted of the hair cloth, a very coarse chemise, and the long robe which fastened round my neck, and descended to my feet. In this situation I remained the whole day, and appeared at all the exercises we had to perform. In the evening, when I had retired to my cell, I heard the sound of people approaching, chanting the litanies ; the procession was composed of all the members of the house, ranged in two lines. They entered, and I appeared ; they put a cord round my neck, a torch in the one hand, and a scourge in the other. One of the nuns took the end of the cord and led me between the two ranks, and the procession moved on towards a small private oratory consecrated to the Holy Virgin. They came to my cell, chanting in a solemn voice, and they returned in silence. When I reached this little oratory, which was lighted up with two candles, I received orders to ask pardon of Heaven, and of the community for the scandal I had occasioned. The nun by whom I was

conducted told me in whispers what I was to say, and I repeated it word for word. After this they took the cord from my neck, they stripped me to the middle, they threw my hair, which flowed over my shoulders, to one side ; the scourge which I carried in my left hand was put into my right, and they began the Miserere. I understood what they expected me to do, and it was performed. The Miserere being concluded, I received a short exhortation from the Superior, the lights were extinguished, the nuns withdrew, and I again dressed myself. When I returned to my cell, I felt violent pains in my feet ; I examined them, and found them covered with blood from the wounds they had sustained from pieces of broken glass which the nuns had been so malicious as to scatter in my way. I underwent this ignominious punishment in the same manner the two following days, only on the last a psalm was added to the Miserere. Upon the fourth day my habit of a nun was restored to me, with almost the same ceremony which is practised at this solemnity when it is public. Upon the fifth, I renewed my vows. In the course of a month I went through the rest of the penance which they had imposed upon me, after which, by degrees, I returned to the ordinary state which prevailed in the community. I resumed my place in the choir and in the refectory, and I discharged in my turn the various functions of the house. But how great was my surprise, when I observed my young friend who had so kindly interested herself in my fortune. She appeared to be almost as much altered as myself. She was frightfully attenuated, her countenance was pale as

death, her lips white, and her eyes almost sunk. "Sister Ursula," said I to her in a whisper, "what is the matter with you?"

"What is the matter?" replied she; "I am attached to you, and yet you can ask me such a question! It was full time that a period should be put to your sufferings; had they continued longer, death must have proved the misery I felt."

To her care was I indebted for escaping wounds upon my feet, the two last days of penance. She had the kindness privately to sweep the passages and to remove the glass which was scattered in the way. On the days when I was condemned to live on bread and water, she deprived herself of a part of her allowance, which she wrapped in a clean piece of cloth, and threw it into my cell. The nun who was to lead me by the cord was chosen by lot, and the lot fell upon her. She had the firmness to call upon the Superior, and protest to her that she would sooner die than undertake this infamous and cruel office. Fortunately, this young lady's family was possessed of considerable wealth; she enjoyed a large annuity, which she employed in a manner that pleased the Superior, and for a few trifling gifts, she found a nun to take her place. I will not be so presumptuous as to imagine that the signal displeasure of Heaven was displayed against the base creature who undertook the task, in the misfortune under which she has fallen. She has become mad, and is confined, but the Superior lives, governs, torments, and enjoys perfect health.

It was impossible that my constitution could resist trials



so rude and so lengthened ; I fell sick. In this critical situation it was that Sister Ursula really testified the sincerity of the friendship she had conceived for me—she saved my life. As she herself would sometimes tell me, what she has thus preserved could not be called a blessing, yet there was no kind of service which I did not experience from her attention on those days when it was her turn to preside in the infirmary. Neither was I neglected at other times, thanks to the interest she took in my welfare, and to the rewards which she distributed among those who nursed me, in proportion as they gave me satisfaction. She asked permission to watch me during the night, and the Superior refused her request, under pretext that she was too delicate to support the fatigue. This refusal she considered as the most afflicting disappointment. All the attentions she bestowed, however, could not check the progress of my distemper ; I was reduced to the last extremity, and received the Sacraments. A few moments before they were administered, I requested to see all the members of the community assembled, and the favor was granted. The nuns stood round my bed, and the Superior in the middle of them. My young friend sat at my pillow, and held my hand, which she bedewed with her tears. They conjectured that I had something to say. They raised me up, and supported me in an erect posture by the assistance of two pillows. Then, addressing myself to the Superior, I entreated her benediction, and that she would forget the faults I had committed. Of all my companions I asked pardon for the scandal my conduct had occasioned. I had sent for a number of toys, which formed either the ornaments

of my cell or were reserved for my particular use, and I entreated the Superior's permission to dispose of them. She consented, and I bestowed them on the nuns who had acted as her attendants when I was thrown into the dungeon. I desired her who had led me by the cord on the day of my penance to approach, and embracing her, while I presented her with my rosary and crucifix, I said :

“Dear Sister, remember me in your prayers, and be assured that I will not forget you before Heaven.”

And why did not the Supreme Being call me away at this moment? I should have gone to him without disquietude; and what a blessing is such a state of mind! Who can presume that he will possess it a second time? This trying occasion, however, must again return; and may the solemn hour be as tranquil as that which I then experienced! I saw the heavens opened, and doubtless they were, for then conscience no longer deceives, and mine gave the promise of eternal felicity. After receiving the Sacrament, I fell into a kind of lethargy; all this night, I was given over. From time to time they came and felt my pulse. I was sensible of the touch of hands groping over my face; and I heard, seemingly, distant voices, saying—“It increases! Her nose is cold! She will not survive an hour! The rosary and crucifix will be yours!” While another, in a tone of resentment, said—“Retire, retire; allow her to die in peace. Have you not already tormented her enough?” How delightful were my sensations, upon recovering from this crisis, and again opening my eyes, to find myself in the arms of my friend! She had never left

me ; she had passed the night in ministering to my assistance, in repeating the prayers for persons in their last agonies, in making me kiss the crucifix, and applying it to her own lips, after withdrawing it from mine. When she saw my eyes roll, and heard me breathe a profound sigh, she imagined that it was my last ; and, calling me her friend, uttered doleful cries, saying—" Oh Heaven ! have compassion upon her and upon me ! Receive her spirit ! Beloved friend, when you are before the throne of Grace, remember Sister Ursula !" I looked on her, sadly smiling, and dropped a tear as I pressed her hand. At this moment, Dr. B—— arrived. This was the physician of the house, reputed a man of ability, but despotic, haughty and severe ; he tore my friend from me with violence ; he felt my pulse and my skin ; he was accompanied by the Superior and her favorites. After a few short questions with regard to what had taken place, he answered :

" She will recover ;" and turning to the Superior, who derived no pleasure from this observation—" yes, madam," said he, " she will recover ; her skin is favorable ; the fever has abated ; life begins to dawn anew in her eyes."

At every word of this, joy beamed on the countenance of my friend, while, on the features of the Superior and her companions, were displayed a disappointment and chagrin, which I cannot describe, and which their constraint was illy able to dissemble.

" Sir," said I, " I no longer desire to live."

" So much the worse," replied he ; and, after giving certain orders, he departed.

I was told that during my lethargy I frequently repeated—"Dear mother, you then beckon me to you. I am coming to join you. I will tell you all." It was my old Superior whom probably I thus addressed; I have no doubt of it. I gave her picture to no one, but desired to carry it along with me to the grave. The prognostic of Dr. B—— was fulfilled; the fever subsided; it was carried off by copious perspiration, and no doubt was now entertained of my cure. I did indeed recover, but the period of my convalescence was very tedious. It was decreed that I should endure in this house all the sufferings it is possible to experience. My distemper was in its nature malignant; Sister Ursula had hardly ever left me a moment. As I began to regain my strength, hers began to decline; her stomach was deranged; in the afternoon she was attacked by fainting fits, which sometimes lasted a quarter of an hour; in this situation she appeared as dead; her eyes sunk; a cold sweat covered her brow, and, collecting in drops, flowed down her cheeks; her arms hung motionless and pale. The only way in which she received any benefit was by unlacing her stays and untying her clothes. When she recovered from the swoon, her first impulse was to look for me at her side; and there she always found me; sometimes, even when she retained a certain portion of sense and consciousness, she would stretch her hands round, without opening her eyes.

The object of this action was so well known, that some nuns presenting themselves to her hand thus groping round, and not being discovered, because she then happened to relapse without motion, would say to me :

“Sister ——, it is you she wishes ; come here.”

Then I would place myself at her feet, lay my hand upon her forehead, and there it remained till the swoon subsided. When it was over, she would say to me :

“Ah, Sister ——, it is I who am to go away, and you who are to remain behind ; it is I who am first to see her again ; I will speak to her of you, and she will weep when she hears your sad story ; if they still love in Heaven, surely it is no crime to weep. If tears are sometimes bitter, they are sometimes, too, delightfully sweet.” Then she reclined her head upon my neck, wept profusely, and added : “Adieu, Sister —— ; adieu, my friend ; who will share your sufferings when I am no more ? Oh, my dearest friend, how I lament you ! I am about to leave you ; I feel that I am. If you were happy, how deeply should I regret to die !”

I was extremely alarmed at her situation ; I spoke to the Superior ; I proposed that she should be taken to the infirmary ; that she should be exempted from attending at service, and from performing any of the laborious exercises of the house, and that a physician should be called. But I only received for answer, that her complaint was nothing serious ; that the fainting fits to which she was subject would go away of themselves, and Sister Ursula was perfectly contented to discharge her usual duties, and to follow her ordinary course of life.

One day, after matins, at which she had been present, she did not appear again as usual ; I conceived that she must be very ill. When morning services were over, I flew

to her apartment, and found her lying on the bed, dressed. When I entered, she said to me :

“ Are you there, my dear friend ? I feared greatly that you would be long in coming, and I expected you. With what impatience did I long to see you ! My swoon was so severe and so long, that I believed it was to continue for ever, and that I was never to see you more. There is the key of my oratory ; open the drawers ; raise a little board which separates the drawer from below upwards into two parts ; behind this board you will find a packet of papers. I have never been able to summon sufficient resolution to part with them, in spite of the danger which keeping them occasioned. When I am no more, they are yours.”

She was so feeble and so oppressed, that she was unable to pronounce together two words of this address. She hesitated between every syllable, and spoke so low, too, that, although my ear was close to her mouth, I had the utmost difficulty in hearing what she said. I took the key, pointed with my finger to the oratory, and she made signs that I was right. Feeling now a presentiment that I was about to lose her, and persuaded that her malady was a consequence of mine, or occasioned by the fatigue she had undergone, I burst into tears, and yielded to the emotions of the most violent affliction ; I kissed her forehead, her eyes, her face, her hands ; I asked her forgiveness. Meanwhile, she appeared totally absent. She did not hear me, and one of her hands, moving gently backwards and forwards, stroked my face. I believe that she no longer saw me ; perhaps, even, she imagined I had gone away, for she called :

“ Sister —— !”

I said, “ Here I am.”

“ What o'clock is it ?”

“ It is half-past eleven.”

“ Half-past eleven ! Go to dinner ; go ; you will return immediately.”

The bell rang for dinner, and I was obliged to quit her ; when I had reached the door, she called me back, and I returned. She made an effort to present me her face ; I kissed it ; she took my hand, and kept it fast locked in hers. She seemed unwilling, even unable, to leave me.

“ It must be, however,” said she, as she let me go ; “ it is the will of Heaven ; adieu, Sister ——, adieu. Give me my crucifix.”

I put it into her hand, and went away. When we were about to rise from the table, I addressed myself to the Superior ; I spoke to her, in presence of all the nuns, of the danger of Sister Ursula, and pressed her to judge of her situation, in person.

“ Very well,” said she ; “ we must see her.”

She went up stairs, accompanied by some others, and I followed. They entered her cell ; poor Sister Ursula was no more ! she was stretched upon her bed, with her clothes on, her head reclining upon the pillow, her mouth and eyes shut, and the crucifix in her hand. There was another angel in heaven. The Superior coolly gazed upon her, and said :

“ She is dead. Who could have imagined that she was

so near her end? She was an excellent girl; let the bell toll her knell, and let her be buried."

I remained alone by her pillow. It is impossible for me to paint my sorrow, yet I envied her fate. I sat down beside her, bathed her with my tears, kissed her again and again, and spread the sheet over her face, the features of which now began to change. I then bethought me of executing the commission with which she had entrusted me. To prevent interruption in the discharge of this task, I waited till all the members of the house were employed at service. I opened the oratory, removed the board, and found a large bundle of papers, which I have managed to preserve through all my troubles and difficulties, and a portion of which I have given the reader, in the form of a history of *Coralla*.

I was now left alone in the house, indeed in the world, for I now knew no human being that was interested in my fortune. Such was my state of mind when our ecclesiastic superiors paid a visit to the house. They entered, they traversed the cells, they questioned the nuns, they required an account of both the spiritual and temporal administration; according to the temper which they bring along with them to the discharge of this duty, they repair, or they increase the disorder. I had now an opportunity of again meeting the honest and rigid Archbishop, with his two young and compassionate attendants. They seemed to recollect the deplorable state in which I had formerly appeared before them; their eyes glistened with tears, and I remarked the



expressions of sympathy and joy upon their countenances. The Archbishop sat down and placed me opposite to him. His two companions stood behind his chair, and their looks were fixed on me.

“Sister,” said the Archbishop, “pray how are you served now?”

I replied, “Sir, I am forgotten.”

“So much the better.”

“And this is the utmost extent of my wishes ; but I have an important favor to request of you, and that is to invite hither the Mother Superior.”

“And why?”

“Because, if any complaint happens to be made against her, she will not fail to ascribe it to me.”

“I understand, but still inform me of all you know concerning her.”

“Sir, I entreat you to call her, and that she may hear both your questions and my answers.”

“Tell us, nevertheless.”

“Sir, you seem desirous to ruin me.”

“No; entertain no apprehension of any kind. From this moment she has no authority over you; before the end of this week you will be transferred to Saint —— of —— . You have a good friend.”

“A good friend, sir? I do not know who that can be.”

“It is your lawyer.”

“Mr. ——?”

“The same.”

“I did not imagine that he still kept me in remembrance.”

“He has waited upon your sisters, the Chief President, and all who are remarkable for piety. He has lodged your dowry in the house I have mentioned, and you have now only a very short time to remain here.”

The Archbishop perceiving that he could obtain no satisfaction, left the room with a recommendation of secrecy upon what they had told me of my translation to Saint ——. As the Archbishop walked alone through the passage, his two companions returned and paid their respects to me in a manner extremely tender and affectionate. I am ignorant who they are, but may Heaven preserve to them that feeling and compassionate character which is so rarely to be found in their situation, and which so well becomes the depository of the weakness of mankind, and the intercessors for Divine Mercy. I supposed that the Archbishop was employed in consoling, examining or rebuking some other nun, when he again entered my cell. “By what means,” said he, “did you become acquainted with Mr. ——?”

“In the course of my suit.”

“By whom was he recommended to you for the conduct of it?”

“By the ——.”

“You must have had frequent conferences with him in the course of your business?”

“No, sir, I saw him but seldom.”

“How did you communicate to him your instructions?”

“By a journal written with my own hand.”

“You have preserved copies of these papers?”

“No, sir.”

“By whom were they conveyed to him?”

“By the ——.”

“And how were you introduced to her acquaintance?”

“By Sister Ursula, my friend, and her relation.”

“You have seen Mr. —— since the loss of your suit?”

“Once.”

“That is very seldom. You have never written to him?”

“No, sir.”

“He will doubtless inform you of what he has done for you. I command you not to see him in the parlor, and if he writes to you either directly or indirectly to send me his letter without opening it.”

“Yes, sir, I will obey you.”

Whether the distrust of the Archbishop pointed to me or to my benefactor, I was hurt by it. Mr. —— came to —— that very evening. I kept my word to the Archbishop and refused to see him; next day he wrote to me by his messenger; I received his letter and sent it unopened to the Archbishop. To the best of my recollection, this happened upon Tuesday. I expected, with the utmost impatience, the result of the promise of the Archbishop and the exertions of Mr. ——.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday passed without my hearing anything upon the subject. How very tedious did these days appear; I trembled, lest some obstacle had occurred to derange the whole plan. I was not to recover my liberty, but I was to change my prison, and that was something. The first instance of good fortune inspires in our minds the hope of a second, and this perhaps is the origin of the proverb, “That good luck seldom comes single.” I

was acquainted with the companions I was about to quit, and I easily supposed that I should gain something by living among other persons. Be they what they might, they could neither be more malicious nor worse-intentioned. On Saturday morning about nine o'clock, a great commotion arose in the house ; a very trifling matter serves to throw the heads of nuns in a ferment ; they went to and fro, they whispered, the doors of the dormitories opened and shut incessantly. This, as you may have observed from what I have already said, is the signal of monastic revolutions. I was alone in my cell, and waited in anxious suspense ; my heart beat ; I listened at the door ; I looked through the window ; I roamed about without being conscious of what I did. Trembling with joy, I said to myself, "It is me they are coming to seek, in a moment I shall be here no longer," and I was not mistaken. Two persons I had never seen presented themselves to me ; they were a nun, and a girl ; in a single word they communicated to me the object of their visit ; I collected in a hurry the few things that belonged to me, having carefully wrapped the papers of Sister Ursula in one of my habits, and that I carried myself, with particular care. I did not ask permission to see the Superior ; Sister Ursula was no more, and I was therefore leaving nobody who cared for me, or whom I loved. I went down stairs, the doors were thrown open. I skipped into the coach, and was driven away.

The Archbishop and his two young ecclesiastics, the lady of the —, and Mr. — were assembled in the Superior's apartment, when they were informed of my departure. On

the road, the nun acquainted me with everything relative to the house ; and, by way of chorus to every expression which was uttered in its praise, the girl added, " It is downright truth." She congratulated herself that the choice of coming for me had fallen upon her, and at the same time made a tender of her friendship. In consequence of this she entrusted me with some secrets, and gave me some advice with regard to the conduct I ought to follow. Her advice was, probably, very proper for her situation, but it was not applicable to mine. I do not know whether you have ever seen the convent of ——. It is a large, square building, one of the sides of which overlooks the road leading to ——, the other the river ——. At each of the front windows were one, two, or three nuns ; and from this circumstance I derived more knowledge of the order that prevailed in the house than from all the nun and her companion had said. It seemed that they knew the carriage in which we were, for in a twinkling all the veils disappeared, and I arrived at the gate of my new prison. The Superior came to meet me with open arms, embraced me, took my hand and led me into the hall which belonged to the community, where a few nuns had assembled before I entered, and to which others immediately flocked.

The name of this Superior was Madam ——. I cannot resist the impulse I feel to give a description of her before proceeding further. She is a little woman, very plump, yet nimble and active in her motions. Her head never stands still upon her shoulders a single moment. There is always something out of order in her dress ; her figure is neither

good nor bad ; her eyes, one of which, the right, is higher and larger than the other, are full of fire, mixed with something of wildness. When she walks, she draws her arms backwards and forwards. When she is going to speak, she opens her mouth before she has arranged her ideas, and therefore stutters a little. When she sits, she shifts about in her chair, as if she felt uneasy. She is totally careless of decorum. She speaks to you, and then bewilders herself; stops short, and forgets where she was ; loses her temper, and calls you ass, brute, idiot, if you cannot lead her back to the subject. Sometimes she is so familiar as to say *thee* and *thou* ; sometimes haughty and imperious, even to disdain. Her moments of dignity are short. She is alternately tender and severe. The discomposure of her figure marks all the disorder of her mind, and the inequality of her character ; from this cause, order and confusion alternately succeed each other in the house. Some days all distinction and order were confounded, boarders and novices, novices and nuns, were mingled together ; they ran from chamber to chamber, or took tea, coffee, chocolate, wines, with each other ; or service was hurried over with incredible celerity. In the midst of this tumult, the countenance of the Superior suddenly changes ; the bell rings, the nuns retire, and shut themselves in their apartments ; the most profound silence succeeds to noise, shouting, and tumult, and you would imagine that all at once Death had visited every creature in the house. If a nun, at such a time is guilty of the slightest omission, the Superior summons her to her cell, treats her with rigor, commands her to undress, and give herself

twenty stripes with the scourge. The nun obeys, undresses herself, takes the scourge, and macerates herself; but no sooner has she bestowed a few stripes, than the Superior, having resumed her sympathetic disposition, snatches the instrument of penance, bursts into tears, laments her misfortune in being obliged to punish, kisses her forehead, her eyes, her mouth, her shoulders, loads her with caresses and with praises. She then raises her up, dresses her with her own hands, says to her the kindest things, dispenses with her attendance upon exercises, and sends her back to her cell. It is extremely unpleasant to be placed with women of this character; we cannot tell either what will please or displease them, what we ought to do or what we ought to avoid. Nothing is conducted after a regular system: we are either supplied with profusion or starved to death. The economy of the house is thrown into confusion; remonstrances either give offence or are neglected. We are either too near or too far removed from Superiors of this description. Neither true distance nor proper measure are observed. We pass from disgrace to favor, and from favor to disgrace, without knowing why. Such was the woman to whom I had taken the solemn vow of obedience; for our vows accompany us from one house to another.

## CHAPTER VII.

The Pretty Nuns—A Display of Charms—The Wanderer in the Corridors—Remorse—The Guilty Superior—The Laws of Nature “*versus*” the Laws of Popery—The Penalty of Crime—A Maniac’s Death.

I REPAIRED to the Superior’s apartment, where I found a pretty numerous company of nuns, the youngest and the handsomest in the house. The rest had paid their visits and retired. I assure you, the assemblage presented a very agreeable picture. Conceive to yourself a group of between ten or twelve persons, the youngest of whom might be about fifteen, and the oldest not twenty-three ; a Superior bordering upon forty, fair, ruddy, plump, half-raised up in her bed, with a double chin, which became her extremely ; arms round as if they had been turned, fingers taper and interspersed with dimples ; two black eyes, large, lively and tender, seldom quite open, but half-shut, as if she to whom they belonged had felt some difficulty in opening them ; lips that displayed the vermilion of the rose ; teeth white as pearls ; the most beautiful cheeks ; a very pleasing head, sunk in a pillow of down ; her arms extended carelessly by her sides ; and little cushions to support her elbows. I was seated on the edge of the bed, doing nothing ; another in an arm-chair, with a small embroidery frame upon her knee.



Others, near the windows, were employed in working lace. Some were seated on the ground, upon the cushions they had taken from the chairs, sewing, embroidering, or spinning on small wheels. Some were fair, others brown ; no one resembled another, though all were beautiful. Their characters were as various as their physiognomies. Some were serene, others sprightly, others serious, sad, or melancholy. They were all engaged in some kind of work as I have mentioned, except myself. It was not difficult to discover who were friends, who indifferent, and who enemies. The friends were placed beside or opposite to each other. As they worked they talked, they consulted ; they looked by stealth at each other, and pressed each others fingers, on pretence of lending a needle, a pin, or the scissors. The Superior surveyed them all ; she blamed one for assiduity, another for idleness ; this for her indifference, that for her sadness ; she made them bring her their work ; she praised or blamed ; she adjusted the head-dress of one. "That veil comes too much forward. That cap encroaches too much upon the face, it does not display enough of your checks. These folds have a bad effect." And upon all she bestowed either slight reproofs or little endearments.

In this new residence fresh dangers awaited me. Treated mildly, perhaps with too much kindness, by the Abbess and the sisters, I believed myself shielded by a joyful innocence ; but the rigor, with which a high prelate shortly brought the entire convent to the strict discipline of its order, proved to me how much I had been deceived.

The Superior went out no more at night ; she passed

whole weeks without going either to service, to the choir, to the dining-room, or to the hall of recreation ; she lived shut up in her chamber ; she wandered in the corridors, or went down to the church ; she went about knocking at the doors of the nuns, and saying to them in a plaintive voice, " Sister such a one, pray for me ; Sister such another, pray for me." A report spread that she was disposed to make a general confession.

One day, when I went down first to the church, I saw a piece of paper fixed to the curtain on the rail ; I went and read it : " Dear sisters ! you are invited to pray for a nun who has strayed from the path of duty, and who wishes to return to Heaven." I was tempted to tear it, but I let it remain. Some days after there was another, with the following inscription : " Dear sisters ! you are desired to implore the mercy of Heaven upon a nun who is sensible of her wanderings—they are many." Another day there was another invitation : " Dear sisters ! you are entreated to pray Heaven to deliver a nun from despair, who has lost all confidence in the Divine mercy."

These invitations, in which were painted the cruel vicissitudes of a mind in pain, threw me into a profound melancholy. While I was looking on one occasion upon some of these placards, I asked myself, what are these wanderings with which she reproaches herself ? What crimes can she have committed ? I recollected the exclamations of the director ; I recalled his expressions ; I endeavored to find out their meaning, I could not understand them ; I became, as it were, absorbed. Some of the nuns who observed me

began to talk with one another about me, and if I am not mistaken, they considered me as threatened with the same terrors with which the Superior was afflicted. This poor Superior never looked from under her veil ; she took no part in the affairs of the house ; she never spoke to anybody excepting the new director, with whom she had frequent interviews ; he was a young Benedictine. I know not whether he enjoined all the mortifications which she practiced ; she fasted three days in the week, she macerated herself, she heard service in the inferior stalls ; we passed her door in going to church ; there we would find her prostrated, with her face upon the ground ; she refused to rise in any person's presence. At night she went down stairs barefooted, and in her night dress ; if Sister Theresa or I happened to meet her, she returned, and put her face against the wall. One day, on going out of my cell, I found her prostrate, with her arms stretched out, and her face upon the ground ; she said to me, " Advance, walk over me, tread upon me, I deserve no better treatment."

