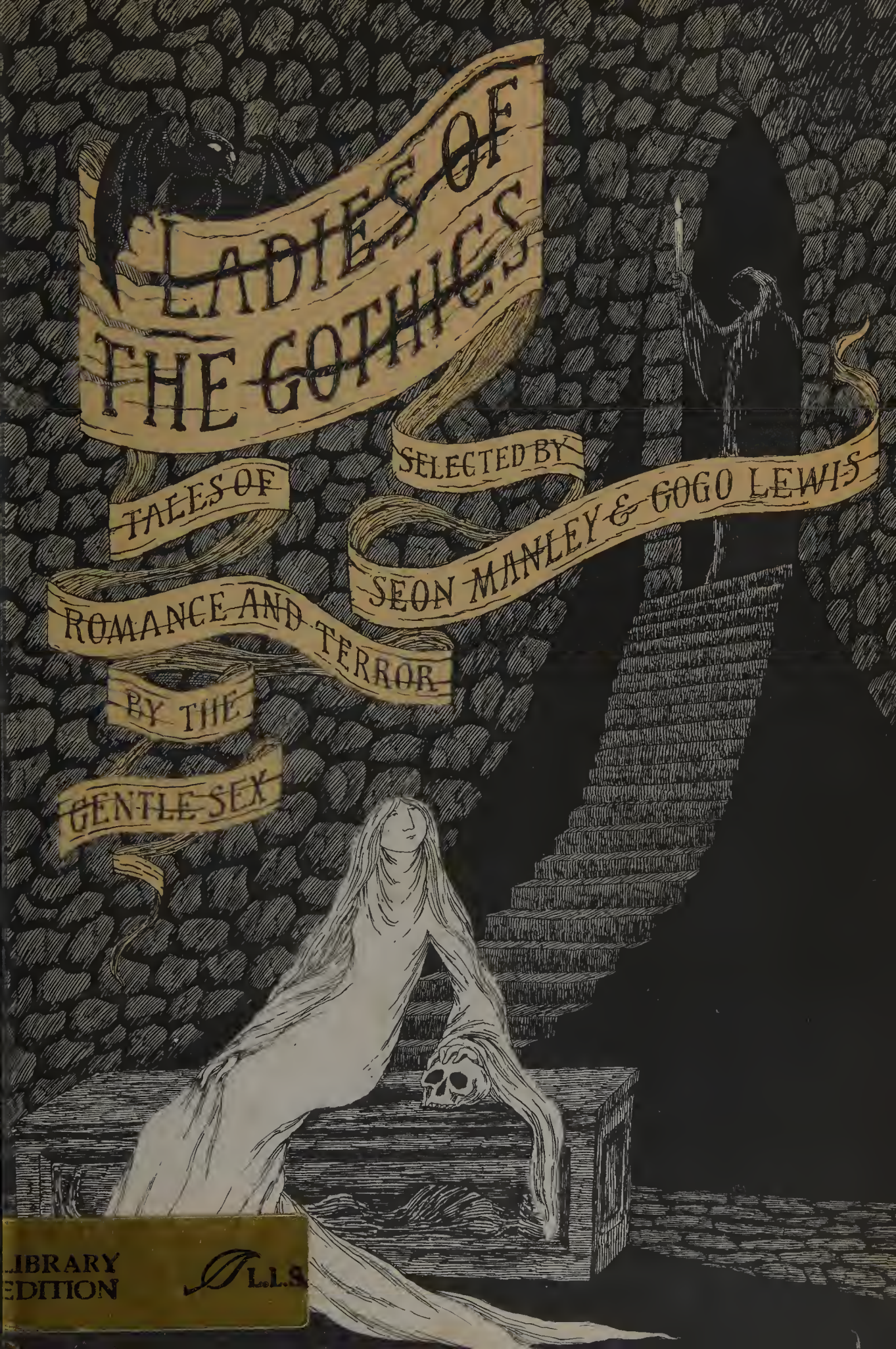

LADIES OF THE GOTHICS

Tales of Romance and Terror by the Gentle Sex

Selected and with Introductions by Seon Manley and Gogo Lewis

Hidden rooms, secret stairways, haunted castles, skeletons in the closet—for escape reading, nothing can beat the gothic story. And of all forms of fiction, probably none has better shown the natural talent of the woman writer.

Today as in the past, the mistresses of the genre raise this form of writing to an art. In this collection Seon Manley and Gogo Lewis sample the best of two centuries. Here you will find Jane Austen's witty exploration of the gothic novel; the haunting "The Housekeeper's Story" by Emily Brontë; Elizabeth Madox Roberts' beautifully written story of the "monstrous defilement" of a lovely old house; Ruth Rendell's tale of a modern bride held in the grip of the past; and Isak Dinesen's fantasy of a young romance that blooms in the presence of death.

With these and other masterpieces, eleven great women writers demonstrate the reason for the unprecedented popularity of the gothic tale today.

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Ladies of the Gothics

Tales of Romance and Terror by the Gentle Sex

SELECTED AND WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

Seon Manley & Gogo Lewis

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This book is for our cousin
DOROTHY J. MURISON
with love

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Introduction

The tale of terror is as old as humankind. In ancient days, terror was creatively expressed in epic poems, in ballads, in the drama and in folk tales; but it has never been better expressed than it is today in the novel and the short story. The gothic story first flowered in the late eighteenth century when horror, terror, the supernatural, murder, violence, gloom, isolation, old houses, and old castles haunted the work of many women writers. Tied to home and housekeeping as "the gentle sex" so often was, women wrote in between innumerable chores such as those that Emily Brontë, author of *Wuthering Heights,* described: brushing the carpets, peeling apples and potatoes, kneading the bread dough, baking, washing, ironing, sandstoning the stairs, raking the fire, turning the mangle. It was no wonder that women sought the pleasure and mental stimulation of turning a good phrase, and a delight in exorcising their fears and frustrations and, often, their romantic dreams.

There have always been two strains within the tradition of

gothic writing. One is romance, a reaction against the extreme realism and rationalism of the early eighteenth century; a reaction expressed in such books as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and in some of the short stories of Mary Shelley. The same feelings of reaction against uncomfortable reality are reflected in gothic writing today. The other strain, of course, was the supernatural, the development of the tale of terror. Some storytellers developed more of the romantic aspect of the gothic; others employed terror more frequently: many women writers combined both in almost even measure.

Today gothic writing is enjoying an extraordinary renaissance. Once again it is in the very capable hands of women writers—so much so, that the great critic of the supernatural, Anthony Boucher, suggested the genre name of "Gothica" because its best exponents were and are women.

Although it is sometimes fashionable to decry the gothic story as a "type," it was a major factor in the development of the novel and the contemporary short story. The grandmother of all gothic writers, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, who published *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, was to influence Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Honoré de Balzac. The gothic style was the first to use atmosphere and mood, the first to use compelling descriptions of weather and landscape, the first to explore the terrors buried in the subconscious and turn them into entertainment.

Celia Fremlin

Gothic literature has always been associated with the grotesque and pervaded by the supernatural. All such stories as we know them today are descended from the gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, which were filled with dark and secret rooms, treacherous stairways, black marble, ominous vaults, dank velvet, ghostly winds—and purple passages. Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, whose 1794 novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was spectacularly successful, has one of her heroines say, typically, "When I entered the portals of this gothic structure a chill purely prophetic chilled my veins, pressed upon my heart and scarcely allowed me to breathe."

The supernatural gothic tales came to the fore when people truly believed in the ghost story, when leisure allowed the enjoyment of a three-decker novel, and open fires encouraged storytelling. After a while the very weight of the gothic novel made it impossible to read. Its lugubrious ghosts became almost laughable; with the disappearance of the castle and the dungeon,

novels of the clanking of chains and the moaning of disembodied voices became, for a long period, almost extinct. But the gothic short story never died. It is still going strong, as popular as ever.

Celia Fremlin, whom *The New York Times* has applauded as having "brilliant intuitive insights into adults and children alike," has abandoned the old castles of other centuries and substituted an old town house, a very contemporary woman in distress, and a feeling of timeless menace to fashion a superb modern gothic.

The Locked Room Upstairs

A door banged in the empty flat upstairs.

Margaret felt her fingers tighten on the covers of her library book, but she refused to look up. As long as she could keep her eyes running backward and forward along the lines of print, she could tell herself that she hadn't given in to her fear—to this ridiculous, unreasoning fear that had so inexplicably laid hold of her this evening.

What was there to be afraid of, anyway? Simply that the upstairs flat had been empty all this week, and that Henry was on duty tonight? But she had often been alone before—if you could call it alone, with Robin and Peter in bed in the very next room. Two little boys of six and eight sound asleep in bed can't really be called company, but still . . .

Leonora hesitated, wondering which way she should turn.

Margaret realized that she was still reading the same sentence, over and over again, and she shut the book with an angry little slam. What *was* the matter with her? Was it that murder in

the papers—some woman strangled by a poor wretch who had been ill-treated in his childhood? He had a grudge against women, or something—Margaret hadn't followed it very carefully—had locked himself in an empty room in this woman's house, and then, in the middle of the night, had crept out . . .

All very horrid, of course; but then one was always reading of murders in the papers—anyway, they'd probably caught him by now. Now, what had she better do to put these silly ideas out of her head once and for all?

Go upstairs, of course. Go upstairs to the empty flat, look briskly through all the rooms, shut firmly whichever door it was that was banging, and come down again, her mind set at rest. Simple.

She put her book down on the little polished table at her side. But why was she putting it down so softly, so cautiously? Margaret shook herself irritably. There wasn't the slightest need to be quiet. Nothing ever seemed to wake the boys once they were properly off, and poor deaf old Mrs. Palmer on the ground floor certainly wouldn't be troubled.

Just to convince herself, she picked the book up again and dropped it noisily on the table. Then, with a firm step, she walked out to the landing.

The once gracious staircase of the old house curved down into complete blackness. For a moment Margaret was taken aback. Even though old Mrs. Palmer was often in bed before ten, she always left the hall light on for the other tenants—perhaps, too, for her own sake, from a deaf woman's natural anxiety not to be shut away in darkness as well as silence.

Margaret stood for a moment, puzzled. Then she remembered. Of course; the poor old thing had gone off this morning on one of her rare visits to a married niece. Tonight the downstairs flat was empty too.

Margaret was annoyed to feel her palms growing sticky as she gripped the top of the bannisters, peering down into the darkness. What on earth difference did it make whether Mrs. Palmer was there or not? Even if she was there, she would have been asleep by now, deep, deep in her world of silence, far out of reach of any human voice . . . of any screams . . .

Snap out of it, girl! Margaret scolded herself. This is what comes of reading mystery stories in the evening instead of catching up with the ironing as I meant to! She turned sharply round and walked across the landing to the other staircase—the dusty, narrower staircase that led to the empty flat above.

The hall stairs were in bad enough repair, goodness knew, but these were worse. As Margaret turned the bend which cut her off from the light of her own landing, she could feel the rotten plaster crumbling under her hand as she felt her way up in the darkness.

The pitter-patter of plaster crumbs falling onto the stairboards was a familiar enough sound to Margaret after six months in this decrepit old house; but all the same she wished the little noise would stop. It seemed to make her more nervous—to get in the way of something. And it was only then that she realized how intently her ears were strained to hear some sound from the empty rooms overhead.

But what sound? Margaret stood on the top landing listening for a moment before she reached out for the light switch.

Bother! The owners, who in all these months had never raised a finger to repair rotting plaster, broken locks, and split window frames, had nevertheless bestirred themselves in less than a week to switch off the electric light supply to the vacant flat! Now she would have to explore the place in the dark.

She felt her way along the wall to the first of the four doors that she knew opened onto this landing. It opened easily; and

Margaret again silently cursed the owners. If only they'd take the trouble to fix locks on their own property she would have been spared all this—the top flat would have been properly locked up the moment the Davidsons left, and then there would have been no possibility of anyone lurking there. Her annoyance strengthened her, and she flung the door wide open.

Empty, of course. Accustomed as her eyes were to the complete blackness of the landing, the room seemed to her quite brightly lit by the dim square of the window, and she could see at a glance into every empty corner.

The next room was empty too, and the next, except for the twisted, shadowy bulk of the antique gas cooker which Mrs. Davidson so often declared had "gone funny on her," and might she boil up a kettle on the slightly newer cooker in Margaret's flat?

But the fourth door *was* locked. Nothing surprising in that, Margaret told herself, turning the shaky china knob this way and that without success. Not surprising at all. All the rooms ought to have been locked like this—probably this was the only one which *would* lock, and the owners had lazily hoped for the best about the others. A perfectly natural explanation: no need to turn the handle so stealthily . . .

To prove the point, Margaret gave the knob a brisk rattle, and it came off in her hand. Just like this house! she was thinking, and heard the corresponding knob on the other side of the door fall to the floor with a report like a pistol in the silence of the night.

But what was *that*? It might have been the echo of the bang, of course, in the empty room. Or—yes, of course, that must be it! Margaret let her breath go in a sigh of relief. That scraping, tapping noise—that was exactly the noise a china knob would make, rolling lopsidedly across the bare boards. Wasn't it?

Yes, of course it was. Margaret was surprised to find how quickly she had got back to her own flat—to her lighted sitting-room—to her own fireside, her heart beating annoyingly, and the dirty china knob still in her hand.

Leonora hesitated, wondering which way she should turn.

Margaret pushed the book away with a gesture of irritation. She had thought that by facing her fear—by going up to the empty flat, looking in all the rooms and shutting the doors firmly so that they couldn't bang, she would have regained her peace of mind. Yet here she was, sitting just as before, her heart thumping, ears straining for she did not know what.

What *is* it all about? she asked herself. Has anything happened today to make me feel nervous? Have I subconsciously noticed anyone suspicious lurking about outside? God knows it's a queer enough neighborhood! And leaning her chin on her hands, her thick black curls falling forward onto her damp forehead, she thought over the day.

Absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. Henry had gone to work as usual. The boys had been got off to school with the usual amount of clatter and argument—Peter unable to find his wellingtons, and Robin announcing, at the very last moment, just as they were starting down the steps, that his teacher had said they were all to bring a cardboard box four inches wide and a long thin piece of string.

Then had followed the morning battle for cleanliness against the obstinate old house. The paintwork that collapsed into dry rot if you wiped it too thoroughly. The cobwebs that brought bits of plaster down with them when you got at them with a broom. . . .

They weren't going to be here much longer, that was one thing, reflected Margaret. They would be moving to the country

soon after Christmas, and it hadn't seemed worthwhile to look for anywhere else to live for such a short time. Besides, if they *had* to live in a flat with two lively small boys, this ramshackle old place offered some advantages. Among all this decay no one was going to notice sticky fingermarks and more chipped paint; no one was going to complain about what games the children played in the neglected garden, overgrown with brambles and willow herb. No one minded their boots, and the boots of their numerous small friends, clattering up and down the stairs.

Margaret smiled as she thought of the odd assortment of friends her sons had managed to collect during their six months here. Such a queer mixture of children in a neighborhood like this, ranging from real little street toughs to the bespectacled son of a divorced but celebrated professor. Always in and out of the house—Margaret couldn't put a name to half of them. That crowd this afternoon, for instance—who *were* they all?

Margaret wrinkled her brows, trying to remember. Alan, of course, the freckle-faced mischief from the paper shop at the corner. And Raymond—the fair, sly boy that Henry said she shouldn't let the children play with—but what could you do? And William—stodgy, mouse-colored William—who simply came to eat her cakes, it seemed to Margaret, for he never played at anything in particular with the others.

Oh, and there had been another one today—a new one, for whom Margaret had felt an immediate revulsion. About eight or nine he must have been, very small for his age and yet strangely mature, with a sharp, shrewd light in his pale, red-rimmed eyes. He had a coarse mop of ill-cut ginger hair and the palest of pale eyebrows and eyelashes, almost invisible in his pale, pinched face. And he was painfully thin.

In spite of her dislike, Margaret had been touched by the thinness—and puzzled, too—real undernourishment is so rare in

children nowadays. She had pressed on him cakes and bread and jam, but he had not eaten anything—indeed, he seemed scarcely aware that anything was being offered him—and in the end Margaret had given up and let the others demolish the provisions with their usual speed.

Margaret shivered, suddenly cold, and leaned forward to put more coal on the fire. The memory of this queer, ginger-haired child had somehow made her feel uneasy all over again. She wished she'd made more effort to find out who he was and where he came from, but the boys were always so vague about that sort of thing.

"What, Mummy?" Peter had said when she had asked him about the child that evening; "Mummy, you said *I* could have the next corn-flake packet, and now Robin."

"Yes, yes, darling, but listen. Who was that little ginger-haired boy you brought home from school today?"

"Who did?" interrupted Robin helpfully.

"Well—Peter, I suppose. Or do *you* know him, Robin? Perhaps he's *your* friend?"

"Who is?"

Margaret had sighed. "The little ginger-haired boy. The one who hardly ate anything at tea."

"*I* didn't hardly eat anything, either," remarked Robin smugly.

"Ooo—you story!" broke in Peter indignantly. "I saw you myself, you had three cakes, and . . ."

Margaret had given it up, and determined to ask the child himself if he ever turned up again.

And, strangely enough, as she had gone across their own landing to put on the boys' bath, she thought she caught a glimpse of the little creature in the hall below, darting past the foot of the stairs. But she couldn't be sure; dusk always fell

early in that dim, derelict hall, and the whole thing might have been a trick of the light. Anyway, when she had gone to the back door and called into the damp autumn twilight, there had been no answer, and nothing stirred among the rank, overgrown shrubs and weeds.

Margaret picked up her book again, slightly reassured. All this could quite reasonably explain her nervousness tonight. She was feeling guilty, that's what it must be. There was something peculiar about the child, and she should have made more effort to find out about him. Perhaps he needed help—after all, there *were* cases of child cruelty and neglect even nowadays. Tomorrow she would really go into the matter, and then there would be nothing more to worry about.

Leonora hesitated, wondering which way she should turn.

Sometimes, on waking from a deep sleep, one knows with absolute certainty that something has wakened one, but without knowing what. Margaret knew, with just this certainty, that something had made her raise her eyes from the book. She listened—listened as she had listened before that night—to the deep pulsing in her ears, to the tiny flickering murmur of the coals. Nothing more.

But wasn't there? What was that, then, that faint, faint shuffle on the landing outside? Shuffle, shuffle—soft as an autumn leaf drifting—shuffle shuffle—pad pad . . . silently the door swung open and there stood Robin, blinking, half asleep.

Margaret let out her breath in a gasp of relief.

"Robin! Whatever's the matter? Why aren't you asleep?"

Robin blinked at her owlishly, his eyes large and round as they always were when just wakened from sleep.

"I don't like that little boy in my bed," he observed.

"What little boy? Whatever are you talking about, Robin?"

"That little boy. He's horrid. He pinches me. And he's muddling the blankets. On purpose."

"Darling, you're dreaming! Come along and let's see!"

Taking the child's hand, Margaret led him back into his own room and switched on the light.

There was Peter, rosily asleep with his mouth open as usual; and there was Robin's little bed, empty, and with the clothes tumbled this way and that as if he had tossed about a lot in his sleep.

This confirmed Margaret's opinion that he had had a nightmare. After all, what was more likely after her cross-questioning about the mysterious little visitor that evening? In spite of his apparent inattention, Robin had no doubt sensed something of the anxiety and distaste behind her questions, and it was the most likely thing in the world that he would dream about it when he went to bed.

