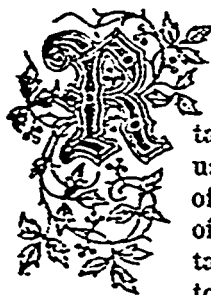


THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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ROMANCE and religion ; seclusion from the world and the consequent attainment to a purely spiritual life on earth ; a round of good deeds ; an exaltation of the spirit into a rapt ecstatic devotion, are attributed to the residents of nunneries by young women whose domestic duties are felt as irksome, or who, through a sincere but mistaken devotion, fancy in themselves a *vocation* and get up sisterhoods in imitation of those in the Romish Church. In this they are encouraged not unfrequently by certain ministers of the Church of England who love to describe themselves as "priests of the Anglican Branch of the Church Catholic," and in dress, manner, and appearance, masquerade in the garb of the Romish priesthood, even assuming the stock invented by Cardinal Wiseman, as a Romish priest in England not unjustly complains, believing it to have been the necktie worn by the early fathers, from whom it descended along with Apostolical succession, a belief also much insisted upon by them. The dove-eyed novice, brought in amidst the pealing of the organ, the waving of censers, and all the imposing ceremonials which the Church of Rome can so well produce, her bridal attire replaced by the robes of the order, black or grey, into which she is initiated, her "wealth" of golden or raven tresses shorn from her head (sold, by the way, as the statistics of the hair trade show, for the adornment of the daughters of frivolity.) the theatrical withdrawal of the newly consecrated nun, have all an effect, studiously calculated to strike the imagination. On the other hand an abuse as indiscriminate as the praise bestowed on the conventual system, has been indulged in, which facts scarcely seem to warrant. In Lower Canada, in which an opportunity is afforded of seeing the inmates of these institutions, the ro-

mance can scarcely be long retained in the presence of the plain heavy common-place looking women who are marched to church, marshalled two and two, and presenting one monotonous type of character, the exceptions being exceedingly rare. In the vast majority of cases these poor girls are placed in convents as the easiest method of providing for them, and they vegetate within the walls, some of whose secrets have at last leaked out in a trial, the evidence in which is now before the world.

A young Irish lady, Miss Saurin, contrary to the wishes of her parents and friends, entered upon the preparatory stages of conventual life, and in due time was admitted into the order as a professed nun. For some time everything appears to have passed in a satisfactory manner ; and she was appointed to the duties of teaching in one of the schools, her qualifications for which appear to have been limited, as it was stated in the evidence at the trial just concluded that she could read very imperfectly, and could not spell. Up till 1860, Mrs. Starr, Mrs. Kennedy, and Miss Saurin, known in religion as Sister Mary Scholastica, lived together in terms of friendship, Mrs. Starr being "Mother Superior," Mrs. Kennedy holding the next rank, and Miss Saurin, being eligible for the position of "Mother Superior," which, it appears from the evidence, is an office held for a limited period, and to which the sisters are elected by the voice of the community, as the nunneries are called. But in that year Mrs. Starr, according to the evidence of Miss Saurin, asked her to state what took place between her and the priest at confession, which Miss Saurin refused to tell, believing that her confessions were intended for the ear of the priest only, and that they should be spoken of to no other. From that moment commenced a series of petty persecutions, individually small and mean, but calculated to wound and torture the mind of her on whom they