

**AWFUL DISCLOSURES OF MARIA  
MONK, THE STARTLING  
MYSTERIES OF A CONVENT  
REVEALED! AND SIX MONTHS IN  
A CONVENT**

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Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, the Startling Mysteries of a Convent Revealed! And Six Months in a Convent by Maria Monk

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**MARIA MONK**

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TAKING THE VOW.

AWFUL DISCLOSURES

OF

MARIA MONK,

THE

THRILLING

MYSTERIES

OF A

CONVENT REVEALED!

AND

SIX MONTHS IN A CONVENT.

PHILADELPHIA:

T. B. PETERSON, 101, CHESTNUT STREET.

## PREFACE.

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It is to be hoped that the reader of the ensuing narrative will not suppose that it is a fiction, or that the scenes and persons that I have delineated, had not a real existence. It is also desired, that the author of this volume may be regarded not as a voluntary participator in the very guilty transactions which are described; but receive sympathy for the trials which she has endured, and the peculiar situation in which her past experience, and escape from the power of the Superior of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery, at Montreal, and the snares of the Roman Priests in Canada, have left her.

My feelings are frequently distressed and agitated by the recollection of what I have passed through; and by night and by day I have little peace of mind, and few periods of calm and pleasing reflection. Futurity also appears uncertain. I know not what reception this little work may meet with, and what will be the effect of its publication here or in Canada, among strangers, friends, or enemies. I have given the world the truth, so far as I have gone, on subjects of which I am told they are generally ignorant; and I feel perfect confidence, that any facts which may yet be discovered, will confirm my words whenever they can be obtained. Whoever shall explore the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal, will find unquestionable evidence that the descriptions of the interior of that edifice, given in this book, were furnished by one familiar with them; for whatever alterations may be attempted, there are changes which no mason or carpenter can make and effectually conceal; and therefore there must be plentiful evidence in that Institution, of the truth of my description.

There are living witnesses, also, who ought to be made to speak, without fear of penances, tortures, and death, and possibly their testimony at some future time, may be added, to confirm my statements. There are witnesses I should greatly rejoice to see at liberty; or rather there were. Are they living now? or will they be permitted to live after the Priests and Superiors have seen this book? Perhaps the wretched nuns in the cells have already suffered for my sake—perhaps Jane Ray has been silenced for ever, or will be murdered, before she has time to add her most important testimony to mine.

But speedy death in relation only to this world, can be no great calamity to those who lead the life of a nun. The mere recollection of it always makes me miserable. It would distress the reader, should I repeat the

dreams with which I am often terrified at night; for I sometimes fancy myself pursued by the worst enemies; frequently I seem as if again shut up in the Convent; often I imagine myself present at the repetition of the worst scenes that I have hinted at or described. Sometimes I stand by the secret place of interment in the cellar; sometimes I think I can hear the shrieks of the helpless females in the hands of atrocious men; and sometimes almost seem actually to look again upon the calm and placid features of St. Frances, as she appeared when surrounded by her murderers.

I cannot banish the scenes and character of this book from my memory. To me it can never appear like an amusing fable, or lose its interest and importance. The story is one which is continually before me, and must return fresh to my mind, with painful emotions, as long as I live. With time, and Christian instruction, and the sympathy and examples of the wise and good, I hope to learn submissively to bear whatever trials are appointed me, and to improve under them all.

Impressed as I continually am with the frightful reality of the painful communications that I have made in this volume, I can only offer to all persons who may doubt or disbelieve my statements, these two things:—

Permit me to go through the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal, with some impartial ladies and gentlemen, that they may compare my account with the interior parts of the building, into which no persons but the Roman Bishop and Priests are ever admitted; and if they do not find my description true, then discard me as an impostor. Bring me before a court of justice—there I am willing to meet *Lalargus*, *Dufrene*, *Phelan*, *Bowin*, and *Richards*, and their wicked companions, with the Superior, and any of the nuns, before a thousand men.

MARIA MONK.

*New York, January 11, 1856.*



# AWFUL DISCLOSURES OF MARIA MONK.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

Early life—Religious Education neglected—First School—Entrance into the School of the Congregational Nunnery—Brief Account of the Nunneries in Montreal—The Congregational Nunnery—The Black Nunnery—The Grey Nunnery—Public Respect for these Institutions—Instructions received—The Catechism—The Bible.

My parents were both from Scotland, but had been resident in the Lower Canada some time before their marriage, which took place in Montreal, and in that city I have spent most of my life. I was born at St. John's, where they lived for a short time. My father was an officer under the British Government, and my mother has enjoyed a pension on that account ever since his death.

According to my earliest recollections, he was attentive to his family, and had a peculiar passage from the Bible, which often occurred to me in after life. I may very probably have been taught by him, as after his death I did not recollect to have received any instruction at home, and was not even brought up to read the Scriptures; my mother, although nominally a Protestant, not being accustomed to pay attention to her children. She was rather inclined to think well of the Catholics, and often attended their churches. To my want of religious instruction at home, and the ignorance of my Creator and my duty, which was its natural effect, I think I can trace my introduction to convents, and the scenes which I am to describe in the following narrative.

When about six or seven years of age, I went to school to a Mr. Workman, a Protestant, who taught in Sacrament street, and remained several months. There I learned to read and write, and arithmetic as far as division. All the progress I ever made in these branches was gained in that school, as I have never improved in any of them since.