However, to reassure the child, Margaret embarked on a thorough search of the little room. Under both the beds they looked, into the clothes closet, behind the curtains—even, at Robin's insistence, into the impossibly narrow space behind the chest of drawers.

"He was such a *thin* little boy, you see, Mummy," Robin explained, and the phrase gave Margaret a nasty little pang of uneasiness. The hungry, too-old little face seemed to hover before her for a moment, its eyes full of ancient, malicious knowledge. She blinked it away, shut the lid of the brick box (what an absurd place to look!), and bundled Robin firmly back to bed.

"And do you promise I won't dream it again?" asked Robin anxiously, and Margaret promised. This was the standard formula after Robin's nightmares. It had always worked before.

Nearly twelve o'clock. There was nothing whatever to stay up for, but somehow Margaret couldn't bring herself to go to bed. She reached out toward her library book, but felt that she could not face Leonora's indecision again, and instead picked up yesterday's evening paper. She would look for something cheerful to read before she went to bed. The autumn fashions, perhaps—or would it be the spring ones they'd be writing about in October? It was all very confusing nowadays.

But it wasn't the autumn fashions she found herself reading —or the spring ones. It was the blurred photograph of the wanted man that caught her eye—a man in his fifties perhaps —from such a bad picture it was difficult to tell. A picture of the murdered woman, too—a Mrs. Harriet somebody—and a description of her . . .

Margaret's attention suddenly became riveted and she read the report from beginning to end, hardly daring to breathe. This man, at large somewhere in London tonight, had escaped from a mental institution where he had been sent some years ago for strangling another woman in somewhat similar circumstances to this Mrs. Harriet . . .

Margaret felt her limbs grow rigid. Both women had been the mothers of small boys . . . both had lived in tall derelict houses converted into flats . . . both had had black hair done in tight curls . . . Margaret fingered her hairstyle with damp, trembling fingers, and tried not to read any more, but her eyes seemed glued to the page. Why had the man not been hanged that first time?

There followed the story of his childhood—a story of real Dickensian horror. Brought up in a tall ruined old house by a stepmother who had starved him, thrashed him, shut him in dark rooms where she told him clawed fiends were waiting . . . her black, shining curls had quivered over his childhood like

the insignia of torture and death. The prison doctors had learned all this from him after the first murder—and had learned, too, how the sight of a black-haired woman going up the steps of just such a derelict house as he remembered had brought back his terror and misery with such vividness that "I didn't just *feel* like a little boy again—I *was* a little boy . . . that was my house . . . that was *her*"——that was the only way he could describe it. And he had crept into the house, locked himself in one of the empty rooms until the dead silence of the night, and then crept out, with a child's enormity of terror and hatred in his heart, and with a man's strength in his fingers . . .

Margaret closed her eyes for a second, and then opened them again to read the description of the murderer: "About fifty years of age, medium height, ginger hair growing gray, eyebrows and eyelashes almost invisible . . ." With every word the face leaped before her more vividly—not the face of the aging, unknown man, but the little malevolent face she had seen that afternoon—the ill-cut ginger hair, the little red-rimmed eyes filled with the twisted malice of an old and bitter man . . .

"I didn't just *feel* like a little boy again, I *was* a little boy . . ." The words beat through Margaret's brain, over and over again.

She thrust the paper away from her. Don't be so fanciful and absurd, she told herself. After all, if I *really* think anything's wrong all I've got to do is call the police. There's the telephone just there in the hall.

She walked slowly to the door and out onto the landing, and stood there in her little island of light with darkness above and below. She tried to go on telling herself what nonsense it all was, how ridiculous she was being. But now she dared not let any more words come into her mind, not any words at all. For she was listening—listening as civilized human beings rarely

have need to listen——listening as an animal listens in the murderous blackness of the forest. Not just with the ears—rather with the whole body. Every organ, every nerve is alert, pricked up, so that, in the end, it is impossible to say through which sense the message comes, and comes with absolute certainty: Danger is near. Danger is on the move.

For there was no sound. Margaret was certain of that. No sound to tell her that something was stirring in the locked room upstairs—that dark, empty room so like the locked room where once a little boy had gone half mad with terror at the thought of the clawed fiends. The clawed fiends who had lost their terrors through the years and become his friends and allies, for now at last he was a clawed fiend himself.

Still Margaret heard no sound. No sound to tell that the door of the empty room was being unlocked, silently, and with consummate skill, from the inside. No shuffle of footsteps across the dusty upstairs landing. No creak from the ancient, rickety steps of that top flight of stairs.

And in the end it was not Margaret's straining ears at all which caught the first hint of the oncoming creature—it was her eyes. They seemed to have been riveted on that shadowy bend in the bannisters for so long that when she saw the hand at last, long and tapering, like five snakes coiled round the rail, she could have imagined it had been there all the time, flickering in and out and dancing before her eyes.

But not the face. No, that couldn't have been there before. Not anywhere, in all the world, could there have been a face like that—a face so distorted, so alight with hate that it seemed almost luminous as it leered out of the blackness, as it seemed to glide down toward her a foot or two above the bannister . . .

There was a sound now——a quick pattering of feet, horribly light and soft, like a child's, as they bore the heavy adult

shape down the stairs, the white, curled fingers reaching out toward her . . .

A little frightened cry at Margaret's elbow freed her from her paralysis. A little white face, a tangle of ginger hair . . . and an instinct stronger than that of self-preservation gripped her. In a second she was on her knees, her arms round the small trembling body; she felt the little creature's shaking terror subsiding into a great peace as she held him against her breast.

That dropping on her knees was salvation. In that very second her assailant lunged, tripped over her suddenly lowered body, and pitched headlong down the stairs behind her. Crash upon crash as he fell from step to step, and then silence. Absolute silence.

Then a new clamor arose.

"Mummy! Mummy! Who . . . ? What . . . ?"—a tangle of small legs and arms, and in a moment her arms seemed to be full of little boys. She collected her wits and looked down at them. Only two of them, of course, her own two, their familiar dark heads pressed against her, their frightened questions clamoring in her ears . . .

And when the police came, and Henry came, and the dead man was taken away, there was so much to tell, so much to explain. It could all be explained quite easily, of course (as Henry pointed out), with only a little stretching of coincidence.

The little ginger-headed boy must come from somewhere in the neighborhood—no doubt he could be traced, and if necessary helped in some way. Margaret's obsession about him would explain Robin's dream; it would also explain why, in that moment of terror, she imagined the strange child had rushed into her arms. Really, of course, it must have been one of her own boys.

And yet, Margaret could never forget the smile on the face

of the dead man as he lay crumpled at the foot of the stairs. They say that the faces of the dead can set in all sorts of incongruous expressions, but it seemed to Margaret that the smile had not been the smile of a grown man at all; it had been the smile of a little boy who has felt the comfort of a mother's arms at last.

Ruth Rendell

Damsel in distress; plenty of atmosphere; the conflict between the old and the new. These are generally considered the outstanding elements of a good gothic story. Here, Ruth Rendell combines these ingredients into a heady brew. She is particularly good in that gothic ability to evoke another time and to impose it upon a contemporary scene.

The gothic novel was rich in the romance of the past. It was that sense of the past that caused a ruined castle to be haunted not only by ghosts but by past deeds. In fact, most ancient superstitions declared that all ruins were haunted. All gothic writers found a curious charm, a thrill in "the pleasure of the horrible" and in "the infinity of time."

The infinity of time is always a challenge. In the dark world of the unconscious, there is no time. We can drift through different periods of our lives without any barriers. "Minutes," said the pioneer gothic writer Monk Lewis, "are hours in the noctuary of terror." Can there be other things about time that

we do not know? Can we, as in this story, be possessed by discarnate entities of other times?

In some respects our time today is much like the period that originally produced the gothic story: both were times of anxiety; there were wars and rumors of wars; "at home and abroad," as the gothic critic Montague Summers said, "dark shadows were lowering." Readers sought, as they seek now, a counter-anodyne. It is the gothic tale; and Miss Rendell is a mistress of the genre.

The Long Corridor of Time

On the evening of their first day, when they had hung their pictures and unpacked their wedding presents—tasks they hadn't cared to entrust to her mother or to the moving men—they went for a walk in the square. They walked along the pavement in the September twilight, admiring the pale gleaming façades of the terraces which, now divided into flats, had once been the London residences of the very rich. Then, when they had completed their little tour and had examined all four sides of the square, Marion took his hand and led him toward the wilderness of trees and shrubs which formed its center.

It was a gloomy place where only the tall trees—a plane, a walnut, and a catalpa—seemed to flourish. A few attenuated rosebushes struggled for life in the shadowy corners, their wan flowers blighted with mildew. Marion put her hand on the gate in the iron railings.

"It's locked," she said.

"Of course it is, darling. It's a private garden for the tenants only. The head porter gave me our key just now."

"Do let's go in and explore it."

"If you like, but there doesn't seem much to explore."

She hesitated, holding the key he had handed her, looking through the railings at the small patchy lawn, the stone table, and the wooden seat. "No," she said. "Tomorrow will do. I *am* rather tired."

He was touched, knowing how anxious she always was to please him. "It's hardly the sort of garden you've been used to, is it?"

She smiled but said nothing.

"Do you know, darling, I feel very guilty. I've taken you away from the country, from all your country things—your horses, the dogs—everything. And all I've given you is this."

"You didn't *take* me, Geoffrey. I came of my own free will."

"Hmm. I wonder how much free will we really have. If you hadn't met me, you'd be at the university now—you'd have your own friends, young people. I'm twice your age."

"Oh, no," she said seriously as they walked back to the terrace where their flat was. "I'll be eighteen next week. You were twice my age when we got engaged and I was seventeen and five months. Exactly twice. I worked it out to the day."

He smiled. The head porter came out, holding the door open for them. "Good night, madam. Good night, sir."

"Good night," said Geoffrey. So she had worked it out to the day. The earnest accuracy of this, a sort of futile playfulness, seemed to him entirely characteristic of the childhood she hadn't quite left behind. Only five or six years ago perhaps she had been writing, with comparable precision, inside exercise books: *Marion Craig, The Mill House, Sapley, Sussex, England, Europe, The World, The Universe.* And now she was his wife.

"He called me madam," she said as they went up in the elevator. "No one ever did that before." With his arm round her and her head on his shoulder she said, "You'll never be twice my age again, darling. That isn't mathematically possible."

"I know that, my love. You've no idea," he said, laughing, "what a tremendous comfort that is."

It wasn't true, of course, that he had given her nothing but a dusty scrap of London shrubbery to compensate for the loss of The Mill House. He asked himself which of her friends, those schoolgirls who had been her bridesmaids, could expect even in five years' time a husband who was a partner in a firm of stockbrokers, a five-room flat in nearly the smartest part of London, a car of her own parked in the square next to her husband's Jaguar, and a painting for her drawing-room wall that was almost certainly a Sisley.

And he wouldn't stand in her way, he thought as he looked in his bedroom glass before leaving for work, scrutinizing his dark head for those first silver hairs. She could still ride, still have parties for people her own age. And he would give her everything she wanted.

He glanced down at the fair head on the pillow. She was still asleep and on her skin lay the delicate bloom of childhood, a patina that is lighter and more evanescent than dew and is gone by twenty. He kissed her tenderly on the side of her folded lips.

"It bothers me a bit," he said to Philip Sarson who came out as he was unlocking his car. "What is Marion going to do with herself all day? We don't know anyone here but you."

"Oh, go shopping, go to the cinema," said Philip airily. "When I suggested you take the flat I thought how handy the West End would be. Besides, married women soon find their hands full."

"If you mean kids, we don't mean to have any for years yet. She's so *young*. God, you do talk like a Victorian sometimes."

"Well, it's my period. I'm steeped in it."

Geoffrey got into his car. "How's the new book coming?"

"Gone off to my publisher. Come round tonight and I'll read you some bits?"

"No, you come to see us," said Geoffrey, trying to sound enthusiastic. A jolly evening for Marion, he thought, a merry end to the day for an eighteen-year-old—coffee and brandy with a tired stockbroker of 35 and an historian of 45. He would ask her first thing he got back what she thought about it and if there were the least hesitancy in her manner, he would phone Philip and put him off.

"But I'd like to see him," she said. "I love hearing about Victorian London. Stop worrying about me."

"I expect I shall when we've settled in. What did you do today?"

"I went to Harrods and matched the stuff for the dining-room curtains and I arranged for my driving lessons. Oh, and I explored the garden."

"The garden? Oh, that bit of jungle in the middle of the square."

"Don't be so disparaging. It's a dear little garden. There are some lovely old trees and one of the porters told me they actually get squirrels in there. It's been such a hot day and it was so quiet and peaceful sitting on the seat in the shade."

"Quiet and peaceful!" he said.

She linked her arm through his and touched his cheek with one gentle finger. "I don't want to be a gadabout all the time, Geoffrey, and I've never been very wild. Don't you like me the way I am?"

He put his arms round her, emotion almost choking him.

"I love everything about you. I must be the luckiest man in London."

"I know exactly what you mean," said Philip when, two hours later, Marion resumed her praises of the garden. "It *is* peaceful. I used to sit out there a lot last summer, working on my book, *Great-Grandfather's London*. I've passed many a happy hour in that garden."

"Yes, but you're practically a great-grandfather yourself," Geoffrey retorted. "I want Marion to go out with her contemporaries."

"Very few of her contemporaries can afford to live in Palomede Square, Geoff. But I'm glad you like it, Marion. I'm thinking of writing a book about the square itself. I've unearthed some fascinating stories and a lot of famous people have lived here." Philip named a poet, an explorer, and a statesman. "These houses were built in 1840 and I think that a hundred and thirty years of comings and going ought to make a good read."

"I'd like to hear some of those stories one day," said Marion. In her long black skirt she looked like a schoolgirl dressed up for charades. She must get out and buy clothes, Geoffrey thought, spend a lot of money. He could afford it.

Philip had begun to read from his manuscript and during the pauses, while Marion asked questions, Geoffrey thought—perhaps because they had all been mentally transported back more than 100 years—of those Victorian dresses which were once more so fashionable for the very young. He imagined Marion in one of them, a ruched and flounced gown with a high, boned collar and long puff sleeves. In his mind's eye he saw her as a reincarnation of a Nineteenth Century ingenue crossing the square, her blonde hair combed high, walking with delicate tread toward the garden.

Smiling at Philip, nodding to show he was still listening, he got up to draw the curtains. But before he pulled the cords, he looked out beyond the balcony to the empty square below with its lemony spots of lamplight and its neglected, leafy, umbrageous center. Between the canopy of the ilex and the dusty yellow-spotted laurel he made out the shape of the stone table and, beside it, the seat that looked as if it had never been occupied.

The corners of the garden were now deep caverns of shadow and nothing moved but a single leaf which, blown prematurely from the plane tree, scuttered across the sour green turf like some distracted insect.

He pulled the curtain cords sharply, wondering why he suddenly felt, in the company of his loved wife and his old friend, so ill at ease.

"How was your driving lesson, darling?"

"It was nice," she said, smiling up at him with a kind of gleeful pride. "He said I was very good. When I came back I sat in the garden learning the Highway Code."

"Why not sit on the balcony? If I'd been at home today I'd have sunbathed all afternoon on that balcony."

She said naively, "I do wish you could be home all day," and then, as if feeling her way with caution, "I like the garden best."

"But you don't get any light there at all. It must be the gloomiest hole in London. As far as I can see, no one else uses it."

"I'll sit on the balcony if you want me to, Geoffrey. I won't go in the garden if it upsets you."

"*Upsets* me? What an extraordinary word to use! Of course it doesn't *upset* me. But the summer's nearly over and you might as well make the best of what's left."

While they had been speaking, standing by the windows which were open onto the balcony, she had been holding his arm. But he felt its warm pressure relax and when he looked down at her he saw that her face now had a vague and distant look, a look that was both remote and secretive, and her gaze had traveled beyond the balcony rail to the motionless treetops below.

For the first time since their wedding he felt rejected, left out of her thoughts. He took her face in his hand and kissed her lips.

"You look so beautiful in that dress—sprigged muslin, isn't it?—like a Jane Austen girl going to her first ball. You didn't wear that for your driving lesson?"

"No, I changed when I came in. I wanted to put it on before I went into the garden. Wasn't that funny? I just had this feeling I ought to wear it for the garden."

"I hoped," he said, "you were wearing it for me."

"Oh, darling," she said, and now he felt that she was with him once more, "I can understand it upsets you when I go into the garden. I *quite* understand. I know it could affect some people like that. Isn't it strange that I know? But I won't go there again."

He didn't know what she meant or why his simple distaste for the place—a reasonable dislike that was apparently shared by the other tenants—should call for understanding. But he loved her too much to bother with it, and the vague unease he felt passed when she told him she had telephoned one of her bridesmaid friends and been invited to a gathering of young people. It gratified him that she was beginning to make a life of her own, planning to attend with this friend a course of classes. He took her out to dinner, proud of her in her flounced lilac muslin, exultant at the admiring glances she drew.

But he awoke in the night to strange terrors which he couldn't at first define. She lay with one arm about his shoulders but he shook it off almost roughly and went quickly to get a glass of water as if, distressingly, mystifyingly, he must get away from her for a moment at all costs.

Sitting in the half-dark drawing room, he tried to analyze this night fear and came up with one short sentence: I am jealous. Never in his life had he been jealous before and the notion of jealousy had never touched their marriage. But now in the night, without cause, as the result of some forgotten dream perhaps, he was jealous. She was going to a party of young people, to classes with young people. Why had he never before considered that some of those contemporaries whom he encouraged her to associate with would necessarily be young men? And how could he, though rich, successful, though still young in a way, compete with a youth of twenty?

A sudden impulse came to him to draw back the curtains and look down into the garden, but he checked it and went back to bed. As he felt her, warm and loving beside him, his fears went and he slept.

"That's a very young chap teaching Marion to drive," said Philip who worked at home all day, gossiped with the porters, and knew everything that went on. "He doesn't look any older than she."

"Really? She didn't say."

"Why should she? He won't seem young to her."

Geoffrey went up the steps. He had forgotten his key.

"Is my wife in, Jim?" he said to the head porter. "If not, you'll have to open up for me."

"Mrs. Gilmour is in the garden, sir."

"In the *garden?*"

"Yes, sir. Madam's spent every day this week in the garden.

The gardener's no end pleased about it, I can tell you. He said to me only this morning, 'The young lady'—no disrespect, sir, but he called her the young lady—'really appreciates my garden, more than some others I could name.' "

"I don't get it," said Geoffrey as he and Philip went down into the square. "I really don't. She promised me she wouldn't go there again. I honestly do think she might keep the first promise she's made to me. It's a bit bloody much."

Philip looked curiously at him. "Promised you she wouldn't go into the garden? Why shouldn't she?"

"Because I told her not to, that's why."

"My dear old Geoff, don't get so angry. What's come over you? I've never known you to get into such a state over a trifle."

Through clenched teeth Geoffrey said, "I am not accustomed to being disobeyed," but even as he spoke, as the alien words were ground out and Philip stood still, thunderstruck, he felt the anger that had overcome him without any apparent will of his own seep away, and he laughed rather awkwardly. "God, what a stupid thing to say! Marion!" he called. "I'm home."

She had been sitting on the seat, a book on the table in front of her. But she hadn't been reading it, for although it was open, the pages were fast becoming covered with fallen leaves. She turned a bemused face toward him, blank, almost hypnotized; but suddenly she seemed to regain consciousness. She picked up her book, scattered the leaves, and ran toward the gate.

