

**THE CONVENT; A
NARRATIVE,
FOUNDED ON FACT**

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The Convent; A Narrative, Founded on Fact by R. McGrindell

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R. MCGRINDELL

**THE CONVENT; A
NARRATIVE,
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THE CONVENT;

A Narrative,

FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY

R. MCCRENDALL,

AUTHOR OF THE "SCHOOL-GIRL IN FRANCE," "THE ENGLISH
GOVERNESS," ETC.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

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P R E F A C E .

THE following pages are presented to the public under peculiar, and somewhat melancholy, circumstances.

The Authoress, no stranger in the literary world (having acquired some degree of fame by her former works), spent a great part of the last year of her life, in preparing the narrative now published.

I have said the "circumstances were melancholy," yet why should I say so? To her emancipated spirit most joyful has been the change. Her *life* was one of painful suffering, and *death*, to her, brought no sting.

For many years she had been a faithful follower of Jesus, and, in her hour of utmost need, she received that support He never fails to give to those who trust in Him.

Most anxious were her desires to benefit the rising race, and to set before them, in all their soul-destroying power, the doctrines of Popery.

Having passed several years in Roman Catholic countries, and witnessed much of its persecuting spirit, she was well prepared to show the system

practised to deceive the simple-minded ; and many hours of bodily suffering were endured, while endeavouring, by her writings, to impress upon the minds of British youth, the blessing and privilege they enjoy, in having the Word of God taught them from their youth up; and daily did she pray, that they, like the youthful Timothy, might *know* "the Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation."

That her efforts, for the benefit of the young, have not been in vain, pleasing evidences have been given ; her "labour of love" has been acknowledged by her Heavenly Master, in more than one instance. Her "SCHOOL-GIRL IN FRANCE" has been particularly useful, and as the present work was undertaken and carried on in a prayerful spirit, and with a view to His glory, no doubt that He, who has promised His blessing to those who "ask anything" in His name, will vouchsafe to acknowledge the present attempt to spread the knowledge of the truths contained in His own holy word.

The outline of the Narrative is founded on fact. The substance is *true*, but woven together by such circumstances as her imagination suggested as likely to occur to persons situated as were the novices.

CLAREMONT HOUSE,

Dec. 11, 1847.

THE CONVENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONVENT BELLS.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the living faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils ;

Speaking lies in hypocrisy ; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ;

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

1 Timothy, iv. 1, 2, 3.

“LIST ! oh, list to the convent-bells !” exclaimed Cecilia Montague, as, leaning over the side of the luxurious pleasure-boat, around whose gilded prow the deep blue waves of the beautiful Mediterranean sportively danced and sparkled, she bent a delighted ear to the sweet, plaintive melody, that came pealing over the waters, from the spire of a convent at a short distance from the shore. It was the vesper

chime, and the sounds seemed to derive additional softness from the liquid element over which they were borne, and the balmy evening air on which they floated. The sun was just sinking below the horizon, and his parting rays tinged with a golden splendour the placid bosom of the sea, and the lofty turrets of the neighbouring monastery. The lovely coast of Sicily, along which they were sailing, presented at every turn objects of the most varied and romantic beauty; and there was a feeling of calm and delicious enjoyment in the hour and the scene, which was well calculated to hush every jarring passion into peace.

“Do let us step ashore, mamma, and go to see the evening service in that convent-chapel. The sound of the bells is so sweet! and, listen! do you not hear a distant murmur of music, like the echo of seraphic voices?”

“Silly, romantic girl!” exclaimed Mrs. Montague, a quiet, gentle, good-natured woman, “I really doubt if I am doing right in indulging your wayward fancies.” Yet Mrs. Montague, in spite of this doubt, gave the necessary directions to the boatmen, and, with the assistance of a Sicilian count, who accompanied them, the two ladies were soon landed, and entering the fine old avenue that led to the convent. It was a venerable Gothic building, in a state of excellent preservation, and the wilderness of chesnut, olive, and orange trees by which it was surrounded, invested it with an air of sombre majesty, that suited well with the character of the edifice, and the pur-

pose to which it was devoted. The wild solitude and picturesque seclusion of the place did not fail to captivate the imagination of our young enthusiast.

The party followed the windings of a noble avenue, till they came to the chapel, which they immediately entered. A few poor old people, from the neighbouring cottages, composed the whole visible congregation; but, beyond a double grating, rendered impervious by a curtain of crimson silk, were heard the apparently fervent responses of the nuns, while the officiating priest proceeded with the usual Latin service. The effect was considerably heightened by the rich notes of the organ, and the melody of several very beautiful voices, whose thrilling accents made the fretted roof resound with a music almost celestial; and while the ear drank in their fascinating sweetness, and the heart yielded to the enchanting spell, the mind did not pause to reflect, that those sounds were repeated in an unknown tongue, and were, therefore, neither the utterance of the understanding, nor the language of enlightened devotion. The choral strain had ceased, the nuns had retired, and the few peasants were leaving the chapel, before the entranced Cecilia and her party moved from their places. At length, Mrs. Montague rose to depart, and, after many a "longing lingering look" of admiration from her daughter, at the turreted walls, and lovely woods of the convent of Santa Rosalia, they re-entered their boat, and returned to their abode at Palermo.

"Oh! mamma, how I should like to be a nun!"