Shortly after, in a conversation in which all endeavored to display themselves to the best advantage, and to fix the preference of the holy man by every accomplishment they possessed, some one was heard slowly to approach: at intervals to stop, and breathe profound sighs. They listened, they whispered to each other, "It is she, it is our Superior;" they were then silent, and sat down in a circle. It was she in reality. She entered. Her veil reached down to her middle, her arms were crossed upon her breast, and her head reclining. I was the first whom she perceived. At this

moment, she withdrew, from under her veil, one of her hands, with which she covered her eyes, and turning herself a little to one side, with the other she made a signal for us all to depart. We withdrew in silence, and she remained alone with the director. After all our sisters had retired, I went down upon tiptoe, and softly took my station at the parlor door, to overhear what was said. That is very bad, you will say. Oh! as for that, agreed; it is very bad, so I said to myself; and my agitation, the precaution I took to avoid observation, the hesitation with which I proceeded, the voice of my conscience, which every moment urged me to return, would not allow a doubt of it to remain. Curiosity, however, proved victorious, and I went on. But if it was bad to have privily overheard the conversation of two persons, who believed themselves alone, is it not still worse to repeat it? Here again is one of those passages which I write, because I flatter myself you will not read it. I know that this is not the case, but I must, nevertheless, endeavor to persuade myself of its truth. The first word I heard, after a considerable pause, made me shudder: it was, "My father, I am lost." I again collected my spirits. I continued to listen; the veil which hitherto had concealed from me the danger I had undergone was torn off. At this moment, I heard myself called. I was obliged to go; I retired; yet, alas! I had already heard but too much. What a woman! What an abominable woman!

I went to my cell, threw myself frantically upon my bed, and wept copious tears of agony. I now saw my true position, and shuddered at the dangers surrounding me.

The guilty Superior had seen me. Her exclamation of "My Father, I am lost!" was uttered on seeing a part of my dress, as I approached too near the door. She begged me to be secret, not to betray her; she loaded me with promises. "Love is my excuse," said she. "How vain to think these habits, our vows, our ceremonials can change our natures. No!" she exclaimed passionately, "God who has implanted in our hearts the necessity of love, has also sanctioned the fulfillment of its desires. Sister —, I love Father —, and do not blush to own it." I could not but pity the Superior, whilst I condemned her for her weakness in yielding to her criminal desires. I promised to be secret, and kept my word while in the convent, to which my promise was limited. But the Superior was tortured with fear. She doubted the sincerity of my purpose to preserve inviolate the secret which I had learned. Her distress was truly terrible. She watched me constantly, and seemed to be tortured with apprehension whenever I spoke to any of the nuns. Indeed, so dreadful were her fears of discovery that her mind was affected, and her health failed her. She gradually grew worse, mentally and physically, and after living several months in this deplorable situation, she died. What a frightful death! I saw her, the terrible picture of despair and guilt, in her last moment. She thought herself surrounded with infernal spirits, that waited to catch her soul. She exclaimed, in a voice almost suffocated, "There they are! see there!" And opposing to them on the right and left a crucifix which she held in her hand, she howled, she cried, "My God! my God!" Sister

Theresa very soon followed her ; and we received another Superior, advanced in years, full of ill-nature and superstition.

But before I proceed with my own experience, I will lay before the reader another interesting portion of the old papers of Sister Ursula, which I have preserved with so much difficulty. These reminiscences had passed into the hands of a gentleman residing in New York city, who knew the "Sister of Charity" personally, and they are now presented to the public for the first time. Some of the original manuscripts are now extant, and the editor has them in his possession.

## CONFESSIONS OF A SISTER OF CHARITY;

OR,

## RECOLLECTIONS OF A CANADIAN NUN.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.



## I.

My Parentage, Age, and Birth-place, doubtful—My Object in writing these Memoirs, to save American Females from Nunneries, and to hasten their abolishment by Law—Character of Popish Priests—How this Work was prepared about twenty years ago—Its Authenticity.

I AM, probably, a native of Canada, and was born in 1808 or 1810. But I have never been able to ascertain the place or time of my birth with absolute certainty, as several persons, in whom I had reason to place no faith on other subjects, gave me, on different occasions, the only information I ever received on the subject.

The earliest thing I can remember was my living with an old Indian woman, who was very poor, and moved occasionally with me from place to place, treating me with harshness, so that I regarded her with much fear, but knew not how to avoid her, and felt both helpless and friendless. My little

heart, I well remember, throbbed with various and opposite emotions at different times : for the old woman was sometimes kind and even affectionate, though often rough, rude, and even cruel. I have since learned that such variable conduct cannot reasonably be attributed to anything but habits of occasional intemperance ; and I presume such was the fact. How, or at what precise time I came into her power, or why she kept me so long, provided for me, and often at much self-denial, as I know she did, I have never been able to learn, or even to conjecture.

Some persons have told me that I am of Canadian origin, others that I am of mingled American and Indian blood ; and I have been at different times treated with the kindness of a relative by individuals of various descent. However, I am not certain that I have a single relative in the world.

This, however, is not of chief importance to me ; my object is to place on record facts which may be instructive and useful to others, especially to the people of the United States.

I have had much acquaintance with the Black Nunnery, or Hotel Dieu, and the Grey Nunnery of Montreal ; and they are very different institutions from what strangers imagine, who make short visits of curiosity to the few apartments to which they are admitted. I shall tell of what I have personally seen and known of the interior, in the course of years in which I was connected with the nuns and priests, without expecting those who are unacquainted with me, very readily to credit all that I say ; I am aware



that much that I have to communicate, may have the air of improbability or of pure fiction to persons unacquainted with convents, and the character, manners, and habits of Roman Catholic priests. But those who have had opportunities to see and judge, will be more inclined to read it all, for they must find that I tell some things corresponding with their own experience or observation. I claim to know more than nuns are commonly supposed to know—viz., the interior of more than one convent, and to have performed the part of a *Sister of Charity*, some of whom undergo many transformations, when the priests choose so to order them.

I have mingled but little with Protestants, but have been surprised at the ignorance I have found among them respecting the priests and nuns of Canada. They seem to suppose that they must be in many respects much like other people, making some little allowance for circumstances. They say that, having been brought up in the Catholic faith, they must naturally believe what they are taught; that they are doubtless sincere, worship God in their own way, and are as much to be trusted and relied upon as any people in general. If anything is said about the doctrines which they are taught, as being rather unfavorable to habits of truth, freedom of opinion, &c., or of the secrecy of convents, it is common to hear in reply—that it is denied by respectable men that such are their doctrines; that intelligent Catholics must see that the opinions and institutions of America are right and good, and therefore become attached to them; that there are bad people everywhere, and that it is a sin to be uncharitable. If these facts are

appealed to, and I, or any one else, says, "I have seen such or such things in Canada," or some other part of the world, it is probable you will hear in reply—"I have been in Mexico, or Cuba, France, or Ireland, and they are Catholic countries, and I found no such thing in all my travels." Or, if no other reply seems left, so firm are many persons in the belief that all is right in convents, and all pure and holy where priests and nuns are to be found, that they will exclaim: "Oh, you are fanatical! You are persecuting a mistaken but excellent set of people. I will not believe that they, or anybody else can be so bad!"

If you show how convents and priests, and nuns, and Jesuits, have been described as uniformly bad in different countries, and at different times, as is the case so far as I have known anything about them, you are told that there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and that it is impossible to come at the truth.

Now, such conversations I have listened to more than once, and, as I said before, I have been much astonished to find that intelligent people in the United States are very ignorant of many things which are perfectly well-known to persons of even little general knowledge or education in Canada. I therefore presume, that many will be ready to condemn me, if they should never hear what *I* have to say, and that I shall be regarded as wholly unworthy of credit. But I am accustomed to be disbelieved, and am not to be deterred by such an apprehension from the task I have undertaken, although there is still a stronger reason than any I have mentioned, to lead me to expect that I shall not

be believed. I have been accustomed to deceive. I have been trained to it, and have pursued a long and systematic course of falsehood.

This avowal, I am aware, will shock virtuous persons, and give them a strong feeling of aversion against me. I know they will be ready to turn from me with horror and disgust, and yet I make the confession, I make it voluntarily and from choice. I feel no obligation to make it, except an obligation of my conscience. Perhaps, it will be thought from this, that I have changed my character, and now look upon deception in a proper light. It may be thought that one who confesses such a sin, repents of it. This is exactly my case ; I do, indeed, regard falsehood in a very different light from formerly, from that in which I was taught to regard it. I have therefore renounced it, and expect to prove it by my conduct, and to give evidence of my change of practice, by making known things which will hereafter be found to be true, by satisfactory evidence, as may in future be obtained in different ways, and from, perhaps, many sources.

I am aware that I labor under peculiar difficulties at the outset. I have undertaken to make known a wicked and dangerous system, the system of convents ; and I am to do it by making known what I myself have seen and heard, when a member of convents, or in connection with them. The system is one of deceit and fraud, and I have had some hand in carrying it on. Of course, in accusing convents, I accuse myself of being a deceiver. When charging nuns with imposture, I call myself an impostor.

But it will be evident to every mind, that the same objection might lie against any witness, whom it would be possible to present against nunneries; and that if such ground would be sufficient for rejecting one witness unheard, and without trying her testimony by the reasonable rules of evidence, it would be equally proper to reject any other witness; and then such a society of deceivers could never be convicted, because their seclusion shuts them up from the observation and acquaintance of all, except their own members. But it is sufficient to say that "States' evidences" are by no means excluded from courts, but quite the contrary. Their testimony is sought for, and often proves of great value, not on its own account alone, but when satisfactorily sustained by other and independent witnesses.

I present myself, therefore, as an escaped nun, one who has passed through a variety of transformations, including that of a *Sister of Charity*; and declare that I have facts to communicate, which I think important to society, and which it is very difficult for the public ever to know, partly because of the few persons who are ever at liberty to publish them, scarcely one is ever to be found who is willing to come out and confess acts discreditable to herself, and especially to claim the character of one who has been a habitual deceiver.

I have one more remark to make before I commence my narrative. I know not how, or by whom my story may be brought before the world, if it ever is. I shall write it and put it in what I hope will prove a place of safety. I trust it may fall into safe hands, and at some future time be pub-

lished and be useful. I entertain a deep and imperishable enmity against nunneries, because they have been places in which I have suffered numerous and dreadful wrongs. Some of the inmates have been my bitter enemies, and I feel that it would be just if I could bring them to punishment. It would certainly be a duty to make them examples, to deter others from daring to perpetrate such crimes as theirs, even in the secluded abodes of superstition and sin, where they so long kept me imprisoned. If they could be exposed, they would not obtain more victims; and oh! that I could save some of the lovely and artless young girls who enter the Canadian nunneries every year, from the United States as well as from the surrounding country! If my narrative ever comes before the world, it will prevent some of them from trusting themselves in the power of such hypocritical monsters, for it will show something of the impostures and atrocities practiced in nunneries, and give at least some hints of things too shameful to be exposed in full. I have requested that additions may be made to the chapters which I have written, by persons to whom I have communicated and explained some things which I have not time or ability to write. I have never been accustomed to composing, though I was much employed, at times, in the convent, in keeping certain accounts, and occasionally in writing letters to different persons and places. While, therefore, much of the succeeding narrative has been written by my own hand, portions of what may accompany my own may be written by others, who, I trust, will commit to paper without error, what I have communicated by word of mouth. I wish,

however, to state that there may possibly be some discrepancy discoverable in the book, if it appears ; and, if such should be the case, my enemies will of course expose it, and make the worst of it, to discredit the whole story. If I could read the whole when written and in full, before publication, I should be willing and glad to challenge them to prove even a single word untrue : but I shall never be able to see it complete, and no person but myself can have an intimate acquaintance with all the numerous places, persons, dates and circumstances, alluded to in the course of my long and varied history. I must expect that some errors, and perhaps some evident discrepancies, will be found by the shrewd eye of a guilty priest, deeply interested in discrediting a tale, which throws upon all this tribe some portion of the shame which properly belongs to them. Let the impartial reader then, not pay so much regard to the first hue and cry which may be raised against the Canadian Nun, whenever she lifts her voice to the people of the United States : but let every person read and consider the whole coolly and deliberately, compare evidence, and listen to facts elsewhere established, and then decide as reason demands. The first thing which priests attempt, when any one, especially a nun, begins to speak against their darling secret retreats, the convent, is to stop the ears of the public by a deafening clamor. They cry falsehood ! perjury, fanaticism, insanity, uncharitableness, insult to the Holy Roman religion ! &c., &c. And simple-minded people, who have been brought up in the pure society of a Protestant country, cannot easily believe that

priests can be vicious and hypocritical. There never was a fugitive nun who complained of her convent, who was not reported to be *insane*—an escaped bedlamite ; and, probably, no person ever undertook to expose the corruptions or the tyranny of convents, who was not tempted to cease by bribes, or threatened with some severe punishment, to terrify to silence. I shall not be deterred by any consideration, from giving to the world some of the facts I have in my possession ; and I wish to make them subservient to the good of mankind and society, and especially of the virtuous of my own sex. Therefore,

*To the Mothers and Daughters of America, this True and  
Warning Tale is Dedicated by the Author.*

## II.

Sent to the Grey Nunnery in Montreal, when a Child—Companions there—My Foster Brother—A sketch of his History and Amiable Character—Caughnawaga Village, and Indians.

I WAS sent to Montreal when a girl, and placed in the school of the Grey Nuns. There a large part of my life was spent ; but I left the convent at different times, for different reasons, as will be seen in my narrative.

Among the children with whom I associated in the school of the Grey Nunnery, was a boy, very nearly of my own age, whose name I need not give. He was of a pleasant, kind disposition, and always a favorite with me, as he was one of the few from whom I received marks of sincere friendship. I was always told that we had both been baptized together, and had the same godmother ; and of this we occasionally reminded each other, feeling as if they connected us, in some degree, like relatives. We were schoolmates and playmates for several years ; and he displayed, in childhood, the same disinterested character and friendship for me, which he has ever since retained. He was one, not only of my earliest, but of my best and most faithful friends. \*

He was said to have been born at Caughnawaga,



an Indian village on the southern bank of the St. Lawrence, opposite Lachine, and about ten miles from Montreal. His father was a Frenchman and his mother was the daughter of a Frenchman who married a squaw. Though below the middle size, he possessed polished manners, and a pleasing exterior, although his early life was chiefly spent at his native place, and among the society of the Indians. It happened, in consequence of some peculiar circumstances, that a tract of land, of considerable value, was left, by will, to him jointly with myself, by a person residing at Sault St. Louis.

In consequence of the contested title of our land, in the year 1829, my young friend thought it proper, in order to secure our claim, to make a visit to England; and as he apprised me of his intention, I wrote a letter to Sir —, by authority of some of the priests, which he took with him. He was gone a long time, and, on his return, informed me that he had an introduction to His Majesty, George IV., and interviews with some less distinguished personages, but without succeeding in his claims. He, however came home with new ideas and several plans; and soon after his return, began to show a spirit for improvement. He marked out a tract of land which had been left him by his mother, in the village of Caughnawaga, and fenced it in with a stone wall. His neighbors, the Indians, immediately began to regard him with jealousy and dislike, because they are confirmed in their hereditary habits, and opposed to any change, especially to anything like civilization. Their land, even around and within the village, had

never been enclosed for cultivation, and they were resolved that it never should be. When, therefore, the young traveller began to build a second wall, a number of the Indians assembled on the spot one evening, and, on his making his appearance, began to throw stones at him. In self-defence, he wounded one of them with a stone, in his stomach, which it was supposed caused his death the next day. This, however, was doubtful, as the man was well enough to go out in a boat the morning after, when he exerted himself very much in rowing, and took cold.

A prosecution was commenced against my friend ; but fearing that the Indians, according to their practice, would kill him without waiting for its decision, he first took refuge in the church, then, for a time, in a private retreat, which I could show in the Nunnery (as many fugitives have done before and since), and afterwards crossed the boundary into the United States, and spent about eight months in Albany and Brooklyn. His trial had a favorable issue, after which he returned to Canada ; and, having no further apprehensions from his countrymen, he prosecuted plans of improvement with spirit. He has now an expensive and elegant house, well furnished, and adorned with taste, where I have visited him more than once, and where I have always found a welcome, for old acquaintance sake. He has in a parlor a painting of the baptism of John the Baptist, and another of a different subject, also a fine one ; and on the top of the house is an observatory, with telescopes, through which he can not only see Montreal, but read some of the signs upon the houses.

I mention these particulars, to give a clearer idea of the means which were at the command of one of my best friends, and to show how he was enabled to render me important assistance, when aid was necessary. Such are my obligations to his kindness, that I can never lose a lively and grateful sense of his kindness; and my gratitude is the stronger, because I know, that on his return from abroad, with a large estate at his command, and with a disposition to rise above his former habits, and some of his former companions, he did not forget the friends of his childhood.

The village of Caughnawaga\* is as different from the country towns which I have seen in the United States, as it is possible to imagine. I may give a future description of it, and of some of its inhabitants, and occurrences there, and leave others to make comparisons for themselves. I had occasion to visit the place now and then; and I presume even the circumstances which I may touch upon will bear witness to my familiarity with the peculiar state of things in that Indian village.

Caughnawaga stands on the southern bank of the river St. Lawrence, a few miles above Montreal. Seen from the river, on the opposite shore, nothing is visible except the spire of a small stone church, a long and high wall which encloses the priest's house, and a square piece of ground, and a cluster of miserable hovels, the habitations of the remnant of the poor and degraded Indian tribe, whose name belongs to the place.

\* NOTE BY THE EDITOR:—There is a striking resemblance in most of the Jesuit missionary villages, among savage nations in different parts of the world. The

priests are careful to build a substantial edifice, under the name of a church, which includes or is connected with dwellings for themselves, and such other compartments as they please to require. A piece of ground is often enclosed by a high stone wall, apparently for a garden; and sometimes cultivated as such; but, to the eye of a topographer, or even a mere man of observation, the whole presents the aspect of well-planned fort or place of defence. The entrances are commonly few and narrow, so placed, as to be easily closed up or defended; and the walls are thick and strong enough to form a good defence against any force which the people might be able to bring against it, in case of their becoming hostile. The system adopted by the priests of Rome, in their treatment of rude nations, to whom they pretend to convey Christianity, is one of moral subjugation. They reduce them to a virtual vassalage, and never allow them to rise beyond a certain point towards civilization, withholding from them real knowledge, especially the knowledge of the word of God, and surfeiting them with superstitious, fanatical, and idolatrous ideas. At the same time, they inspire them with an abject reverence and fear towards themselves, claiming to be clothed with superhuman authority and power, and keeping them as their bond slaves, to work for their pecuniary profit. They seem to expect to arouse the poor natives to violence and rebellion, even before they begin to preach to them the false Christianity which they go to propagate, for their own interest. This is shown by their constructing such places of defence for themselves while they leave the sheep of their flocks outside of their strong and lofty walls, unprotected from any enemy that may assail from without. The difference between the popish missionaries and others in these points, need not be here described. Caughnawaga is a good specimen of the missions of the Jesuits.

## III.

Left the Grey Nunnery for a Residence in the Country—Treatment there—Instructions received—Return to the Convent—Become a Teacher—My Pupils.

AT a village in Upper Canada were a family said to be distant relations of my own, which had removed thither in the year 1800. The mother had a number of sons, but much to her disappointment, no daughter. The first I knew of them was from a claim she made for me, at the convent, as her grand-daughter. The Superior, to whom she applied, told her she would refer the matter to the Bishop, and be guided by his decision. I was afterwards informed that he decided that she should be gratified, and that she agreed to pay a sum of money, in annual payments, for the favor granted. This I have on hearsay. I was given up to her, and left Montreal in her company. I never learned what relationship was supposed to exist between us, but the woman treated me as well as if I had been indeed her grand-daughter. I profited by her instructions, learned not only to speak fluently in English, but to read and write pretty readily. She taught me also several songs, which I was fond of singing; particularly I remember to this day one called the "Cruel Mother's Tragedy," and another entitled the "Major's Only Son." My grandmother took

much pleasure in hearing me sing them, after I had succeeded in learning them. Her house was in a pleasant place, with a trout brook running near.

I spent a year and a half at that place with my kind friend, but, in the meantime, her husband died; when the priest sent for the money agreed on, she said she could not pay until the settlement of the estate. Before this was accomplished, however, she died of a fever; and then her eldest son refused to acknowledge the contract, and said he had no wish to have me remain in the family. I was, therefore sent for to return to the convent, and often amused the priests in their hours of jollity, by singing my new songs.

As there were no other children in the convent who knew anything of English, I boasted much of my superior knowledge and accomplishments, and was proud, and "as bold as a pagan idol." The Superior took much offence at this, and by way of penance, directed that I should stand upon a stool every day, and read and spell English to every person who visited the convent.

Being now thought capable and large enough, I was set to teach some of the small children in the Grey Nunnery, and numbers of young women are now living, who can bear witness to this fact. Among those whom I instructed in English were Olivette Gaspé (a very sweet child, and my favorite), Betsey Mount, daughter of Dr. Mount, of Pointe Clare, Margarite Gaspé, of Sault St. Louis, Mary Ann and Margaret Laflamme, of Lachine, Lizette Babineau—(her father died of the cholera the second year, the oldest lawyer in the city). Clotilde Hughes was another of my pupils.

There were other girls whose clothes were kept in No. 2 ; but only these were under my instruction. I taught them English, spelling, writing, and sewing.

As I grew up I became more and more intimate with the life of nuns, and passed through many scenes which might interest a reader, especially if given at length and in order, with explanations sufficient to make everything intelligible. But I shall not attempt anything more than to notice a few single scenes and incidents which occurred at different periods, in connection with the two nunneries in which I spent most of my life, without attempting to show, in full, their courses or relations, which would require more time than I have at my command, before my intended departure to a distant and quiet retreat.

## IV.

Trials of a Nun's Life—In ill-health—Went to the St. Francis's Indian Village—A kind old Squaw—My Occupations there—Exposure in the Forest.

THE life of a nun is necessarily subject to many painful trials, and debarred from many enjoyments. Indeed, to a female educated in American society, it must be miserable in the extreme. While the delusion lasts which brings the young into convents, there may be a species of ill-founded enjoyment, for the credulous girl believes that everything is what it appears to be. The Superior a saint, the "sisters" striving to approach perfection, the Bishop, who bears the title of "My Lord," and receives the humble reverence of all, is supposed to bear divine authority, and all the inmates and the place itself, are regarded as pure and holy. She believes that religion consists in self-denial, the opposition and mortification of the feelings, and that the way to secure the favor of God and everlasting salvation, is to renounce parents, home, friends, acquaintances, property, and prospects. Having done all this, and taken a step which they consider as not to be retraced, with the convent doors locked behind them, they fancy the object served, and whatever attractions the world may have had, they are regarded



with suspicion and fear, being taught that even the most harmless are dangerous and fatal, and that every desire for them is sinful. In their imagination, they have painted the occupations of the nunnery as holy, uncontaminated by any taint of earth. If they have had any bitter experience in life, if any disappointment, suffering, or sorrow has fallen to their lot (as is the case with many even of the young), or if, as is perhaps quite as common, they have privately become deeply impressed with the unsatisfactory notion of worldly enjoyments, their brief duration, or doubtful issue, they are in a state of mind exposed to the influence of the crafty and hypocritical priest or jesuit, who stands behind the nun or teacher, and under their direction may be convinced that it is a duty to do things which even common sense or natural humanity would condemn.

I was once very ill, and after being some time under the care of such physicians as they had at the Hotel Dieu and Nun's Island, it was determined that I should go to the St. Francis Indians, which I had desired and requested. This was partly because a certain Indian was to have a trial or examination, in relation to some business with which I was acquainted, and he had desired that I would act as his interpreter, as he could not speak English, and knew no person who spoke Indian, in whom he confided. I felt that I should be obliged to bear witness against him, from conscientious motives, and wishing to be absent from Montreal at that time, to avoid the necessity, I was glad to make a visit to the St. Francis Indians, under the plea of consulting some of their old women, with whom I was acquainted. I there-

fore, having obtained permission, went with a companion, and found a very kind reception, and received every attention.

My most particular friend, a poor old squaw, said to me, "You have been very much ill-treated. The priests ought to be ashamed to conduct themselves as they do. - They never ought to have the care of young women. Many of those shut in nunneries lose their health, and many die early. Stay with me, and I will take good care of you; but you must wear our dress, because everybody will know you for a nun if you do not, and many here dislike nuns. She accordingly made me dress like an Algonquin squaw, and I spent about six months with her. She was a great friend of the priests, and believed all they told her about their power and authority, but not much of their holiness. They occasionally sent sick nuns to her to be nursed, and paid her for it. It was her support. Some of them called at her hut every few days, so that I had news from the convent as often as once a week, and learned how things went on. I could sing with the Indians, and became a general favorite. They called me Caronyohara. There was often some excitement in the village, for the squaws often quarrelled, and were very violent against each other, but fought only with their tongues. They sometimes fell into most furious fits of passion, but never struck each other. I have sometimes seen them throw themselves upon the ground, and beat it with their feet and hands, and sometimes with their heads.