"I shouldn't have gone into the garden," she said. "I didn't mean to but it looked so lovely and I couldn't resist. Wasn't it funny that I couldn't resist?"

He had meant to be gentle and loving, to tell her she was always free to do as she pleased. The idea that he might ever become paternalistic, let alone autocratic, horrified him. But

how could she talk of being unable to resist as if there were something tempting about that drab autumnal place?

"I really don't follow you," he said. "It's a mystery to me." If tempered with a laugh, if accompanied by a squeeze of her hand, his words would have been harmless. But he heard them ring coldly and—worse—he felt glad his reproof had gone home, satisfied that she looked hurt and a little cowed.

She sighed, giving the garden a backward glance in which there was something of yearning, something—was he imagining it?—of deceit. He took her arm firmly, trying to think of something that would clear the cloud from her face, but all that came out was a rather sharp, "Don't let's hang about here. We're due at my cousin's in an hour."

She nodded compliantly. Instead of feeling remorse, he was irritated by the very quality that had captivated him, her childlike naïveté. A deep and sullen depression enclosed him, and while they were at his cousin's party he spoke roughly to her once or twice, annoyed because she sat silent and then, illogically, even more out of temper when she was stirred into a faint animation by the attentions of a boy her own age.

From that evening onward he found himself beginning to look for faults in her. Had she always been so vague, so dreamy? Had that idleness, that forgetfulness, always been there? She had ceased to speak of the garden. All those jaded leaves had fallen. The thready plane twigs hung bare, the evergreens had dulled to blackness, and often in the mornings the stone table, the seat, and the circle of grass were rimed with frost. The nights drew in at four o'clock and it was far too cold to sit in the open air.

Yet when he phoned his home from his office, as he had increasingly begun to do in the afternoons, he seldom received a reply. Nothing had come of that plan to go to classes and she

said she never saw her friend. Where, then, was she when he phoned?

She couldn't be having daily driving lessons, each one lasting for hours. He might have asked her but he didn't. He brooded instead on her absences and his suppressed resentment burst into flames when there was no dinner prepared for their guests.

"They'll be here in three-quarters of an hour!" He had never shouted at her before and she put up her hands to her lips, shrinking away from him.

"Geoffrey, I don't know what happened to me but I forgot. Please forgive me. Can't we take them out?"

"People will begin to think I've married some sort of crazy child. What about last week when you 'forgot' that reception, when you 'forgot' to write and thank my cousin after we'd dined there?"

She had begun to cry.

"All right," he said harshly, "we'll take them to a restaurant. Haven't much choice, have we? For God's sake, get out of that bloody dress!"

She was again wearing the lilac muslin. Evening after evening when he got home he found her in it—the dress he had adored but which was now worn and crumpled, with a food spot at the waist.

He poured himself a stiff drink. He was shaking with anger. The arguments in her favor he had put forward when she forgot the reception—that there had been a dozen gatherings which she hadn't forgotten but had graced—now seemed invalid in the face of this neglect.

But when she came back into the room his rage went. She wore a dress he hadn't seen before, of scarlet silk, stiff and formal yet suited to her youth, with huge sleeves, a tight black and gold embroidered bodice, and long skirt. Her hair was piled

high and she walked with an unfamiliar aloofness that was almost hauteur.

The rage went, to be replaced oddly and rather horribly by an emotion he hadn't supposed he would ever feel toward her—a kind of greedy lust. He started forward, slopping his drink.

"Damme, Isabella, but you're a fine woman!"

Incredulously, she stopped and stood still. "*What* did you say?"

He passed his hand across his brow. "I said, 'God, Marion, you're a lovely girl.' "

"I must have misheard you. I really thought . . . I feel so strange, Geoffrey, not myself at all sometimes and you're not you. You do still love me?"

"Of course I love you. Kiss? That's better. My darling little Marion, don't look so sad. We'll have a nice evening and forget all about this. Right?"

She nodded but her smile was watery, and the next day when he phoned her at three there was no reply although she had told him her driving lesson was in the morning.

Philip looked very comfortable and at home in the armchair by the window, as if he had been there for hours. Perhaps he had. Was it possible that she was out with him, Geoffrey wondered, on all those occasions when he phoned and got no answer?

The dress he had come to hate was stained with mud at the hem as if she had been walking. Her shoes were damp and her hair untidy. Maybe she devoted her mornings to the "very young chap" and her afternoons to this much older one. The husband, he had always heard, was the last to know.

She sat down beside him on the sofa, very close, almost huddled with him. Geoffrey moved slightly aside. What had hap-

pened to her gracious ways, that virginal aloofness, which had so taken him when he first saw her in her father's house? And he recalled, while Philip began on some tedious story of Palomede before the square was built, how he had ridden over to Cranstock to call on her father and she had been there with her mother in the drawing room, the gray-brown head and the smooth fair one bent over their work. At a word from her father she had risen, laying aside the embroidery frame, and played to them—oh, so sweetly!—on the harpsichord . . .

He shook himself, sat upright. God, he must have been more tired than he had thought and had actually dozed off. When had she ever done embroidery or played to him anything but records? And where had he got the name Cranstock from? The Craigs lived in Sapley and her father was dead.

The brief dream had been rather unpleasant. He said sharply, "Anyone want a drink?"

"Nothing for me," said Philip.

"Sherry, darling," said Marion. "Did you say a *manor* house, Philip?"

"Remember all these inner suburbs were villages in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, my dear. The Hewsons were lords of the manor of Palomede until the last one sold the estate in 1838."

His ill temper welling, Geoffrey brought their drinks. What right had that fellow to call *his* wife "my dear," and who cared, he thought, returning to catch Philip's words, if some Hewson had been a minor poet or another had held office in Lord Liverpool's government?

"The last one murdered his wife."

"In that garden," said Geoffrey rather nastily, "and they took him up the road to Tyburn and hanged him."

"No, he was never brought to trial, but there was a good deal

of talk and he was never again received in society. He married a wife half his age and suspected her of infidelity. She wasn't quite sane—what we'd now call mentally disturbed—and she used to spend hours wandering in the manor gardens. They extended over the whole of this square, of course, and beyond. He accused her of having trysts there with her lovers. All imagination, of course—there was no foundation for it."

Geoffrey said violently, "How can you possibly know that? How can *you* know there was no foundation?"

"My dear Geoff! Because the young lady's diary happens to have come into my hands from a great-niece of hers."

"I wouldn't believe a word of it!"

"Possibly not, but you haven't read it. There's no need to get so cross."

"No, please don't, darling."

He shook off the small hand which touched his sleeve. "Be silent, Marion! You know nothing about such matters and shouldn't talk of them."

Philip half rose. He said slowly, "And you accuse *me* of being Victorian! What the hell's got into you, Geoffrey? I was simply telling Marion a tale of old Palomede and you fly into a furious temper. I think I'd better go."

"Don't go, Philip. Geoffrey's tired, that's all." Her lips trembled but she said in a steady voice, "Tell us what became of Mr. Hewson and his wife."

The historian said stiffly, "In the end he took her away to Italy where she was drowned."

"You mean *he* drowned her?"

"That's what they said. He took her out in a boat in the Bay of Naples and he came back but she didn't. After that he was blackballed in his clubs and even his own sister wouldn't speak to him."

"What God-awful romantic tripe," said Geoffrey. He was watching his wife, taking in every slatternly detail of her appearance and thinking now of the City banquet he and she were to attend in the week before Christmas. All summer during their engagement he had looked forward to this banquet, perhaps the most significant public occasion of his year, and thought how this time he would have a beautiful young wife to accompany him. But was she beautiful still? Could she, changed and waiflike and vague as she had become, hold her own in the company of those mannered and sophisticated women?

He phoned her on the afternoon of that dim December day, for she had had a slight cold in the morning, had awakened coughing, and he wanted to be sure firstly that she was well enough to go, and secondly that she would be dressed and ready on time. But the phone rang into emptiness.

Alarmed and apprehensive, he called Philip, who was out, and then the driving school to be told that Mrs. Gilmour's instructor was out too. She couldn't be out with both of them and yet—

He got home by six. It was raining. A trail of wet footmarks led from the elevator to the door of their flat like the prints left by someone who has been called unexpectedly from a bath. And then, even before he saw the damp and draggled figure, still and silent in front of the balcony windows, he knew where she had been, where she had been every day.

But instead of calming his jealousy, this revelation somehow increased it and he began shouting at her, calling her a slut, a failure as a wife, and telling her he regretted their marriage.

The insults seemed to pass over her. She coughed a little. She said dully, remotely, "You must go alone. I'm not well."

"Of course you're not well, mooning your life away in that

foul garden. All right, I'll go alone, but don't be surprised if I don't come back!"

Geoffrey drank more than he would have if she had been with him. A taxi brought him home to Palomede Square just after midnight and he went up in the elevator, not drunk but not quite sober either. He opened their bedroom door and saw that the bed was empty.

There were no lights on in the flat except the hall light which he had just put on himself. She had left him. He picked up the phone to dial her mother's number and then he thought, no, she wouldn't go to her mother. She would go to that driver chap or to Philip.

Philip lived in a flat in the next house. Geoffrey came down the steps into the square and was on the pavement, striding to the next doorway, when he stopped and stared into the garden. At first he thought it was only a pale tree trunk that he could see or a bundle of something dropped behind the stone table. He approached the railings slowly and clasped his hands round the cold wet iron. It was a bundle of clothes, but the clothes enwrapped the seated and utterly still figure of his wife. He began to tremble.

She wore the lilac dress, its skirt sodden with water and clinging to the shape of her legs, and over it her mink coat, soaked and spiky like a rat's pelt. She sat with her hands spread on the table, one gloved, the other bare, her face blank, wax-white, lifted to the rain which fell steadily upon her and dropped sluggishly from the naked branches.

He opened the gate and went up to her without speaking. She recoiled from him but she didn't speak either. He dragged her from the seat and brought her out of the garden and into the house, half carrying her. In the elevator she began to cough, sagging against the wall, water dripping from her hair which

hung in draggles under the slackened scarf that wrapped it, water streaming down her face.

Heat met them as he unlocked the door of the flat. Transiently, he thought as he pushed her inside, what have we come to, we who were so happy? A drunken autocrat and a half-crazed slattern. What has come over us?

The warmth of the radiator against which she leaned made steam rise from her hair and coat. What have we come to, he thought, and then all tender wistfulness vanished, spiraling away down some long corridor of time, taking with it everything that remained of himself and leaving another in possession.

The lamp in the square lit the flat faintly with a sickly yellow radiance. He put on no lights. "I demand an explanation," he said.

"I cannot explain. I have tried to explain it to myself but I cannot." Beneath the coat which she had stripped off, over the soaked and filthy dress, she wore an ancient purple and black wool shawl, moth-eaten into holes.

"What is that repellent garment?"

She fingered it, plucking at the fringes. "It is a shawl. A shawl is a perfectly proper article of dress for a lady to wear."

Her words, her antiquated usage, brought him no astonishment. They sounded natural to his ears.

"Where did you obtain such a thing? Answer me!"

"In the market. It was pretty and I needed a shawl."

He felt his face swell with an onrush of blood. "To be more fitting for your low lover, I daresay? You need not explain why you absent yourself from my household, for I know why. You have assignations in that garden, do you not, with your paramours? With my young coachman and that scribbler fellow Sarson?"

"It is not true," she whispered.

"Do you give me the lie, Isabella? Do you know that I could have a Bill of Divorcement passed in Parliament and rid myself of you? I could keep all your fortune and send you back to your papa at Cranstock."

She came to him and fell on her knees. "Before God, Mr. Hewson, I am your honest wife! I have never betrayed you. Don't send me away, oh, don't!"

"Get up." She was clinging to him and he pushed her away. "You have disgraced yourself and me. You have committed the worst sin a woman can commit, you have neglected your duties and brought me into disrepute before my friends." She crept from him, leaving a trail of water drops on the carpet. "I shall think now what I must do," he said. "I want no scandal, mind. Perhaps it will be best if I remove you from this."

"Do not take me from my garden!"

"You are a married woman, Isabella, and have no rights. Pray remember it. What you wish does not signify. I am thinking of my reputation in society. Yes, to take you away may be best. Go now and get some rest. I will sleep in my dressing-room and we will tell the servants you are ill so that there may be no gossip. Come, do as I bid you."

She gathered up her wet coat and left the room, crying quietly. The lamp in the square had gone out. He searched for a candle to light him to bed but he could not find one.

Philip Sarson came into the porters' office to collect his morning paper. "A bit brighter today," he said.

"We can do with it, sir, after that rain."

"Mrs. Gilmour not out in the garden this morning?"

"They've gone away, sir. Didn't you know?"

"I haven't seen so much of them lately," said Philip. "Gone away for Christmas, d'you mean?"

"I couldn't say. Seven A.M., they went. I'd only just come on duty." The head porter looked disapproving. "Mr. Gilmour said she was ill but she could walk all right. Tried to get into the garden, she did, only he'd taken the key away from her. She got hold of the gate and he pulled her off very roughlike, I thought. It's not the sort of thing you expect in this class of property."

"Where have they gone? Do you know?"

"They took his car. Italy, I think he said. Yes, it was. I saw Naples on their luggage labels. Are you all right, sir? All of a sudden you look quite ill."

Philip made no reply. He walked down the steps, across the square, and looked through the railings into the garden. A small white glove, sodden and flat as a wet leaf, lay on the seat. He shivered, cursing the writer's imagination that led him into such strange and improbable fancies.

Mary Wilkins Freeman

The greatest nineteenth-century American writers in the gothic genre were, of course, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Their richly tapestried stories were part of the romantic literature of their time. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a new movement afoot in writing. It was called realism, and the new writers made an effort to keep their settings, characters, and style more realistic.

Mary Wilkins Freeman, born in New England, was influenced in her taste for the macabre by Nathaniel Hawthorne and, in her own words, "that black atmosphere of suspicion and hatred which gathers nowhere more easily than in a New England town." She felt that time was passing New England by. Its great days were over, and its revitalization in the twentieth century she would not live to see.

After her marriage, Mrs. Freeman was glad to live in the suburbs of New Jersey, but the New England she knew always haunted her. She often tried her hand at the strange and weird

tale. She was interested in characters, their jealousies, their bitterness, often their sheer pettiness—qualities that laid the ground for a new kind of gothic tale.

The Shadows on the Wall

"Henry had words with Edward in the study the night before Edward died," said Caroline Glynn.

She was elderly, tall, and harshly thin, with a hard colourlessness of face. She spoke not with acrimony, but with grave severity. Rebecca Ann Glynn, younger, stouter and rosy of face between her crinkling puffs of gray hair, gasped, by way of assent. She sat in a wide flounce of black silk in the corner of the sofa, and rolled terrified eyes from her sister Caroline to her sister Mrs. Stephen Brigham, who had been Emma Glynn, the one beauty of the family. She was beautiful still, with a large, splendid, full-blown beauty; she filled a great rocking-chair with her superb bulk of femininity, and swayed gently back and forth, her black silks whispering and her black frills fluttering. Even the shock of death (for her brother Edward lay dead in the house) could not disturb her outward serenity of demeanour. She was grieved over the loss of her brother: he had been the youngest, and she had been fond of him, but never had Emma

Brigham lost sight of her own importance amidst the waters of tribulation. She was always awake to the consciousness of her own stability in the midst of vicissitudes and the splendour of her permanent bearing.

But even her expression of masterly placidity changed before her sister Caroline's announcement and her sister Rebecca Ann's gasp of terror and distress in response.

"I think Henry might have controlled his temper, when poor Edward was so near his end," said she with an asperity which disturbed slightly the roseate curves of her beautiful mouth.

"Of course he did not *know,*" murmured Rebecca Ann in a faint tone strangely out of keeping with her appearance.

One involuntarily looked again to be sure that such a feeble pipe came from that full-swelling chest.

"Of course he did not know it," said Caroline quickly. She turned on her sister with a strange sharp look of suspicion. "How could he have known it?" said she. Then she shrank as if from the other's possible answer. "Of course you and I both know he could not," said she conclusively, but her pale face was paler than it had been before.

Rebecca gasped again. The married sister, Mrs. Emma Brigham, was now sitting up straight in her chair; she had ceased rocking, and was eyeing them both intently with a sudden accentuation of family likeness in her face. Given one common intensity of emotion and similar lines showed forth, and the three sisters of one race were evident.

"What do you mean?" said she impartially to them both. Then she, too, seemed to shrink before a possible answer. She even laughed an evasive sort of laugh. "I guess you don't mean anything," said she, but her face wore still the expression of shrinking horror.

"Nobody means anything," said Caroline firmly. She rose

and crossed the room toward the door with grim decisiveness.

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Brigham.

"I have something to see to," replied Caroline, and the others at once knew by her tone that she had some solemn and sad duty to perform in the chamber of death.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brigham.

After the door had closed behind Caroline, she turned to Rebecca.

"Did Henry have many words with him?" she asked.

"They were talking very loud," replied Rebecca evasively, yet with an answering gleam of ready response to the other's curiosity in the quick lift of her soft blue eyes.

Mrs. Brigham looked at her. She had not resumed rocking. She still sat up straight with a slight knitting of intensity on her fair forehead, between the pretty rippling curves of her auburn hair.

"Did you—hear anything?" she asked in a low voice with a glance toward the door.

"I was just across the hall in the south parlour, and that door was open and this door ajar," replied Rebecca with a slight flush.

"Then you must have—"

"I couldn't help it."

"Everything?"

"Most of it."

"What was it?"

"The old story."

"I suppose Henry was mad, as he always was, because Edward was living on here for nothing, when he had wasted all the money father left him."

Rebecca nodded with a fearful glance at the door.

When Emma spoke again her voice was still more hushed. "I know how he felt," said she. "He had always been so prudent himself, and worked hard at his profession, and there Edward

had never done anything but spend, and it must have looked to him as if Edward was living at his expense, but he wasn't."

"No, he wasn't."

"It was the way father left the property—that all the children should have a home here—and he left money enough to buy the food and all if we had all come home."

"Yes."

"And Edward had a right here according to the terms of father's will, and Henry ought to have remembered it."

"Yes, he ought."

"Did he say hard things?"

"Pretty hard from what I heard."

"What?"

"I heard him tell Edward that he had no business here at all, and he thought he had better go away."

"What did Edward say?"

"That he would stay here as long as he lived and afterward, too, if he was a mind to, and he would like to see Henry get him out; and then—"

"What?"

"Then he laughed."

"What did Henry say?"

"I didn't hear him say anything, but—"

"But what?"

"I saw him when he came out of this room."

"He looked mad?"

"You've seen him when he looked so."

Emma nodded; the expression of horror on her face had deepened.

"Do you remember that time he killed the cat because she had scratched him?"

"Yes. Don't!"

Then Caroline reëntered the room. She went up to the stove

in which a wood fire was burning—it was a cold, gloomy day of fall—and she warmed her hands, which were reddened from recent washing in cold water.

Mrs. Brigham looked at her and hesitated. She glanced at the door, which was still ajar, as it did not easily shut, being still swollen with the damp weather of the summer. She rose and pushed it together with a sharp thud which jarred the house. Rebecca started painfully with a half exclamation. Caroline looked at her disapprovingly.

"It is time you controlled your nerves, Rebecca," said she.

