

**THE BELLS OF THE
SANCTUARY;
AGNES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649345472

The Bells of the sanctuary; Agnes by Grace Ramsay

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

GRACE RAMSAY

**THE BELLS OF THE
SANCTUARY;
AGNES**

The Bells of the Sanctuary.

AGNES.



BY

GRACE RAMSAY,

AUTHOR OF "A WOMAN'S TRIALS," "IZA'S STORY," &c.

LONDON :

BURNS, OATES AND COMPANY,

17, 18 Portman Street, and 63 Paternoster Row.

1871.

250. g. 78.

W. DAVY AND SON, PRINTERS, 8, GILBERT STREET, W.

AGNES.

SHE was just seventeen when I first saw her; the eldest of five sisters. She was very pretty, but so spoilt by affectation that you quite lost sight of her beauty in vexation at her conceit. She seemed incapable of losing sight of herself for one instant; no amusement had power to distract her from observing the effect she was producing; self-consciousness amounted to a mania with her. If she went for a walk on the promenade, where the music, or any other attraction, drew a number of strollers to the spot, Agnes made herself a nuisance to everybody by the absurd affectation of her demeanour.

“People are looking at me! How dreadful it is! Let us go to some place where I shan’t be stared at in this way. Did you see how that gentleman looked at me?” and so on.

It was true she was a pretty girl, and as such

may have come in for more observation than a plain one; but the word "grimacière" was written so legibly on her face and her person altogether, that I am satisfied most of the glances were directed to her less in admiration than in criticism. Anything and everything was a pretext *pour se mettre en scène*. If she saw children playing near the water, or sitting on the ledge of one of the fountains, she would clasp her hands, utter a little scream of terror, and beseech everybody to interfere, or else infallibly the little creatures would fall in, or fall over, and be drowned.

"There is not the remotest danger of such a catastrophe, and, if there were, their mothers and bonnes are there to look after them," some one would object; "there is no reason for you to excite yourself about it."

"True; mais je suis si sensible! J'ai tant de cœur!" Agnes would answer, with a sigh, and, casting down her eyes, assume a new *pose*.

In fact, her life was a succession of *poses*, changing as place and opportunity suggested. Her temper, without being a bad one, was capricious, varying with her attitudes, and very

disagreeable to live with ; like all people who are too much absorbed in themselves, she was apt to be very forgetful of others. The only excuse that could be urged for the undisciplined silliness of her character and manner was her health, which had been so precarious and delicate from her cradle up as to render culture and restraint alike impossible. As a baby, she must not be thwarted in any infantine wilfulness, lest it should make her cry, and bring on convulsions. She had scarcely emerged from babyhood when she became a martyr to headaches that had never deserted her since. This furnished a pretext, not unreasonably, for emancipating her from lessons ; and Agnes being, like the generality of human children, antagonistic to that bug-bear of the nursery—her spelling book—took the full value out of her headaches, and till she was quite a big girl could neither read nor write.

When she arrived at the age of fourteen it dawned upon her that she was a dunce, and that dunces, even when blessed with pretty faces, are not usually much admired or considered by their fellow-creatures. This discovery

was unpleasant, and the remedy, though it was still in her hands, appeared to Agnes nearly as unpleasant as the evil. She hated study, and from not having had her mind gradually trained to the effort which it demands, even from the brightest children, before they take to it for its own sake, the simplest task was ten times more irksome and difficult to her than it need have been. She tried to make up in some degree for lost time by applying herself to books at home, but the result was so inadequate to the labour that she soon gave it up in disgust. Two of her sisters had now been a year and a half at the Sacré Cœur, and they gave such pleasant accounts of their life there, that, though the division of work and play struck her as too disproportionately in favour of the former to be thoroughly satisfactory, Agnes was tempted to try it. Her parents were delighted to let her make the experiment, and when her sisters were returning after the Midsummer holidays they got everything ready for her to accompany them.

The trial was not very successful. Agnes was, of course, put into one of the junior classes,

a position very mortifying to her vanity, and though the nuns, making allowance for the disadvantages under which she was placed, stretched indulgence to its utmost limits, she was not able to keep up with her little competitors. Her headaches, which, at first, owing probably to the change of scene and habit, had improved, grew more frequent and painful as the trimestre advanced, and, at last, the slightest mental exertion so palpably increased her sufferings, that she was obliged to leave. Disappointed and disheartened she resigned herself to being a dunce, and relapsed into her old life of idleness and inaction. Her health rallied after a while, and she again resumed the attempt at studying by herself. It was of short duration, however. Like many an older and more experienced student, she attempted too much, and, failing, gave it all up in despair. Twice in the course of the following year she returned to the Convent, but with no better success than on the first occasion. So it happened that, at the age of sixteen, Agnes was as backward in the ordinary rudiments of knowledge as most children at ten. The only thing that gave any hope of her ultimately repairing