Some of the pleasant hours of my time were spent in hearing the old squaw narrate long stories about the St. Francis

Indians, the Algonquins, and the Iroquois, which she sometimes did in English, as she spoke that language freely. My enjoyment at that time was partly owing to the agreeable recollections of my childhood, when I associated much with Indian children. When I was young, I loved the little squaws; they were my youthful love, and I can never forget their red faces. An Indian always looks good to me, and always will. I cannot forget my young friends.

The old squaw, however, was not now quite so careful of me as formerly. She told me one day that I must go with her into the woods, to gather some herbs. We therefore set off with her little French cart and *gosatus*, and rode six or seven miles to a dark forest, where she made a stop with the wagon, tied the horse with a long rope, and leaving me to watch him, walked away, soon disappearing under the trees. There I remained, anxiously awaiting her return. But hour passed after hour, it began to rain violently, and finally evening came on, without any appearance of her.

Having discovered a house at no great distance, I went and asked them to let me in, but they refused, saying I was a squaw. The Indians, they told me, had done them injury, and they would not suffer a squaw to live if they had their own way. Had they the power, they would shoot every Indian. I therefore returned to the cart, and sat down under it, that being the only place I could find. It continued to rain a long time; I was very wet, and thought I should die. At length the moon rose, so that I had some light, which was a considerable relief after the long time I had spent in the darkness. But I had yet to remain in that lonely and uncomfort-

able position until morning, and it was not before ten o'clock in the forenoon that the old woman made her appearance.

She said little, gave no account of herself, and expressed no regret, but, untying the horse, and mounting the cart with me, drove rapidly home over the road we had passed the previous day. My blanket, which was very thick, was thoroughly wet, and I was completely chilled. I took a cold which brought on a sickness that left its effect a long time; indeed, I think I have never yet entirely recovered from it. Thus, instead of being restored to health by my residence with the St. Francis Indians, through a single instance of neglect I was seriously and almost fatally injured.

Some of the priests soon after paid their customary visit to the old woman, and, on seeing me so feeble, inquired the cause. She affected great concern, and said she was not able to account for my illness satisfactorily, but thought it must have been produced by drinking too much cold water. I had her in too much dread to venture to deny it, for fear she would kill me, which I think she would have done, in a fit of passion, as readily as she would a snake, for in her heart she had a bitter antipathy to people of white blood.

I found, ere long, that she was addicted to occasional fits of intoxication; and then she was so violent, and even furious, that I was obliged to go into another room and fasten the door, and stay alone until she got over her fury. She would come to the door, and cry to me to forgive her, and beg me not to tell the priests, even falling on her knees, and supplicating in the most earnest and humble terms, exclaiming, "Oh, you won't, will you? I will never hurt you." I always

promised as she desired; and then she would treat me with all the kindness of a mother for three or four days. Then she would begin to appear sullen and discontented with everything, which would usually continue two or three days, after which she was seized with a voracious appetite, and ate enough to kill two white men; then lying down, she would sleep profoundly for about twenty-four hours. When she awoke, she seemed calm, composed and in good health and spirits, and would conduct as rationally as other people, until she began to drink liquor again, which usually was as soon as she could get it, and then she passed through the same career once more.

I became so weary of such scenes, and indeed apprehensive that they would result, first or last, in some serious injury to me, or even, perhaps, in my death, that I was not sorry to leave the place at the first opportunity. After a few incidents which it is not important to mention here, I found myself again in Montreal, and engaged once more in the nunnery.

## V.

Strange Events—Sunday Occupations in Convents—Drunken Priests—Pretended Miracles.

SOME very singular occurrences took place in the Grey Convent several years ago, about which I will not attempt to make full explanations. The results to me were of some importance, and the case will illustrate some of the many ways in which the convents often have intercourse with society around them. It will be seen, from this and other cases which I might greatly multiply, that the secluded character of nunneries is often used for the purpose, not of shutting out the influence of the world, but rather to shut up in secrecy those who plot against the peace and happiness of the world, and for excluding the world from a proper and rightful superintendence and control of its own business. In short, under pretence of securing a little domain for holy purposes, free from the intrusion of human passions and crimes, convents actually are the places of refuge for the wicked and vicious, whence they can issue to prey upon society.

The occupations of the nuns and priests in the convent on Sundays were such as would hardly be thought possible by people in the States. I shall not mention or even hint at

some, which decency will forbid. I will say, however, that after the ceremonies of the day were over, and also between them, the nuns were allowed to amuse themselves with games of chance. The priests usually spent the afternoon in gambling and drinking beer and wine. There was a nun of a very singular disposition, in the Hôtel Dieu, fond of jokes and tricks, who in different ways made a good deal of disturbance, frequently without letting it be known how it was brought about. She had a great antipathy to the priests, especially to some, who I believe had ill treated her. She came to me one day while I was employed as a nurse, to get a large dose of jalap ; and told me confidentially that she was going to put it into the first mug of beer which she should draw for D. and S. They had put a severe penance upon her at the secret instigation of the Superior, and she would be revenged. I had no predilection for those obnoxious priests, and procured her the drug, which she took with her. On the following Sunday she came running to me in the sick room, and told me to follow her if I wished to see S. in a pretty plight. She led me to the community-room, and there was the poor priest under the effects of a terrible emetic, to her most sincere, though disguised, gratification.

I shall now relate what I saw and heard of the priests' acts and conversation in a few instances. And first, a specimen of the amusements of two priests in a state of intoxication.

Once I saw two priests, quite tipsy, make a bet about two insects, which could run the fastest (one bet five and the other ten dollars), one on a hot plate, and the other on a

cold one. The one on the cold plate stuck fast, and the one on the hot plate ran across it. The one who lost had to pay the ten dollars.

To show how the priests value the Sabbath, a young woman of my acquaintance, while at St. Denis, told me that she at one time happened to dance on Ash-Wednesday, and the priest put a very severe penance on her. Another time she danced on a Sunday, and the priest did not think it worth putting a penance on her at all, as he thought that Sunday did not need to be observed as strictly as Ash-Wednesday. I wish to inform my readers how the Catholics in the country places pay these priests for confession. Each farmer has to give for each acre of land that he owns a certain number of bushels of wheat, peas, and potatoes. About Christmas time, also, the priest of each Parish goes about begging for the child Jesus, as they call him ; and at each house they visit, they expect to be well treated with wine and biscuit.

One day in Lent three priests came to dine at the nunnery, and asked me what we had for dinner. I told them that I believed there was nothing but fish. They sent me to the Superior, to ask her if there was any poultry. The Superior told me to tell them she had two fine ducks. They told me to have them brought to them ; they would turn them into fish. I brought them before they were picked, and they immediately crossed them on each of their joints, saying that was done in order to drive the devil out of them, as they said meat and poultry were possessed of the devil during Lent on Fridays.



One day at communion I happened to drop the wafer on the ground, and the priest ordered me to lick it up, which I did. After mass, he requested me also to put a pin in the spot where it had dropped; and, before vespers, he went and cut the piece out of the carpet, and burned it to ashes in a plate, buried the ashes under the altar, and he told me I was as guilty as any of the murderers of Jesus Christ, and that I had trampled on our Saviour. He told me further that once a woman, on receiving Sacrament, let the wafer drop, and did not inform the Priest of it, but let it remain without picking it up, the devil having tempted her to do so. After mass, when the bellman was going through the Church, he perceived seven angels guarding round the spot; and was so much affected by some power that he was not able to stand, but fell on his face, and there remained. A priest afterwards entered the church, and as he approached the altar, was struck with awe. The foremost angel spoke to him, and informed him of all that had happened, and requested him to go for the Bishop, which he did. The bishop came; and on lifting the wafer, they saw it slip upward through his fingers, and gradually arise, until it disappeared far above, passing through the clouds. He added that the board has ever since been stained with blood; and the more they try to rub it off, the brighter the color appears. It remains, he assured me, in the Old French Church at this day, where the board is still preserved.

## VI.

Visit to a Secret Hospital for Nuns in the Country—The Convent Gardener—Old Lazare—Mysterious Hints.

IN the year 1832, I think it was, I was sent to a country place to attend on a number of nuns, who were there in feeble health to be cured. I found they were in a kind of hospital, in the upper story of the church, where accommodations were provided for them; but all was so arranged that nothing could be seen from the outside, calculated to excite even the least suspicion; and things were conducted, in all respects, with so much secrecy, that the people in the neighborhood had no suspicion that fourteen or fifteen nuns from Montreal were there for a long time, with their attendants, although they were frequently visited by a physician of the neighborhood.

I had been sent there, as I supposed, because it was thought that I was in possession of some medical knowledge and skill, which I had been taught by my Indian mother; and I had opportunity to practice on the patients placed there. I often saw the physician, and received directions and prescriptions from him. As he was strictly forbidden to speak even a single word to any of the nuns, I never heard his voice, but received all my directions from him in

writing. The first time I received any, I was much surprised to find they were written in English, as almost everybody spoke nothing but French. I was afterwards informed that he was an American and a protestant ; but whether this was true or not, I am unable to say.

We occasionally had a visit from a woman, who was said to be an Abbess, and a resident of the place. She seemed to come to find faults in our behavior, which she took pleasure in reporting to the priests, who were sure to believe her ; and then we had penances laid upon us, in great numbers, and often very severe ones.

Having, at that time of my life, no fixed principles to regulate my conduct, no serious views of right or wrong, I regarded everything that I would call a jest, as a trivial matter ; and a falsehood, spoken in joke, as altogether harmless. Having, therefore, a natural turn for teasing, and finding that most of the sick were ignorant and superstitious Irish girls, I often amused myself by exciting fear in them, to produce which I would tell them preposterous fictions.

For example : I gravely assured them that I could talk with the angels, and jabbered a little in Indian, as a specimen of the language in which I conversed. I professed to tell their fortunes with cards, in a manner taught me some time before, by a girl who since had died. The poor and simple Irish nuns believed it all, and would freely confess to me every part of their private history which I wished to learn. I recounted some of their confessions to the priests, and they expressed much gratification at finding me so skill-

ful, and at the results, and often directed me to make further inquiries ; and the consequences to some were very vexatious penances.

There was a singular man employed in the gardens of the convent, whom I used to call our Old Connoisseur. He had a great deal to do about getting herbs, particularly, as I heard him and others say, banewort and cicuta. I know nothing of botany, with the exception of the most common plants, so that I never understood what he really was doing, or what his business was. I have heard him asked frequently, if he was sure that he had got the right plants or roots (I do not know which were intended), and they were used, as I understood, to make wine of, or to be mixed with wine, and put away in bottles. He seemed to have some doubts whether he was doing what was his duty, for he would say—"Sure, the priests know what is right, and I do just as they tell me ; but if you have any objections, why, go and see for yourself, and then be content." I did not know what to make of such remarks, nor of what he said to me one day, when, as I was passing a door, on my way to the school-room, I stopped a moment, and took up one of his bottles.

"Don't be in a hurry to take that !" said he ; "you may wait till you have some wrinkles in your face, and then, perhaps, you will have enough of it. Look at the old dames ; you see they are much more under subjection than you are. But if you are wise, you will not tell what I have said to you ; don't take it for a joke, but observe things, and you will discover what you don't understand yet." Then, as if

fearing he had exposed himself by trusting something to me which would be injurious to him, if known, he added—“Now are you going to keep this to yourself, or will you go and tell it?” I satisfied him that I would not, in any way, expose him, though I felt there would have been no great danger, even if I had been disposed, as I had no idea of what he intended to hint at.

That old man had a wooden leg, and went commonly by the name of the “Old Grand Lazare,” his real name being Lazare Lazert. He was a native of France, as was said, and son of an officer, named Lazert, of the French army, who had been in Canada, and taken an Indian wife, who had afterwards lived with him in France. He lived in the nunnery as a kind of servant, though he seemed to be chiefly employed in the way I have mentioned. I sometimes have gathered banewort for him at the Priests’ Farms. Cicuta grows wild.

There was another man whom I occasionally saw in the Hôtel Dieu, of a different character. I understood he had been a priest, but had incurred the severe displeasure of the bishop and others (how, I do not certainly know, though I have heard that he was reported to be a heretic), and he was kept in confinement, and underwent punishments which, I judged, were intended to destroy his life by degrees. When I first knew him, he was employed to braid trimmings for surplices, and in painting oil-cloths. He was the first person who advised me to leave the convent if I possibly could. He spoke to me with much earnestness and solemnity, whenever I had an opportunity to converse with him ;

he anticipated approaching death, but seemed firm, and of unshaken courage. A physician came in to see him one day, and I believe performed some operation on him; and he died about fifteen hours afterwards, as I was told.

## VII.

The inveigling of a Scotch Girl into the Nunnery—Her Confidential Conversation—The Superior's Plan—Its Execution—The Chapel—A Vision of the Devil and the Virgin Mary.

I MUST now relate the history of a conspiracy for the inveigling of a young lady into the nunnery, in which I had a share, and a very important one. I confess, with contrition and shame, that I committed a great sin, and did an irreparable wrong to an innocent and unsuspecting person, who had never injured me. My only excuse is, that I was taught to think my share in the transaction meritorious, and that I was acting by the directions and commands of those who had me in their power, and habitually under their government. It has left a heavy load on my conscience, which can never be removed. I often reproach myself severely, and can never cease to mourn over the recollection of it. I was the cause of confining in the convent, for life, a young lady of Scotch descent, who entered as a novice, about five months later than myself.

After we had remained as novices some time, and about a year before I became a veiled nun, she one day told me she wished to speak her mind to me, and I gave her attention, with an expression of friendly interest. She said

her feelings had lately been changed. Her mother was a widow lady, and very rich. She had entered the convent because her mother wished her to marry a young man named Duchambeau, or Deschambeaux (I am not certain which), a relation of a lady of Longueil, or named Longueil; but she was attached to another gentleman, of whom I had some knowledge, but whom, for a particular reason, I do not wish to mention. She told me that she had serious doubts of late, whether the life of a nun was happy; and she had great apprehensions that she might repent if she should once take the veil, when it would be too late, as she could never leave the convent again. Now, knowing that I intended to become a nun, she wished to suspend her decision, until I should be able to give her my opinion from my own experience, and she therefore requested me to be prepared to act as her friend in that manner. I expressed my readiness to do her a kindness, as I felt an interest in the confiding girl; but that night, after retiring to bed, it occurred to me that I might perform a great service to the convent and to religion, and gain a high honor to myself, by inducing her to become a nun; and I determined at once to communicate the plan to the Superior. Now, it was the custom for any of the novices who wished to speak to the Superior, to mention the desire to one of the old nuns. This I did the next morning, when I was conducted to the Superior's door, and readily admitted. When I had communicated to her the object of my visit, she expressed much satisfaction, and said she would make arrangements to have the matter taken up at once. She would inform the old nuns who had



charge of the novice's department, that I might have opportunities to converse freely with the Scotch girl, and that I would be appointed to "read the lecture" that day in their room, which should be an appropriate one chosen by herself.

She then told me that if I succeeded in my plan, she would obtain for me a precious relic of the most extraordinary and wonderful powers, which, by its virtues, would secure me fifty days' indulgence for every day that I should wear it. It was a piece of the *heart of Mary Magdalen!* She further promised to intercede for me with the Virgin Mary, to get for me as high a place as that of the founder of the nunnery. She then gave me directions how to proceed. On the following day, after reading the lecture, I was to take the Scotch girl aside, at some convenient opportunity, and have conversation with her. The old nuns would, of course, make no objection, and not interrupt our interview. I was to tell her the steps by which a novice becomes prepared to be a nun, and speak in high terms of the happiness which attends her through life, and the blessings it secures hereafter.

This was all done. I read the lecture as appointed; and, on the next day, taking an opportunity which I readily found, I held a long conversation with the interesting girl, in which I performed my part according to instructions. No objection was made by any one, although such an interview was a direct violation of one of the most rigid laws of the convent, conversation being on almost every occasion strictly prohibited, under penances no way agreeable. I

described the pleasures of a nunnery life in glowing terms, and urged her as a friend to take the subject of becoming one in serious consideration, for I had long deliberated on it, and made up my mind, and felt assured that it was the happiest event in my life when I came to the decision. She promised to give the matter immediate and serious attention, and showed by her appearance that she trusted me implicitly, and was deeply impressed with my remarks.

I then told her that it was her duty to obtain money from her mother, and give it to the convent. It would be an act of great merit, it would be applied to some holy purpose, and be highly pleasing to God, because a service to the church. She promised to consider this subject also, and I left her, well satisfied that I had made a promising beginning in my undertaking.

Though I now look back upon this proceeding with sorrow and self-reproach, and wish it were possible to make some amends to those whom I deeply injured by the base imposture, I was at that time so completely deceived myself, that I felt no compunctions of conscience, but on the contrary, really believed that I was engaged in conferring a great benefit upon the poor girl herself, while I was promoting the honor of the convent and religion, and securing to myself inestimable treasures.

The Superior was overjoyed when I hastened to her apartment, and communicated my report to her. She directed me to hold another conversation with the poor, artless child without delay, and tell her that I was inspired by the Virgin Mary to speak to her in this manner, and that I

could procure her an interview with the Virgin if she desired it. If she would go into the nuns' private chapel with me, that divine personage would speak to her. This she desired ; and I afterward, in concert with the Superior, appointed an hour for the interview.

There was a large cross, which was sometimes used by those who had to perform the peculiar ceremony of lying, in imitation of our Saviour, extended in the attitude of crucifixion. On such occasions the person was required to prepare herself with great solemnity for the ceremony, and then, having the cross laid upon the floor, to enter alone in the gloom of the darkened chapel, lay herself upon it, extend her arms upon the arms of the cross, and lie there in silence perhaps ten or twelve hours, fasting and meditating, or praying the whole time. The Superior told me that things should be prepared for the intended vision, so that in the course of the next week the performance would take place. That week was one very abundant in favors to me. I had presents of many different kinds ; little luxuries were frequently brought me, such as I had never seen before ; I was allowed great freedom, and suffered no penances or restraint. The Superior and old nuns repeatedly expressed their high satisfaction with my behavior, said I was fast making progress in the religious life, that they had full confidence in me, and thought I would become an old and privileged nun before long. They, however, strictly enjoined upon me never to allow any person but themselves to know or suspect that I was engaged in the plan which I was pursuing towards the Scotch novice, and to be extremely

guarded in everything I said and did, to prevent the slightest suspicion from being excited on that subject.

At length they told me that the next Monday morning was appointed for the Scotch girl to see the pretended vision of the Virgin Mary, when the chapel window would be darkened as much as possible with curtains, and a small lamp would be placed near the altar, to make a very dim light, and I must take a station at a particular spot, and stand in an attitude, which I would be taught, and address her in a feigned voice, so that she would not recognize me. I was to act the part of the Devil coming to tempt her, while the Superior, who was to occupy a place at some distance, would appear as the Virgin, and encourage her to resist Satan, renounce the wicked world, and become a nun.

On Saturday evening I was sent to hold another interview with the poor girl, and, according to the Superior's directions, invited her into the room for the "Examen de conscience" (examination of conscience), and told her that she must prepare herself for the expected occasion, which would be a great favor. She was not to eat a mouthful of food on Sunday evening, and be ready on the following morning to go into the chapel, when I would call and conduct her. I apprised her that it was always the practice of the devil, during that penance, to assail with powerful temptations, in order to prevent the escape of a soul from his power; and I hoped she would fortify herself, and summon up all her resolution to resist him successfully. The poor girl believed every word I uttered, and, in the

fullest confidence that I was her friend, and speaking the truth, consented, though with fear and trembling, to attend on the occasion proposed, and to endeavor to summon up all her resolution to endure the solemn trial.

Now that I am older and more experienced, have had the veil of deception removed from my eyes, and seen through the hypocrisy and atrocity of the infernal impostures of convents, I am filled with indignation and horror at the recollection of this base conspiracy. I mourn at the thought of the severe and prolonged misery which I doubtlessly aided in bringing upon the poor confiding girl and her mother, and upon a family circle besides ; and then recollect that hundreds of similar tricks have since been performed with success, in that convent and others, and their countless victims are now suffering the consequences in different places. I think with sorrow of the great neglect of duty in parents, which is the first cause of all this—their wicked and unnatural abandoning of their daughters to the power of their worst enemies. I feel ready to raise a cry against this cruel custom, by which innocent, inexperienced, timid and docile children are taken from the pure and holy family circle where God had placed them, removed from the oversight and guardianship of parents, and the safe and happy society of brothers and sisters, from amidst all the enjoyments, advantages and safeguards of a moral and refined neighborhood, and a pure and Christian society, and shut up in a gloomy prison, ruled under old and barbarous laws, formed centuries ago, in distant lands, in times of stupid ignorance, taught by ignorant, weak-minded and unprinci-

*(I dont you think this true for)*

pled old women, soured by a life of misery, degradation, and tyranny, themselves the debased servants of priests, often men of characters so infamous and dissolute, that, but for the secrecy they enjoy in the convents, they would have been long since extirpated by the hangman—to think of all this as I now do, and to see it in its true light, gives me feelings which I cannot fully express.

I have seen Americans who deny all this, and even intelligent women and Christian mothers, who accuse me of falsehood or insanity for remonstrating against nunneries. I sometimes wish they could be but half an hour in one of those which I have known! There would be no need of my arguments after that. They would come out cured of nunneries for life. Not a daughter or friend of theirs would ever enter one, I would warrant, even if they had to confine them at home by main force.

But I have lost myself in a digression, and must return to my narrative.

On Monday morning I took the poor girl to the chapel, telling her on the way, that, if the Devil should approach her with his temptations, she must make the sign of the cross, for that was the most powerful means she could resort to in resisting his power. I then laid her upon the cross, extended her arms, blinded her eyes with a handkerchief, and withdrew, telling her I should leave her alone. The place indeed was solemn and gloomy. All was dark around, thick curtains being drawn tight over the windows, and the little light of a small lamp only serving to show the altar, and penetrating but a short distance around it. I

retired, and threw over me rough and outré garments, which had been provided as a hideous disguise : for the bandage was so placed that it might be sufficiently removed to allow the poor girl to see a little if she chose : and, after about fifteen minutes, I softly returned, and took my place, in a spot where only my form might be indistinctly seen. I then, in feigned voice, began to address her, in words which the Superior had put into my mouth, and which I very clearly remember. The words are as fresh in mind at this time as if it had passed only yesterday. I entered and stepped to a distant part of the room, and said :

“ Are you not a fool to lie in that posture, for that God of yours ? Had you not better serve me ? ”

She made the sign of the cross ; and I pretended to vanish, retiring into a dark corner, and remaining perfectly motionless and silent for a few minutes ; I then again advanced, and addressed her, saying :

“ Would you not rather serve me, and come out of this place ? You would have nothing to do but to go to balls, and partake of pleasures of all kinds.”

Again she made the sign of the cross, and again I vanished as before. After a few moments' silence, I began again :

“ If you leave this nunnery and serve me, I will have you married to the young man you like so much.”

I was going to say more, but she stopped me short by another sign of the cross ; and, although I made other attempts to get a hearing, she no longer listened to me, but immediately stopped me in the same manner. Finding I

could do no more, I threw off my disguise, and went softly to the Superior, who had been listening all the while. She told me to sit down, and make not even the least noise. She then went in, and said, in a gentle voice :

“I am your Holy Mother. I have been attentive during the temptation you have endured, witnessed your faithfulness, and will adopt you as one of my children. Are you willing to become one of my daughters? If you are, you must join the Sisters this week, and make your vows before another Sabbath passes over your head. I am afraid the devil is laying deep plots, and making extraordinary efforts to get you ; but when you have your vows made, I think you will be safe.”

The Superior then proceeded to ask her if she was willing to give up all she had to the Holy Church, adding, “ Unless you give up all you have here, I cannot accept you.” She then promised her her protection, and retired, after giving her her blessing, saying, “ Peace be with you.”

In the afternoon of that day, I went to inform the poor girl that the Superior wished to see her. She went, and found also a priest, the Superior of the Seminary.\* The Superior of the convent began by telling her she, herself, had had a vision, in which she was informed that the young novice, who was doing penance in the chapel, was acceptable in the sight of God.” The Scotch girl seemed overjoyed on receiving this intelligence. And then the Superior told her that she ought to take all the advice I might give her, as she

\* NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—The Seminary is the institution for the education of priests, kept by the Sulpicians, who are Jesuits under another name.



had full confidence in me, and I would be both qualified and disposed to aid her in any question of duty that might arise in her mind, and had her welfare much at heart. She then requested her to return to the novices' department, retire into a corner, meditate seriously on what course she ought to pursue, and make up her mind. The girl retired accordingly, but I remained, as the Superior had intimated to me that she wished me to stay and hear something in private. The Superior of the Seminary soon after withdrew, and then the Superior of the Convent directed me to go to the novice and use all my influence to persuade her to determine to become a nun immediately, saying that I must not fail to coax her into it. I went, accordingly, but could not bring her to make a promise at that time. She said she must see her mother first. I inquired why that was necessary; and she answered that she wished that everything her mother could spare her should come to the convent. This I communicated to the Superior, who said she would send for her mother the next day.