"I can't help it," replied Rebecca with almost a wail. "I am nervous. There's enough to make me so, the Lord knows."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Caroline with her old air of sharp suspicion, and something between challenge and dread of its being met.

Rebecca shrank.

"Nothing," said she.

"Then I wouldn't keep speaking in such a fashion."

Emma, returning from the closed door, said imperiously that it ought to be fixed, it shut so hard.

"It will shrink enough after we have had the fire a few days," replied Caroline. "If anything is done to it, it will be too small; there will be a crack at the sill."

"I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself for talking as he did to Edward," said Mrs. Brigham abruptly, but in an almost inaudible voice.

"Hush!" said Caroline, with a glance of actual fear at the closed door.

"Nobody can hear with the door shut."

"He must have heard it shut, and—"

"Well, I can say what I want to before he comes down, and I am not afraid of him."

"I don't know who is afraid of him! What reason is there

for anybody to be afraid of Henry?" demanded Caroline.

Mrs. Brigham trembled before her sister's look. Rebecca gasped again. "There isn't any reason, of course. Why should there be?"

"I wouldn't speak so, then. Somebody might overhear you and think it was queer. Miranda Joy is in the south parlour sewing, you know."

"I thought she went upstairs to stitch on the machine."

"She did, but she has come down again."

"Well, she can't hear."

"I say again I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself. I shouldn't think he'd ever get over it, having words with poor Edward the very night before he died. Edward was enough sight better disposition than Henry, with all his faults. I always thought a great deal of poor Edward, myself."

Mrs. Brigham passed a large fluff of handkerchief across her eyes; Rebecca sobbed outright.

"Rebecca," said Caroline admonishingly, keeping her mouth stiff and swallowing determinately.

"I never heard him speak a cross word, unless he spoke cross to Henry that last night. I don't know, but he did from what Rebecca overheard," said Emma.

"Not so much cross as sort of soft, and sweet, and aggravating," sniffled Rebecca.

"He never raised his voice," said Caroline; "but he had his way."

"He had a right to in this case."

"Yes, he did."

"He had as much of a right here as Henry," sobbed Rebecca, "and now he's gone, and he will never be in this home that poor father left him and the rest of us again."

"What do you really think ailed Edward?" asked Emma in hardly more than a whisper. She did not look at her sister.

Caroline sat down in a nearby armchair, and clutched the arms convulsively until her thin knuckles whitened.

"I told you," she said.

Rebecca held her handkerchief over her mouth, and looked at them above it with terrified, streaming eyes.

"I know you said that he had terrible pains in his stomach, and had spasms, but what do you think made him have them?"

"Henry called it gastric trouble. You know Edward has always had dyspepsia."

Mrs. Brigham hesitated a moment. "Was there any talk of an—examination?" said she.

Then Caroline turned on her fiercely.

"No," said she in a terrible voice. "No."

The three sisters' souls seemed to meet on one common ground of terrified understanding through their eyes. The old-fashioned latch of the door was heard to rattle, and a push from without made the door shake ineffectually. "It's Henry," Rebecca sighed rather than whispered. Mrs. Brigham settled herself after a noiseless rush across the floor into her rocking-chair again, and was swaying back and forth with her head comfortably leaning back, when the door at last yielded and Henry Glynn entered. He cast a covertly sharp, comprehensive glance at Mrs. Brigham with her elaborate calm; at Rebecca quietly huddled in the corner of the sofa with her handkerchief to her face and only one small reddened ear as attentive as a dog's uncovered and revealing her alertness for his presence; at Caroline sitting with a strained composure in her armchair by the stove. She met his eyes quite firmly with a look of inscrutable fear, and defiance of the fear and of him.

Henry Glynn looked more like this sister than the others. Both had the same hard delicacy of form and feature, both were tall and almost emaciated, both had a sparse growth of gray blond hair far back from high intellectual foreheads, both

had an almost noble aquilinity of feature. They confronted each other with the pitiless immovability of two statues in whose marble lineaments emotions were fixed for all eternity.

Then Henry Glynn smiled and the smile transformed his face. He looked suddenly years younger, and an almost boyish recklessness and irresolution appeared in his face. He flung himself into a chair with a gesture which was bewildering from its incongruity with his general appearance. He leaned his head back, flung one leg over the other, and looked laughingly at Mrs. Brigham.

"I declare, Emma, you grow younger every day," he said.

She flushed a little, and her placid mouth widened at the corners. She was susceptible to praise.

"Our thoughts today ought to belong to the one of us who will never grow older," said Caroline in a hard voice.

Henry looked at her, still smiling. "Of course, we none of us forget that," said he, in a deep, gentle voice, "but we have to speak to the living, Caroline, and I have not seen Emma for a long time, and the living are as dear as the dead."

"Not to me," said Caroline.

She rose, and went abruptly out of the room again. Rebecca also rose and hurried after her, sobbing loudly.

Henry looked slowly after them.

"Caroline is completely unstrung," said he.

Mrs. Brigham rocked. A confidence in him inspired by his manner was stealing over her. Out of that confidence she spoke quite easily and naturally.

"His death was very sudden," said she.

Henry's eyelids quivered slightly but his gaze was unswerving.

"Yes," said he; "it was very sudden. He was sick only a few hours."

"What did you call it?"

"Gastric."

"You did not think of an examination?"

"There was no need. I am perfectly certain as to the cause of his death."

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham felt a creep as of some live horror over her very soul. Her flesh prickled with cold, before an inflection of his voice. She rose, tottering on weak knees.

"Where are you going?" asked Henry in a strange, breathless voice.

Mrs. Brigham said something incoherent about some sewing which she had to do, some black for the funeral, and was out of the room. She went up to the front chamber which she occupied. Caroline was there. She went close to her and took her hands, and the two sisters looked at each other.

"Don't speak, don't, I won't have it!" said Caroline finally in an awful whisper.

"I won't," replied Emma.

That afternoon the three sisters were in the study, the large front room on the ground floor across the hall from the south parlour, when the dusk deepened.

Mrs. Brigham was hemming some black material. She sat close to the west window for the waning light. At last she laid her work on her lap.

"It's no use, I cannot see to sew another stitch until we have a light," said she.

Caroline, who was writing some letters at the table, turned to Rebecca, in her usual place on the sofa.

"Rebecca, you had better get a lamp," she said.

Rebecca started up; even in the dusk her face showed her agitation.

"It doesn't seem to me that we need a lamp quite yet," she said in a piteous, pleading voice like a child's.

"Yes, we do," returned Mrs. Brigham peremptorily. "We must have a light. I must finish this tonight or I can't go to the funeral, and I can't see to sew another stitch."

"Caroline can see to write letters, and she is farther from the window than you are," said Rebecca.

"Are you trying to save kerosene or are you lazy, Rebecca Glynn?" cried Mrs. Brigham. "I can go and get the light myself, but I have this work all in my lap."

Caroline's pen stopped scratching.

"Rebecca, we must have the light," said she.

"Had we better have it in here?" asked Rebecca weakly.

"Of course! Why not?" cried Caroline sternly.

"I am sure I don't want to take my sewing into the other room, when it is all cleaned up for tomorrow," said Mrs. Brigham.

"Why, I never heard such a to-do about lighting a lamp."

Rebecca rose and left the room. Presently she entered with a lamp—a large one with a white porcelain shade. She set it on a table, an old-fashioned card-table which was placed against the opposite wall from the window. That wall was clear of bookcases and books, which were only on three sides of the room. That opposite wall was taken up with three doors, the one small space being occupied by the table. Above the table on the old-fashioned paper, of a white satin gloss, traversed by an indeterminate green scroll, hung quite high a small gilt and black-framed ivory miniature taken in her girlhood of the mother of the family. When the lamp was set on the table beneath it, the tiny pretty face painted on the ivory seemed to gleam out with a look of intelligence.

"What have you put that lamp over there for?" asked Mrs. Brigham, with more of impatience than her voice usually revealed. "Why didn't you set it in the hall and have done with

it? Neither Caroline nor I can see if it is on that table."

"I thought perhaps you would move," replied Rebecca hoarsely.

"If I do move, we can't both sit at that table. Caroline has her paper all spread around. Why don't you set the lamp on the study table in the middle of the room, then we can both see?"

Rebecca hesitated. Her face was very pale. She looked with an appeal that was fairly agonizing at her sister Caroline.

"Why don't you put the lamp on this table, as she says?" asked Caroline, almost fiercely. "Why do you act so, Rebecca?"

"I should think you *would* ask her that," said Mrs. Brigham. She doesn't act like herself at all."

Rebecca took the lamp and set it on the table in the middle of the room without another word. Then she turned her back upon it quickly and seated herself on the sofa, and placed a hand over her eyes as if to shade them, and remained so.

"Does the light hurt your eyes, and is that the reason why you didn't want the lamp?" asked Mrs. Brigham kindly.

"I always like to sit in the dark," replied Rebecca chokingly. Then she snatched her handkerchief hastily from her pocket and began to weep. Caroline continued to write, Mrs. Brigham to sew.

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham as she sewed glanced at the opposite wall. The glance became a steady stare. She looked intently, her work suspended in her hands. Then she looked away again and took a few more stitches, then she looked again, and again turned to her task. At last she laid her work in her lap and stared concentratedly. She looked from the wall around the room, taking note of the various objects; she looked at the wall long and intently. Then she turned to her sisters.

"What *is* that?" said she.

"What?" asked Caroline harshly; her pen scratched loudly across the paper.

Rebecca gave one of her convulsive gasps.

"That strange shadow on the wall," replied Mrs. Brigham.

Rebecca sat with her face hidden: Caroline dipped her pen in the inkstand.

"Why don't you turn around and look?" asked Mrs. Brigham in a wondering and somewhat aggrieved way.

"I am in a hurry to finish this letter, if Mrs. Wilson Ebbit is going to get word in time to come to the funeral," replied Caroline shortly.

Mrs. Brigham rose, her work slipping to the floor, and she began walking around the room, moving various articles of furniture, with her eyes on the shadow.

Then suddenly she shrieked out:

"Look at this awful shadow! What is it? Caroline, look, look! Rebecca, look! *What is it?*"

All Mrs. Brigham's triumphant placidity was gone. Her handsome face was livid with horror. She stood stiffly pointing at the shadow.

"Look!" said she, pointing her finger at it. "Look! What is it?"

Then Rebecca burst out in a wild wail after a shuddering glance at the wall:

"Oh, Caroline, there it is again! There it is again!"

"Caroline Glynn, you look!" said Mrs. Brigham. "Look! What is that dreadful shadow?"

Caroline rose, turned, and stood confronting the wall.

"How should I know?" she said.

"It has been there every night since he died," cried Rebecca.

"Every night?"

"Yes. He died Thursday and this is Saturday; that makes three nights," said Caroline rigidly. She stood as if holding herself calm with a vise of concentrated will.

"It—it looks like—like—" stammered Mrs. Brigham in a tone of intense horror.

"I know what it looks like well enough," said Caroline. "I've got eyes in my head."

"It looks like Edward," burst out Rebecca in a sort of frenzy of fear. "Only—"

"Yes, it does," assented Mrs. Brigham, whose horror-stricken tone matched her sister's, "only—Oh, it is awful! What is it, Caroline?"

"I ask you again, how should I know?" replied Caroline. "I see it there like you. How should I know any more than you?"

"It *must* be something in the room," said Mrs. Brigham, staring wildly around.

"We moved everything in the room the first night it came," said Rebecca; "it is not anything in the room."

Caroline turned upon her with a sort of fury. "Of course it is something in the room," said she. "How you act! What do you mean by talking so? Of course it is something in the room."

"Of course, it is," agreed Mrs. Brigham, looking at Caroline suspiciously. "Of course it must be. It is only a coincidence. It just happens so. Perhaps it is that fold of the window curtain that makes it. It must be something in the room."

"It is not anything in the room," repeated Rebecca with obstinate horror.

The door opened suddenly and Henry Glynn entered. He began to speak, then his eyes followed the direction of the others'. He stood stock still staring at the shadow on the wall. It was life size and stretched across the white parallelogram

of a door, half across the wall space on which the picture hung.

"What is that?" he demanded in a strange voice.

"It must be due to something in the room," Mrs. Brigham said faintly.

"It is not due to anything in the room," said Rebecca again with the shrill insistency of terror.

"How you act, Rebecca Glynn," said Caroline.

Henry Glynn stood and stared a moment longer. His face showed a gamut of emotions—horror, conviction, then furious incredulity. Suddenly he began hastening hither and thither about the room. He moved the furniture with fierce jerks, turning ever to see the effect upon the shadow on the wall. Not a line of its terrible outlines wavered.

"It must be something in the room!" he declared in a voice which seemed to snap like a lash.

His face changed. The inmost secrecy of his nature seemed evident until one almost lost sight of his lineaments. Rebecca stood close to her sofa, regarding him with woeful, fascinated eyes. Mrs. Brigham clutched Caroline's hand. They both stood in a corner out of his way. For a few moments he raged about the room like a caged wild animal. He moved every piece of furniture; when the moving of a piece did not affect the shadow, he flung it to the floor, the sisters watching.

Then suddenly he desisted. He laughed and began straightening the furniture which he had flung down.

"What an absurdity," he said easily. "Such a to-do about a shadow."

"That's so," assented Mrs. Brigham, in a scared voice which she tried to make natural. As she spoke she lifted a chair near her.

"I think you have broken the chair that Edward was so fond of," said Caroline.

Terror and wrath were struggling for expression on her face. Her mouth was set, her eyes shrinking. Henry lifted the chair with a show of anxiety.

"Just as good as ever," he said pleasantly. He laughed again, looking at his sisters. "Did I scare you?" he said. "I should think you might be used to me by this time. You know my way of wanting to leap to the bottom of a mystery, and that shadow does look—queer, like—and I thought if there was any way of accounting for it I would like to without any delay."

"You don't seem to have succeeded," remarked Caroline dryly, with a slight glance at the wall.

Henry's eyes followed hers and he quivered perceptibly.

"Oh, there is no accounting for shadows," he said, and he laughed again. "A man is a fool to try to account for shadows."

Then the supper bell rang, and they all left the room, but Henry kept his back to the wall, as did, indeed, the others.

Mrs. Brigham pressed close to Caroline as she crossed the hall. "He looked like a demon!" she breathed in her ear.

Henry led the way with an alert motion like a boy; Rebecca brought up the rear; she could scarcely walk, her knees trembled so.

"I can't sit in that room again this evening," she whispered to Caroline after supper.

"Very well, we will sit in the south room," replied Caroline. "I think we will sit in the south parlour," she said aloud; "it isn't as damp as the study, and I have a cold."

So they all sat in the south room with their sewing. Henry read the newspaper, his chair drawn close to the lamp on the table. About nine o'clock he rose abruptly and crossed the hall to the study. The three sisters looked at one another. Mrs. Brigham rose, folded her rustling skirts compactly around her, and began tiptoeing toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Rebecca agitatedly.

"I am going to see what he is about," replied Mrs. Brigham cautiously.

She pointed as she spoke to the study door across the hall; it was ajar. Henry had striven to pull it together behind him, but it had somehow swollen beyond the limit with curious speed. It was still ajar and a streak of light showed from top to bottom. The hall lamp was not lit.

"You had better stay where you are," said Caroline with guarded sharpness.

"I am going to see," repeated Mrs. Brigham firmly.

Then she folded her skirts so tightly that her bulk with its swelling curves was revealed in a black silk sheath, and she went with a slow toddle across the hall to the study door. She stood there, her eye at the crack.

In the south room Rebecca stopped sewing and sat watching with dilated eyes. Caroline sewed steadily. What Mrs. Brigham, standing at the crack in the study door, saw was this:

Henry Glynn, evidently reasoning that the source of the strange shadow must be between the table on which the lamp stood and the wall, was making systematic passes and thrusts all over and through the intervening space with an old sword which had belonged to his father. Not an inch was left unpierced. He seemed to have divided the space into mathematical sections. He brandished the sword with a sort of cold fury and calculation; the blade gave out flashes of light, the shadow remained unmoved. Mrs. Brigham, watching, felt herself cold with horror.

Finally Henry ceased and stood with the sword in hand and raised as if to strike, surveying the shadow on the wall threateningly. Mrs. Brigham toddled back across the hall and shut the south room door behind her before she related what she had seen.

"He looked like a demon!" she said again. "Have you got

any of that old wine in the house, Caroline? I don't feel as if I could stand much more."

Indeed, she looked overcome. Her handsome placid face was worn and strained and pale.

"Yes, there's plenty," said Caroline; "you can have some when you go to bed."

"I think we had all better take some," said Mrs. Brigham. "Oh, my God, Caroline, what—"

"Don't ask and don't speak," said Caroline.

"No, I am not going to," replied Mrs. Brigham; "but—"

Rebecca moaned aloud.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Caroline harshly.

"Poor Edward," returned Rebecca.

"That is all you have to groan for," said Caroline. "There is nothing else."

"I am going to bed," said Mrs. Brigham. "I shan't be able to be at the funeral if I don't."

Soon the three sisters went to their chambers and the south parlour was deserted. Caroline called to Henry in the study to put out the light before he came upstairs. They had been gone about an hour when he came into the room bringing the lamp which had stood in the study. He set it on the table and waited a few minutes, pacing up and down. His face was terrible, his fair complexion showed livid; his blue eyes seemed dark blanks of awful reflections.

Then he took the lamp up and returned to the library. He set the lamp on the centre table, and the shadow sprang out on the wall. Again he studied the furniture and moved it about, but deliberately, with none of his former frenzy. Nothing affected the shadow. Then he returned to the south room with the lamp and again waited. Again he returned to the study and placed the lamp on the table, and the shadow sprang

out upon the wall. It was midnight before he went upstairs. Mrs. Brigham and the other sisters, who could not sleep, heard him.

The next day was the funeral. That evening the family sat in the south room. Some relatives were with them. Nobody entered the study until Henry carried a lamp in there after the others had retired for the night. He saw again the shadow on the wall leap to an awful life before the light.

The next morning at breakfast Henry Glynn announced that he had to go to the city for three days. The sisters looked at him with surprise. He very seldom left home, and just now his practice had been neglected on account of Edward's death. He was a physician.

"How can you leave your patients now?" asked Mrs. Brigham wonderingly.

"I don't know how to, but there is no other way," replied Henry easily. "I have had a telegram from Doctor Mitford."

"Consultation?" inquired Mrs. Brigham.

"I have business," replied Henry.

Doctor Mitford was an old classmate of his who lived in a neighbouring city and who occasionally called upon him in the case of a consultation.

After he had gone Mrs. Brigham said to Caroline that after all Henry had not said that he was going to consult with Doctor Mitford, and she thought it very strange.

"Everything is very strange," said Rebecca with a shudder.

"What do you mean?" inquired Caroline sharply.

"Nothing," replied Rebecca.

Nobody entered the library that day, nor the next, nor the next. The third day Henry was expected home, but he did not arrive and the last train from the city had come.

"I call it pretty queer work," said Mrs. Brigham. "The idea

of a doctor leaving his patients for three days anyhow, at such a time as this, and I know he has some very sick ones; he said so. And the idea of a consultation lasting three days! There is no sense in it, and *now* he has not come. I don't understand it, for my part."

"I don't either," said Rebecca.

They were all in the south parlour. There was no light in the study opposite, and the door was ajar.

Presently Mrs. Brigham rose—she could not have told why; something seemed to impel her, some will outside her own. She went out of the room, again wrapping her rustling skirts around that she might pass noiselessly, and began pushing at the swollen door of the study.