A number of girls of my acquaintance went to school to the nuns of the Congregational Nunnery, or Sisters of Charity, as they are sometimes called. The schools taught by them are perhaps more numerous than some of my readers may imagine. Nuns are sent out from that convent to many of the towns and villages of Canada to teach small schools; and some of them are established as instructresses in different parts of the United States. When I was about ten years old, my mother asked me one day if I should not like to learn to read and write French, and then I

began to think seriously of attending the school in the Congregational Nunnery. I had already some acquaintance with that language, sufficient to speak it a little, as I heard it every day, and my mother knew something of it.

I have a distinct recollection of my first entrance into the Nunnery; and the day was an important one in my life, as on it commenced my acquaintance with a convent. I was conducted by some of my young friends along Notre Dame street, till we reached the gate. Entering that, we walked some distance along the side of a building towards a chapel, until we reached a door, stopped, and rung a bell. This was soon opened, and entering, we proceeded through a long covered passage till we took a short turn to the left, soon after which we reached the door of the school-room. On my entrance, the Superior met me, and told me first of all that I must dip my fingers into the holy water at her door, cross myself, and say a short prayer; and this she told me was always required of Protestant as well as Catholic children.

There were about fifty girls in the school, and the nuns professed to teach something of reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. The methods, however, were very imperfect, and little attention was devoted to them, the time being in a great degree engrossed with lessons in needle-work, which was performed with much skill. The nuns had no very regular parts assigned them in the management of the schools. They were rather rough and unpolished in their manners, often exclaiming, "O'est un menti," (that's a lie,) and "mon Dieu," (my God,) on the most trivial occasions. Their writing was quite poor, and it was not uncommon for them to put a capital letter in the middle of a word. The only book of geography which we studied, was a catechism of geography, from which we learnt by heart a few questions and answers. We were sometimes referred to a map, but it was only to point out Montreal or Quebec, or some other prominent name, while we had no instruction beyond.

It may be necessary, for the information of some of my readers, to mention, that there are three distinct Convents in Montreal, all of different kinds—that is, founded on different plans, and governed by different rules. Their names are as follows:—

1. The Congregational Nunnery.
2. The Black Nunnery, or Convent of Sister Bourgoise.
3. The Grey Nunnery.

The first of these professes to be devoted entirely to the education of girls. It would require, however, only a proper examination to prove, that with the exception of needle-work, hardly anything is taught excepting prayer and catechism; the instruction in reading, writing, &c., in fact, amounting to very little, and often to nothing. This Convent is adjacent to the next to be spoken of, being separated from it only by a wall. The second professes to be a charitable institution for the care of the sick, and the supply of bread and medicines for the poor; and something is done in these departments of charity, although but an insignificant amount compared with the size of the buildings, and the number of inmates.

The Grey Nunnery, which is situated in a distant part of the city, is also a large edifice, containing departments for the care of insane persons and foundlings. With this, however, I have less personal acquaintance than with either of the others. I have often seen two of the Grey nuns, and know their rules, as well as

those of the Congregational Nunnery; they do not confine them always within their walls, like those of the Black Nunnery. These two Convents have their common names (Black and Grey) from the colours of the dresses worn by their inmates.

In all these three Convents there are certain apartments into which strangers can gain admittance, but others from which they are always excluded. In all, large quantities of various ornaments are made by the nuns, which are exposed for sale in the *Ornament Rooms*, and afford large pecuniary receipts every year, which contribute much to their income. In these rooms, visitors often purchase such things as please them, from some of the old and confidential nuns who have the charge of them.

From all that appears to the public eye, the nuns of these Convents are devoted to the charitable object appropriated to each, the labour of making different articles known to be manufactured by them, and the religious observances, which occupy a large portion of their time. They are regarded with much respect by the people at large; and now and then when a novice takes the veil, she is supposed to retire from the temptations and trouble of this world into a state of holy seclusion, where, by prayer, self-mortification, and good deeds, she prepares herself for heaven. Sometimes the Superior of a Convent obtains the character of working miracles: and when such an one dies, it is published through the country, and crowds throng the Convent, who think indulgences are to be derived from bits of her clothes and other things she has possessed; and many have sent articles to be touched to her bed or chair, in which a degree of virtue is thought to remain. I used to participate in such ideas and feelings, and began by degrees to look upon a nun as the happiest of women, and a Convent as the most peaceful, holy, and delightful place of abode. It is true, some pains were taken to impress such views upon me. Some of the priests of the Seminary often visited the Congregational Nunnery, and both catechised and talked with us on religion. The Superior of the Black Nunnery adjoining, also, occasionally came into the school, and enlarged on the advantage we enjoyed in having such teachers, and dropped something now and then relating to her own convent, calculated to make us entertain the highest ideas of it, and make us sometimes think of the possibility of getting into it.

Among the instructions given to us by the priests, some of the most pointed were directed against the Protestant Bible. They often enlarged upon the evil tendency of that book, and told us that but for it many a soul condemned to hell, and suffering eternal punishment, might have been in happiness. They could not say anything in its favour; for that would be speaking against religion and against God. They warned us against its woe, and represented it as a thing very dangerous to our souls. In confirmation of this, they would repeat some of the answers taught us at catechism; a few of which I will here give. We had little catechisms, ("*Les Petite Catechismes*") put into our hands to study; but the priests soon began to teach us a new set of answers, which were not to be found in our books, from some of which I have received new ideas, and got, as I thought, important light on religious subjects, which confirmed me more in my belief in the Roman Catholic doctrines. Those questions and answers I can still recall with tolerable accuracy, and some of them I will add here. I never have read them, as we were taught them only by word of mouth.