Her mother came, and, on learning her daughter's state of mind, entreated her with the greatest earnestness to leave the convent; but all her efforts were vain. No persuasion could influence her. She declared that she had determined to become a nun on the next day, Wednesday, requesting her mother to bring, the same afternoon, everything she intended to give her. The result was, that the money was brought and paid over; and I was assured that no other nun had ever brought so rich a donation before. She was received on Wednesday.

I never afterwards spoke with that young woman, but whenever I met her, which was more frequently than I desired, she gave me a look which pierced through my very soul.

## VIII.

The Hôtel Dieu, or Black Nunnery—The Subterranean Passage—Facts—Arguments *Pro and Con*—Historical Evidence—Importance of the Question—Effects to be Anticipated.

THE Hôtel Dieu, or Black Nunnery, of Montreal, is situated in the midst of the city. The grounds form nearly a square of about two hundred feet, and are surrounded by high walls, except where the buildings come to the streets, which are narrow. The names of the streets are St. Paul's and Notre Dame, in front and rear, and St. Joseph's and St. John Baptist at the sides. On the square beyond St. Joseph's street, stands the Seminary, where the young priests of Canada are educated. Adjoining it is the site of the old church, where are old vaults remaining. Now, so much has been reported about a subterranean passage between the Nunnery and the Seminary, that I will mention a few things relating to it.

A house stands on the corner of the nunnery grounds, at the angle of Notre Dame and St. Joseph's street, which is, or was, occupied by a man, several of whose family have declared that they have been frightened at different times, by hearing voices proceeding from under ground, which they

could not at first account for, because there was no other building near their own. It has long been rumored in Montreal that there is a subterranean passage under St. Joseph's street ; and several persons have lately declared, that they have heard the human voice under ground, in that immediate vicinity. These assertions have been denied by the priests ; but not long ago, as I heard it declared without contradiction, some laborers while digging under the site of the old church, came upon such an opening, which was seen by passers-by, and attracted attention. But it was soon carefully concealed again, and it was given out that the opening was only an old vault. In June, 1835, I believe, from the statements made by reputable persons, cries were heard under ground, in that neighborhood ; and those were so loud and distressing as to attract my attention ; and two Roman Catholic servant girls, living in the corner-house above mentioned, left their place on account of them, either from terror or superstition, or both.

A tailor living in Quebec suburbs, whose name might be given, was one of the persons who have spoken of such sounds being heard in the place mentioned ; and had as his authority, an apprentice of his, who had told him of them. But many other witnesses have asserted the same thing, so that it has long been a current belief among a large class of people in Montreal, that there is a secret passage leading under ground, between the Seminary and the nunnery, or their grounds ; and that persons sometimes pass, who talk loud enough to be heard, and others are forced through, against their will, or otherwise ill-treated, and that

these latter are generally females, as shrill cries and shrieks are sometimes clearly distinguished.

REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.—About twenty years ago, a highly respectable and intelligent American gentleman visited the Priests' Seminary in Quebec, and held a long conversation with a foreigner of education and polished manners, who showed him, in a confidential manner, a key of superior workmanship, which he said belonged to the door of a subterranean passage, leading to an adjacent convent. The visitor had previously been quite incredulous concerning the existence of such passages, and had expressed much opposition to the reports, then in general circulation, respecting that in Montreal.

The discussion which was then excited, has served to direct attention to the subject ; and a collection of cases of a similar kind has been made, in which subterranean passages have been found to exist between the institutions of priests, and those of nuns, &c., which may some day be published. In all the principal papal countries, and in all periods of popery, such secret communications have been in existence. It is not to be wondered at, that the Romish ecclesiastics in the United States should be unwilling to have such facts known, or that they should use great efforts to quiet or to divert public inquiry when aroused to it. The fact is of so practical and direct a kind, so discreditable, so shameful, hypocritical, so conclusive against the character, nature and influence of such institutions, in short, such a decisive, unanswerable and overwhelming argument against them, and

all that is theirs, that they must regard the question as vital. In an intelligent and free Protestant country, at the present period of the world, the existence of such a concealed means of communication between large edifices, professedly devoted to great numbers of males and females, separated from each other and the world, for religious seclusion and the special and exclusive service of God, offers so flagrant an instance of profligacy and hypocrisy, that the exposure of it, whenever it shall be made obvious, must inevitably draw down upon the guilty, overwhelming condemnation, abhorrence, and disgust. Whenever the day arrives, that the American public shall be convinced of what some persons already are persuaded of, they will look upon the whole monastic system with different eyes, and it will no longer be necessary to collect facts and arguments, and publish books like the present. Parents and guardians will beware of the horrible gulf against which we are now warning them, and even the Jesuit and Bishop will lay their plans in vain ; their secret agents will toil for naught ; the numerous spies and seducers, who infest every class of American society, will find their efforts frustrated. They will be exposed, unmasked, and driven away with the scorn and antipathy which they deserve.

And such a change may be near. We have lately seen the signal downfall of a popish archbishop, in the most conspicuous situation in America, exposed, stripped and held up to public view, as an arrant impostor and hypocrite—his impious claims of resemblance to the divine Saviour were opposed by the simplest statement of facts, and documents copied from public records. No man in the United

States now needs to be told, that Romish ecclesiastics are rapacious hawks and vultures, who use the pretence of religion to shear, and even to skin and eat the sheep they pretend to feed. Just so it will be with nuns, nunneries and monasteries of every kind and name, when some clear, practical, and positive truth shall be made known and proved, conclusive of the corrupting purposes to which the monastic system is, and for centuries has been, extensively adapted and sustained. And the general indignation will be great in proportion to the victims, who have been the sufferers. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, will feel more deeply, when they view the toils set for the fairest, loveliest, and most unsuspecting of their households ; and especially, when they contemplate the plots and wiles, by which estates were secretly heaped up by arrogant priests, while assuming the whine and cant of hypoerisy, even though bread was snatched from the mouths of the poor, or the last penny robbed from the pockets of the bereaved. The stealthy invasion of the fire-side, under pretences of religion, in order to rob it of its diamonds, and to extinguish for ever its light and happiness, will send legislators to write in our statute books, with pens of iron, laws which shall open convents to the light of day, unlock their secret recesses, and drive from their lurking-places, the foreign and unclean birds and beasts, which now desolate and defile our native land.

There is already abundant and superabundant evidence against convents, to mark upon every edifice of that nature the label :—

*“ A Suspicious Institution.”*

In past times, and long before the epoch of the glorious Reformation, a vast amount of testimony had been collected, attested, and recorded against the immorality of priests and nuns, at the order of bishops, and even popes, who, alarmed or disgusted at their degraded and infamous condition, at different periods attempted to reform them. Those records, whenever they shall be read in this country, will be found to furnish abundant ground for our legislators to proceed upon, against institutions of the same kind now existing in our land.

## CONFESSIONS RESUMED.

It has recently been said, and I believe printed, by some of the priests or their known friends, that the hole opened on the site of the old church, was part of an ancient covered way, long disused and almost forgotten, which was constructed in early times, to secure the holy Jesuits of the seminary, and the holy nuns of the Hôtel Dieu, a retreat to boats in the river St. Lawrence, in case of danger from the Indians. But the nuns are under a solemn vow, binding them never to leave the convent, even in case of fire ; and besides the first story told by the priests, and sworn to by their friends, was, that there is no subterranean passage at all, and never was any, and that it is a shameful slander to say that any ever existed. But besides, the direction of the passage, as indicated by the cries, and by the opening of the hole in the site of the old church, is quite a different one from that which would be taken to reach the river's bank



in a direct line ; and therefore all the pretences of the priests (as is usually the case with their stories), go to prove the very opposite to what they assert.

However, I am now speaking of the testimony of other people, and should only add here, that I need none to convince myself, as I have not only known persons who have seen the subterranean passage in question, but have seen priests come and go through it, into and from the convent, and have passed through it myself. I have no doubt there are others of the kind in Canada ; and, wherever there is a nunnery near a priests' institution of any kind, I should presume, as a matter of course, there would be a secret passage between them.

## I X.

## REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.

Intrigues in Convents—Plots, Conspiracies, &c., against persons, near and distant—  
Note concerning the Abduction of Bishop Rézé—Murder of an American Nun  
at Sea—Reflections.

HERE the author touches, with much truth, upon one of the many great branches of iniquity, private and public, essentially belonging to the convent system. The developments made on this subject, by Cardinal Ricci, are numerous and astounding, almost surpassing belief, and exceeded only by his developments of the shameful corruption and criminality of convents. It is proper to give here a brief account of a remarkable instance in which such intrigues were successfully carried on in the interior of the *United States*, as they resulted in the kidnapping and irrecoverable loss of a bishop, who had offended certain priests in one of our western towns, by his endeavors to restrain their heinous and scandalous conduct.

Bishop Rézé, who was considered one of the most irreproachable men for moral character who ever bore the title of a popish bishop in the *United States*, lived in Cincinnati about —— years ago. There was a convent, in which irregularities were committed, and he interfered to stop them, by which he brought ruin upon his own head. The

following particulars, relating to him, are derived from notes now before the editor, written about ten years ago, from the verbal communications of a foreign Roman priest, who had had extensive opportunities for observing the priests and Jesuits in Europe, and had become a sincere and pious protestant, which character he has maintained to this day.

“Dr. Frederick Rézé, my friend, was Vicar-General of Cincinnati, and Bishop of Detroit. He was born, I believe, in Hanover, in low condition; and, on going to Rome, became acquainted with Gaetana, the barber of Cardinal Casselani, then Prefect of the Propaganda, now (in 1846) Pope, and was admitted into the Propaganda, where he became chaplain in the Sistine Chapel. The Cardinal’s influence made Dr. Rézé Grand Vicar, and sent him to Cincinnati. He was a member of the Leopold Society. When the Cardinal was elected Pope, he made Rézé a bishop. His preaching was much more evangelical than that of most popish ecclesiastics; and he suspended several priests and nuns for intemperance; and other immoralities. One of those priests, and one of the nuns, went to Rome to protest against him. They were Belgians; and there they met with one of their countrymen, high in influence, who readily espoused their cause. This was Father de la Marche, Procurator-General of the Dominican Orders. There are four orders of monks: the Dominican, the Franciscan (which includes the Capuchins, whose founder was St. John Capistrano), the St. Francis de Paul, and the Augustinians. Each of these four orders is governed by a general, who

resides near the Pope. The Jesuits are not monks, but priests.

Now Father de la Marcha had great influence, from his station with the Dominicans; and, when Bishop Rézé arrived at Rome, that dignitary had been enlisted against him, and in favor of the Belgian priest and nun, from Cincinnati, who had preceded him. He had gone thither for the purpose of justifying his conduct; but his enemies, wishing to prevent him from having an opportunity to make explanations, got him summoned to give an account of receipts and expenses, that they might get hold of something by which to crush him. They raised a suspicion of his having retained a portion of the money which had passed through his hands, but produced no evidence of it, and would not allow him to return to the United States.

I was in Rome while he was detained there, saw him often, and formed an attachment to him. He resided in a convent, near the Corso—I think it is Santa Maria in Lucina. There a miserable room had been assigned to him, with scarcely a chair, and he was not permitted to go out, unless for a short walk in the city, and then only in company with some person belonging to the Propaganda. I have seen him mending his red stockings, which are worn by bishops. I felt so much sympathy for him, that I visited him daily, for several months. At the time when I left him, I was informed that it was the intention to send him to Monte Casino, near Capua, in the kingdom of Naples, the residence of the General of the Benedictines, and the *mother-house* of the order.

“ Cardinal Prince Franzoni, Prefect of the Propaganda, is, in fact, Pope for non-Catholic countries, and appoints all bishops for them. He is a Genoese prince. He, his chaplain, Don Philippe, and Archbishop Cardolini, of Edesse (late Archbishop of Spoleto), were my friends, for some time after my arrival in Rome ; but, when they knew of my intimacy with Bishop Rézé, they all became my enemies.”

The preceding facts, copied from notes written at the time when they were communicated, have been given, in order to show how intrigues may be carried on in American convents, for nefarious purposes, with perfect secrecy, extend their influences to Rome, and there produce their designed effects. The disappearance of Bishop Rézé caused much inquiry in the United States, for a time, and the inquiry was repeated in many newspapers : “ Where is he ? ” but he seems now to have been almost entirely forgotten. The last news heard of him was, that he was in Germany, where he had chosen a retreat. This was asserted by some of his enemies in New York, and probably was intended to mislead inquiry. Whether living or dead, is now uncertain—probably the latter.

One natural question presents itself : Ought not American laws to be able to check the criminal proceedings of intrusive, bold and arrogant foreigners, who come to this country to perpetrate crimes, and deliver innocent persons into the hands of a foreign despotic power, to be imprisoned, and perhaps killed, to satisfy their revenge, and to leave them unrestrained in crime ?

But there is another case which addresses itself still more

directly to the feelings of Americans. A few years ago, a young woman of this country was placed in a European convent, and after some time, was suspected of an intention to escape, and renounce Popery. By what means such a suspicion was aroused, is not known ; but a plan was formed, by most treacherous means, to defeat her supposed or pretended project, and to punish her for entertaining it. She was placed on board a ship, with expressions of kindness and good wishes, and set sail. On board, however, was a man who pretended to medical skill, and officiously undertook to administer some medicine, which he told her she required. She died in a short time, with symptoms of having been poisoned ! The physician was a Jesuit, and secret agent of the convent where she had resided.

Will not a time come, when such atrocities shall cease ? Is it not a duty to make known to Americans the true nature and actual developments of that system of falsehood, darkness, and crime, which is urged and insinuated among us by so many specious foreign impostors, and advocated by so many corrupt and selfish men, among our most unprincipled politicians ? The preceding instances of successful intrigue are but two examples out of many others known, and, doubtless, of thousands never revealed to the world. Who will say that a system ought not to be overthrown, which produces such criminal effects ?

## CONFESSIONS RESUMED.

THE intrigues which were continually going on in the convents were sources of endless troubles, anxiety and suspicion. The practice of going out in disguises, was one of the ways of deceiving the world ; but every person within the walls, as it appeared to me, was either a plotter, a victim, or a dupe and instrument of the intrigues of others. Many, I presume, like myself, were, at different times, all these ; and it would be impossible for me to describe the many ways in which such a life produces misery. Never, after I had begun to see into the insincerity of the sanctimonious professions of the priests, Superiors, and some of the old nuns, did I enjoy a moment of real confidence in any person around me ; and, after I had been employed in deceiving others, both in the convent and out of it, I had a restless and stinging conscience added to a sense of universal hypocrisy and active malignity among my companions and rulers, which rendered life a burden. I believe I was sometimes impelled by a desperate hostility to the human race, when set at the task of beguiling, betraying and injuring others, although the remains of my belief in the religious doctrines in which I had been educated, often seemed to have much influence on my conduct. I have felt the strangest mixture of doubts, and conflicting emotions, when leaving the convent in the dress of a Sister of Charity, and in acting as one, as school-teacher, and otherwise.

Many cases I could mention, in which nuns as well as novices were made sufferers by the stealthy and nefarious

designs of the priests, Superior, and some of the old nuns ; and the latter were sometimes overreached by counterplots, or unexpected intrigues, laid in revenge, or for some other motive. The evangelical priest, who, I think, was one of the greatest sufferers, was doubtless betrayed by some deep-laid plot ; and, but for some favorable circumstances, which I shall never fully understand, I presume I should have shared a similar fate.



## X.

Dépôt of Garments for Disguise—Excursions from the Convent dressed as a Sister of Charity, as a Priest, &c.—Nuns' Island—The Priests' Farm—Persons whom I saw visiting the Nunnery—Nuns and others of my Acquaintance—Imprisoned Nuns in Cells—A Spanish Nun.

I HAVE mentioned several instances in which I was sent out from the convent for different purposes. These were by no means the only occasions, nor the only objects for which I went. And there were other nuns, many others, who were at different times dispatched to various places, and for divers reasons. I shall not go extensively in these matters, partly from the want of room, but more from considerations which I think urgent and decisive. I will only remark that the instances to which I allude are among the least blameworthy, and offensive to morality and decency.

There was a place in the nunnery allotted to the deposit of dresses of different kinds, to be used as disguises ; and to it we commonly went when we were preparing for a *sortie*. The world believes that the vows of nuns are strictly adhered to ; and especially those which obligate to strictly moral behavior, and a close confinement for life. I have

given some intimations that the world is mistaken on both these points. It is not only occasionally that nuns leave the Hôtel Dieu, and go about the city and country, but it is a thing of very frequent occurrence. They go, however, at such times, in such disguises, to such places, and in such company, that they are seldom observed or known as nuns ; and often are mistaken for men, especially for priests. I have been dressed in various ways, and have gone out alone and in company, and have passed, not only for a Sister of Charity, or a nun, school-mistress, or a visitor of the poor or sick, but for a man, a priest, being arrayed in "the garb," or common dress of a priest, in Montreal. )

I have met with nuns in the streets, since I came to the United States, and sometimes those who are bound on secret errands. I know how such persons feel, how they are trained to appear very demure, forbidden to speak or even to raise their eyes, and to look as if meditating on holy things ; and I know, from experience, how difficult it is to play such an affected part well. I have seen several nuns here, too, I think, in men's clothes. If not, I am greatly mistaken. In the evening it is not very difficult for a woman to pass for a man in a crowd, when dressed with care, and somewhat practised beforehand, especially with one or two real men to accompany her. As for priests in the disguise of other men, that is a matter of daily occurrence, I have no doubt, in the United States as well as in Canada. If any one could see the clothing collected in the dressing-room in our nunnery, he would be surprised. The only wonder to me is that a practice so common has never been found out by the

public, and, indeed, seems not to be suspected by Americans.

I have mentioned that nuns were sent to several different places in the country when ill, and that some of those in health sometimes went to nurse them, and others to teach in the schools. I have yet to mention Nuns' Island and the Priests' Farm, two large and well-known estates in the vicinity of Montreal, which are used as places of continual resort. Visitors to that city are shown them as separate establishments, exclusively devoted, the one to nuns and the other to priests. Such is not the opinion extensively current among the people of the city and surrounding country; and I could reveal facts of a kind which would give a very different aspect to both, from that which their proprietors claim for them. I forbear, at least for the present.

I was sometimes stationed at the place of reception, to answer calls of persons visiting the nunnery for different purposes. I was then the only person visible, but not the only one within hearing. The Superior, or an old man, was always or generally near by, completely concealed, but near enough to overhear every word spoken by others or myself, even in a low voice. I was, therefore, required to be very careful what I said, for penances were certain to follow any offence committed in that place. Among those with whom I conversed at different times, in that place, were various persons from a distance, and quite a number of travellers from the United States. Several of these I still remember, having always had a good memory for names

and circumstances connected with casual interviews. Possibly, if my recollections should ever be published, some of those persons may be reminded of their visits at the nunnery, and remember "the tall nun," as I was called by some. If their impressions are as vivid as my own, they certainly cannot have forgotten it. I presume I observed them with more interest than they did me, for I sometimes was excited with an almost uncontrollable desire to escape from my gloomy and disgusting prison, while conversing with beautiful, free, and happy young ladies, or men of an honest, virtuous aspect, whose condition appeared to me blessed beyond all description. I fixed my eyes upon their cheerful countenances, admired their fresh and ruddy complexions, their happy looks, lively motions, ready and sincere and innocent smiles, and contrasted them with the sallow, unhealthy, dispirited, suspicious and often despairing beings with whom I had been so long imprisoned. I thought of the happy and affectionate families to which they belonged, and sighed, when they left me, at the thought of my base, cruel jailors and oppressors; and their depravity and hypocrisy appeared more abominable and intolerable than ever. The looks of some of our visitors, therefore, with their actions and words, are much more vivid in my memory, than my own can be on theirs.

A Mrs. B——, of Boston, once called to see me, and inquired whether I was discontented. Of course, I could reply only *no*, being watched and overheard as usual. She said she was my aunt. I wished most heartily that I might be at liberty to speak and act as I felt. I should have gone

with her, and most gladly. A young man, on another occasion, inquired for me by name, as she had done, and told me he was my cousin. He said his name was Leicester, and that his father kept the lighthouse at New London. Mr. Thomas Emerson and Mr. Curtis visited the nunnery some years ago, and wished to see me, but said nothing of importance that I remember. Old Cache-rokayo, one of my Indian acquaintances, afterward said that the father of one of those gentlemen was formerly an Indian trader.

Among the nuns I knew, were Miss Burroughs, Louise Gaspé, Margerite Gaspé, Miss Paget daughter of Mr. Paget (a portly man)—Miss P. had not been *received* when I left the convent, but I have since heard that she has been—Frances and Ann Stearns, from La Prairie, Margerite and Marie Laflamme, Anna Collins, Sarah Mount, and a nun called Sainte Genevieve, who died from having received an injury in one of her limbs. I might mention others, and also name several priests.

A number of nuns were confined in small cells in the cellar, bolted and kept by themselves for a long time. I did not know why, and believe they were not precisely informed of the reason of their imprisonment. I sometimes carried them their food, but was allowed so little time, and was so closely watched, that I had very little opportunity to converse with them. They usually appeared taciturn, as if dispirited or ill; but sometimes they would speak a few words. Two of the prisoners were called Angelique and Hortense.

I will mention two of the nuns particularly, because there was something mysterious about them both, although they had nothing in common in their disposition, habits, or origin. One was rather an aged one, full of wit and ingenuity, and sometimes of a terrible character, even to the priests. The other was a Spanish girl, who spoke French with a strong foreign accent. She said but little, at least in my presence, partly because I saw her but seldom. She was sad and melancholy. I have heard her console us sometimes, when any of us complained, by saying that our condition was much less painful than that of a Spanish nun, as the rules and penances which she had been subject to in Spain were more severe.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—It is remarkable, that some months after this was written, an article was published in an American magazine in favor of Canadian convents, and designed to counteract impressions current against them; and a Spanish nun was there introduced, with a sketch of her history, showing, unwittingly, a connection between convents in Spain and South America.

## XI.

Strange men in the Convent—Absconding from Justice—An Old Friend takes Refuge There.

WHEN I grew old enough to be allowed to go about the convent, and to be able to begin to form some judgment of things around me, I observed men now and then, in some parts of the convent, whom I had never seen before, who usually disappeared after a short time, and were succeeded by others. I thought this very strange, especially as they seemed to be wholly unoccupied, and to have no visible object. Partly by hints, accidental remarks, and my own surmises, I became satisfied, at length, that they were men accused of crimes, or who, for other reasons, wished to be concealed for a time; and that they usually paid money for being allowed to enter and remain in the Institution. We had many at different times, from some of whom I learned certain things which it might be interesting for the world to know. It certainly appeared to me a very convenient refuge for some whom I supposed to be criminals; and I judged that the officers of justice and other persons interested in their capture must have been greatly thwarted in their efforts, by the way of escape which they so easily found.

Some of them appeared quite at their ease while in the nunnery, and were well received by the priest and Superior, in fact enjoying all the freedom they could desire. No secret was made of their being great friends and intimates of theirs, and they freely joined in their good dinners and wine-drinking.

One day I was surprised at the sudden appearance of a man I had formerly known when a child. He had been engaged in a difficulty with some Indians at some distance in the country, in which his life had been threatened ; and having reason to apprehend that some white men were secretly spurring them on to injure him, and might get him imprisoned on false charges, having friends in the convent, he hastened to it, and obtained admission. I had reason to believe that his fortune secured him that favor, and that he paid a considerable sum to the priests for their kindness. That was the only case of the kind in which I had entire reason to believe that an innocent man was admitted. His behavior also proved that he was of a different character from most of the others : for he conducted himself with the utmost propriety ; and the result of his difficulties made it clear that his enemies had been altogether in the wrong, and that his life and liberty were at the time in imminent danger. He remained in the convent until an opportunity was found to send him into "the States" without being seized by his enemies ; and, after some time had elapsed, and their passions had cooled, he thought it safe to return, and succeeded in arranging everything in a peaceable manner.



NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—These few remarks relate to a very important branch of convent abuses, of extensive prevalence, and ancient date. Among the many strong objections urged against convents, in different ages and countries, is their abuse of *the right of refuge*, as it is called. According to custom and papal laws, places nominally consecrated to religion are inviolable; and convents, as well as churches, &c., have often been sought as asylums by persons in fear of capture, injury, death, or persecution. In some cases, we doubt not, the innocent have thus been reasonably protected from injustice or violence; and it is much to be lamented, that no retreat was ever provided for those numerous victims of popish persecution, who were sacrificed by thousands, for virtues instead of for crimes. But the greatest abuses have often been committed under the name of *holy refuge*, with the histories of which many volumes might be filled. An example or two will suffice our present purpose.