"She has not got any lamp," said Rebecca in a shaking voice.

Caroline, who was writing letters, rose again, took a lamp (there were two in the room) and followed her sister. Rebecca had risen, but she stood trembling, not venturing to follow.

The doorbell rang, but the others did not hear it; it was on the south door on the other side of the house from the study. Rebecca, after hesitating until the bell rang the second time, went to the door; she remembered that the servant was out.

Caroline and her sister Emma entered the study. Caroline set the lamp on the table. They looked at the wall. "Oh, my God," gasped Mrs. Brigham, "there are—there are *two*—shadows." The sisters stood clutching each other, staring at the awful things on the wall. Then Rebecca came in, staggering, with a telegram in her hand. "Here is—a telegram," she gasped. "Henry is—dead."

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

For a long time our American South treasured the ruins on its landscape. We all know the stories of how the land was scarred and the plantations burned as the rampaging northern armies of the Civil War cut giant swaths of pain over the southern landscape. Even today, in some isolated areas, the aftermath of that terrible war can still be seen. Old derelict mansions, old houses that once belonged to "great families," have been turned into restaurants, museums, or in some cases, because their upkeep was too expensive, they crumble by the wayside. In the early part of the twentieth century these ruins were very prevalent. Houses overgrown with creepers and grasses had a romantic sadness; they were often a kind of shrine in some of the southern neighborhoods.

When literature began to reconsider gothic tales in the period immediately after the First World War, a new form influenced by surrealism and symbolism began to take shape. The great surrealist André Breton pointed out that ruins "appear

suddenly so full of significance because they express collapse of the feudal period."

Suddenly we began to see in our own country stories trying to capture something long since over: the collapse of feudalism. For even here in America there was a feudal world—that of master and slave. It was a world of withdrawn women who rarely went out into the sunlight, who were waited upon hand and foot, who did not quite know what life was all about.

A group of writers in the South were greatly inspired by the painful conflict of old and new: Elizabeth Madox Roberts was one of the best. In many ways Miss Roberts was typical of her time and place. A true southerner, she was born in Kentucky, of pioneer stock, and fed on the tales of Kentucky by her maternal grandmother and on stories of Greek and Roman mythology that her father read to her every night.

She was thirty-five years old before she was able to get enough money to fulfill her ambition to attend the University of Chicago in 1917. But even before that time, she had already taught school throughout Kentucky, working in regions where country superstitions and the old feudal system were curiously mixed. She began to write poetry and was suddenly a writer to be reckoned with. She won a series of poetry awards and then turned to novels and short stories which explored the basic landscape of the South. The critic Willard Thorp said that among America's many regional novelists, the best have all been women; and the best of those, Sarah Orne Jewett, Willa Cather, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

The Haunted Palace

The House stood at the head of a valley where the hollow melted into the rolling uplands. The high trees about the place so confined the songs of the birds that on a spring morning the jargoning seemed to emerge from the walls. The birds seemed to be indoors or within the very bricks of the masonry. In winter the winds blew up the hollow from the valley and lashed at the old house that stood square before the storms. The place was called Wickwood. It had been the abode of a family, Wickley, a group that had once clustered about the hearths there or had tramped over the courtyard or ridden through the pastures.

From a road that ran along the top of a ridge two miles to the east, the House could be seen as a succession of rhomboids and squares that flowed together beneath the vague misty reds of the mass. Or from the valley road to the west, looking up the hollow into the melting hills, in winter one could see it

as a distant brick wall set with long windows, beneath a gray sloping roof. Sometimes a traveler, allured by the name of the place or by the aloof splendor of the walls as seen vaguely from one or the other of these highways, would cross the farmlands by the way of the uneven roads. He would trundle over the crooked ways and mount through the broken woodland to come at last to the House. Leaving his conveyance, he would cross the wide courtyard on the smooth flagstones, and he would hear the strange report his footfalls made as they disturbed the air that had, but for the birds and the wind, been quiet for so great a length of time that it had assumed stillness. He would wonder at the beauty of the doorways and deplore the waste that let the House stand unused and untended. He would venture up the stone steps at the west front and peer through the glass of the side lights. The strange quality of the familiar fall of his own shoe on stone would trouble his sense of all that he had discovered, so that he would at last come swiftly away.

The country rolled in changing curves and lines and spread toward the river valleys, where it dropped suddenly into a basin. The farms were owned by men and women who had labored to win them. But among these were younger men who worked for hire or as share-owners in the yield.

One of these last, Hubert, lived with Jess, his wife, in a small whitewashed shelter behind a cornfield. Jess spoke more frequently than the man and thus she had more memory. She had been here two years, but before that time she had lived beside a creek, and before that again in another place, while farther back the vista was run together in a fog of forgetting. She had courted Hubert in a cabin close beside a roadway. She remembered another place where there was a plum tree that

bore large pink-red fruits, and a place where her father had cut his foot with an ax. Now, as a marker, her own children ran a little way into a cornfield to play. Beyond these peaks in memory, going backward, the life there rested in a formless level out of which only self emerged. She met any demand upon this void with a contempt in which self was sheltered.

Hubert was a share-laborer, but he wanted to be able to rent some land. He wanted to use land as if he were the owner, and yet to be free to go to fresh acres when he had exhausted a tract as he willed. After the first child, Albert, was born, he said to Jess:

"If a person could have ahead, say, four hundred dollars and against the Dean land might come idle. . . ."

His fervor had the power of a threat. He was knotty and bony and his muscles were dry and lean. He had learned at school to write his name and to make a few slow marks that signified numbers or quantities, but later he had used this knowledge so infrequently that most of it was lost to him. He wrote his name painfully and, writing, he drew his fingers together about the pen. His breath would flow hard and fast under the strain, his hand trembling. If there were other men standing about he would, if he were asked to write his name, sometimes say that he could not, preferring to claim complete illiteracy rather than to undergo the ordeal.

"Against the Dean land might come idle. . . ." He had a plan over which he brooded, wanting to get a power over some good land that he might drain money out of it. He was careful, moving forward through the soil, taking from it.

When the second child came they lived at the Dean land, behind the cornfield. Jess would fling a great handful of grain toward her hens and they would come with reaching bills and

outthrust necks, their wings spread. She would throw ears of corn to the sow and it would chew away the grains while the sucklings would drag milk, the essence of the corn, from the dark udders.

"We ought, it seems, to build the sow a little shed against winter comes," Jess said to Hubert.

"We might eat the sow. I might fatten up the sow and get me another."

"She always was a no-account sow. Has only five or six to a litter. It's hardly worth while to pester yourself with a lazy hog."

"Fannie Burt asked me what was the name of the sow or to name what kind or breed she was. 'Name?' I says. As if folks would name the food they eat!"

Hubert laughed at the thought of naming the food. Names for the swine, either mother or species, gave him laughter. To write with one's hand the name of a sow in a book seemed useless labor. Instead of giving her a name he fastened her into a closed pen and gave her all the food he could find. When she was sufficiently fat he stuck her throat with a knife and prepared her body for his own eating.

Jess yielded to the decision Hubert made, being glad to have decisions made for her, and thus she accepted the flesh of the brood sow. Of this she ate heavily. She was large and often of a placid temper, sitting in unbrooding inattention, but often she flamed to sudden anger and thrust about her then with her hands or her fists. She did not sing about the house or the dooryard. Singing came to her from a wooden box that was charged by a small battery. She adjusted the needle of this to a near sending station and let the sound pour over the cabin. Out of the abundant jargon that flowed from the box she did not learn, and before it she did not remember. . . .

Jess had a few friends who came sometimes to see her. They were much like herself in what they knew and in what they liked. She would look curiously at their new clothing.

But one of them, named Fannie Burt, would come shouting to the children as she drove up the lane in a small cart, and her coming filled the day with remembered sayings and finer arrangements. When Fannie came Jess would call Albert, the oldest child, and send him on his hands and knees under the house to rob the hen's nest if there were not enough eggs in the basket, for the day called for a richer pudding. Fannie had no children as yet and she could be light and outflowing. She went here and there and she knew many of the people.

"Miss Anne mended the cover to the big black sofa in the parlor. . . ." She would tell of many things—of tapestry on a wall, blue and gold. Words seemed light when she talked, as being easily made to tell of strange and light matters. Jess was not sure that Fannie knew more of these things than she knew herself, since the words conveyed but an undefined sense. The lightness of bubbles floated about Fannie, things for which Jess had no meanings. Fannie had lived the year before at a farm where the owner had been as a neighbor to her. She often went back to call there, staying all day as a friend.

"Miss Anne mended the cover to the sofa where it was worn." Jess laughed with Fannie, and she scarcely knew whether she laughed at the sofa or at the mended place. She herself could not sew, and thus she could not mend any broken fabric of any kind. She laughed, however, Fannie's call being just begun. She was not yet hostile to it. She tried for the moment to stretch her imaginings to see something desired or some such thing as grace or beauty in the person who leaned over the ancient tapestry to mend it. The effort was spent in wonder and finally in anger. Fannie laughed at the sullenness that came

to Jess. The sofa had come from Wickwood, she said. It had been given to Miss Anne at her marriage, for she was somehow related to the Wickleys. Laughing, Fannie tossed the least child and settled to tell again. Her tales would be, all together, a myth of houses and families, of people marrying and settling into new abodes. She was gay and sharp, and her face was often pointed with smiles. Or she would be talking now with the children and telling them the one story she had from a book.

"Then a great ogre lived in the place . . . a Thing that threatens to get you . . . a great Thing . . . destroys . . . eats up Life itself. Drinks the blood out of Life. It came with a club in its hand. . . . It was a fine place, but had a Thing inside it. . . . That would be when little Blue Wing went to the woods to play. She found this place in the woods. . . ."

"What was that?" Jess asked suddenly. "What kind was that you named?"

"A giant. Ogry or ogre. A Thing. Comes to eat up a man and to eat Life itself. . . ."

Fannie would be gone and Jess would be glad to have an end of her. As if too much had been asked of her she would sit now in vague delight, and she would forget to run her radio instrument while she saw Fannie's bright pointed face as something slipping past her. The stories that had been told had become a blend of indistinct mental colorings that would drop out of memory at length, as a spent pleasure no longer wanted. She would reject the visit completely and turn to anger, thrusting Fannie out. Then, complete hostility to the visitor having come to her, she would set roughly upon her tasks. If the children spoke of the stories that had been told she would order them to be quiet.

Some of the farms had lost their former owners. A house

here and there was shut and still while the acres were farmed by the shifting men who lived in the cabins or in the town. A man came searching for Hubert at the end of the harvest to offer him a part of the Wickley place to farm.

"It's said fine people once lived there," Hubert said when he told Jess of his offer.

"If they're gone now I wouldn't care."

"It's not like any place ever you saw in life. It's good land, howsoever."

Other tenants would be scattered over the acres, laborers who would farm by sharing the crops. Hubert would rent the acres about the house and he would live there.

"Is there a good well of water?"

"Two wells there are," he answered her.

"I never heard of two wells."

"One has got a little fancy house up over it."

"What would I do with a little fancy house built up over a well? I can't use such a house." As if more might be required of her than she could perform, Jess was uneasy in thinking of the new place to which they would go. She did not want to go there. "It's a place made for some other," she said. She could not see the women of the place going about their labors. She could not discover what they might carry in their hands and what their voices might call from the doorways, or how they would sleep or dress themselves or find themselves food. In her troubled thought, while she came and went about the cabin room where the least child lay, shapes without outline, the women of the Wickleys, went into vague distances where doors that were not defined were opened and closed into an uncomprehended space.

But the next day Fannie Burt came and there was something further to know. The Wickley farm was called Wickwood, she

said. Miss Anne's father had gone there in old Wickley's lifetime. Together these two men had made experiments in the growing of fine animals. Sometimes it would be a horse old Wickley wanted. "Egad!" he would say, or "I'm not dead yet!" Another story running into a comic ending, "A good colt she is, but a leetle matter of interference. Look at her hind feet." Fannie had something that Miss Anne had in mind. It was told imperfectly, thrown out in a hint and retained in a gesture, put back upon Miss Anne, who could tell with fluent words and meaning gestures. She would be sitting over the last of the dessert in the old, faded dining room. She would be telling for the pure joy of talking, laughing with the past. "Pappy went over to Wickwood. . . . It was Tuesday. . . . Came Sunday then and we all said, 'Where's Pappy?' Came to find out and he's still over to Wickwood with Cousin Bob. All that time to get the brown mare rightly in foal. And all still on paper."

Fannie would seem to be talking fast, and one thing would seem to be entangled with another, although she spoke with Miss Anne's quiet, slow cadence. In her telling men would be sitting together in a library. One would be making a drawing of a horse, such a horse as he would be devising. A horse would be sketched on paper before it was so much as foaled. This would be old Robert Wickley, a pen between his thumb and his fingers. "What we want after all is a good Kennedy saddle horse, fifteen hands high and two inches over. Take Danbury II, say, over at Newmarket. . . ."

"You take Danbury and you'll plumb get a jackass."

"Pappy laughed over a thing once for a week before he told us," Miss Anne's speaking through Fannie's speaking. "Pappy in a big tellen way one day and he let it be known what he was so amused about."

A man had come in at the door at Wickwood, a hurried man with money in cash saved by. He wanted the Wickley land on which to grow something. He wanted to buy, offering cash.

"Do you think you could live in my house and on my land?" old Wickley asked.

Fannie would be telling as Miss Anne had told and, beyond again, the father who had told in a moment of amusement. Men who came on business were let in at a side door. "Business was a Nobody then," Miss Anne said. Mollie would be off somewhere in the house singing. Carline had run off to get married. Old Wickley, father to Robert, rolling back his shirt-sleeves because the day was hot, and walking barefoot out into the cool grass, or he would be standing under the shower in the bath house while somebody pumped the water that sprayed over him. Miss Sallie made the garden with her own hands and designed the sundial. They made things for themselves with their hands. Bob Wickley sketching for himself the horse he wanted on a large sheet of manila paper. His grandmother had, as a bride, set the house twelve feet back of the builder's specifications in order to save a fine oak tree that still grew before the front door. A man wanting to plow his pastures. . . .

"Two hundred dollars an acre for the creek bottom, cash money."

Wickley had called him a hog and sent him away.

"Pappy laughed over it for a week. ' "You think you could live in my house? Come back three generations from now." . . . And, egad, he couldn't,' Pappy said."

"Hogs want to root in my pasture," Bob Wickley said. He was angry. . . . Miss Anne speaking through Fannie's speaking, reports fluttering about, intermingled, right and wrong, the present and the past. Fannie could scarcely divide one Wickley from another. One had gathered the books. One had held a

high public office. One had married a woman who pinned back her hair with a gold comb. Their children had read plentifully from the books. Justus, William, and Robert had been names among them. Miss Anne now owned the portrait of the lady of the golden comb. There had been farewells and greetings, dimly remembered gifts, trinkets, portraits to be made, children to be born. . . .

In this telling as it came from the telling of Miss Anne, there was one, a Robert, who danced along the great parlor floor with one named Mollie. Mollie was the wife of Andrew. She had come from a neighboring farm. When they danced the music from the piano had crashed and tinkled under the hands of Miss Lizette, Robert's mother, or of Tony Barr, a young man who came to visit at Wickwood. Down would fling the chords on the beat and at the same instant up would fling the dancers, stepping upward on the rhythm and treading the air. Mollie's long slim legs would flash from beneath her flying skirts, or one would lie for an instant outstretched while the pulse of the music beat, then off along the shining floor, gliding and swaying with the gliding of Robert, until it seemed as if the two of them were one, and as if they might float out the window together, locked into the rhythms, and thus dance away across the world.

"Where are they now?" Jess asked.

Fannie did not know. Miss Anne had not told her.

"Where would be Andrew, the one that was her husband?" She was angry and she wanted to settle blame somewhere.

He would be beside the wall. He would look at Mollie with delight. His head would move, or his hands, with the rhythm, and his eyes would be bright. Mollie loved him truly.

Sometimes it would be the old fast waltzes that were danced, and then Miss Lizette and old Bob would come into it. Then

they would whirl swiftly about the floor and the music would be "Over the Waves." The young would try it, dizzy and laughing, or they would change the steps to their own.

"What did they do?" Jess asked. "I feel staggered to try to know about such a house."

"They had a wide scope of land," Fannie answered her. "They burned the bricks and made the house. They cut the timber for the beams of the house off their own fields."

The House had become an entity, as including the persons and the legends of it. All the Wickleys were blurred into one, were gathered into one report.

"There was a woman, Mollie Wickley. She was the mother of Andrew, or maybe she was his wife," Fannie said. "I don't recall. It's all one. There was a Sallie Wickley. I don't know whe'r she was his daughter or his wife."

"Iffen he couldn't keep it for his children," Jess called out, "why would he build such a place?"

"He lived in the house *himself*."

Jess and Hubert would be going to the place where these had been. All these were gone now. The land was still good. Hubert would be able to take money out of it. He would hold the plow into the soil and his tongue would hang from the side of his mouth in his fervor to plant more and to have a large yield. The people would be gone. Jess dismissed them with the clicking of her tongue. They seemed, nevertheless, to be coming nearer. In Fannie's presence, while she sat in the chair beside the door, they came nearer, to flit as shapes about her fluttering tongue while Jess fixed her gaze upon the mouth that was speaking or shifted to look at the familiar cups and plates on the table. Shapes fluttered then over the cups. Vague forms, having not the shapes of defied bodies, but the ends of meanings, appeared and went. Fannie knew little beyond the

myths she had made, and Jess knew much less, knew nothing beyond the bright tinkle of Fannie's chatter.

"It was the horse then," Fannie said, in part explaining. "Now nobody wants enough horses. . . . Now it's tobacco."

Hubert and Jess came to the place, Wickwood, at sundown of an early winter afternoon. Hubert talked of the land, of the fields, growing talkative as their small truck rolled slowly through the ruts of the old driveway. When they had passed through the woodland, which was now in part denuded of its former growth, they came near to the house. It seemed to Jess that there was a strange wideness about the place, as if space were spent outward without bounds. They went under some tall oaks and maples while Hubert muttered of his plans.

A great wall arose in the dusk. The trees stretched their boughs toward the high wall in the twilight. When it seemed that the truck would drive into the hard darkness of the wall that stood before them as if it went into the sky, Hubert turned toward the left and rounded among the trees. Other walls stood before them. Jess had never before seen a place like this. It seemed to her that it might be a town, but there were no people there. The children began to cry and Albert screamed, "I want to go away!" Jess herself was frightened.

"Hush your fuss," Hubert said. His words were rough. "Get out of the truck," he said to her. She attended to his short angry speech; it jerked her out of her fear and dispersed a part of her dread of the place. It made her know that they, themselves and their goods, their life and their ways of being, would somehow fit into the brick walls, would make over some part of the strangeness for their own use. He had climbed from the vehicle and he walked a little way among the buildings, stalking in the broad courtyard among the flagstones and over the grass. He looked about him. Then he went toward a wing of

the largest house and entered a small porch that stood out from one of the walls.

"We'll live here," he said.

She did not know how he had discovered which part of the circle of buildings, of large houses and small rooms, would shelter them. He began to carry their household goods from the truck. Jess found her lantern among her things and she made a light. When the lantern was set on a shelf she could look about the room where they would live.

There were windows opposite the door through which they had entered. Outside, the rain dripped slowly through the great gnarled trees. The rain did not trouble her. A press built into the wall beside the chimney seemed ample to hold many things. Hubert set the cooking stove before the fireplace and fixed the stovepipe into the small opening above the mantel. The children cried at the strangeness, but when the lamp was lighted and food had been cooked they cried no more. When Jess set the food on the table they had begun to live in the new place.

Hubert went away across the courtyard and his step was hollow, amplified among the walls of the building. He came back later, the sound he made enlarged as he walked nearer over the flagstones.

"It's no such place as ever I saw before!" Jess cried out.

She had begun a longer speech but she was hushed by Hubert's hostile look. They would stay here, he said. It was the Wickley place. She closed the door to shut in the space she had claimed for their living, being afraid of the great empty walls that arose outside. The beds were hastily set up and the children fell asleep clutching the familiar pillows and quilts. Her life with Hubert, together with her children and her things for housekeeping, these she gathered mentally about

her to protect herself from being obliged to know and to use the large house outside her walls. She began to comfort herself with thoughts of Hubert and to court him with a fine dish of food she had carefully saved.

The morning was clear after the rain. Hubert had gone to bring the fowls from their former abode. Albert had found a sunny nook in which to play and with the second child he was busy there.

"What manner of place is this?" Jess asked herself again and again. Outside the windows toward the south were the great gnarled trees. Outside to the north was the courtyard round which were arranged the buildings, all of them built of red, weathered brick. Toward the west, joined to the small wing in which Hubert had set up their home, arose the great house. There were four rows of windows here, one above the other.

The buildings about the court were empty. A large bell hung in the middle of the court on the top of a high pole. There was a deep well at the back of the court where the water was drawn by a bucket lifted by a winch. Jess had a great delight in the well, for it seemed to hold water sufficient to last through any drought. Not far from the well stood a large corncrib, holding only a little corn now, but ready for Hubert's filling. She went cautiously about in the strange air.

She had no names for all the buildings that lay about her. She was frightened of the things for which she had no use, as if she might be called upon to know and to use beyond her understanding. She walked toward the west beneath the great wall of the tallest house.

There were birds in the high trees and echoes among the high walls. The singing winter wren was somewhere about, and the cry of the bird was spread widely and repeated in a shadowy call again and again. Jess rounded the wall and looked

cautiously at the west side. There were closed shutters at some of the windows, but some of the shutters were opened. In the middle of the great western wall there were steps of stone. They were cut evenly and laid smoothly, one above another, reaching toward a great doorway about which was spread bright glass in straight patterns at the sides, in a high fan-shape above.

Jess went cautiously up the steps, watching for Hubert to come with the fowls, delaying, looking out over the woodland and the fields. Hubert had said again and again that this would be the Wickley place, Wickwood, that they would live there, tilling the soil, renting the land. Jess saw before her, on the great left-hand door, a knocker. She lifted it and tapped heavily, listening to the sound she made, waiting.

There was no sound to answer her rap but a light echo that seemed to come from the trees. Her own hate of the place forbade her and she dared not tap again. Standing half fearfully, she waited, laying her hands on the smooth door frame, on the fluted pillars and the leading of the glass. A cord hung near her hand and, obeying the suggestion it offered, she closed her fingers about it and pulled it stiffly down. A sound cut the still air where no sound had been for so long a time that every vibration had been stilled. The tone broke the air. The first tone came in unearthly purity, but later the notes joined and overflowed one another.

She waited, not daring to touch the cord again. The stillness that followed after the peal of the bell seemed to float out from the house itself and to hush the birds. She could not think what kind of place this might be or see any use that one might make of the great doorway, of the cord, of the bell. A strange thing stood before her. Strangeness gathered to her own being until it seemed strange that she should be here, on the top of a stair of stone before a great door, waiting for Hubert to come

with her hens. It was as if he might never come. As if hens might be gone from the earth.

She saw then that the doors were not locked together, that one throbbed lightly on the other when she touched it with her hand. She pushed the knob and the door spread open wide.

Inside, a great hall reached to a height that was three or four times her own stature. Tall white doors were opened into other great rooms and far back before her a stairway began. She could not comprehend the stair. It lifted, depending from the rail that spread upward like a great ribbon in the air. Her eyes followed it, her breath coming quick and hard. It rose as a light ribbon spreading toward a great window through which came the morning sun. But leaving the window in the air, it arose again and wound back, forward and up, lost from view for a space, to appear again, higher up, at a mythical distance before another great window where the sun spread a broad yellow glow. It went at last into nothingness, and the ceiling and the walls melted together in shadows.

When she had thus, in mind, ascended, her eyes closed and a faint sickness went over her, delight mingled with fear and hate. She was afraid of being called upon to know this strange ribbon of ascent that began as a stair with rail and tread and went up into unbelievable heights, step after step. She opened her eyes to look again, ready to reject the wonder as being past all belief and, therefore, having no reality.

"What place is this?" she asked, speaking in anger. Her voice rang through the empty hall, angry words, her own, crying, "What place is this?"

At one side of the floor there were grains of wheat in streaks, as if someone might have stored sacks of wheat there. Jess thought of her hens, seeing the scattered grain, and she knew that they would pick up the remaining part of it. They would hop from stone to stone, coming cautiously up the steps, and

they would stretch their long necks cautiously in at the doorway, seeing the corn. They would not see the great stairway.

A light dust lay on the window ledges. A few old cobwebs hung in fragments from the ceiling. The dust, the webs, and the wheat were a link between things known and unknown, and, seeing them, she walked a little way from the hall, listening, going farther, looking into the rooms, right and left. She was angry and afraid. What she could not bring to her use she wanted to destroy. In the room to her right a large fireplace stood far at the end of a patterned floor. There were shelves set into the white wall beside the large chimney. She left this room quickly and turned toward the room at the left. Here two large rooms melted together and tall doors opened wide. There were white shapes carved beneath the windows and oblong shapes carved again on the wood of the doors, on the pillars that held the mantel. Before her a long mirror was set into a wall. In it were reflected the boughs of the trees outside against a criss-cross of the window opposite.

She was confused after she had looked into the mirror, and she looked about hastily to find the door through which she had come. It was a curious, beautiful, fearful place. She wanted to destroy it. Her feet slipped too lightly on the smooth wood of the floor. There was no piece of furniture anywhere, but the spaces seemed full, as filled with their wide dimensions and the carvings on the wood. In the hall she looked again toward the stair and she stood near the doorway looking back. Then suddenly without plan, scarcely knowing that her own lips spoke, she flung out an angry cry, half screaming, "Mollie Wickley! Mollie! Where's she at?" The harsh echoes pattered and knocked among the upper walls after her own voice was done. Turning her back on the place, she went quickly out of the doorway.

In the open air she looked back toward the steps she had

ascended, seeing dimly into the vista of the hall and the upward-lifting ribbon of the stair. A sadness lay heavily upon her because she could not know what people might live in the house, what shapes of women and men might fit into the doorway. She hated her sadness and she turned it to anger. She went from the west front and entered the courtyard. Hubert came soon after with the fowls and there was work to do in housing them and getting them corn.

On a cold day in January when his ewes were about to lamb, Hubert brought them into the large house, driving them up the stone steps at the west front, and he prepared to stable them in the rooms there. The sheep cried and their bleating ran up the long ribbon of the stair. They were about thirty in number, and thus the wailing was incessant. Hubert and Jess went among them with lanterns. The ewes turned and drifted about among the large rooms; but as they began to bear their lambs Hubert bedded them here and there, one beneath the stairway and three others in the room to the right where the empty bookshelves spread wide beside the tall fireplace. The night came, dark and cold.

"They are a slow set," Jess said. She wanted to be done and she was out of patience with delaying sheep.

"Whoop, here! Shut fast the door!" Hubert called.

Jess was wrapped in a heavy coat and hooded in a shawl. She went among the sheep and she held a lantern high to search out each beast. If a ewe gave birth to three lambs she took one up quickly and dropped it beside a stout young beast that was giving life to but one and she thus induced it to take the second as her own. She flung out sharp commands and she brought the animals here and there. The halls were filled with the crying of the sheep. Threats came back upon her from her own voice, so that she was displeased with what she did and her displeasure

made her voice more high-pitched and angry. Anger spoke again and again through the room. She wanted the lambing to be easily done, but the days had been very cold and the sheep delayed.

"It was a good place to come to lamb the sheep," she called to Hubert. "I say, a good place." She had a delight in seeing that the necessities of lambing polluted the wide halls. "A good place to lamb. . . ."

"Whoop! Bring here the old nanny as soon as you pick up the dead lamb!" Hubert was shouting above the incessant crying of the sheep.

The ewes in labor excited her anew so that she wanted to be using her strength and to be moving swiftly forward, but she had no plan beyond Hubert's. "Whoop, rouse up the young nanny! Don't let the bitches sleep! Whoop, there!"

He was everywhere with his commands. When the task was more than half done he called to Jess that he must go to the barn for more straw for bedding. "Whoop! Shut the door tight after me. Keep the old ewe there up on her legs." He went away, carrying his lantern.

Jess fastened the outer door and she turned back into the parlors. Then she saw a dim light at the other end of the long dark space that lay before her. She saw another shape, a shrouded figure, moving far down the long way. The apparition, the Thing, seemed to be drifting forward out of the gloom, and it seemed to be coming toward her where she stood among the sheep. Jess drove the laboring mothers here and there, arranging their places and assisting their travail with her club. She would not believe that she saw anything among the sheep at the farther end of the rooms, but as she worked she glanced now and then toward the way in which she had glimpsed it. It was there or it was gone entirely. The sheep and

the lambs made a great noise with their crying. Jess went to and fro, and she forgot that she had seen anything beyond the sheep far down the room in the moving dusk of white and gray which flowed in the moving light of her lantern.

All at once, looking up suddenly as she walked forward, she saw that an apparition was certainly moving there and that it was coming toward her. It carried something in its upraised hand. There was a dark covering over the head and shoulders that were sunk into the upper darkening gloom. The whole body came forward as a dark thing illuminated by a light the creature carried low at the left side. The creature or the Thing moved among the sheep. It came forward slowly and became a threatening figure, a being holding a club and a light in its hands. Jess screamed at it, a great oath flung high above the crying of the sheep. Fright had seized her and with it came a great strength to curse with her voice and to hurl forward her body.

"God curse you!" she yelled in a scream that went low in scale and cracked in her throat. "God's curse on you!" She lunged forward and lifted her lantern high to see her way among the sheep. "God's damn on you!"

The curse gave strength to her hands and to her limbs. As she hurled forward with uplifted stick the other came forward toward her, lunging and threatening. She herself moved faster. The creature's mouth was open to cry words but no sound came from it.

She dropped the lantern and flung herself upon the approaching figure, and she beat at the creature with her club while it beat at her with identical blows. Herself and the creature then were one. Anger continued, shared, and hurled against a crash of falling glass and plaster. She and the creature had beaten at the mirror from opposite sides.

The din arose above the noise of the sheep, and for an instant the beasts were quiet while the glass continued to fall. Jess stood back from the wreckage to try to understand it. Then slowly she knew that she had broken the great mirror that hung on the rear wall of the room. She took the lamp again into her hand and peered at the breakage on the floor and at the fragments that hung, cracked and crazed, at the sides of the frame.

"God's own curse on you!" She breathed her oath heavily, backing away from the dust that floated in the air.

Hubert was entering with a load of straw on his back. He had not heard the crash of glass nor had he noticed the momentary quiet of the sheep. These were soon at their bleating again, and Jess returned from the farther room where the dust of the plaster still lay on the air. Hubert poured water into deep pans he had placed here and there through the rooms. He directed Jess to make beds of the straw in each room. Their feet slipped in the wet that ran over the polished boards of the floor.

It was near midnight. Jess felt accustomed to the place now and more at ease there, she and Hubert being in possession of it. They walked about through the monstrous defilement. Hubert was muttering the count of the sheep with delight. There were two lambs beside each of the ewes but five and there were but two lambs dead and flung to the cold fireplace where they were out of the way. There were thirty-two ewes, they said, and their fingers pointed to assist and the mouths held to the sums, repeating numbers and counting profits.

Lamb by lamb, they were counted. There were two to each mother but the three in the farther room and the two under the staircase. These had but one each. "Twice thirty-two makes sixty-four," they said to assist themselves, and from this they subtracted one for each of the deficient ewes, but they became confused in this and counted all one by one. Counting with

lantern and club, Jess went again through the halls, but she made thus but forty lambs, for she lost the sums and became addled among the words Hubert muttered. At last by taking one from sixty-four and then another, four times more, in the reckoning they counted themselves thirty-two ewes and fifty-nine lambs. The sheep were becoming quiet. Each lamb had nursed milk before they left it. At length they fastened the great front door with a rope tied to a nail in the door frame, and they left the sheep stabled there, being pleased with the number they had counted.

Emily Brontë

Even the landscape around the family home of the Brontës, that area which Emily, in her book, was to call Wuthering Heights, has a strange gothic quality. There are haunches of hills and precipitous slopes stretching far down into the bracken. There are ridges standing high like some giants on the landscape, and masses of gritstone; there are cliffs with deep passages, gothic tunnels and caves running beneath the rock.

There you will find legends of maidens who must thread their way through the tunnels, and if they can do so from daylight to daylight they will marry by the year's end; but if one takes fright, one's chance for love is lost forever. You climb through wet black peat over inky stones, heather, and clusters of moss. All the time there is a deep sighing of the wind and the distant cry of birds.

It was in this landscape that the four Brontë children—Anne, Emily, Charlotte, and their brother Branwell—lived and wrote. Their writing was all-important to them. They were known to

walk ten miles to pick up paper from some distant stationery shop.

Living alone with only one another for company, their imaginations roamed the world; but to one of them in particular, Emily, nothing was more important than her own place, her own area in Yorkshire, her own moors. They evoked the richest and most beautiful of all gothic novels, *Wuthering Heights.*

Here the old housekeeper introduces us to one of the most fascinating love stories of all time, that of Heathcliff and Cathy, and an unforgettable reading experience.

The Housekeeper's Story

Before I came to live here, she commenced—waiting no further invitation to her story—I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton's father, and I got used to playing with the children: I ran errands too, and helped to make hay, and hung about the farm ready for anything that anybody would set me to. One fine summer morning—it was the beginning of harvest, I remember—Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came downstairs, dressed for a journey; and after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me—for I sat eating my porridge with them—and he said, speaking to his son, "Now my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool to-day, what shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be little, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!" Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the

stable, and she chose a whip. He did not forget me; for he had a kind heart, though he was rather severe sometimes. He promised to bring me a pocketful of apples and pears, and then he kissed his children, said good-bye, and set off.

It seemed a long while to us all—the three days of his absence—and often did little Cathy ask when he would be home. Mrs. Earnshaw expected him by supper-time on the third evening, and she put the meal off hour after hour; there were no signs of his coming, however, and at last the children got tired of running down to the gate to look. Then it grew dark; she would have had them to bed, but they begged sadly to be allowed to stay up; and, just about eleven o'clock, the door-latch was raised quietly and in stepped the master. He threw himself into a chair, laughing and groaning, and bid them all stand off, for he was nearly killed—he would not have such another walk for the three kingdoms.

"And at the end of it, to be flighted to death!" he said, opening his great-coat, which he held bundled up in his arms. "See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil."

We crowded round and, over Miss Cathy's head, I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's; yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he meant to do with it, and whether he were mad? The master tried to explain the matter; but he was really half-dead with fatigue, and all that

I could make out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool; where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he said; and his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him at once, than run into vain expenses there: because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it. Well, the conclusion was that my mistress grumbled herself calm; and Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children.

Hindley and Cathy contented themselves with looking and listening till peace was restored: then, both began searching their father's pockets for the presents he had promised them. The former was a boy of fourteen, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle crushed to morsels in the great-coat, he blubbered aloud; and Cathy, when she learned the master had lost her whip in attending on the stranger, showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing, earning for her pains a sound blow from her father to teach her cleaner manners. They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room; and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house.

This was Heathcliff's first introduction to the family. On coming back a few days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual) I found they had christened him "Heathcliff": it was the name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname.

Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn't reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident and nobody was to blame. This endurance made old Earnshaw furious when he discovered his son persecuting the poor, fatherless child, as he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges; and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. I sympathised a while; but when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them, and take on me the cares of a woman at once, I changed my ideas. Heathcliff was dangerously sick: and while he lay at the worst he would have me constantly by his pillow: I suppose he felt I did a good deal for him, and he hadn't the wit to guess that I was compelled to do it. However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and the others forced me to be less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly: *he* was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble.

He got through, and the doctor affirmed it was in a great measure owing to me, and praised me for my care. I was vain of his commendations, and softened towards the being by whose means I earned them, and thus Hindley lost his last ally: still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered often what my master saw to admire so much in the sullen boy who never, to my recollection, repaid his indulgence by any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent to his benefactor, he was simply insensible; though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes. As an instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once bought a couple of colts at the parish fair, and gave the lads each one. Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it soon fell lame, and when he discovered it, he said to Hindley:

"You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine; and if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder." Hindley put out his tongue and cuffed him over the ears. "You'd better do it at once," he persisted, escaping to the porch (they were in the stable): "you will have to; and if I speak of these blows, you'll get them again with interest." "Off, dog!" cried Hindley, threatening him with an iron weight used for weighing potatoes and hay. "Throw it," he replied, standing still, "and then I'll tell how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died, and see whether he will not turn you out directly." Hindley threw it, hitting him on the breast, and down he fell, but staggered up immediately, breathless and white; and, had not I prevented it, he would have gone just so to the master, and got full revenge by letting his condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it. "Take my colt, gipsy, then!" said young Earnshaw. "And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father

out of all he has: only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan.—And take that, I hope he'll kick out your brains!"

Heathcliff had gone to loose the beast, and shift it to his own stall; he was passing behind it, when Hindley finished his speech by knocking him under its feet, and without stopping to examine whether his hopes were fulfilled, ran away as fast as he could. I was surprised to witness how coolly the child gathered himself up, and went on with his intention; exchanging saddles and all, and then sitting down on a bundle of hay to overcome the qualm which the violent blow occasioned, before he entered the house. I persuaded him easily to let me lay the blame of his bruises on the horse: he minded little what tale was told since he had what he wanted. He complained so seldom, indeed, of such stirs as these that I really thought him not vindictive: I was deceived completely, as you will hear.

In the course of time, Mr. Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and when he was confined to the chimney-corner he grew grievously irritable. A nothing vexed him; and suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits. This was especially to be remarked if any one attempted to impose upon, or domineer over, his favourite: he was painfully jealous lest a word should be spoken amiss to him; seeming to have got into his head the notion that, because he liked Heathcliff, all hated, and longed to do him an ill turn. It was a disadvantage to the lad; for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the master, so we humoured his partiality; and that humouring was rich nourishment to the child's pride and black tempers. Still it became in a manner necessary; twice, or thrice, Hindley's manifestation of scorn, while his father was near, roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it.

At last, our curate (we had a curate then who made the living answer by teaching the little Lintons and Earnshaws, and farming his bit of land himself) advised that the young man should be sent to college; and Mr. Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said—"Hindley was naught, and would never thrive as where he wandered."