In the year 1769, Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, reformed the system of asylums in his dominions, after a long course of objections, delays, and evasions made by the court of Rome, to which he had remonstrated. Cardinal De Ricci informs us, that Gratian first claimed for the ecclesiastical body the power of judging persons accused of crimes; but that not until 1591, Pope Gregory 14th originated the great abuse and scandal of asylums. This was done by allowing persons accused of all possible crimes, except eight, which were specified, to be protected in religious houses, and authorizing ecclesiastical tribunals to

decide what refugees were and what were not to be considered guilty. The abuses became so great, that they were greatly restricted in France and several other countries; and prevailed longest in Tuscany. There, as Potter informs us, the vicinity of Rome and other circumstances made the course for reform more difficult than elsewhere. There, we are told, assassins, fratricides, poisoners, incendiaries, deserters, robbers, some of the sons of the nobility who wished to withdraw themselves from paternal authority, soldiers from their officers, those who had contracted debts, &c. &c., all took refuge in the same asylum, were equally well received, and lived in a state of the greatest disorder. They frequently disturbed the performance of divine service, and often maltreated the clergy! committed crime after crime, insulted and even wounded those who attended the church where they had been received without shame, and were supported and openly defended. There they kept a school for the instruction of the young in robbing and swindling, sold contraband goods and stolen wares. They had women among them, slept under the porticoes, &c. They ate, drank, worked at their trades, and kept open shop in the churches. They wore concealed arms, arrested the passengers, in order to ransom them, and fired at agents of the police, if they happened to pass by. They sallied out secretly to commence fresh robberies and assassinations, and returned within the sanctuary of the church, in order to enjoy, without fear, the protection which the temple and its ministers granted them.

The convents were the greatest receptacle of criminals,

whom the monks treated remarkably well, on account of the benefit they derived from their domestic labors, and because they would use them as instruments for the commission of those frauds which they seem desirous of executing, and as apologies for those of which they *themselves were guilty*, and which they failed not to place to the credit of their guests. They employed them particularly in contraband trade, for the use of the convent.

A short time previous to the reform of the asylum, the monks of the convent of Spirito, in Florence, carried their impudence so far, as to allot a chamber *among the novices*, to the accommodation of a robber, who had attempted to kill his own brother.

There were in Tuscany at the suppression of the asylum, eighty refugees, of whom a third had been guilty of willful murder, and the rest either of cutting or maiming persons, or of committing extensive robberies. Several of them had escaped from the galleys.

## XII.

Disguises of Nuns, when sent out of Nunneries—Sisters of Charity, not forming, of course, a distinct Order—Dresses—Instructions—Manners observed in Public—Disguised for School-teachers—My School in a Canadian Village.

ANY honest reader of the rules or “constitutions” of different “Religious Orders” (as the written plans or laws are called), which are presented to the world, would naturally presume that they are all distinct and separate from each other, and would be, of all things, most distant from entertaining an idea of members of one assuming the garb of another, as a disguise, for various purposes. But an intimate acquaintance with the practices actually existing in convents, papist schools, the streets, and elsewhere, will lead to very opposite opinions ; and I shall give a few facts, to show some of the purposes for which, and modes in which, such measures are practised.

The priests seem to think it highly important to keep as many of their own teachers in the country schools as they can. They therefore send out nuns here and there to keep school for the children in different places, in various ways, and under different appearances. I was sent by them, in several instances, but do not pretend to know in full

their exact motives in every case, or all the arrangements by which their ends were accomplished.

I once went to the town of —, in Canada, according to the directions I received, in the dress of a Sister of Charity, or one which might pass for such ; and was examined by a school officer to whom I had been directed, and was received as the school-mistress for the season. I am naturally fond of children, and also fond of instructing them in what I know, though that may not be much. I soon began to grow fond of several of my pupils, and found they liked me, as children usually do those who treat them kindly. But occurrences took place which rendered it necessary for me to take another place, and I wrote to the person who had sent me, that I wished to be sent for. I received a message in reply that a messenger would be in a particular apartment of the village inn, at a particular day and hour, whom I might know by his telling me that my father had sent for me. I went thither, accordingly, and a man approaching me, said in a low voice: “Your father has sent for you, and wants you at home.”

I soon made the necessary preparations, joined my convoy, and proceeded to Montreal. What was thought of me in the school or in the town, I could only conjecture, after my sudden departure. I had very little to say by way of excuse, and did not attempt to say much. It was the business of my masters, the priests, and they, perhaps, took measures to give a favorable or reasonable aspect to the affair, or perhaps they have supplied my place with another teacher, perhaps a better or a more acceptable one. I am

sure they would not have found one more fond of the task, or more disposed to exercise an affectionate and attentive oversight of the children. But the priests, on that, as on other occasions, did not think proper to acquaint me with their operations, any more than with their objects or their plans for the past or for the future ; and I had long been accustomed to act without knowing, or expecting to know, anything satisfactory concerning the different sorts of business in which I was employed.

## XIII.

Government of Convents—The Pope, the Real or Nominal Head—The Administration—Councils—Trials—The Condemned Priest said to have been Killed—Crimes of Priests, &c.

I HAVE had opportunities, at different times, to judge of the plan on which the government of the convents in which I have been, is conducted, and will give the reader what I know, or rather what I believe. But I would apprise all that I do not positively affirm everything from my own personal experience, because I have been obliged to (and do) rely upon the statements of others, and upon some of my own deductions or conjectures, formed from what I saw or heard. In these, or in some of them, I may have made mistakes; and I am especially desirous that a distinction may be kept in mind here, as in other parts of my book, between what I claim to know from personal acquaintance, and what I do not.

The Pope of Rome is unquestionably acknowledged, verbally and theoretically at least, as the source, centre, and origin of all power in the government of convents. Reports are made or said to be made to him, by persons appointed; and orders and other communications, either

genuine or forged, are at times received from him and read to the nuns. Next to him the holy Bonne Mère, or Good Mother, in company with the Bishop and the highest ecclesiastic under him, constitute the Administration, or authority which represents him. I have heard it said, that in every council or tribunal, which is formed by the three last-mentioned personages, the holy Bonne Mère, or Superior, has the precedence in expressing her opinion or will. But I have never heard of her claiming any authority, or contradicting them. Neither do I think that they would ever yield to her in any important case, or trouble themselves with any labored effort to convince or bring her to agree with them in any favorite measure. I think, from what I have seen, that they would rather take the shorter and easier method, of getting her out of the way by some means or other, and putting another in her place, who would be likely to comply with their wishes.

In certain cases, it is customary for the administration or chief rulers of a convent to summon a council of old nuns, to deliberate and decide with them. This consists sometimes of six, and sometimes of twelve. When a nun is to be tried for an offence deemed criminal, the accused is allowed to choose six, and the accusers or rulers six. These preparations having been made, solemn oaths are required to be taken, that nothing shall be divulged of all that takes place, during their lifetime, unless to a priest in confession. Then the trial commences, and is prosecuted in secret, and the fate of the accused is decided, in the utmost privacy, though it be for life or death, and the sentence is executed,



however severe, without the possibility of appeal or escape, and nothing ever transpires beyond the walls of the convent, or even beyond the walls of the retired and closely secluded departments of the edifice, appropriated to such scenes of gloom and horror.

Four of the members of a council may disapprove of a sentence passed by the others, or may think the case should be published to the world. Some feeble, unprotected female, who has been intrusted to the mild, meek, and apparently pure and holy "religious," when accused, condemned and sentenced by such a tribunal to a dungeon to starve to death, may express her dread or her anguish in terms which will affect the natural feelings of some one of her judges ; or, at a later day the recollection of the victim, and the consciousness of the imposture practised on her confiding friends without the convent, may disturb the conscience. To prevent this from leading to any public disclosures, the confessor is pointed at, as prepared to undertake the removal of her burden, by atoning for her sin by his holy prayers and masses ; and she is invited to tell all her compunctions and receive the assurance of deliverance from the punishment of God, whose power is intrusted to him.

It is but seldom that formal trials of any kind are held in the Canadian Convents, as far as I have means of judging ; but I have known or heard of several, and had reason to believe that they usually resulted in severe punishments. The most severe, I think, was that of the evangelical priest, before mentioned. I shall not pretend to give a full history of his case, being but very imperfectly acquainted with it, as

I have said before. I understand that he had a trial of some kind, and that he was quite confident that he was to lose his life, and had dark forebodings that it was to be by some cruel means, and that his body was to be afterwards treated in some savage-like manner. I was sent to supply him with his food a number of times while he was confined in his cell, and my natural feelings of humanity, it seemed, were not known to exist, for I was not watched, and had several opportunities to converse with him, which I did by stealth.

He told me of his condition and impending fate ; spoke in a solemn, but firm and unwavering tone ; said he was persecuted for his love of the truth, and because he was a Christian according to the Gospel ; that he had no fear of death, being resigned to the will of God, but was disquieted when he thought of what might be done to his body after death, as he wished to be decently buried. He was, however very urgent that I should escape. He one day told me he had thought of a way in which we might both escape together, and then, by reaching the United States, we might expose the crimes of the priests in the convents. I offered to do anything in my power to save him, and to risk my own safety for the hope of saving us both. We hastily arranged a plan, on which we afterwards again conferred.

I have given some of my friends some hints of the plan ; but as it was not successful, at least so far as he was concerned, and, indeed, perhaps was not judiciously devised, or even possible of execution, I deem it not important to be written here. It might, perhaps, afford some hints to the

keepers of nunneries, by which they might be led to thwart the plans of some of their victims in future. But there is another reason. My mind was in a state of great excitement, and might not now be able, from recollection, to give a fair account of the ingenious and daring scheme which he chiefly formed, as he is not living to correct my memory, or to explain some things which I may not have fully understood.

Suffice it then to say, that we were doomed to a sad and fatal disappointment. His intention was suspected, if not actually discovered; he was charged with a design to escape, and that probably determined his enemies to shorten his term of life. I can only add, that with his last words he exhorted me to fly while I could, as he felt confident that I was not discovered, suspected, or watched, and that his fate was not important to me or the world. He would soon be in a better world; he forgave his persecutors and joyfully hoped to be forgiven, for the sake of the Redeemer, through the mercy of God.

Soon after, a man who sometimes performed the part of a surgeon, passed the place where I was, and after a brief space repassed. I heard some broken expressions from several persons, to whom I paid little attention, intimating that there was "blood" somewhere—"growing weaker"—"dead." An uncertain period of extreme anxiety and effort passed with me; I knew but little of where I was, or whom I saw, though I felt that I was making desperate exertions of body and mind, with alternate hopes and fears of the wildest kind struggling in my heart, and almost tearing me in pieces. At length, I had a consciousness of

safety, tranquillity, security, and my first desire was for rest and sleep. I slumbered hour after hour, and when I awoke I was in a quiet chamber in a kind American house, in a lovely village in the State of New York.

But how I have wandered from my subject! I must resume the thread of my narrative in this chapter. My statements, I know, are disconnected. I have told one part of my story more in detail than I designed, but it may be in a manner necessary that so much of it should be recorded.

I intended to mention that most of the discipline and punishments inflicted, are imposed without even the shadow of a fair trial, or any trial at all beyond the mere decision of a priest; and as almost the whole of a convent life consists of penances of various kinds, the forms of trial by a tribunal, and sometimes by a skeleton of a jury, may properly be regarded as a mere mockery of justice and mercy. Indeed, this is one of the most correct and striking aspects in which the entire system of popery can be received; for what is the life of a papist but an innumerable series of accusations by others, or self-impeachments, accompanied by summonses and trials before individual priests, called father-confessors, with the consequent condemnations, by those single judges, to such pains, penalties, taxes, or debasing acts of servility which they may choose to pronounce, without appeal, escape, or relaxation, in the name of God, and threats of eternal perdition? How this degrades men, and debases or destroys sanity!

The most flagrant vices to which the power and influence

of the priests led them, were of such a nature, that I cannot describe or even name them. I will refer, in as inoffensive a manner as I can, to a case or two, which are not fit to appear in a book, but exactly adapted to figure among the most atrocious crimes in a criminal court, and to call for the severest punishment of law, and the deepest execration of society.

In the Grey Nunnery there had somehow been introduced three members of one family : a woman about sixty years old, her daughter, about thirty-nine (both widows), and a grand-daughter, fourteen. I believe they had sought refuge there from poverty and misfortune. They are there now. One of the priests said to another person in my hearing, that he had abused them all at confession. On another occasion, when he was drunk, he repeated what he had said, and more. It was frequently the case that they denied when sober what they had affirmed while intoxicated, saying that the sins of the people were so great and terrible that they made them crazy, and that they are so much accustomed to hear wicked things said, that they repeat them almost without knowing it, and from distress of mind. One priest I knew, however, who really seemed to be conscientious for a time, and struck with true compunction ; for he said he himself was more wicked than his penitents, and he had determined never to confess any person again. Another priest exclaimed : "What, do you repent of doing your duty, and intend never to perform it again ? It is time for you to go to 'Calvaire,' and purge away your sins !" Not long after this, I heard that a council was called, to be held at

"Calvaire," and I never saw the conscientious priest again, nor heard of him. What became of him, whether he is living or dead, I cannot tell. He had before been occasionally seen in the convent, but never after that time.

I could repeat conversations I heard, which proved that some of the nuns had been quite convinced by the priests, that the latter were incapable of committing crimes, and that whatever they did was, of course, right, pure, and holy.

## XIV.

BY THE EDITOR.

Motives of the Early Opponents of Popery in the United States—Obstacles raised against them by Priests, by Americans—Classes of Opponents—The Bishops and the Pope have been too confident and bold, and have greatly hastened their own Ruin—Encouraging Aspect of present Circumstances—Some Features of Popery now well understood by Americans—Convents need Exposure—They must soon be suppressed.

WHEN the popish institutions in the United States were first seriously assailed by intelligent and patriotic writers, as being opposed to republican principles, and dangerous to private welfare, and to the preservation of American freedom, great opposition was expressed. The Romish priests and their people denied, denounced, and even threatened the authors, in secret as well as publicly, while multitudes of Protestants, ministers as well as laymen, denounced the efforts made to bring out the truth, as unchristian, unjust, false, and libellous. It proved that a very general ignorance prevailed in this country of some of the most established truths of history, and that a wonderful incredulity existed, which was fostered by an ill-placed charitableness among the people. Gradually the eyes of the public were opened, greatly favored by the rash confidence of the papal hierarchy among us. Now, few

men are to be found who are sufficiently duped and perverted not to see in popery a political much more than a religious system; and the legislatures of several States have recently begun to pass laws necessary to restrain the power of that *imperium in imperio*.

There is a great and important characteristic of the people of the United States, which should never be overlooked by those who would judge them aright, especially in relation to any practical matter. *They do not act without conviction, nor become convinced without evidence.*

This is a truth long well known to Americans generally, but unknown to certain foreigners, acquainted only with people of other nations; and recent events have made it more obvious and striking than ever before.

All observers of the Romish controversy, which has been carried on entirely in our country, during the past twenty years or more, must be aware that *the* one party have proceeded in a manner appropriate to our countrymen, while the others have not. The opponents of popery have appealed to arguments and facts, and relied on them alone; while its advocates have resorted to false displays and pretences, avoided fair discussion, and claimed authority above human reason. While these have been their open means, they have relied chiefly on secret machinations with political men; and, by intrigue, influenced elections, and often gained advantages by bargains with some of our most unprincipled demagogues. Still, the friends of truth, liberty, and Christianity have persevered, believing that the incalculable baseness, falsehood, hypocrisy, and inhumanity



of the popish system, which appears incredible and impossible to Americans, accustomed only to the purity which belongs to Protestant society, would, at length, be exposed, be obvious and acknowledged, and then be rejected and restrained by lawful, salutary, necessary, and efficient laws and regulations, as well as by the disgust and apprehensions of an intelligent and virtuous public.

That change has recently commenced on a wide scale, and has extended with a rapidity which could scarcely have been hoped for. It has been greatly assisted by the rash confidence of some of the principal agents of popery themselves, and to such a degree have they been foolhardy, in blind reliance on their supposed influence in our country, that they have more completely unmasked their own character, and the aims and tendencies of popery, than all their opponents could have hoped to do in many years. The mission of that infamous man, Bedini, his arrogant claims and hypocritical pretensions ; the attempts of priests to put down free discussion in Canada, New York and elsewhere, by inciting mobs ; the impudence of foreign associations ; John Hughes' explosions of passion, with his mad exposure of his whole character and obnoxious position, when stripped by the Legislature of New York, of only one portion of his powers and possessions ; these, together with the impious farce of the new dogma recently promulgated by the Pope and his heathen court, have opened the eyes of Americans by the million, to the true nature and aims of popery, so widely that they are not likely ever to be closed.

The opponents of popery had expected that the papist

bishops would be emboldened by their temporary success in gaining a few converts ; and many corrupt, political co-operators, to throw off some of their disguises, and expose a portion of the real features of the system, which Americans were so slow to comprehend. But no one expected that those foreign emissaries, who, under the guise of Christian bishops, had so long, assiduously, and continually devised and carried on their plans in secret, could be so blind and incautious as to treat the American people like the degraded, oppressed, and superstitious inhabitants of papal Europe. No one would have been persuaded two years ago, that all the rapacity for church property since displayed, would be expressed, or that such a profligate and murderer as Bedini would be sent here to denounce our State laws, and trample them under foot, by the authority of his master, the hypocrite, murderer, and traitor, Pope Pius IX.

No man can look at the unprecedented, universal, political revolution which has been effected in the United States within a few months, and doubt for a moment that the doom of popery in this country is sealed. Honest patriots of all parties have laid aside other objects and considerations, to unite for the overthrow of that foreign monster, which has long been lurking in secret, but has now been discovered ; and new laws, already passed by some of our legislatures, now command, in a voice of thunder, that the pestilential flood shall come no further. Foreign regiments are disbanded, and arms are taken from those who have not American hearts to direct how, in time of trial, to use them aright.

Every part of the great machine called popery, is of such a nature as to require study to be fully understood. Every part is complex, and adapted to operate in particular ways, upon particular classes of people, and for particular ends, though subservient to the whole system, and secretly directed by the same head. Every part has also an exterior and an interior; the former is assumed and false, but prostraded upon public attention in order to make deceitful impressions; and the other is secret, concealed and difficult of discovery, cautiously guarded and surrounded with arrangements invented, prepared, and ready to be used, to quiet suspicion or to mislead it.

Among these are nunneries, which form one of the favorite institutions of popery in Protestant countries, and which have been employed with much effect in the United States. Many American parents, and indeed many fathers, mothers and guardians in our land, calling themselves Protestants, and who consider themselves Evangelical Christians, are still so inconsiderate as to send their children and wards to popish schools and nunneries. In some parts of the country this is very common. How thoughtless, how ignorant must they be, thus to expose them to sustain an irreparable injury, and to probable ruin. The reputation which such institutions have, as places of education, is false and unmerited. Even if they teach French or some other frivolous or secondary branch better than other schools near them, they teach none of the grand and indispensable sciences thoroughly or correctly, if at all; while their chief design and effort is to pervert the mind and conscience, estrange

the hearts of the children from their Bibles, their parents and families, and their God. Many of them, especially rich and beautiful young females, when once beguiled into the power of the priests, are treated worse than prisoners in our penitentiaries, and, as in other countries, come to early graves in misery and shame.

The accompanying true narratives are now given to the American people, to aid in exposing convents to their view, that they may be opened and abolished by law.

#### HORRORS OF A NUNNERY.

(Written after an interview with a young lady who had fled from a convent.)

What spectres pursue me, what visions affright,  
Whenever the day-beams give place to the night;  
Then gloom, dread, and horror my bedside attend—  
O, then, above all things, I long for a friend.

Unkindness and terror so oft and so long  
Have been my companions; my foes are so strong,  
I fear the calm evening, and e'en the fair morn;  
Oh, would my past freedom and peace might return!

False religion has clouded the sky o'er my head,  
And Rome sends her demons to fill me with dread;  
Superstition surrounds me with darkness and fear:  
Sweet friends of my childhood, oh, would you were near!

Harsh, rude, and unfeeling are they who control—  
These dreary abodes send a chill to my soul;  
Vile priests at their summons compel me to bow—  
My father and guardian, Oh, where art thou?

Long a pris'ner, oppress'd, lone, and vainly I've griev'd,  
Ah, fatal delusion! I'm now undeceiv'd;

But my tyrants are round me, and fill me with dread ;  
Noble brothers! sweet mother, oh, come to my aid!

Believe not the falsehoods the wretches will tell,  
When they say I am happy and choose this dark cell ;  
Haste, open my prison, delay not to come,  
Unbolt my damp dungeon, and carry me home!

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MY NARRATIVE RESUMED.

Tricks of Nuns—The tipsy Priest—Miracles—The speaking Image—"Our Lady of Tongres"—The Letter—An exciting Incident—An enraged Superior.

I SHALL now be able to express myself in a more connected manner, as this part of my narrative is written under more favorable auspices. The nervous, disconnected style of a portion of the preceding pages must have been observed by the attentive reader, and I rejoice that I am now enabled to relieve my indulgent friends from the necessity of reading any more of a journal written in the broken style of the parts I have alluded to.

The tricks played in the convent were numerous, and varied in their character. Some I witnessed, some I only heard of. I was the victim of many. By *tricks* I do not intend to include such abominable cheats impostures as are too common, and which are calculated to produce grievous and lasting injury to those upon whom they are practised. Such for instance as the system of falsehoods and hypocritical pretensions which are used in persuading young girls to take the veil. I refer now to such little plots as nuns sometimes form to revenge some injury inflicted upon them by priests or other persons. I will relate one

of these tricks, which was practised upon a priest, by a nun of our community. The "holy father" had rendered himself particularly obnoxious to one Sister Susan, and she soon found an opportunity to revenge herself upon him. He was a disreputable man, and among his vices that of drunkenness was one of the most prominent. Watching her opportunity, Sister Susan one day found Father L—— lying in a vacant cell, so far intoxicated as to be perfectly helpless, and she seized upon the occasion to administer a severe castigation upon him. But in order to avoid detection, she took a piece of black crape and made a rude mask of it—then taking a heavy stick, she went into the cell and gave the drunken father a terrible beating, while he, not wishing to be detected in so shameful a condition, had just sense enough not to make a loud outcry. His bruises and other evidences of the occurrence, however, led to an exposition, and while yet half stupefied with liquor and excitement—he demanded that the "black nun"—should be punished. The Superior, supposing he was telling a falsehood, or had had a drunken dream, or, if believing his story, rejoicing at his beating for her own sake, treated the matter very lightly, and assured him that she had never had a "negro nun" in her community.

Sometimes we were entertained by the Confessor in the chapel, after the services were over, who related circumstances connected with the history of celebrated personages of the Romish Church. At other times he would tell us of miraculous occurrences, from which sprung the worship of certain images. One day he related the following :

“In the Cathedral church of St. Salvator, there was an old image of Jesus Christ crucified, standing behind the choir, in a small obscure chapel ; now, nobody took notice of that crucifix, except a devout prebend or canon of the Church, who was in the habit of kneeling to the image daily, and to pray heartily to it. This prebend was ambitious of advancement in the church ; so one day, as he was on his knees before the image, he begged that by its power and influence he might be made a bishop, &c. To which earnest request the image made answer, ‘*And thou seest me here, what dost thou do for me ?*’ To which the canon answered, ‘*Lord I have sinned and done evil before thee.*’ For this humble answer the image said, ‘*Thou shalt be a bishop ;*’ and accordingly he was made a bishop very soon after. On learning of this miraculous incident the chapter resolved to build a fine chapel in one corner of the church to put the figure in, that it might be worshiped with more veneration and decency ; but the image spoke again to the prebend and said, ‘*My pleasure is to continue where I am till the end of time.*’ So it is kept in the same chapel, but is richly endowed.”

At another time he gave us a history of “*Our Lady of Tongres.*” He said that, “In the middle of the night on the second of February, a family of the Tongri, whilst keeping vigils, observed an unusual brightness in the garden. After a short time this splendor received a great increase, until at length it rivalled the sun itself. A fragrance far above that of Sabæa—because it was of celestial origin—succeeded, and a most enchanting harmony was



heard from afar. On proceeding to the scene, early in the morning, an image of the Mother of God was found. The man who first saw it was instantly cured of a disease, under which he had suffered for three years. The statue was at once removed to the church of St. Martin, to be worshiped for the public good. But, lo ! the next morning, the same light, the same fragrance, the same melody, was perceived, and the image, it was discovered, had gone back to its original situation in the garden. It was taken back to St. Martin's, and again it returned to the garden—a third time this miraculous translation was repeated, and then it was settled that our Lady of Tongres had made choice of the garden, as the situation of her shrine—therefore, the house to which the garden was attached, was converted into a temple, and dedicated to her honor !”

The relation of such ridiculous stories was listened to by some few of the more ignorant and superstitious nuns, with the most profound interest ; whilst others would smile sily, and cast quizzical glances at their familiar companions. I thought it betrayed a very shallow policy to attempt so gross an imposition upon some of us, whom the Confessor and Superior must have known would only receive their palpable falsehoods with the contempt they merited. But these impostors are so accustomed to dealing with the superstitious, illiterate, and blind believers of their faith, that they will not forego their habits of deception, when in the presence of the more intelligent of their flock ; hence their loss, in many instances, of the better informed, whose reasons rebel against the reception of such sheer nonsense,

and such utter absurdities. The novices are imposed upon, by those whose business it is to *train* them, and are made to believe that when they feel sad, they are experiencing "the operations of the Holy Spirit." If they weep, their tears are interpreted as "tears of delight," and sighs are always "wafted up to heaven." Thus the poor deluded ones are led on by gradual steps, until the noose is thrown about their necks, from which no human power can release them.