I hoped heartily we should have peace now. It hurt me to think the master should be made uncomfortable by his own good deed. I fancied the discontent of age and disease arose from his family disagreements: as he would have it that it did: really, you know, sir, it was in his sinking frame. We might have got on tolerably, notwithstanding, but for two people, Miss Cathy and Joseph, the servant: you saw him, I dare say, up yonder. He was, as is yet most likely, the wearisomest self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours. By his knack of sermonizing and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw; and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained. He was relentless in worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a reprobate; and, night after night, he regularly grumbled out a long string of tales against Heathcliff and Catherine: always minding to flatter Earnshaw's weakness by heaping the heaviest blame on the last.

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day: from the hour she came downstairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going—singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wicked slip she was—but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest

smile, and lightest foot in the parish; and, after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when once she made you cry in good earnest, it seldom happened that she would not keep you company, and oblige you to be quiet that you might comfort her. She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him: yet she got chided more than any of us on his account. In play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear slapping and ordering; and so I let her know.

Now, Mr. Earnshaw did not understand jokes from his children: he had always been strict and grave with them; and Catherine, on her part, had no idea why her father should be crosser and less patient in his ailing condition than he was in his prime. His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her father hated most, showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination. After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes came fondling to make it up at night. "Nay, Cathy," the old man would say, "I cannot love thee; thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!" That made her cry, at first: and then being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven.

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw's troubles on earth. He died quietly in his chair one October eve-

ning, seated by the fireside. A high wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney: it sounded wild and stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together—I, a little removed from the hearth, busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible near the table (for the servants generally sat in the house then, after their work was done). Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still; she leant against her father's knee, and Heathcliff was lying on the floor with his head in her lap. I remember the master, before he fell into a doze, stroking her bonny hair—it pleased him rarely to see her gentle—and saying: "Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?" And she turned her face up to his, and laughed, and answered, "Why cannot you always be a good man, father?" But as soon as she saw him vexed again, she kissed his hand, and said she would sing him to sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast. Then I told her to hush, and not stir, for fear she should wake him. We all kept as mute as mice a full half-hour, and should have done longer, only Joseph finished his chapter, got up and said that he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He stepped forward, and called him by name, and touched his shoulder; but he would not move, so he took the candle and looked at him. I thought there was something wrong as he set down the light; and seizing the children each by an arm, whispered them to "frame upstairs, and make little din—they might pray alone that evening—he had summut to do."

"I shall bid father good night first," said Catherine, putting her arms round his neck, before we could hinder her. The poor thing discovered her loss directly—she screamed out: "Oh, he's dead. Heathcliff! he's dead!" And they both set up a heart-breaking cry.

I joined my wail to theirs, loud and bitter; but Joseph asked

what we could be thinking of to roar in that way over a saint in heaven. He told me to put on my cloak and run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess the use that either would be of, then. However, I went, through wind and rain, and brought one, the doctor, back with me; the other said he would come in the morning. Leaving Joseph to explain matters, I ran to the children's room: their door was ajar, I saw they had never lain down, though it was past midnight; but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on: no parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they did, in their innocent talk: and, while I sobbed and listened, I could not help wishing we were all there safe together.

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and—a thing that amazed us, and set the neighbours gossiping right and left—he brought a wife with him. What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us: probably she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account. Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to delight her; and every circumstance that took place about her: except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners. I thought she was half silly, from her behaviour while that went on: she ran into her chamber, and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children; and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly: "Are they gone yet?" Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a-weeping—and when I asked what was the

matter? answered, she didn't know; but she felt so afraid of dying! I imagined her as little likely to die as myself. She was rather thin, but young, and fresh-complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick: that the least sudden noise set her all in a quiver, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes: but I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathize with her. We don't in general take to foreigners here, Mr. Lockwood, unless they take to us first.

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the three years of his absence. He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him. Indeed, he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a parlour; but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge glowing fire-place, at the pewter dishes and delft-case, and dog-kennel, and the wide space there was to move about in where they usually sat, that he thought it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance; and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm.

Heathcliff bore his degradation pretty well at first, because

Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages; the young master being entirely negligent how they behaved, and what they did, so they kept clear of him. He would not even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves; and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper. But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the mornings and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable, for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures. One Sunday evening, it chanced that they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind; and when I went to call them to supper, I could discover them nowhere. We searched the house, above and below, and the yard and stables; they were invisible: and at last, Hindley in a passion told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night. The household went to bed; and I, too anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head out to hearken, though it rained: determined to admit them in spite of the prohibition, should they return. In a while, I distinguished steps coming up the road, and the light of a lantern glimmered through the gate. I threw a shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr. Earnshaw by knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself: it gave me a start to see him alone.

"Where is Miss Catherine?" I cried hurriedly. "No accident, I hope?" "At Thrushcross Grange," he answered; "and I would have been there too, but they had not the manners to ask me to stay." "Well, you will catch it!" I said: "You'll never be content till you're sent about your business. What in the world led you wandering to Thrushcross Grange?" "Let me get off my wet clothes, and I'll tell you all about it, Nelly," he replied. I bid him beware of rousing the master, and while he undressed and I waited to put out the candle, he continued: "Cathy and I escaped from the washhouse to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their manservant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names, if they don't answer properly?" "Probably not," I responded. "They are good children, no doubt, and don't deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct." "Don't you cant, Nelly," he said: "nonsense! We ran from the top of the Heights to the park, without stopping—Catherine completely beaten in the race, because she was barefoot. You'll have to seek for her shoes in the bog to-morrow. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves on a flower-pot under the drawing-room window. The light came from thence; they had not put up the shutters, and the curtains were only half closed. Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, and we saw—ah! it was beautiful—a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and

Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves. Shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella—I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy—lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure! to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair, and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange—not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the house-front with Hindley's blood!"

"Hush, hush!" I interrupted. "Still you have not told me, Heathcliff, how Catherine is left behind?"

"I told you we laughed," he answered. "The Lintons heard us and, with one accord, they shot like arrows to the door; there was silence, and then a cry, 'Oh, mamma, mamma! Oh! papa! Oh, momma, come here! Oh, papa, oh!' They really did howl out something in that way. We made frightful noises to terrify them still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was drawing the bars, and we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on, when all at once she fell down. 'Run, Heathcliff, run!' she whispered. 'They

have let the bulldog loose, and he holds me!' The devil had seized her ankle, Nelly: I heard his abominable snorting. She did not yell out—no! She would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow. I did, though! I vociferated curses enough to annihilate any fiend in Christendom; and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried with all my might to cram it down his throat. A beast of a servant came up with a lantern at last, shouting: 'Keep fast, Skulker, keep fast!' He changed his note, however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was throttled off; his huge, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendent lips streaming with bloody slaver. The man took Cathy up: she was sick: not from fear, I'm certain, but from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling execrations and vengeance. 'What prey, Robert?' hallooed Linton from the entrance. 'Skulker has caught a little girl, sir,' he replied, 'and there's a lad here,' he added, making a clutch at me, 'who looks an out-and-outer! Very like, the robbers were for putting them through the window to open the doors to the gang after all were asleep, that they might murder us at their ease. Hold your tongue, you foul-mouthed thief, you! you shall go to the gallows for this. Mr. Linton, sir, don't lay by your gun.' 'No, no, Robert,' said the old fool. 'The rascals knew that yesterday was my rent day: they thought to have me cleverly. Come in; I'll furnish them a reception. There, John, fasten the chain. Give Skulker some water, Jenny. To beard a magistrate in his stronghold, and on the Sabbath, too! Where will their insolence stop? Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid, it is but a boy—yet the villain scowls so plainly in his face; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?' He pulled me under the chandelier, and Mrs. Linton placed her spectacles on her nose and raised her hands in hor-

ror. The cowardly children crept near also, Isabella lisping: 'Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He's exactly like the son of the fortune-teller that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar?'

"While they examined me, Cathy came round; she heard the last speech, and laughed. Edgar Linton, after an inquisitive stare, collected sufficient wit to recognize her. They see us at church, you know, though we seldom meet them elsewhere. 'That's Miss Earnshaw!' he whispered to his mother, 'and look how Skulker has bitten her—how her foot bleeds!'

" 'Miss Earnshaw? Nonsense!' cried the dame; 'Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gipsy! And yet, my dear, the child is in mourning—surely it is—and she may be lamed for life!'

" 'What culpable carelessness in her brother!' exclaimed Mr. Linton, turning from me to Catherine. 'I've understood from Shielders' " (that was the curate, sir) " 'that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But who is this? Where did she pick up this companion? Oho! I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool—a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway.'

" 'A wicked boy, at all events,' remarked the old lady, 'and quite unfit for a decent house! Did you notice his language, Linton? I'm shocked that my children should have heard it.'

"I recommenced cursing—don't be angry, Nelly—and so Robert was ordered to take me off. I refused to go without Cathy; he dragged me into the garden, pushed the lantern into my hand, assured me that Mr. Earnshaw should be informed of my behaviour, and, bidding me march directly, secured the door again. The curtains were still looped up at one corner, and I resumed my station as spy; because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended shattering their great glass

panes to a million of fragments, unless they let her out. She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off the grey cloak of the dairymaid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head and expostulating with her, I suppose: she was a young lady, and they made a distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire; and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as he ate; and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons—a dim reflection from her own enchanting face. I saw they were full of stupid admiration; she is so immeasurably superior to them—to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly?"

"There will more come of this business than you reckon on," I answered, covering him up and extinguishing the light. "You are incurable, Heathcliff; and Mr. Hindley will have to proceed to extremities, see if he won't." My words came truer than I desired. The luckless adventure made Earnshaw furious. And then Mr. Linton, to mend matters, paid us a visit himself on the morrow; and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family, that he was stirred to look about him, in earnest. Heathcliff received no flogging, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine should ensure a dismissal; and Mrs. Earnshaw undertook to keep her sister-in-law in due restraint when she returned home; employing art, not force: with force she would have found it impossible.

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christ-

mas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in. Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly, "Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?" "Isabella has not her natural advantages," replied his wife: "but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things—stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls—let me untie your hat."

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath, a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dare hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments. She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug; and, then, she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw watched anxiously their meeting; thinking it would enable them to judge, in some measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first. If he were careless, and uncared for, before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so, since. Nobody but I even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him wash himself, once a week;

and children of his age seldom have a natural pleasure in soap and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service in mire and dust, and his thick, uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded. He might well skulk behind the settle, on beholding such a bright, graceful damsel enter the house, instead of a rough-headed counterpart of himself, as he expected. "Is Heathcliff not here?" she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors.

"Heathcliff, you may come forward," cried Mr. Hindley, enjoying his discomfiture, and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard he would be compelled to present himself. "You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants."

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "Why, how very black and cross you look! and how—how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?"

She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable.

"Shake hands, Heathcliff," said Mr. Earnshaw, condescendingly; "once in a way, that is permitted."

"I shall not," replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; "I shall not stand to be laughed at. I shall not bear it!"

And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

"I did not mean to laugh at you," she said; "I could not

hinder myself: Heathcliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd. If you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right: but you are so dirty!"

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress; which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his.

"You needn't have touched me!" he answered, following her eye and snatching away his hand. "I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty."

With that he dashed head foremost out of the room, amid the merriment of the master and mistress, and to the serious disturbance of Catherine, who could not comprehend how her remarks should have produced such an exhibition of bad temper.

After playing lady's-maid to the newcomer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting Christmas Eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone; regardless of Joseph's affirmations that he considered the merry tunes I chose as next door to songs. He had retired to private prayer in his chamber, and Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw were engaging Missy's attention by sundry gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an acknowledgment of their kindness. They had invited them to spend the morrow at Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition: Mrs. Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that "naughty swearing boy."

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock, decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper;

and above all, the speckless purity of my particular care—the scoured and well-swept floor. I gave due inward applause to every object, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand as a Christmas-box; and from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him; and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad's situation now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying. It struck me soon, however, there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them: I got up and walked into the court to seek him. He was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts according to custom.

"Make haste, Heathcliff!" I said, "the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph is upstairs: make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes out, and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bedtime."

He proceeded with his task and never turned his head towards me.

"Come—are you coming?" I continued. "There's a little cake for each of you, nearly enough; and you'll need half-an-hour's donning."

I waited five minutes, but getting no answer, left him. Catherine supped with her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I joined in an unsociable meal, seasoned with reproofs on one side and sauciness on the other. Heathcliff's cake and cheese remained on the table all night for the fairies. He managed to continue work till nine o'clock, and then marched dumb and dour to his chamber. Cathy sat up late, having a world of things to order for the reception of her new friends:

she came into the kitchen once to speak to her old one; but he was gone, and she only stayed to ask what was the matter with him, and then went back. In the morning he rose early; and as it was a holiday carried his ill-humour onto the moors; not reappearing till the family were departed for church. Fasting and reflection seemed to have brought him to a better spirit. He hung about me for a while, and having screwed up his courage, exclaimed abruptly:

"Nelly, make me decent. I'm going to be good."

"High time, Heathcliff," I said; "you *have* grieved Catherine: she's sorry she ever came home, I dare say! It looks as if you envied her because she is more thought of than you."

The notion of *envying* Catherine was incomprehensible to him, but the notion of grieving her he understood clearly enough.

"Did she say she was grieved?" he inquired, looking very serious.

"She cried when I told her you were off again this morning."

"Well, *I* cried last night," he returned, "and I had more reason to cry than she."

"Yes: you had the reason of going to bed with a proud heart and an empty stomach," said I. "Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves. But, if you be ashamed of your touchiness, you must ask pardon, mind, when she comes in. You must go up and offer to kiss her, and say—you know best what to say; only do it heartily, and not as if you thought her converted into a stranger by her grand dress. And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I'll steal time to arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that he does. You are younger, and yet, I'll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders: you could knock him down in a twinkling! don't you feel that you could?"

Heathcliff's face brightened a moment; then it was overcast afresh, and he sighed.

"But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich he will be!"

"And cried for mamma at every turn," I added, "and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. Oh, Heathcliff, you are showing a poor spirit! Come to the glass, and I'll let you see what you should wish. Do you mark those two lines between your eyes; and those thick brows, that instead of rising arched, sink in the middle; and that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil's spies? Wish and learn to smooth away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, and change the fiends to confident, innocent angels, suspecting and doubting nothing, and always seeing friends where they are not sure of foes. Don't get the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet hates all the world as well as the kicker, for what it suffers."

"In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even forehead," he replied. "I do—and that won't help me to them."

"A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad," I continued, "if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly. And now that we've done washing, and combing, and sulking—tell me whether you don't think yourself rather handsome? I'll tell you, I do. You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuther-

ing Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!"

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown and began to look quite pleasant, when all at once our conversation was interrupted by a rumbling sound moving up the road and entering the court. He ran to the window and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismount from their horses: they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, and brought them into the house and set them before the fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.

I urged my companion to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed; but ill-luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful; or, perhaps, eager to keep his promise to Mrs. Linton, shoved him back with a sudden thrust, and angrily bade Joseph "keep the fellow out of the room—send him into the garret till dinner is over. He'll be cramming his fingers in the tarts and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute."

"Nay, sir," I could not avoid answering, "he'll touch nothing, not he: and I suppose he must have his share of the dainties as well as we."

"He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs again till dark," cried Hindley. "Begone, you vagabond! What! you are attempting the coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks—see if I won't pull them a bit longer."

"They are long enough, already," observed Master Linton, peeping from the doorway; "I wonder they don't make his head ache. It's like a colt's mane over his eyes!"

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff's violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce (the first thing that come under his gripe) and dashed it full against the speaker's face and neck; who instantly commenced a lament that brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place. Mr. Earnshaw snatched up the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber; where, doubtless, he administered a rough remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he appeared red and breathless. I got the dish-cloth, and rather spitefully scrubbed Edgar's nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for all.

"You should not have spoken to him!" she expostulated with Master Linton. "He was in a bad temper, and now you've spoilt your visit; and he'll be flogged: I hate him to be flogged! I can't eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?"

"I didn't," sobbed the youth, escaping from my hands, and finishing the remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket-handkerchief. "I promised mamma that I wouldn't say one word to him, and I didn't."

"Well, don't cry," replied Catherine, contemptuously, "you're not killed. Don't make more mischief; my brother is coming: be quiet! Give over, Isabella! Has anybody hurt *you?*"

"There, there, children—to your seats!" cried Hindley, bustling in. "That brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists—it will give you an appetite!"

The little party recovered its equanimity at sight of the fra-

grant feast. They were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had befallen them. Mr. Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls, and the mistress made them merry with lively talk. I waited behind her chair, and was pained to behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up the wing of a goose before her. "An unfeeling child," I thought to myself; "how lightly she dismisses her old playmate's troubles. I could not have imagined her to be so selfish." She lifted a mouthful to her lips; then set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them. She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long; for I perceived she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master: as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then, as Isabella Linton had no partner; her entreaties were vain, and I was appointed to supply the deficiency. We got rid of all gloom in the excitement of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton band, mustering fifteen strong: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds of all the respectable houses, and receive contributions every Christmas, and we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them. After the usual carols had been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music, and so they gave us plenty.

Catherine loved it too; but she said it sounded sweetest at the top of the steps, and she went up in the dark; I followed. They shut the house door below, never noting our absence, it was so full of people. She made no stay at the stairs' head,

but mounted farther, to the garret where Heathcliff was confined, and called him. He stubbornly declined answering for a while; she persevered, and finally persuaded him to hold communion with her through the boards. I let the poor things converse unmolested, till I supposed the songs were going to cease, and the singers to get some refreshment; then, I clambered up the ladder to warn her. Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice within. The little monkey had crept by the skylight of one garret, along the roof, into the skylight of the other, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could coax her out again. When she did come Heathcliff came with her, and she insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, as my fellow-servant had gone to a neighbour's to be removed from the sound of our "devil's psalmody," as it pleased him to call it. I told them I intended by no means to encourage their tricks; but as the prisoner had never broken his fast since yesterday's dinner, I would wink at his cheating Mr. Hindley that once. He went down; I set him a stool by the fire, and offered him a quantity of good things; but he was sick and could eat little, and my attempts to entertain him were thrown away. He leant his two elbows on his knees, and his chin on his hands, and remained wrapt in dumb meditation. On my inquiring the subject of his thoughts, he answered gravely:

"I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!"

"For shame, Heathcliff!" said I. "It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive."

"No, God won't have the satisfaction that I shall," he returned. "I only wish I knew the best way! Let me alone, and I'll plan it out: while I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain." . . .

But, Mr. Lockwood, I forgot these tales cannot divert you.

I'm annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate; and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed! I could have told Heathcliff's history, all that you need hear, in half a dozen words.

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose, and proceeded to lay aside her sewing; but I felt incapable of moving from the hearth, and I was very far from nodding.

Ann Radcliffe

It is hard for us to believe today that libraries were once symbols of wickedness. The circulating library of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (which you could join for a small sum), was the purveyor of pleasure as television is today. It was filled with those wicked books called novels, and such libraries were "to reconcile those two irreconcilable things—literature and young girls." The readers were said to be rocked to sleep in the motherly arms of the librarian; more aggressive journalists said that the public was eating the apple of knowledge through the work of libraries, and little good would result.

All of these comments seem almost unbelievable today, as does the sensation caused by one woman and one book. The woman was Mrs. Ann Radcliffe; the book was *The Mysteries of Udolpho,* the most popular book of its time.

An unusually attractive young woman, Mrs. Radcliffe had long been a lover of romance. She was deeply read in Shakespeare and loved the old tragedies, but she read indiscriminately,

poetry and novels as well. The chapters in her books were headed with quotes from classical and popular writers.