A friendly nun, with whom I had exchanged a hasty word or two of kindly feeling, had not attended services for several days, but one morning she appeared at High Mass, and signified that she had a letter for me, which I soon found an opportunity of securing. Intending to read it in my cell, I placed it between the leaves of a book I held in my hand at the time, but in doing so, the movement was observed by the Superior, and she asked me what I had there. My fear was so great that I could not speak, and I am sure my face must have been perfectly colorless, for I could feel the blood receding from the surface of my body, and concentrating around and within my very heart. I should have swooned with terror, had not my attention been drawn suddenly to my poor friend, who sank back upon the floor where she was kneeling, with a death-like pallor upon her face. A low, half suppressed groan, uttered as she fell, drew all eyes upon her, and while the attention of all present was thus attracted, I quickly, and with great presence of mind, ran around to the opposite side of the group which had collected about the prostrate form of my friend, and thrust her letter beneath the pedestal of an

image of St. Catherine, standing in a niche beside the altar. This accomplished, I pushed my way forcibly in among the rest, and had the pleasure of seeing my suffering friend open her eyes. Looking wildly around, she exclaimed, "Where am I? Oh, Yes, Holy Virgin! I remember!" Instantly kneeling down by her side, I kissed her, and embracing her, whispered, "Do not fear, it is safe." She pressed my arm, as a signal that she understood me, and the cause of her terror being removed, she soon regained her strength, and proceeded to her cell.

I was urged by the Superior to give up the letter, but when I solemnly assured her that I was not in possession of it, she flew into a rage and threatened to punish me severely. She then endeavored to make me divulge its contents, but I would sooner have died than betrayed my friend, and signified as much to the enraged Superior, whereupon she ordered me to my cell, and promised me the infliction of a terrible penance for my obduracy. Whether she repented of her severity, or thought it best to let the matter drop, or for some other reason, she did not act upon her promise, as I did not hear from her again on that particular subject.

## CHAPTER IX.

Priestly Duplicity—An Outrage—An unexpected Sight—Midnight Adventures in the Convent—Irksomeness of Convent Life—The agonized Soul—The Lover's Moonlight Stroll—The Oaken Door—The Key—The Resolution to Escape.

MY situation was anything but enviable. New persecutions awaited me. I was accused of having practised sorcery upon the last Superior. The immoral habits of the priests and nuns were daily made more apparent to me, and as I made no observations on the subject, and seemed to be indifferent to all that passed around, the father confessors became emboldened to make improper advances. One day, just before twilight in the evening, as I was passing along the hall leading to my cell, I met Father ——, who came and took my hand in a warm and excited manner, and said to me, "Sister, you seem dissatisfied and unhappy, can I do anything to render you more happy and contented?" "No father," I replied. "All I ask is my freedom, and that you all deny me."

"Not so, sister," said he. "It is your temporal father who constrains us to keep you with us; but your obduracy renders your residence here uncomfortable to you, as well as to those who are your co-mates in this holy retreat."

"I have no co-mates," I answered. "All shun me, and

some hate me because I am not content to be immured within these walls against my will."

"It would be a pleasure for you to be with us, if you would be more pliable, and enter into the enjoyment of those pleasures which are within the scope of absolution, and are justified by our theological philosophy," said the "holy father."

"There is no philosophy," I answered, "founded upon rational and moral logic, that can justify a crime." And now, becoming alarmed at finding myself parleying with one who was urging upon me the commission of criminal pleasures with their antidote of "absolution," I requested permission to retire to my cell. But, emboldened by my stopping to converse with him, the confessor, still holding my hand, although I had endeavored to withdraw it, drew me towards him, and would have proceeded to further liberties, had I not broke away from him by main force, and flew to my cell, where, trembling with excitement, I fell upon my knees, and besought my father in heaven to befriend me. I soon became composed and was about to retire, when a gentle rap at my door threw my nervous system into a perfect tremor of excitement, as I could not conceive it to be any other than father—but summoning up a forced resolution, I went to the door and opened it. Nothing could have astonished me more than the sight which presented itself to my view. There stood my friend, Sister Agnes, who had befriended me on several occasions, in the convent of St. ———, and who had been transferred to this house without my knowledge, until the moment when she appeared, like an apparition, at the door of my cell. On receiving a sign from me to enter,

she stepped quickly within, and closing the door, we embraced each other affectionately.

Sister Agnes had a great deal to tell me about her trials at St. ———; and I related to her the exciting event of that evening. She was shocked at my recital, and warned me to beware how I stopped to argue with the father confessors, lest they should prevail over my scruples, and draw me into their snares.

We sat on my low pallet, conferring for an hour, I should think, when Sister Agnes concluding it was best to go to her cell, left me with many expressions of regret on being obliged to do so.

She had not been gone more than a minute, when I was alarmed by hearing a smothered scream, as though some one was suddenly frightened. I thought I should have fainted, so great was my fear that Sister Agnes had been detected on her way to her cell, or I thought something worse might have befallen her. What to do, I knew not. To leave her in trouble was cowardly—to go to her, was to expose myself, and perhaps my friend, too, to a greater danger. But acting upon a generous impulse, I ran as rapidly as I could along the now nearly dark passage, and soon reached the vicinity whence the sound seemed to have come. I called in a low, whispering tone, “Hist! hist! who’s there?” not daring to call my friend by name.

Presently, a door opened a short distance from me, and I stepped hastily forward, when Sister Agnes, to my infinite relief, called me to her, and in a trembling voice, whispered, “Do not be alarmed. I was frightened on seeing two

figures approaching me, and as they were between me and my door, I thought myself detected, and could not repress a cry of alarm that arose to my lips. The two persons, a male and female, appeared to be as much alarmed as I was, and ran from me as though I were a ghost."

Thus satisfied of my friend's safety, I hastened back to my dreary cell, and after praying with an aching heart, and firmly resolving to escape, if possible, from that dreadful place, I retired to rest.

On the following morning, while at our morning exercises, I observed the movements and looks of all about me with close attention, and I thought I saw an anxious expression on the countenance of one Sister Olivia, as she cast a furtive glance at me, and again I observed her looking at others anxiously and scrutinizingly. Sister Agnes and myself had no opportunity of conversing on the subject of the adventure which had befallen us on the previous evening, until after our dismissal at the close of the ceremonies of the afternoon, when we were allowed to walk in the grounds attached to the Convent, but which were surrounded by a high wall. Here, attended by two elder nuns, we moved along with a monotonous and solemn pace, as though keeping time with the measured notes of the dead march. To one of a naturally lively and cheerful disposition, the weary and irksome practices of a Convent are dreadful in the extreme. On this occasion particularly, I could have groaned aloud, and wept the bitterest tears of agony, if by giving way to my feeling it would have availed me aught. But to bear and suffer in silence was my lot; and the

knowledge of my helpless, remediless condition, made my sorrows so intense that the fountains of my eyes seemed to be dried up by the fever heat of my poor aching and half-distracted brain.

Oh! I thought, if I could but unbosom myself to my friend, and pour into her ears the tale of my sorrows and my hopes, how light would it make my surcharged and heavy-laden heart!

Even the few half-whispered words of sympathy which passed between us, were a solace, and the promise made by each that no opportunity of meeting should be lost, was a balm to our wounded souls.

When night came I could not resist the strong temptation of visiting Sister Agnes, and regardless, from the desperate state of my feelings, of all consequences, I went boldly to her cell and rapped gently at the door. She opened it immediately, and entering, we conversed freely for some time. Presently we heard a slight cough, and then a low admonition to be careful. I at once proposed to Sister Agnes that we should fathom the mystery at all hazards, and she acceded to the proposal. We opened the door, which had been left a little ajar, carefully, and looked up and down the passage; when, at the furthest extremity to the left, where the hall at St. ——'s runs towards the town, we saw a priest and a nun, standing by the dim light of a window, where the rays of the rising moon entered with a faint and pallid light. They appeared to be engaged in close and earnest conversation, whispering in a cautious and timid manner for a few minutes, then moved towards a part



of the building occupied by the recluse nuns, where those who had not advanced into the higher honors of the convent were never allowed to go. As if by a simultaneous and sympathetic impulse, we quickly entered the hall and hurried to the end of it, where a transverse corridor leads into the western range of secluded apartments, inhabited by the Superior and her associates, the recluse nuns. This corridor has also at its eastern terminus, a long and narrow stairway, leading down into the deeper section of the grounds lying towards the river. This part of the enclosure is terraced, having winding paths running far down below the level of the elevation upon which stands the main structure of the Convent. Arriving at the end of the passage, we looked around the western corner, and to our terror saw the priest and nun returning, but they were so intent upon their own affairs, that fortunately, they did not perceive us. We drew back into the partially shaded passage, and stood rooted to the spot with fear.

With their heads in close proximity, the twain passed on towards the stairway, eastward; and again mustering sufficient courage, Sister Agnes and myself peered cautiously through the darkness, endeavoring to trace the mysterious wanderers. With a boldness which, to recall now in my cooler moments, astonishes me, we moved along the corridor towards the stairway leading down into the open grounds, and seeing no one there we descended the stairs and passed out into the terrace walk winding past the doorway. The light of the moon had the effect, at first, to deter us from proceeding far enough into the open air to be seen from the

windows of the Convent, but our curiosity getting the better of our prudence, we concluded to go on, but be careful to keep in the shadows of the trees.

With palpitating hearts, we advanced along a path which was shaded by a row of cedar trees on either border, and soon saw the objects of our search, as they were turning into a still more secluded avenue.

Following as closely as we could with safety, Sister Agnes and myself, with clasped hands, kept on behind the party in advance, until they reached a part of the surrounding wall, in which was fixed a small oaken door, heavily studded with large iron nails. The priest, taking a key from his pocket, at once unlocked the door, and the two, seeming confident that no one could be moving at that late hour of the night, passed out, leaving the key in the lock, but closing the door after them, which creaked upon its hinges.

We were now utterly at fault, and each turned inquiringly towards the other. Sister Agnes was the first to speak.

“Let us secure the means of escape which heaven seems to have placed within our reach,” was her spirited proposition.

I consented at once, and not to be outdone by my fellow prisoner, I went directly to the door and drew the key noiselessly from the lock.

“It will not be safe to venture forth to-night,” said I, “as the creaking door might betray us, for we know not how near the father confessor and his companion may be.”

“That thought was mine also,” said Sister Agnes, “and now let us retrace our steps as quickly as possible, and await the current of events.”

Ascending the more elevated ground, by the winding paths, we soon reached the upper avenue, where we had an unobstructed view of the river, which we paused a moment to admire, as the silver rays of the lovely moon shone upon its placid surface.

“See, see!” exclaimed Sister Agnes, “that boat moving out from the shore. It contains two persons, a man and woman, I believe.”

“Perhaps the same whom we have traced so far to-night,” said I.

“Most likely. They appear to be making for the point where the walls of the old convent of St.— stands out in bold relief against the sky beyond.”

“Now is our time to fly from these unholy grounds,” said I. And I felt as though nerved to the desperate venture by an unseen power.

My friend was equally resolved, and hastily, but still trembling with an excitement we could not entirely suppress, we proposed, in hurried and broken sentences, the method of proceeding best to be adopted.

## CHAPTER X.

Hasty Preparations—The Boat—The Escape—The Alarm—My Flight with Sister Agnes—Adventures—Fatigue and Repose—Liberty! how Sweet!—The Sagacious Dog—A Friend—A Welcome—Natural Behavior, versus the Artificiality of Convent Life—Considerate Friends—Priests in Pursuit.

IT was determined that we should return to our apartments, and secure such needful and suitable clothing, as would best subserve our purpose—then hasten to leave the place; trusting in the all-seeing eye of Providence to watch over us, in our flight from a spot which we believed to be desecrated by the presence of corrupt and guilty beings.

Noiselessly but rapidly, we made our way back to our respective cells. Selecting the darkest clothing from my scanty wardrobe, and wrapping the papers of Sister Ursula (which I had concealed beneath my pallet of straw), in a silk handkerchief, I hastened back to the doorway at the foot of the stone step. I was the first to reach the spot—but had not long to await the coming of Sister Agnes.

Looking out upon the water, to see that all was clear, and seeing nothing of the boat, we hurried down towards the door in the wall, keeping in the shade of the trees, and as much beneath them as possible, fearing we might be seen

from the windows, by any one who should chance to be stirring in the convent.

We soon reached the wall, and opening the door, with trembling hands, we held our breath with fear as it grated harshly upon its rusty hinges.

This was scarcely done, when Sister Agnes descried the boat and its occupants, in the distance, as they were leaving the point whereon the ruined convent stood.

“Quick ! be quick !” she exclaimed, “or we are lost.”

She had no sooner uttered these words of warning, than the convent bell pealed out a sudden sound, as though it had been stricken in alarm by a fear-nerved hand.

“Courage Sister —— !” cried the generous “Agnes,” seeming to forget herself, and only alarmed for my safety. “Let us lock the door, to prevent pursuit in this direction, and to draw attention from ourselves, and fix it upon yonder guilty couple.”

It was a happy thought, and we did not lose much time in carrying it into execution.

Withdrawing the key from the lock, I threw it down among some bushes near the water ; and now like startled deer we sped as swiftly as our feet could carry us, along the river's bank, that skirted the adjacent town.

Favored by the foliage of the trees and bushes growing on the bank above us, we were safe from view, and felt encouraged by this most favoring feature of our flight, for had we been exposed to view in the bright moonlight, without an intervening screen, such as the trees or bushes formed, we should surely have been detected. We could still hear

the convent bell tolling the alarm, and at every peal our hearts throbbed with a more painful intensity, and our nervous limbs were animated with an additional celerity.

We continued our flight, in this most trying frame of mind, until, completely exhausted, we sank down upon the sloping side of a rising knoll, immediately on the outskirts of the suburban district of the town, known as the —— district. Here, resting for a few minutes, we hastily discoursed upon our best plan of proceeding, and concluded to call in at the first house of good appearance which we should find most convenient and accessible, at the break of day, and throw ourselves upon the mercy of its inmates. After sitting for a few minutes, and finding ourselves greatly refreshed, we continued our flight, for so it may still be called, although our pace was greatly modified, as the thought of the distance placed between ourselves and the convent walls, had tended to reassure us. Keeping as much as possible beneath the trees, along the river's bank, and listening to every sound that reached our ears, we pursued our way towards the better part of the district, which was situated on the table-land above the water's edge.

We soon reached a fence of rails, surrounding the grounds designed for farming purposes, and concluded to remain at a proper distance from the house, until the morning's light should set the farming hands astir.

Looking about us for a comfortable hiding-place, we selected a little clump of alder bushes and other shrubs, which afforded us a retreat impervious to the prying eyes of any who might be searching for us, and at the same time a

sylvan bed of leaves whereon to rest our wearied limbs. Overcome with excessive fatigue of mind and body, my friend and myself were soon fast asleep, notwithstanding an agreement that we should keep alternate watches for fear of a surprise.

We must have slept for several hours, because when I was awakened by my friend, the sun was up and shining brightly on the river, and driving off the mist that hung above the water's surface like a fleecy cloud.

“Oh! Liberty!” I cried, “how sweet, how beautiful!”

My affectionate companion gave me a morning kiss, and we vowed that we would share together the cruel sufferings of captivity, or else enjoy the luxuries of freedom hand in hand through life.

It will readily be supposed that but little time was lost in making our toilette, and we were soon on our way to the house which we had selected for a visit. Crossing a field of corn and melons, we reached a garden fence, along which we walked, until we arrived at a gate opening into a path bordered with boxwood of large and luxuriant growth. We had not walked far along this beautiful path, when a large dog, of the Newfoundland species, came running toward us; but when the sagacious animal saw that it was only two females, he seemed to think (and I believe he *did think*: it is a part of my philosophy), that no mischief was intended, and he came up to us in a friendly manner, then ran off towards the house, as if to announce our approach. Presently an elderly gentleman came out of the door, and walked down the path to meet us. The benign

expression of this venerable man's countenance greatly relieved our anxiety as to the result of our call, and I at once addressed him as I would a friend. "Sir," said I, "you see before you two unfortunate girls, who have escaped from the St. T——'s Convent, and who claim your protection from their pursuers, as we doubt not the Superior has sent out her emissaries to secure us."

"Poor unfortunates !" exclaimed the good old gentleman, in a compassionate tone of voice. "Come in, come in ; my house shall be your castle, and I will sooner see it razed to the ground than a hair of your heads shall be touched. Come in, I have daughters of my own, and they will welcome you too."

"Heaven will reward you, sir," said Sister Agnes, for by that endearing title I must still call her, although not in the conventual sense.

"Yes," replied the old gentleman, "Heaven will reward me if I merit it ; and my conscience tells me I am serving heaven in protecting you."

Leading the way, our benevolent friend ushered us into a kind of dining-room, where an elderly female and two young ladies were seated at a breakfast-table. They all immediately arose, and our hospitable friend relieving us of the unpleasant necessity of repeating our story, in a few words informed his wife and daughters of the circumstances which led to our early and unexpected call. We were immediately greeted with a cordial welcome, and with many expressions of sympathy, were assured of their determination to protect us, should their intervention be required. Plates



and chairs were immediately placed for us at the table, and we were warmly urged to make ourselves "at home."

I cannot convey in mere words an idea of the pleasure it gave me to be once more among those who were free to act a natural part, who were at liberty to smile, or even signify their happiness and joy by an unrestrained and hearty peal of laughter. I had been so long accustomed to the senseless and unnatural method of behavior prescribed by the "rules" of the convent, that I felt, and am sure I must have appeared awkward and constrained in the eyes of my new friends. Hypocrisy having been reduced to a science in the convent, I still felt the influence of its subtle power over my mind and person. I still experienced its trammeling control. Sister Agnes appeared more at her ease, and perhaps she did not experience the feeling I have endeavored to describe. It might have been that my nature was more susceptible of impressions, and retained them longer.

While at our breakfast, I cast an uneasy glance at the servant maid, who was called into the room once or twice for some necessary service, when our considerate host, observing my look of mingled apprehension and suspicion, promptly relieved my anxiety by informing me that all around him were Protestants, and that I need be under no apprehension on that score. At the same time, the good lady of the house told me that she would have a talk with the servant girl, who could be trusted, so that she would be upon her guard in case of any inquiries being made for my friend or myself.

After breakfast we were furnished with dresses more

becoming to our new position, by the generous daughters of our venerable friend, who seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to make us comfortable and happy.

Requesting the use of a writing-desk, which stood upon a table in the sitting-room, I addressed a hasty note to Mr. ——, my legal friend at ——, apologizing to him for my seeming unkindness in refusing to see him while at the Convent of St. ——, and requesting his aid in my present emergency. Sister Agnes also wrote to a distant relative, the only being on earth she could claim as such, because her more immediate connections were all of the Catholic belief, and would most likely obey their priests, should they require the betrayal of a fugitive from a convent—even though that fugitive were a blood relation. In the afternoon a lady called upon our friends, mentioned a report of our escape as circulating through the town, but made no particular comments, and could give no especial information.

As soon as this lady's call was announced, Sister Agnes and myself were requested to sit in a retired chamber, until she should leave, which we were very glad to do

Nothing more reached us this day respecting our escape. We had taken a refreshing sleep in the heat of the day, and in the afternoon, towards evening, we felt a new vigor imparted to us, mentally and physically. Sister Agnes, particularly, manifested an exuberance of good spirits, such as I could scarcely believe it possible for any one to possess under the still unpleasant and difficult circumstances surrounding her. She skipped about, and laughed and talked

in the most lively manner, and the youngest daughter of our host being of the same joyous temperament, their happiness had its influence upon her sister and myself. I think it was on the third day after our escape, that a gentleman called to see Miss Matilda, the eldest of our young lady friends, and informed her that the most exciting rumors were rife, in town, respecting the escape of two nuns from the convent; that two priests, and two or three of the elderly nuns were making inquiries and searching diligently in every direction for the runaways. He said that the people generally sympathized deeply with the fugitives, and that the convent could not furnish force enough to carry them back against their wills. It may be supposed that we were greatly alarmed at learning the condition of the public mind on our account, and the more so, because we well knew that the more excitement there was, the more anxious our pursuers would be to get us into their hands again before we could inform the people of the bad treatment we had been subjected to, and the practices of the inmates of the convent.

Our hosts offered to place us under the protection of the authorities, if we desired it, but wishing to avoid so much publicity, we thanked our good friends for the offer, and only requested that we should have permission to remain under their charge until we could hear from our friends to whom we had written. They were so kind as to say that we would be welcome to remain a year with them if we could make ourselves contented in their little family circle. On the following week, letters came for Sister Agnes and myself; hers was from her friend's father, offering his protection, with

a few lines of sympathy and love from his daughter. Enclosed in this letter was one directed to a gentleman of high respectability in town. This letter was immediately sent as directed, our kind host being well acquainted with the person for whom it was intended. Mine contained instructions how to proceed legally, my friend Mr. C—— taking a professional as well as friendly view of my “case.” There were also some few expressions of condolence and interest, and fifty dollars in the form of a draft upon the bank at —— . He advised me to see a good Protestant lawyer, if I thought I was in danger, and could not safely leave town ; but if there was no pressing necessity to take legal measures, then to start immediately for the city where he resided. I resolved to act upon this last suggestion, acquainted Sister Agnes with my purpose, and urged her to accompany me. The gentleman to whom her friend had addressed the letter, called upon her and proffered his services. She informed him of her wish to accompany me, and he placed his carriage at our disposal, as a conveyance at once comfortable and safe. In this we could go as far as M——, and there we could take the boat for R——.

A purse of money was given to Sister Agnes in a most delicate manner by her new acquaintance, and with hearts as light as the free birds of the air we started on our journey.

## CHAPTER XI.

The hasty Departure—Change of Horses—A devoted Friend—The Steamer—The Arrival—An angry Bishop—A Power beyond the Laws—A cool Lawyer—The Dismissal—The baffled Bishop.

WE fondly hoped that our trials were over, as far as the priest and Superior of the Convent were concerned ; but not so, for we had not proceeded further than the central portion of the town, when Sister Agnes, who was looking incautiously from the carriage-window, quickly drew back and exclaimed : “ He saw me ! ” It was Father L——. Knowing that nothing worse could happen from my being seen, as well as Sister Agnes, I looked out, and saw our pursuer hastening on after us, and looking about as if for some means of pursuit. I informed our friend, Mr. ——, of what I had observed, and he ordered the driver to put the horses at the most rapid pace at which he could drive them with safety. We fairly flew over the ground, but our fears and our desire to escape were so great, that, to us, the carriage seemed to move with no remarkable degree of speed. I believe that the fastest locomotive would scarcely have satisfied our desire to be moving at the greatest possible velocity. We must have travelled several miles at this furi-

ous rate, when the driver stopped before a public house, and informed Mr.— that his horses could not go on at the speed they had been travelling. Fresh horses were ordered, and we were fortunate enough to procure a team of excellent ones. But little time was lost, and on we raced, looking behind us to see if any one was in pursuit. No one was visible along the road we had come, and we hoped that we had escaped the notice of Father L—, as to the direction we had taken on leaving town.

After driving some four or five miles further, at a galloping pace part of the time, our driver slackened the speed of our noble horses, and let them take breath.

We soon reached a small village, seven miles distant from M—, but did not pause a moment longer than was necessary to wipe the horses, and give them a little water. The seven miles were soon travelled, and, stopping at one of the hotels until the boat should leave for R—, we had an opportunity to recover from our nervous trepidation, and to thank our generous friend for his valuable services. He assured us repeatedly that it was his duty, and urged that we were under no obligations to him whatever. His politeness and gentlemanly attentions were unremitting—so much so, that we could not but feel a deep sense of our indebtedness to him, notwithstanding his generous reasoning, that the performance of a duty calls for no feeling of obligation.

As the boat started in an hour or so after our arrival, we all concluded that it would be safe to go alone to R—, although our noble friend proffered his company and pro-

tection, should we feel the least apprehensive in travelling alone. We could not believe that Father L—— had been able to follow us so closely, and we did not feel justified in putting Mr. —— to so much trouble; we therefore insisted that we should be perfectly safe in going to R—— unaccompanied.

After procuring our state rooms for us, and informing the captain that we were unattended, and might possibly require attention, and receiving a promise from the captain that we should be cared for, our kind benefactor took leave of us in the most affectionate manner. Indeed, had we been his own children, he could not have manifested a more tender solicitude for our welfare; and we shall ever regard him in the light of one who has conferred upon us a favor, which a life of the most grateful remembrance cannot repay.

We remained in our state room during our whole voyage to R——, and were waited upon with the greatest attention by the chambermaid, whom the captain had instructed to call frequently upon us to see if we required anything. Our meals, which we ate on board the steamer, were sent to our room by the attentive chambermaid, at our request. Our arrival had been anticipated by Mr. C——, who received us at the landing, and conducted us to his house, where we were introduced to his sisters, two lovely and affectionate girls.

He did not reproach me for my seeming ingratitude at the Convent of St. ——, when, at the archbishop's order, I refused to see him, and sent back his letter unopened. But I mentioned it, and apologizingly urged the arch-

bishop's order in extenuation of what might appear to be ingratitude.

I supposed, of course, the archbishop would conclude that I had sought the protection of Mr. —, therefore I was neither surprised nor alarmed when the Bishop of — called upon my counsellor and demanded my rendition into the hands of the community of St. —. "I have come," said the bishop, with that arrogant assumption of power peculiar to Romish priests, who are accustomed to tyrannize over their ignorant flocks, "I have come to demand the possession of Miss —, known as Sister Louisa —, whom we have reason to believe has hidden herself in your house."

"Sir," said my friend, "this country is neither Italy, nor Spain, nor Portugal, nor Cuba—it is America; and if you have not learned the difference between the spirit of the respective countries I have named, and that of this government, let me tell you your ignorance is unpardonable; because the time you have employed practising deception upon the superstitious and bigoted of your flock, could have been better devoted to an acquisition of some slight knowledge respecting the rights of American citizenship. Do you think, sir, because I submitted to the peculiar laws of the locality of St. —'s Convent, that I will be as yielding here?"

"You may do as you please," replied the bishop angrily; "but I warn you to beware you do not go too far with your legal steps, or that you do not incur the serious displeasure of a power that is beyond your laws."

"I know your meaning," was my friend's reply; "but I



neither fear the secret machinations of your Jesuit band, nor do I dread the consequences of your priestly wrath. And now, sir, I require to be left alone, my professional duties must be attended to."

"Well, sir, you have a right to request me to leave your house," said the bishop, while rage and vexation were visibly at work within his breast, "but the courtesy of your request is only equalled by your reverence for my holy office."

"Save your sneers, most reverend sir, for those upon whom they fall with some effect—and when next you call upon an American Protestant, endeavor to divest yourself of the idea that you are in the house of a Roman Catholic—tempering the language, and measuring the magnitude of your demand, accordingly."

Biting his lip with a badly disguised mortification at thus being baffled by the cool courage and straight-forward language of my friend—the Bishop withdrew from the apartment adjoining the one where I had been writing during the conference, with the door partly open—and left the house with a firm determination, I doubted not, of being revenged upon us all.

Nor was I mistaken in my supposition, as the sequel will show

## CHAPTER XII.

The Dawning of Love—The Fascinating Stranger—A Pen-Portrait—The Pleasures of Charity—The Appeal—The Promise.

SO much devotion to my interest, exercised on the part of my able counsel, could not be regarded with indifference, and I began to feel the truth of the axiom that “gratitude is akin to love.”

Nor did he appear to regard me as merely a stranger who needed his professional abilities as a defence against the acts of those who set both the laws of God and man at defiance—for I had observed with the penetration and perception for which our sex is noted, that a more than professional solicitude was manifested in my behalf.

Sister Agnes had been observing certain looks and glances also, and had quizzed me a little respecting them, but I preferred to be very stupid, and would not “let on” that I understood the drift of her innuendoes.

It will be more convenient in the course of my narrative, hereafter, to designate my legal friend by his surname, *Clarence*—and I shall do so all the more readily because I think it is a beautiful name and will look well in print.

Sister Agnes, with her sweet disposition, and agreeable manners, had also endeared herself to Clarence and his

sisters, so that our household circle was one of great harmony and unalloyed happiness. But Sister Agnes was of an independent turn of mind, and she was very anxious to get some genteel employment, so that she should not be a burden upon the family of her new acquaintance.

I also desired very much, indeed, to find a situation as teacher in some select school, or to have a few pupils in music, whom I could teach at their homes. We informed Clarence of our wishes in this particular, and he said, *perhaps*, he would see what he could do for us, at the same time intimating that he should not and we need not go to much trouble "in the matter."

When he had an opportunity of speaking with me alone, he informed me that he had written to my father, desiring a statement of his wishes regarding my disposal and asking permission to advise me respecting any proposals of marriage which might be made me. He said this with a meaning smile. Clarence has a calm and innocent way of saying things, and although such a proceeding might seem strange to a stranger, yet when its purport was mentioned by Clarence, it appeared all well enough, and I thanked him for his consideration.

The day after this interview, a lady, who said her name was Lorimer, called in to solicit a donation for a charitable object—and managed to make herself so agreeable that Adelaide, Clarence's eldest sister, invited her to call again.

I had been out taking a stroll with Clarence, and when we returned, both the girls gave utterance to a volume of eulogistic expressions, regarding their enchanting visitor—

so extravagant were they in her praise that I accused them of hyperbole—but, they denied most strenuously, that they had exceeded the bare truth in the least degree.

They said I would have an opportunity of judging for myself, as this charming visitor had promised to repeat her visit.

About the third day after her first visit, the lady above referred to called again, and this time I was at home, and was introduced to Miss Lorimer, as she called herself. I should judge her to be about thirty-five years of age, although there was nothing of the old maid in her manner or appearance. On the contrary, there was a freshness and buoyancy in her movements, and a seeming artlessness and frankness which won upon my affections very rapidly, and by the time we had conversed an hour or so upon various subjects, but more especially upon that of *charity*, I felt as though I had known her for many a year.

She was not beautiful nor pretty, but she was possessed of charms which, in their "*tout ensemble*," might be called handsome. Her hair was very dark, but did not appear to be of a decided black; her eyes were positively black, and penetrating in their expression. A well rounded, gracefully turned and elastic figure, about five feet three inches in height must complete my description. The power of fascination appeared to be a gift of Miss Lorimer's, as that of "charming" is a gift of the rattlesnakes, and the appropriateness of this simile will be seen before I shall have concluded this recital of my experience in the ways of Jesuitism.

Added to the advantages I have named above, I must

mention those of a naturally fine intellect, cultivated by a thorough education, and many polite accomplishments, and till the portrait is not complete, unless I say in the words of a common expression, she had "a winning way about her."

Indeed, there was no resisting the attacks made upon the outworks of your heart's affections, by this singular woman, who appeared to have reduced all the seductive arts into a concentrated battery; which, brought to bear upon your doubts, suspicions, or incredulity, always carried them by storm.

So thoroughly impressed was I with the conviction that she was all goodness, all honesty, and all sincerity, that I would have confided the secrets of my very soul to her keeping, without a fear of their betrayal.

Charity was the burden of her song, and upon this subject she was truly eloquent—dwelling upon its pleasures and lauding its beauties as the youthful lover sings the rapture of his mistress' presence, or dwells upon her lovely charms in strains of glowing poesy.

"Come," said she to me—"and taste the delicious joy of doing good—of ministering to the poor—of pouring balm upon the wounded soul—of dispelling the dark clouds of deep despondency and making the light of hope shine in upon the gloomy minds of those whom desperation drives to thoughts of crime, or suicide."

"Ah," said I, "most gladly would I also be a good Samaritan, but I am poor myself and have no means of feeding the hungry, or of clothing the naked."

"None are so poor," was her reply, as to be unable to

contribute something ; a word of consolation, a cheering smile, a look of sympathy. Promise me that you will go and see the suffering poor, and pour into their wounded hearts the balm of hope."

To resist her warm appeals, and deny a request so easily complied with, during my idle hours, would have been both unfeeling and impolite; and in truth, although there were some unpleasant features in the mission, I desired to see the under-current of society, so that I did not hesitate to promise her, as she desired.

Naming a day when she would call for me the following week, Miss Lorimer left us, not without many regrets at parting, however, which being expressed in a tone of sincere attachment, had the effect of impressing us still more favorably towards her.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The Jesuit Spies—The Angel of Mercy—The By-ways of the City—Blessings Before and Curses After—Americans and Irish—The Deception—The Trap—Prisoners again—A Rude and Insolent Priest—The Vault.

AS soon as Miss Lorimer had left, Julia, Adelaide's sister requested to be exonerated from the charge of having indulged in hyperbole, which I had preferred against her, on account of our agreeable visitor.

I at once acquitted her of having exceeded the truth, as I fully believed at the time that Miss Lorimer was entitled to all the praises which had been lavished upon her by the two unsuspecting sisters.

Adelaide playfully pretended to some degree of jealousy, because of the marked preference shown for my company on the contemplated mission of charity; and Julia said she had a great mind to quarrel with me.

We were sitting at the front parlor windows during this colloquy, looking out upon the tide of humanity sweeping by, when Adelaide suddenly exclaimed: "See there! what kind of people are they with those long black coats on?"

I looked across the street, and saw three Jesuit priests walking along, and looking over at the house occasionally, but in their usually sly and guarded manner.

"They are Jesuits," said I, while a tremor seized upon me in defiance of a struggle to throw it off.

Neither Adelaide nor Julia perceived my agitation on beholding those saintly villains, whom I knew well enough were contemplating some mischief to myself; and I was ashamed to own that I could experience a thought of fear while under the roof of their courageous brother. Nothing of moment occurred during the interval of time between the last visit of Miss Lorimer and her promised call on the Wednesday following.

She came at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and this time, Sister Agnes, whose curiosity had been greatly excited by our high-toned coloring of Miss Lorimer's character and person, was gratified with a view of our "Angel of Mercy," as Adelaide had named her.

Clarence had not yet returned from his office, and the day was very pleasant, so that, needing no escort, and having none had we required any, Miss Lorimer, Sister Agnes, to whom an invitation had extended, and myself, set out upon our wanderings among the poor.

Our guide conducted us along and through the most obscure, the dirtiest, and most repulsive streets in the great metropolis, in a quarter the least frequented by those who compose, to use a hackneyed expression, the "better classes" of the community.

Nothing was visible but squalid wretchedness, rags, misery, and filth; while the most offensive language greeted our ears.

The calls of our guide appeared to be confined to the



Irish, who poured upon her the blessings of the Virgin Mary and all the saints of the calendar ; but what they said after we had left, when they found we had but little *money* to give, I leave to the imagination of those who know the Irish character perhaps as well as I do.

I remarked to Miss Lorimer that there appeared to be but few Americans in need of charity.

“ They are a proud and stiff-necked race of people, who prefer to die like rats, in holes and corners, rather than make their necessities known,” was the reply, uttered, I thought, in rather a petulant tone of voice. The thought struck me that she might be of Irish birth herself, so that I did not give expression to the reflection which entered my mind, that the Americans did not need as much charity as the Irish, because the former are more industrious, intelligent, and temperate than the latter, and, in fact, are altogether infinitely superior to them in every attribute of humanity ; therefore *employment* is all that is required to place them beyond the necessity of taking alms from the charitable, even if they could be known, while employment fails to raise the Irish above the level where *priestcraft*, aided by ignorance, intemperance, and superstition, has placed them, and holds them with its iron chains.

Nearly three hours had been spent in this region of reeking crime, vice, and poverty ; and, sick at heart, fatigued in body, and anxious to get home, I proposed that we should leave those scenes of wretchedness ; but Miss Lorimer requested us to call in and examine an institution established by a benevolent gentleman, for the alleviation of the suffer-

ing poor of that vicinity. This consumed nearly an hour's time, so that when we started for our homes "the shades of evening" were gathering round us.

Our shortest way would have been across the city, in a westerly direction, until we should reach the great Broadway of the city; but Miss Lorimer prevailed upon us to take a car on the more democratic thoroughfare, and ride up to a point where the two great avenues converged, arguing as an excuse for this step, that she was anxious to call on some friends this evening, as she had an engagement to do so.

Suspecting nothing wrong, we of course complied with her request, although Sister Agnes manifested a great desire to hurry home, lest our friends should be uneasy at our protracted absence. Miss Lorimer directed the driver to stop the car at one of the cross streets, about a mile from our starting-place, which we soon reached. It was now getting dark, and we hurried along at a pretty rapid rate. Our companion told us that we should be detained but a moment at the house where she wished to stop. Presently she ran up the stoop of a very large house, and quickly ringing the bell, she stepped before the door-plate, which I had barely time to notice, was of an unusual size, and requested us to step in a moment. The door was opened almost immediately, and we entered the hall, and were at once shown into the parlor by Miss Lorimer, who appeared to be very much at home. The parlor was but dimly lighted, although there was light enough to enable poor Sister Agnes and myself to perceive the character of

the apartment we had entered, and we turned an affrighted look towards each other, as each arrived at the conclusion that we had been deceived.

“Excuse me for a moment,” said our deceitful companion, “I will return presently—amuse yourselves with the paintings;” and with a low, malicious laugh, she left us to ourselves, locking the door after her. The paintings on Catholic subjects, a crucifix, books with crosses upon them, were evidences enough that we were trapped by our inveterate foes. My first impulse was to try the doors—all were locked. Sister Agnes made an effort to raise the sashes of the windows, but could not, and the close blinds outside appeared to be made expressly to prevent escape.

“My God!” exclaimed Sister Agnes, “what will become of us?” and clasping her hands, she threw herself upon her knees by a chair, and commenced to weep, and call upon God to help her.

My terror, I am sure, was equal to hers, but I kept a better command of myself, and strove to comfort her, and inspire her with more courage. She soon recovered from the excessive fright which had at first prostrated her strength, and arising from her kneeling posture, asked me, in a calm and collected manner what was to be done. Let us scream for help said I, some one may hear us in passing by.

We went to the window, and raising our voices to their shrillest pitch, we screamed and called for help, but we had not time to repeat our cries before the door was thrown open, and Father L—— (as we discovered afterwards, not

recognizing him at the time) with two female companions dressed in the habits of nuns, entered the room.

Father L—— advancing directly to me, seized me by the wrist and threatened to kill me if I did not desist, while the nuns seized upon Sister Agnes and dragged her into a back apartment, where Father L—— also conducted me, although I struggled to get away from him.

“Let me go, villain!” I cried, “you will repent of this!”

“Who will make us repent, Miss Runaway?” he asked, in an insolent manner.

“I have friends,” said I, “who will not desert me.”

“There are those who have a prior claim upon you, Sister. The Church and your father, stand between you and your lover.”

“My lover!” I exclaimed indignantly; “but no!” I cried, as contempt took the place of anger in my breast—“you cannot insult me, scoundrel priest!”

“Holy Virgin! Mother of God!” cried she by whom we had been betrayed—for now we knew her, although dressed in the habit of a nun.

“What sacrilege!” screamed the other.

“Take her to the vault!” was the imperative demand of Father L——, his face being purple with rage, and seizing me rudely by the arm, he almost dragged me into the hall, and down a flight of stairs, thence along the lower hall, into an apartment, at the end of it, which seemed to be set into the ground. Thrusting me forcibly into this cold and damp cell, they locked the door and left me alone in the dark. Groping around in search of something to lie upon, I found

a roughly constructed pallet, upon which I threw myself and wept the bitterest tears I remember ever to have shed.

But it was not for myself, alone, that my tears flowed in copious torrents ; it was the misery of my dear Sister Agnes, and the uncertainty of her fate, that contributed greatly to my distress of mind.

## CHAPTER XIV.

My Cell—The Conference—The Superior—Cross-Questionings—What is a Prisoner? Sister Agnes—Liberty—The Subterranean Passage—The Archbishop—"Harping on Liberty"—Praying to all but God—The Return.

PLACING my hand against the wall, I found that it was cemented and had a finished surface, as though prepared with some care, but no opening could I discover, which would answer as a vent for the confined air to escape, and as a means of ingress for the pure air without, save only a small window-like orifice cut through the door, and crossed and recrossed with iron bars. I had lain about an hour upon the dampened pallet, when the door was unlocked, and a nun entered, and placed a lamp and some coarse food, with a small mug of water, a cross and a breviary upon the floor.

"How long am I to be confined here?" I asked.

"That is no affair mine," said she, "but I should think as long as you are obdurate."

"Do you mean as long as I refuse to be a nun?"

"I mean, as long as you continue to strive against the workings of the Holy Spirit, and give us trouble by your foolish contumacy."

“But I cannot believe that the Holy Spirit desires a sacrifice of happiness, a senseless confinement of the free mind, of the senses, and of the body, within the walls of a convent.”

“We'll not argue that now, I've no time to discuss the subject,” said she, and was going out, when I asked if I could be allowed to see Sister Agnes.

“I will ask the Superior, and let you know,” was the civil answer, saying which, she stepped out of the vault and locked the door.

In a few minutes the Superior entered, and asked me if I wished to see Sister Agnes.

I answered, that I did.

“Will you promise to be less obstinate?” she asked.

“If by that, you mean to ask me, if I will yield a jot of my determination, never to become a nun, I answer, no!”

“Why do you shun the life?”

“I have no taste for it.”

“Why did you escape from St. ——?”

“Because I was confined against my will, and was not satisfied.”

“How came it, that Father C—— and Sister M—— were locked out by you, on the night of your escape?”

“I locked the door to prevent pursuit.”

“How did it happen that they were out that night?”

“You will have to ask the holy father himself.”

“Where have you reason to suppose they went?”

“They can tell you best.”

“Did they go to the ruins of the old convent of St ——?”

“I think they did.”

“At whose house did you stay while in town?”

“A truthful answer to that question, might subject my kind protectors to some inconvenience.”

“We know in whose carriage you left town.”

“Yes, madam.”

“Mr. ——— seems to take a great interest in your affairs.”

“Yes, madam.”

“He cannot be entirely disinterested.”

“The consideration of fees is apt to interest a lawyer.”

“But you have no means to pay him.”

“I shall have, if I ever get my rights.”

“Your father’s fortune is still involved.”

“But not so much as formerly.”

“How do you know that?”

“From a friend.”

“He wishes you to remain with us a year or two.”

“And will you keep me?”

“Yes.”

“A prisoner?”

“No.”

“You will not let me go?”

“Perhaps not.”

“What is a prisoner?”

“Would you like to go up stairs?”

“Yes.”

“You may go.”

“I see the subterfuge, but it matters little to me, whether I am here or in the garret, so that the doors are locked.”



“From the upper windows you can see the Archbishop’s residence, and the cathedral.”

“May I attend mass?”

“Yes.”

“In the cathedral?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“To-morrow morning, if you wish.”

“And Sister Agnes?”

“Why should we indulge you?”

“Because you have injured me.”

“I will ask the Archbishop if Sister Agnes may attend.”

“I should like to see her to-night.”

“You will conspire to escape.”

“We are not willingly here.”

“Promise me you will not attempt to escape.”

“I could not escape from this cell to-night, were I to attempt it.”

“You are very perverse, but I am disposed to be indulgent, and will send Sister Agnes down.”

She went away, carefully closing and locking the door after her, and in a few minutes returned, bringing Sister Agnes with her.

“Sister Agnes,” said I, “I feel very grateful that I am allowed to see you.”

“Be more deserving, and we will be more lenient,” said the Superior, as she went away.

“Do you know where we are?” was my first inquiry.

“At the Institution of ———, in ——— street.”

“Then we cannot escape, I suppose?”

“We must hope, though they watch me very closely. I might throw a note from the window, if I could obtain the paper and a pencil, or pen and ink, to write it with.”

“Let us pretend to be more reconciled; it is the only way to conciliate their favor. Yesterday I was angry, and acted rashly. I am ashamed to think of the epithet which I applied to Father L——, and yet I know that he deserves it. The Superior has promised that I shall go to mass, and perhaps you will be allowed to accompany me, in the morning.”

“Where?”

“To the Cathedral.”

“Is it possible?”

“Yes.”

“I cannot believe it—they are deceiving you.”

“They may adopt some plan to prevent a scene in the street, or there is something in it which I do not understand.”

“Oh, Sister! beware how you trust them!”

“I am desperate. Nothing can be worse than imprisonment; and now, since I have tasted liberty, I indeed believe

“‘One day, one hour of virtuous liberty,  
Is worth a whole eternity in bondage.’”

“Do not despair,” said Sister Agnes; “I believe that Mr. —— will find a way to get us out.”

The attendant came in and changed my pallet for a fresh

and dry one, and asked Sister Agnes if she would prefer to stay with me till morning.

“Yes, indeed!” was Sister Agnes’ earnest answer.

Half the night was spent in revolving over in our minds plans and schemes of escape, but at last, overcome with exhaustion, we sank into a slumber, and neither of us awoke till morning.

I was aroused from a sound sleep by the pressure of a hand upon my shoulder, and, starting up, I found the Superior standing by my side.

“Come,” said she, “it is nearly time to say mass.”

“I will be ready in a moment. Come, Sister Agnes!” I said, “let us go to mass.”

The Superior made no objection to this, and I was happy to know that Sister Agnes was to accompany me.

We were soon ready, and, following the Superior, we went out into an area, in the side of which was a door, and this she opened, but paused a moment, as if expecting some one. We had not waited longer than a minute or two, when we were joined by two nuns, who had a small kind of candelabra, having three branches, with sockets holding as many candles.

Sister Agnes and myself drew back in alarm, as we feared that we should be led into some gloomy dungeon, and be incarcerated for life.

The Superior, however, in a kindly manner, assured us that it was a private passage leading to the Cathedral, which was but a short distance from the Institution.

The lights, illuminating the vault-like passage, dispelled

the gloomy aspect of the place, and we followed after the Superior and one of the nuns, holding a candelabra, while the other nun followed after us.

Proceeding in this manner for a considerable distance, we at last reached a door at the extremity of the subterranean passage. Here we paused for a moment, until the Superior unlocked the door, when we all passed up a flight of stone steps into the chancel, where we were joined by the Archbishop. He took us by the hand in a manner intended to be fatherly, but his displeasure was plainly visible.

“Is it possible,” he commenced, “that two of our youngest and fairest daughters should give us so much trouble? What would you have, my children?”

“Liberty, father, liberty,” said I.

“Liberty! I am told you’re always harping on that word. You do not know its meaning. In the sense that you require it, it means liberty to go into the world, to expose yourself to all the evil influences, the vicious contacts, the severe temptations, ever to be dreaded in this modern Sodom of an heretical land—in this imbecile community, calling itself enlightened, but whose moral attributes are sinking from day to day, as may be witnessed even in the immediate neighborhood of this most holy edifice.”

“Father,” I replied, “we have not”—

“Speak for yourself!” said the Archbishop, sharply.

“Yes, father. I have not found it so. I have been surrounded by an atmosphere of purity; a circle of generous, noble, and virtuous friends, whose contact was not to be dreaded, and”—

“You do not know the world,” again interrupted the Archbishop ; “it is full of deceit. You are a child, to trust it. Come, let us engage in our holy offices, and pray to the ever blessed, the Immaculate Mother of Mary ; the Virgin Queen of Heaven ; to Jesus Christ, her glorious Son ; the Holy Ghost, and all the saints and holy hosts in heaven, that you may be saved from the contamination of the world.”

I do not know what the substance of *their* prayers was, the services being mostly rendered in Latin ; but I know that *I* prayed to God (whom *they* had never thought to name), to deliver me from the hands of my jailors.

The ceremony completed, the Archbishop administered a brief admonition to Sister Agnes and myself, to be prayerful, patient and obedient ; after which, following our guides, we retraced our steps along the gloomy passage, and soon reached our cell, where we were locked in by our tender Mother Superior.

But little time was left us for consultation, as we were interrupted by the entrance of the Superior, accompanied by a priest of the Order of Jesuits, who was left alone with me while Sister Agnes was ordered to follow the Superior.

## CHAPTER XV.

The Tempter and the Tempted—Threats—The Heretic—Another Convent—Gagged and Blinded—The Ride—The Convent of the Sacred ——— —The Gay Superior.

MY visitor seated himself upon a low stool in my cell, and appeared to be somewhat confused.

He was a fine looking young man, and had the appearance of a man of the world rather than a priest, who believed in and practised the offices of his calling. His forehead, was, high, broad, and handsome—his hair and eyes black—his features fine and expressive—and his voice as musical as Apollo's lute.

“Sister,” he commenced—after an awkward and painful pause, as though he had entered my cell before he had decided upon his plan of action, and required time to arrange it in his mind, ere he ventured to address me. “Sister,” said he, “they tell me you are intractable, difficult to please, perverse, and self-willed—but I am not inclined to believe it. I think I know the cause of your dissatisfaction. You find the rules of the convents too rigid and too irksome in their observance ; your temperament and disposition rebel against the austerity and solemnity of a convent life ! at least, such convent life as you have

experienced in the two, where you have lived. Is it not so?"

"It is."

"But Sister, we have other religious houses, where your enjoyments, your pleasures, your freedom, will be greater."

"I am not suited to the life, even, in a much more modified form than any I have known, and your arguments are lost on me."

"You should not decide without experience."

"I have had experience enough."

"But not of the kind I am urging now, for I am sure you could not object to the life of a nun, in the convent of the Sacred ——."

"Wherein does it differ from others?"

"The confessors are all refined, intelligent, and youthful men, compared with those of the convents you have lived at; the amusements are more like those of the world, and love is unrestricted." As he uttered the last sentence, he drew nearer to me, and attempted to take my hand. But I withdrew to the extremity of my narrow cell, and ordered him to desist from offering any further arguments in favor of a convent life.

"My determination is irrevocable," said I.

"Can nothing," he asked—"no consideration under heaven, move you?"

"No!"

"Then," said he, losing his temper, "you have been described correctly, as an obstinate, self-willed, headstrong girl."

“ You may call me what you please.”

“ We may find a way to bend your stubborn neck, and bring your high head down.”

“ You may achieve a glorious victory in crushing to the earth a frail, weak form like mine, but *the soul*, will mount to Heaven, if it be pure, though all the Bishops, priests, and prelates of the Church of Rome essay to keep it down.”

“ Heretic ! you have left the only true Church, out of which there is no salvation !”

“ I have been hunted from the church you claim so much for.”

“ You confess then !”

“ I may love that, from which I have been driven. My heart may cling to it, while my persecutors are dragging me away from it.”

“ It is a struggle between the Holy Spirit and the Devil, and you assist the latter.”

“ There are those who torment me, against whom the charge of a league with Satan, might better be preferred.”

“ Whom do you accuse ?”

“ My jailors.”

“ Who are they ?”

“ My persecutors.”

“ Name them.”

“ They are too numerous to name, and some of them I do not know.”

“ You evade answering my questions.”

“ I cannot answer them.”



“I see,” said he, rising, as if to go. “You are cunning and firm, but we may outwit you and bend your stubborn spirit too.”

“I am in your power,” I replied, “and you have not spared me heretofore. I know that I must suffer, but not always. Your temporal and spiritual power is limited to earth—but in the Spirit-land, where tyrants cannot come, ’tis love that rules.”

“Who is the tyrant here?”

“There is one mightier than the rest, and many under him who do his will.”

“You speak in enigmas.”

“If I were free, I would be free to speak.”

“It is a waste of time to argue with you. I leave you alone to struggle with the Devil, since you reject the aid of those who have the power to drive him hence. Saying which, the Jesuit left the cell, and I felt as though it was *I* who had driven forth the evil one.

I remained in my cell four days longer in solitary confinement, excepting when the attendant came to place the necessaries of life upon the floor, when, on the fifth day, the Superior came, and taking a seat upon the pallet, asked me if I was well.

“Yes,” I answered, “that is I am free from actual pain or dangerous sickness, but my health most suffer from confinement in a place like this.”

“You look pale; but the bloom would soon return to your cheeks, and the fire to your eyes, if you would take an occasional stroll in the grounds attached to the Convent of

the Sacred ——, with the agreeable confessor who visited you on Tuesday last. He talks of no one but you now, and seems to have been most favorably impressed by your attractions. Will you go to the ladies' convent, where he and other handsome confessors resort?"

"Madam, a gilded cage is still a prison."

"But the delicate wires of a gilded cage do not exclude the cheerful light of the glorious sun, and the sweet refreshing air."

Concluding at once that a change might be attended with opportunities to escape, and knowing that I was proof against the temptations which I foresaw were in store for me, I determined to go to the convent they had selected for me, but not without an effort to secure the companionship of Sister Agnes.

"Only on one condition could I be induced," said I.

"Name it."

"That Sister Agnes shall accompany me."

"She has consented on the same condition."

"When do you wish us to go?"

"To-night."

"Well, I consent."

"But we have our conditions also."

"What are they?"

"That you go peaceably, and have a handkerchief tied over your mouth, and another over your eyes. There is nothing painful in it, and our safety requires the precaution."

"I consent."

“ I will send for you at about ten o'clock.”

“ I shall be ready, madam.”

“ Good evening.”

“ Good evening.”

And once again I was locked within that dismal cell.

When the hour appointed had arrived, a coarse, masculine-looking nun came to the vault, and making known her business, bound a handkerchief over my mouth, and another across my eyes, then throwing a loose gown, with a hood attached to it, over my shoulders and head, she led me out into the passage, up stairs, and along the upper hall, where I was joined by some one, whose hand was placed in mine. I supposed it to be Sister Agnes, but in order to be sure of it, I felt her shoulders, neck, and face.

Our guides, perceiving my distrust, led us into the parlor, and, taking the bandage from our eyes, allowed us to look at each other for an instant. It was Sister Agnes, and I felt my courage return.

We then had our arms tied down to our sides, and were led out to a carriage. After some little delay at the door, as though they were looking to see if the way was clear at the words “ all right,” they led us out. The moment we were seated, with a guard on either side of us, the carriage drove off rapidly. We could hear the noise and rattle of other vehicles as they passed us, and, occasionally, the hum of voices.

After riding for about an hour, the carriage was drawn up, as it appeared to me, against the curbing of the sidewalk, and we were conducted through a gateway, along a stone-

paved pathway, up a flight of steps, and into a hall, without the least pause, as we were evidently expected. From the hall we were guided into a room, where the bandages were taken from our eyes and mouths. The apartment in which we found ourselves was elegantly and tastefully furnished, in a somewhat olden style, but having nothing of a sombre appearance, such as is apparent in the reception rooms of convents generally. There was perceptibly an effort made to hit the happy medium between the fashionably gay and gaudy furniture of our modern and flashy aristocracy, and the more staid, substantial, ancient and honorable-looking eagle-clawed and dragon-footed furniture of the time-honored Knickerbocker race.

The effect was decidedly agreeable, perhaps rendered the more so to me, from the fact of my having so recently emerged from my vault-like apartment under ground.

Having seated ourselves, at an invitation from one of our guides, we were requested to await the appearance of the Superior. The nuns who had accompanied us then withdrew, and we could hear the sound of voices in the hall for several minutes.

A tall and handsome-looking woman was the first to enter. She announced herself as the Mother Superior of the Novices, and commenced talking very pleasantly, and, as I thought, somewhat too lightly, for one in her position.

“You incorrigible young rogues,” said she smilingly, “you have tested the patience of our more solemn fathers rather severely. They should have known better though,

the sanctimonious, long-faced, old curmudgeons, than to have given such heavy doses of grace and ceremony to such graceless and fun-loving young scamps. But never mind ; here you may smile and laugh, and frolic, too, if you like, so that you do not neglect your easy duties ; because there will come a day when a knowledge of them will be useful to you, and their observance pleasant. You will sober down in time, you know ;—but it is not well to anticipate old age. Our handsome father-confessor, although you put him out a little, was very much taken with you, Sister L——. He speaks in raptures of your wit and beauty, but censures your obduracy. Sister Agnes, you are looking well. How is your health ?”

“ I enjoy pretty good health, thank you,” said Sister Agnes, “ considering my trials.”

The Superior had ran on at such a rattling rate, that I fairly lost my breath in trying to keep up with her. It was truly fatiguing.

“ Our community,” continued the Superior, “ is made up of agreeable people, who are more suited to associate with our neophyte pupils. Austerity is well enough in its place, but it is unwise to force nature too harshly. Rigid rules cannot make good nuns, any more than a law can transform an Englishman into a Spaniard ; but our Solons of the long robe, who are better skilled in theology than in the philosophy of human nature, scorn to be instructed by a woman ; and I have talked to them in vain. Are you fond of music, Sister —— ?”

“ Yes, madam—very.”

“ You must hear Miss L—— play and sing. She is the best harpist we have. But come, you may wish to go to your rooms ;” and we were shown to our apartments, which were very comfortably furnished.

## CHAPTER XVI.

The Popery-Trap—Amiable Snakes—The gullible Protestants—The Father Confessor—A Confessor in Love—The jealous Superior—A Scene—An angry Altercation—Close Questioning.

A WEEK'S experience in this trap for young ladies, gave me an insight into its purposes, and its method of accomplishing them.

Located amidst the wealthier class of citizens, who had retired to that quiet part of the city, where they live an exclusive, aristocratic, and luxurious life, this "Institution" sends out its emissaries among the careless Protestants, to worm their way into favor, and to praise the "Institution," as one affording peculiar and great advantages over any other, as an Academy of Learning. In this way, many pupils are secured; while the few Catholic families of wealth who send their daughters to the "Institution," are constantly dwelling upon their daughters' astonishing progress, and urging their Protestant friends to avail themselves of the "advantages" of so excellent a Religious House. Parents, "good, easy souls," are prevailed upon to visit the "Ladies" of the Institution, and the "Ladies," amiable snakes, wind themselves around the hearts of their

credulous visitors, and twine themselves, with a salient smoothness, about the affections of the "tender parents," so that the "parents," no longer able to withstand the "very agreeable" and "eminently pious" Mother Superior's fascinating manners, consent to send their daughters to the popery-trap to become "accomplished"—Catholics.

I have heard them laugh over the "gullibility" of American Protestant mothers (Heaven save us from such "mothers!") whom they have duped by their pious looks, their assumed suavity, their acting of the "persecuted" saint, their "resignation to the will of Providence," their artful flatteries, and all the "appliances and means" afforded by a well-arranged and faithfully-studied system of hypocrisy. The "Ladies" do not try to proselyte their pupils, because they have promised the "parents not to do so; and "ladies" always keep their word. They only make a liberal display of crosses, rosaries, scapularies, missals, and breviaries, popish medals, pictures, &c., &c., with a continual exhibition of sundry motions in the air, figuring out a cross; to say nothing of involuntary ejaculations, respecting the Immaculate Virgin, the Mother of God, Holy Saint Frances, and a host of other saintly names, as pass-words to paradise; the Father and Son being the least called upon of any.

These, with the technical terms of "purgatory," "absolution," "confession," and the expressive phrases connected therewith, must have their influence over the tender mind, and if that influence is not of a proselyting character, then it is the reverse. There is no standing still in the matter



of education ; the pupil is either progressing or retrograding ; and educating the mind to become accustomed to the Catholic forms and ceremonies, is progressive or the reverse. Which is it ?

Sister Agnes and myself were allowed many liberties in this Institution of easy piety, but we could readily perceive that we were watched with great vigilance, although at a distance. The building was enclosed by a brick wall, of considerable height, so that we could not hope to escape by means of an escalade. We did not despair, however, of getting out of this new jail, by some means, and were constantly watching for an opportunity. We were not allowed to speak with those pupils who did not reside permanently at the Institution, and they were always attended by one of the teachers, as far as the gate, which was locked again as soon as the pupils had passed out.

One day, the same father confessor who had called to see me at the convent (where we were taken by the female Jesuit, who called herself Miss Lorimer) came into the parlor where I was sitting, after school hours, and seated himself close beside me. I drew my seat away from him, and he did not then attempt to follow me, but said, "Daughter, you find this abode much more endurable, I think, than any you have lived at yet."

"Yes," I answered, "but there are restraints enough upon me, to keep me always reminded of my condition."

Then changing the subject, I inquired about my father and sisters.

“They are well, and wish you to become reconciled to live in a Religious House.”

“I should not be a burden upon them,” I answered, “if I were allowed my freedom, and why should they insist upon my becoming a nun against my will?”

“They have their reasons.”

“I suspect it is not so much their fault, that I am deprived of liberty, as it is the fault of others.”

“What do you desire more than you have here?”

“Freedom!”

“You have every comfort and many luxuries.”

“All embittered by imprisonment.”

“There are those who love you, here, and it grieves their hearts to know that you are miserable.”

“I know of none who love me, but Sister Agnes.”

“*You are loved!*” said the father confessor, with emphasis, and he gazed intently into my face and upon my person, as he uttered the words. I could not endure the ardent—almost passionate, expression of his eyes, and coloring deeply, turned away my head to hide my deep confusion.

He arose, and walked the room with hasty steps. His agitation increased, and I could hear the deep drawn sighs of his heaving breast, as he approached me in his walk across the floor.

There was a pause for a minute or two, and the silence had become painful, when the confessor came to me, and placing his hand upon my head, commenced to say—“Love’s holy spirit dwells in breasts of kings, and,”—— at this

moment the Lady Superior entered the room, when the confessor seeing her, said abruptly, "God bless you my child, and may he teach you to be obedient."

The searching and suspicious glance of the Superior, and the dark cloud of gloom that flitted across her face, told me a tale of love and jealousy not to be mistaken, and indeed, a far less practised eye than hers, could easily perceive the flush of the warm blood upon his cheek, and a less practised ear could readily detect the low quavering of his deep-toned voice.

She stood for an instant as if transfixed to the floor, and then rapidly glancing from one to the other with flashing eyes, she said, "Father Confessor, you are rightly named, first you confessed to me, that you were stricken with admiration of a certain fair daughter, and now, if I mistake not, you have confessed again. Really we must have a curb put upon our high-spirited confessor."

"Madam!" exclaimed the confessor, angrily, "this is *my* affair!" Then taking her hand, he said, "This way, I would speak to you in private." She followed him, unresistingly, and I was left to my own reflections. I could hear the voices of the Confessor and the Superior in the next room. They were evidently engaged in an angry altercation. I was greatly alarmed, and my agitation was excessive. Seeking for Sister Agnes, I immediately informed her of the scene which had transpired in the parlor. She was just finishing a piece of needlework, and was about to look for me, when I ran into the room, excited and frightened.

We were talking over the affair, when one of the teachers

entered, and said the Mother Superior desired my company in the parlor. With a palpitating heart and my nerves all trembling with excitement, I walked slowly down stairs, in order to gain time for the recovery of my courage, and by the time I reached the parlor door, I felt somewhat composed.

I found the Superior alone.

“Sister ——,” said she, “I have repented of my display of passion, and believe it to have been unwarrantable, at least as far as you are concerned. Will you deal candidly with me?”

“Madam,” I replied, “I have no concealments to make.”

“Did not the Father Confessor make a confession of love to you?”

“No, madam.”

“Why was he so confused when I entered the room?”

“It would be difficult to tell.”

“Do you not suspect him of loving you?”

“I have no right to suspect him.”

“Have you no ground for suspicion?”

“You, madam, told me, that he spoke in raptures of my wit and beauty.”

“True, I did—but I supposed—no matter. You need not confess to him again.”

“Very well, madam.”

“Are you content?”

“I am.”

“You do not regard him?”

“Yes, as a confessor. Nothing more.”

“Would you swear to that?”

“I would, if occasion required.”

“You may go now. Stay a moment! Are you not lonesome?”

“Yes, madam.”

“You may sleep with Sister Agnes to-night.”

“Yes, madam. Thank you.”

“I will go to her room with you,” saying which, the Superior led the way, and I followed to the door of Sister Agnes’s room, where the Superior left me. She went to the head of the stairs, and looked back suspiciously, as I was closing the door after me.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A Call from the Archbishop—The Interview in the Oratory—The Evil Spirit and the Lost Soul—Possessed of Satan—The Announcement of Freedom—The Swoon—The Recovery—My Departure with Sister Agnes—We are Free once more.

IT was on the second day after the adventure recorded in the last chapter, that I was requested to go to the oratory, where the Archbishop desired to see me. I made a reverential obeisance as I entered, and placing his hand upon my head he gave me a blessing. After which, taking my hands in his, he said, "Daughter, your legal friend has been urging your suit."

"Yes, father," said I, and I could not keep the tell-tale blushes down, as I thought of Clarence and his noble devotion to me. The Archbishop perceived my confusion, and rightly divined the cause.

"I understand it now," said he ; "you were not called of Heaven. Your vocation is of the world. But sometimes Satan proves the conqueror, and since you will not have the aid of our all-powerful intercession, we must not endanger the souls of others, by keeping in our midst a sinful soul that has the Evil Spirit ever hovering round it, ready to seize upon it, when utterly abandoned by the Holy Ghost."

“Father!” I cried at these terrible words—for I was still something of a slave to priestcraft, “Father, what shall I do?”

“It is too late,” said he, “you have given your love to man, and worship him rather than the ever Blessed Virgin.”

I was silent.

“Your friend demands your liberty, do you renounce Heaven for him and the world?”

“Oh, Father!” I cried, “I can pray to God, and our Blessed Redeemer in my closet, and they will hear me. The ever Blessed Virgin will not close her ears to my voice, because it does not ascend from the cloister or the cell.”

“Mother of God!” exclaimed the Archbishop, “Satan possesses her!”

“Oh no, father, believe it not,” I cried—I love God and our Saviour so much, that Satan, whom I hate, cannot come near me.”

The Archbishop seemed to be struggling with some tormenting thought; he paced the length of the oratory back and forth, with rapid strides—at length he said, “There is no help for it. To-morrow night you are to leave this place. You and sister Agnes. You will go as you came, in a carriage, but not bandaged.”

“Where to, father?”

“To the house of your friend.”

At this joyful announcement, my feelings overcame me, and I sunk back against the wall, where I was sitting, in a swoon.

When I recovered, the Superior and Sister Agnes were

bending over me, and chafing my temples with their fingers, dipped in water.

I soon recovered strength enough to reach my room, attended by my ever-faithful Sister Agnes.

The next day dragged heavily by—it seemed an age. The confessor sent for me in the morning, but I excused myself on a plea of indisposition. The Superior was extremely agreeable whenever we met. She appeared to rejoice as much as I did, at the prospect of my departure.

Sister Agnes and myself were all impatience, and in the evening we listened with painful intentness for the sound of the carriage wheels.

We were filled with doubts and apprehension, regarding the sincerity of the Archbishop's promise, and were lost in conjectures as to the causes which led to our relief from bondage.

At length, however, the carriage was announced, and we were accompanied to the front parlor by the Superior, where we were introduced to a priest whom we had never seen before, that we could remember. He informed us, that he would accompany us to the house of our friend, and after taking leave of the Superior we proceeded at once to the carriage, which we entered, with some doubts and fears still haunting our thoughts.

The priest who sat opposite to Sister Agnes and myself, addressed merely a few common-place remarks to us occasionally, and assumed very much the manner of a human saint, who was in the presence of two incorrigible monsters, whom all the cruel efforts of a sinful host of bishops, priests



and nuns, had failed to save from the jaws of the wicked world. And yet, I devoutly believed that my prayers came from as pure a heart as any that throbbed beneath the habit of a nun or the robe of a priest. At all events, I could not be made to believe that a robe or a habit can make good men and good women, out of many such priests and nuns as I have known.

It was late, but the numerous gas-lights brilliantly illuminated the streets, and once again we beheld the busy world with its throngs of free and happy people.

## CONCLUSION.

Letters from Home—A Deduction—The Mystery explained—The Archbishop and the Law—The Archbishop and the People—The Proposal—A Wedding—God and Man.

I MUST pass hastily over minor incidents, in the conclusion of my narrative. We were soon in the presence of Clarence and his sisters, who gave us a most hearty welcome.

The priest who had accompanied us, did not leave the carriage, but ordered the driver to return to the Convent.

Clarence, during my absence, had received from my father and sisters several letters, which were written in a more conciliatory and kindlier spirit than any I had ever received from them. I could very easily divine the reason of my father's yielding temper. The tenor of the letter from Clarence, touching the subject of my marriage, and the affectionate interest which he evidently felt in my welfare, were coupled together by my shrewd parent, and a deduction was drawn therefrom, which led to the conclusion that a wedding would grow out of the friendship formed between Clarence and myself.

When Adelaide had finished her household duties, on the morning after my return, she explained away the mystery

attending my liberation from the Convent, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words :—

“ Your protracted absence, my dear L——, on the day of your departure with the vile woman who so grossly deceived us all, greatly alarmed us ; and when night came on, and still you did not make your appearance, we were filled with the most cruel apprehensions. Clarence was wild with excitement, he imagined a thousand evils ; he accused the Jesuits, the Bishop, the nuns of having decoyed you into their snares, and vowed that he would restore you to freedom, or fall himself a victim to their malice.

“ He did not sleep a moment during the whole night, and as soon as morning dawned, accompanied by a friend, he went directly to the residence of the Archbishop, and informed him of his suspicions respecting your abduction.

“ The Archbishop assumed an air of offended dignity, and angrily denied that he was cognizant of your absence from home ; but Clarence was not to be driven from the field. He held up the law as a terror to the high dignitary, but the Archbishop, with calm effrontery, told him that he held in his grasp the fortunes of those who made the laws, and that they would not dare to attempt an enforcement of any law of the land which was obnoxious to him. I know not how it is, but Clarence tells me it is indeed too true, that this proud priest had uttered the truth, and that he felt it in all its potential force ; but he tells me that having studied the history of politics for the past few years, and having had occasion to watch the course of this intriguing priest, he knew that there was ONE POWER before which the

Archbishop had always quailed, and that power was THE PEOPLE, with their intelligence, their patriotism, and their honesty.

“‘*The People,*’ then exclaimed Clarence, ‘shall be appealed to ; the public square shall be the forum from which I shall speak to the millions ; and that portion of the public press which breathes the national spirit, will echo the cry of “AN AMERICAN GIRL IN A ROMISH PRISON !” until the deafening shouts of a nation’s native sons shall shake to earth the prison walls that girdle her about. *I go, to invoke the spirit of the people!*’ cried Clarence as he moved towards the door. ‘Stay, stay!’ exclaimed the trembling priest ; ‘you are rash ; be not hasty, I will see if your suspicions are well grounded. I promise you, indeed, that no harm shall happen to the girl, if by any chance she has strayed among my people. This is sudden, my dear sir ; a little time is needed. I will inquire to-day at our several houses in the city.’

“‘See that you do then,’ said Clarence, ‘and let me know by night, or by the power that made me I will make the city ring with this foul wrong.’

“True to his promise, the cheering word was brought from the Archbishop that you were safe, and that, in a few days, you should be restored to us.

“The cause of the delay was not explained to us, but Clarence thinks that a feeling of pride would not allow them to deliver you up in so short a time after the demand, as to make it appear that they were seriously alarmed, and set you free on absolute compulsion.

“But Clarence persevered, and now that you are restored to us again, you must promise never to leave us more.”

“Oh,” said I, “how can I promise that?”

“Why, my dear friend, by promising that you will take my noble brother as your legal protector, your ‘able counsel,’ and your lawful husband.”

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a happy wedding party at the residence of Clarence, about a month subsequent to the conversation held above, and sisters Agnes, Adelaide, and Matilda were my lovely bridesmaids.



God, in his infinite goodness, has given us a beautiful world as our temporal abode. He has bestowed upon us, from the abundance of his store, all things that it is meet we should have. He has given us the glorious sun and the moon, and the stars—he has poured into the lap of nature the germs of innumerable and delicious fruits to please the taste, and the seeds of myriads of lovely flowers to please the eye;—his gifts are countless, and he has endowed us with faculties which were given us that we might enjoy those gifts; but man has sought to pervert the purposes of “Him who doeth all things well,” and to impose upon his fellow creatures, laws which outrage those of God. Man in his arrogance, and for sinful purposes, has set at naught the natural laws of God, and has substituted in their stead the “Canon Laws” of a corrupt priesthood—laws which are irrational,

oppressive, sinful, and demoralizing. The great and glorious, the bright and beautiful world is a creation of God's. The pure, the free, the life-giving air of heaven was made to breathe ; the genial warmth of the sun, the light of the moon, and the silvery rays beaming down upon us from the star spangled skies, were given us for our good, and they were designed for our use and our enjoyment.

The CONVENT is a thing of man's creation, a dark and dreary fraud, that gives the lie to God, and impiously ignores His handiworks. Enclosed by lofty walls, it seems a thing apart from earth, as though ashamed to gaze with honest eyes upon the loveliness and glory of the world—a dread and terrible abode for guilty souls who flee to darkness and mysterious shades, as to a veil whose folds will hide their deep remorse, their sins and shame.

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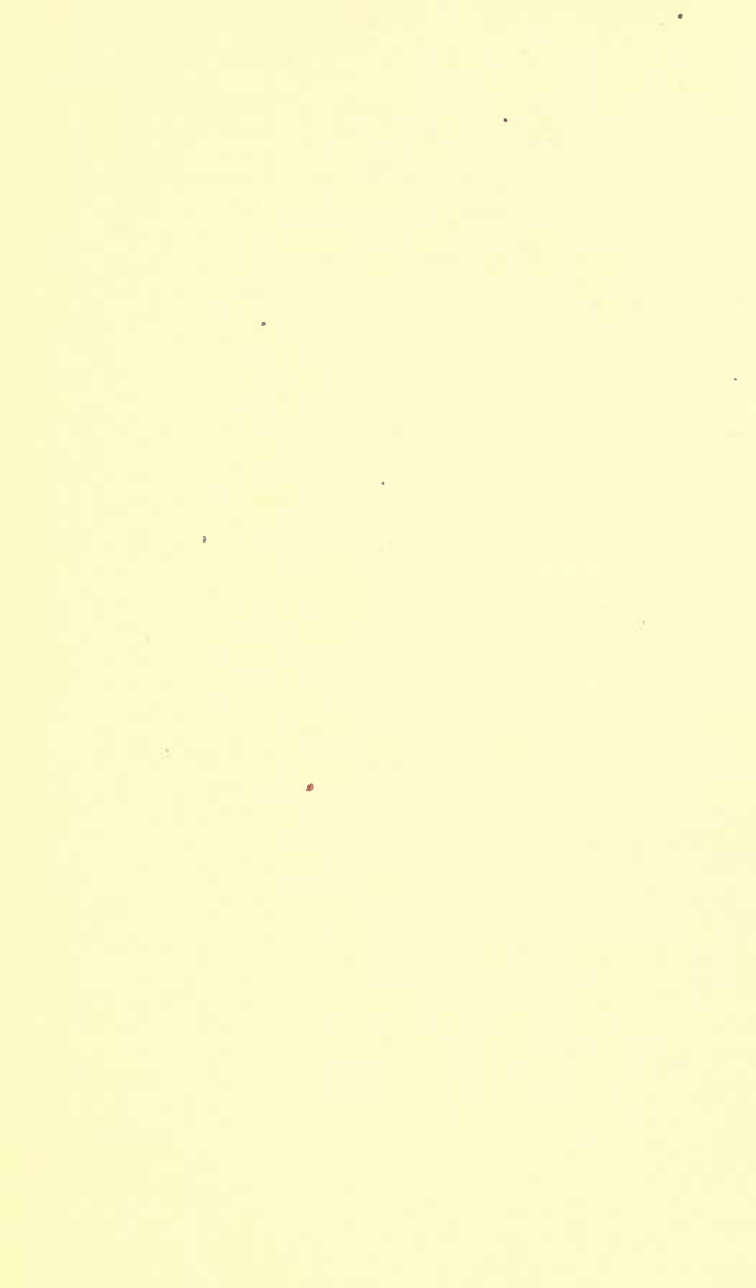
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