Ann Radcliffe was always attracted by the terrible and the ghostly. She knew all the old beliefs that centered around the ancient abbeys that were found in her stories, and she studied the ghostly legends that belonged to each and every English castle.

Ancient ruins fascinated her. She could see in her mind's eye such places as Furness Abbey, once peopled by a midnight procession of monks. In her earliest novels she used hardly any conversation, but she had an extraordinary sense of the dramatic as well as a great ability to depict a frightening landscape. She is a major figure in the history of the English and American novel.

The Haunted Chamber

The count gave orders for the north apartments to be opened and prepared for the reception of Ludovico; but Dorothee, remembering what she had lately witnessed there, feared to obey; and not one of the other servants daring to venture thither, the rooms remained shut up till the time when Ludovico was to retire thither for the night, an hour for which the whole household waited with the greatest impatience.

After supper, Ludovico, by the order of the count, attended him in his closet, where they remained alone for near half an hour, and on leaving which his lord delivered to him a sword.

'It has seen service in mortal quarrels,' said the count, jocosely; 'you will use it honourably no doubt in a spiritual one. To-morrow let me hear that there is not one ghost remaining in the château.'

Ludovico received it with a respectful bow. 'You shall be obeyed, my lord,' said he; 'I will engage that no spectre shall disturb the peace of the château after this night.'

They now returned to the supper-room, where the count's

guests awaited to accompany him and Ludovico to the north apartments; and Dorothee, being summoned for the keys, delivered them to Ludovico, who then led the way, followed by most of the inhabitants of the château. Having reached the back staircase, several of the servants shrunk back and refused to go further, but the rest followed him to the top of the staircase, where a broad landing-place allowed them to flock round him, while he applied the key to the door, during which they watched him with as much eager curiosity as if he had been performing some magical rite.

Ludovico, unaccustomed to the lock, could not turn it, and Dorothee, who had lingered far behind, was called forward, under whose hand the door opened slowly, and her eye glancing within the dusky chamber, she uttered a sudden shriek and retreated. At this signal of alarm the greater part of the crowd hurried down, and the count, Henri, and Ludovico were left alone to pursue the inquiry, who instantly rushed into the apartment, Ludovico with a drawn sword, which he had just time to draw from the scabbard, the count with a lamp in his hand, and Henri carrying a basket containing provision for the courageous adventurer.

Having looked hastily round the first room, where nothing appeared to justify alarm, they passed on to the second; and here too all being quiet, they proceeded to a third in a more tempered step. The count had now leisure to smile at the discomposure into which he had been surprised, and to ask Ludovico in which room he designed to pass the night.

'There are several chambers beyond these, your excellenza,' said Ludovico, pointing to a door, 'and in one of them is a bed, they say. I will pass the night there; and when I am weary of watching, I can lie down.'

'Good,' said the count; 'let us go on. You see, these rooms

show nothing but damp walls and decaying furniture. I have been so much occupied since I came to the château, that I have not looked into them till now. Remember, Ludovico, to tell the housekeeper tomorrow to throw open these windows. The damask hangings are dropping to pieces; I will have them taken down, and this antique furniture removed.'

'Dear sir,' said Henri, 'here is an armchair so massy with gilding, that it resembles one of the state chairs in the Louvre more than anything else.'

'Yes,' said the count, stopping a moment to survey it, 'there is a history belonging to that chair, but I have not time to tell it; let us pass on. This suite runs to a greater extent than I imagined; it is many years since I was in them. But where is the bedroom you speak of, Ludovico? These are only antechambers to the great drawing-room. I remember them in their splendour.'

'The bed, my lord,' replied Ludovico, 'they told me was in a room that opens beyond the saloon and terminates the suite.'

'O, here is the saloon,' said the count, as they entered the spacious apartment in which Emily and Dorothee had rested. He here stood for a moment, surveying the relics of faded grandeur which it exhibited, the sumptuous tapestry, the long and low sofas of velvet with frames heavily carved and gilded, the floor inlaid with small squares of fine marble, and covered in the centre with a piece of rich tapestry work, the casements of painted glass, and the large Venetian mirrors of a size and quality such as that period France could not make, which reflected on every side the spacious apartment. These had also formerly reflected a gay and brilliant scene, for this had been the state room of the château, and here the marchioness had held the assemblies that made part of the festivities of her nuptials. If the wand of a magician could have recalled the

vanished groups—many of them vanished even from the earth! —that once had passed over these polished mirrors, what a varied and contrasted picture would they have exhibited with the present! Now, instead of a blaze of lights, and a splendid and busy crowd, they reflected only the rays of the one glimmering lamp which the count held up, and which scarcely served to show the three forlorn figures that stood surveying the room, and the spacious and dusky walls around them.

'Ah!' said the count to Henri, awaking from his deep reverie, 'how the scene is changed since last I saw it! I was a young man then, and the marchioness was alive and in her bloom; many other persons were here too, who are now no more. There stood the orchestra, here we tripped in many a sprightly maze—the walls echoing to the dance. Now they resound only one feeble voice, and even that will, ere long, be heard no more. My son, remember that I was once as young as yourself, and that you must pass away like those who have preceded you—like those who, as they sung and danced in this most gay apartment, forgot that years are made up of moments, and that every step they took carried them nearer to their graves. But such reflections are useless—I had almost said criminal—unless they teach us to prepare for eternity, since otherwise they cloud our present happiness without guiding us to a future one. But enough of this—let us go on.'

Ludovico now opened the door of the bedroom, and the count, as he entered, was struck with the funereal appearance which the dark arras gave to it. He approached the bed with an emotion of solemnity, and, perceiving it to be covered with a pall of black velvet, paused. 'What can this mean?' said he, as he gazed upon it.

'I have heard, my lord,' said Ludovico, as he stood at the feet, looking within the canopied curtains, 'that the Lady Marchion-

ess de Villeroi died in this chamber, and remained here till she was removed to be buried; and this perhaps, signor, may account for the pall.'

The count made no reply, but stood for a few moments engaged in thought, and evidently much affected. Then, turning to Ludovico, he asked him with a serious air, whether he thought his courage would support him through the night. 'If you doubt this,' added the count, 'do not be ashamed to own it; I will release you from your engagement without exposing you to the triumphs of your fellow-servants.' Ludovico paused; pride and something very like fear seemed struggling in his breast: pride, however, was victorious;—he blushed, and his hesitation ceased.

'No, my lord,' said he, 'I will go through with what I have begun; and I am grateful for your consideration. On that hearth I will make a fire; and with the good cheer in this basket, I doubt not I shall do well.'

'Be it so,' said the count: 'but how will you beguile the tediousness of the night, if you do not sleep?'

'When I am weary, my lord,' replied Ludovico, 'I shall not fear to sleep; in the meanwhile, I have a book that will entertain me.'

'Well,' said the count, 'I hope nothing will disturb you; but if you should be seriously alarmed in the night, come to my apartment. I have too much confidence in your good sense and courage to believe you will be alarmed on slight grounds, or suffer the gloom of this chamber, or its remote situation, to overcome you with ideal terrors. Tomorrow I shall have to thank you for an important service; these rooms shall then be thrown open, and my people will then be convinced of their error. Good night, Ludovico; let me see you early in the morning, and remember what I lately said to you.'

'I will, my lord. Good night to your excellenza—let me attend you with the light.'

He lighted the count and Henri through the chambers to the outer door. On the landing-place stood a lamp, which one of the affrighted servants had left; and Henri, as he took it up, again bade Ludovico 'good night,' who, having respectfully returned the wish, closed the door upon them and fastened it. Then, as he retired to the bedchamber, he examined the rooms through which he passed with more minuteness than he had done before; for he apprehended that some person might have concealed himself in them for the purpose of frightening him. No one, however, but himself was in these chambers; and leaving open the doors through which he passed, he came again to the great drawing-room, whose spaciousness and silent gloom somewhat startled him. For a moment he stood looking back through the long suite of rooms he had just quitted; and as he turned, perceiving a light and his own figure reflected in one of the large mirrors, he started. Other objects, too, were seen obscurely on its dark surface, but he paused not to examine them, and returned hastily into the bedroom, as he surveyed which, he observed the door of the Oriel, and opened it. All within was still. On looking round, his eye was caught by the portrait of the deceased marchioness, upon which he gazed for a considerable time with great attention and some surprise; and then, having examined the closet, he returned into the bedroom, where he kindled a wood fire, the bright blaze of which revived his spirit which had begun to yield to the gloom and silence of the place; for gusts of wind alone broke at intervals this silence. He now drew a small table and a chair near the fire, took a bottle of wine and some cold provision out of his basket, and regaled himself. When he had finished his repast he laid his sword upon the table, and not feeling disposed to

sleep, drew from his pocket the book he had spoken of. It was a volume of old Provençal tales. Having stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, trimmed his lamp, and drawn his chair upon the hearth, he began to read; and his attention was soon wholly occupied by the scenes which the page disclosed.

The count, meanwhile, had returned to the supper-room, whither those of the party who had attended him to the north apartment had retreated upon hearing Dorothee's scream, and who were now earnest in their inquiries concerning those chambers. The count rallied his guests on their precipitate retreat, and on the superstitious inclinations which had occasioned it; and this led to the question, whether the spirit, after it has quitted the body, is ever permitted to revisit the earth; and if it is, whether it was possible for spirits to become visible to the sense? The baron was of opinion, that the first was probable, and the last was possible; and he endeavoured to justify this opinion by respectable authorities, both ancient and modern, which he quoted. The count, however, was decidedly against him; and a long conversation ensued, in which the usual arguments on these subjects were on both sides brought forward with skill and discussed with candour, but without converting either party to the opinion of his opponent. The effect of their conversation on their auditors was various. Though the count had much the superiority of the baron in point of argument, he had fewer adherents; for that love, so natural to the human mind, of whatever is able to distend its faculties with wonder and astonishment, attached the majority of the company to the side of the baron; and though many of the count's propositions were unanswerable, his opponents were inclined to believe this the consequence of their own want of knowledge on so abstracted a subject, rather than that arguments did not exist which were forcible enough to conquer his.

Blanche was pale with attention, till the ridicule in her father's glance called a blush upon her countenance, and she then endeavoured to forget the superstitious tales she had been told in the convent. Meanwhile, Emily had been listening with deep attention to the discussion of what was to her a very interesting question; and remembering the appearance she had seen in the apartment of the late marchioness, she was frequently chilled with awe. Several times she was on the point of mentioning what she had seen, but the fear of giving pain to the count, and the dread of his ridicule, restrained her; and awaiting in anxious expectation the event of Ludovico's intrepidity, she determined that her future silence should depend upon it.

When the party had separated for the night, and the count retired to his dressing-room, the remembrance of the desolate scenes he had so lately witnessed in his own mansion deeply affected him, but at length he was aroused from his reverie and his silence. 'What music is that I hear?' said he suddenly to his valet. 'Who plays at this late hour?'

The man made no reply; and the count continued to listen, and then added, 'That is no common musician; he touches the instrument with a delicate hand. Who is it, Pierre?'

'My lord!' said the man, hesitatingly.

'Who plays that instrument?' repeated the count.

'Does not your lordship know, then?' said the valet.

'What mean you?' said the count, somewhat sternly.

'Nothing, my lord, I mean nothing,' rejoined the man submissively; 'only—that music—goes about the house at midnight often, and I thought your lordship might have heard it before.'

'Music goes about the house at midnight! Poor fellow! Does nobody dance to the music, too?'

'It is not in the château, I believe, my lord. The sounds come from the woods, they say, though they seem so very near; but then a spirit can do anything.'

'Ah, poor fellow!' said the count, 'I perceive you are as silly as the rest of them; tomorrow you will be convinced of your ridiculous error. But, hark! what voice is that?'

'Oh, my lord! that is the voice we often hear with music.'

'Often!' said the count; 'how often, pray? It is a very fine one.'

'Why, my lord, I myself have not heard it more than two or three times; but there are those who have lived here longer, that have heard it often enough.'

'What a swell was that!' exclaimed the count, as he still listened; 'and now, what a dying cadence! This is surely something more than mortal.'

'That is what they say, my lord,' said the valet; 'they say it is nothing mortal that utters it; and if I might say my thoughts—'

'Peace!' said the count; and he listened till the strain died away.

'This is strange,' said he, as he returned from the window. 'Close the casements, Pierre.'

Pierre obeyed, and the count soon after dismissed him, but did not so soon lose the remembrance of the music, which long vibrated in his fancy in tones of melting sweetness, while surprise and perplexity engaged his thoughts.

Ludovico, meanwhile, in his remote chamber, heard now and then the faint echo of a closing door as the family retired to rest; and then the hall-clock, at a great distance, struck twelve. 'It is midnight,' said he, and he looked suspiciously round the spacious chamber. The fire on the hearth was now nearly expiring, for his attention having been engaged by the book before him, he had forgotten everything besides; but he soon added fresh wood, not because he was cold, though the night was stormy, but because he was cheerless; and having again trimmed the lamp, he poured out a glass of wine, drew his chair nearer to the crackling blaze, tried to be deaf to the wind that howled mourn-

fully at the casements, endeavoured to abstract his mind from the melancholy that was stealing upon him, and again took up his book. It had been lent to him by Dorothee, who had formerly picked it up in an obscure corner of the marquis's library; and who, having opened it, and perceived some of the marvels it related, had carefully preserved it for her own entertainment, its condition giving her some excuse for detaining it from its proper station. The damp corner into which it had fallen, had caused the cover to be so disfigured and mouldy, and the leaves to be so discoloured with spots, that it was not without difficulty the letters could be traced. The fictions of the Provençal writers, whether drawn from the Arabian legends brought by the Saracens into Spain, or recounting the chivalric exploits performed by crusaders whom the troubadours accompanied to the East, were generally splendid, and always marvellous both in scenery and incident; and it is not wonderful that Dorothee and Ludovico should be fascinated by inventions which had captivated the careless imagination in every rank of society in a former age. Some of the tales, however, in the book now before Ludovico were of simple structure, and exhibited nothing of the magnificent machinery and heroic manners which usually characterized the fables of the twelfth century, and of this description was the one he now happened to open; which in its original style was of great length, but may be thus shortly related. The reader will perceive it is strongly tinctured with the superstition of the times.

THE PROVENÇAL TALE

There lived, in the province of Bretagne, a noble baron, famous for his magnificence and courtly hospitalities. His castle was graced with ladies of exquisite beauty, and thronged with

illustrious knights; for the honour he paid to feats of chivalry invited the brave of distant countries to enter his lists, and his court was more splendid than those of many princes. Eight minstrels were retained in his service, who used to sing to their harps romantic fictions taken from the Arabians, or adventures of chivalry that befell knights during the crusades, or the martial deeds of the baron, their lord; while he, surrounded by his knights and ladies, banqueted in the great hall of the castle, where the costly tapestry that adorned the walls with pictured exploits of his ancestors, the casements of painted glass enriched with armorial bearings, the gorgeous banners that waved along the roof, the sumptuous canopies, the profusion of gold and silver that glittered on the sideboards, the numerous dishes that covered the tables, the number and gay liveries of the attendants, with the chivalric and splendid attire of the guests, united to form a scene of magnificence such as we may not hope to see in these degenerate days.

Of the baron the following adventure is related:—One night, having retired late from the banquet to his chamber, and dismissed his attendants, he was surprised by the appearance of a stranger of a noble air, but of a sorrowful and dejected countenance. Believing that this person had been secreted in the apartment, since it appeared impossible he could have lately passed the ante-room unobserved by the pages in waiting, who would have prevented this intrusion on their lord, the baron, calling loudly for his people, drew his sword, which he had not yet taken from his side, and stood upon his defence. The stranger, slowly advancing, told him that there was nothing to fear; that he came with no hostile intent, but to communicate to him a terrible secret, which it was necessary for him to know.

The baron, appeased by the courteous manner of the stranger, after surveying him for some time in silence, returned his

sword into the scabbard, and desired him to explain the means by which he had obtained access to the chamber, and the purpose of this extraordinary visit.

Without answering either of these inquiries, the stranger said that he could not then explain himself, but that, if the baron would follow him to the edge of the forest, at a short distance from the castle walls, he would there convince him that he had something of importance to disclose.

This proposal again alarmed the baron, who would scarcely believe that the stranger meant to draw him to so solitary a spot at this hour of the night without harbouring a design against his life, and he refused to go; observing at the same time, that if the stranger's purpose was an honourable one, he would not persist in refusing to reveal the occasion of his visit in the apartment where they stood.

While he spoke this, he viewed the stranger still more attentively than before, but observed no change in his countenance, nor any symptom that might intimate a consciousness of evil design. He was habited like a knight, was of a tall and majestic stature, and of dignified and courteous manners. Still, however, he refused to communicate the substance of his errand in any place but that he had mentioned; and at the same time gave hints concerning the secret he would disclose, that awakened a degree of solemn curiosity in the baron, which at length induced him to consent to accompany the stranger on certain conditions.

'Sir knight,' said he, 'I will attend you to the forest, and will take with me only four of my people, who shall witness our conference.'

To this, however, the knight objected.

'What I would disclose,' said he with solemnity, 'is to you alone. There are only three living persons to whom the circum-

stance is known: it is of more consequence to you and your house than I shall now explain. In future years you will look back to this night with satisfaction or repentance, accordingly as you now determine. As you would hereafter prosper, follow me; I pledge you the honour of a knight that no evil shall befall you. If you are contented to dare futurity, remain in your chamber, and I will depart as I came.'

'Sir knight,' replied the baron; 'how is it possible that my future peace can depend upon my present determination?'

'That is not now to be told,' said the stranger; 'I have explained myself to the utmost. It is late: if you follow me it must be quickly; you will do well to consider the alternative.'

The baron mused, and, as he looked upon the knight, he perceived his countenance assume a singular solemnity.

(Here Ludovico thought he heard a noise, and he threw a glance round the chamber, and then held up the lamp to assist his observation; but not perceiving anything to confirm his alarm, he took up the book again, and pursued the story.)

The baron paced his apartment for some time in silence, impressed by the words of the stranger, whose extraordinary request he feared to grant, and feared also to refuse. At length he said, 'Sir knight, you are utterly unknown to me; tell me, yourself, is it reasonable that I should trust myself alone with a stranger, at this hour, in the solitary forest? Tell me, at least, who you are, and who assisted to secrete you in this chamber.'

The knight frowned at these words, and was a moment silent; then, with a countenance somewhat stern, he said, 'I am an English knight; I am called Sir Bevys of Lancaster, and my deeds are not unknown at the holy city, whence I was returning to my native land, when I was benighted in the forest.'

'Your name is not unknown to fame,' said the baron; 'I have heard of it.' (The knight looked haughtily.) 'But why, since

my castle is known to entertain all true knights, did not your herald announce you? Why did you not appear at the banquet, where your presence would have been welcomed, instead of hiding yourself in my castle, and stealing to my chamber at midnight?'

The stranger frowned, and turned away in silence; but the baron repeated the questions.

'I come not,' said the knight, 'to answer inquiries, but to reveal facts. If you would know more, follow me; and again I pledge the honour of a knight that you shall return in safety. Be quick in your determination—I must be gone.'

After some farther hesitation, the baron determined to follow the stranger, and to see the result of his extraordinary request; he therefore again drew forth his sword, and, taking up a lamp, bade the knight lead on. The latter obeyed; and opening the door of the chamber, they passed into the ante-room, where the baron, surprised to find all his pages asleep, stopped, and with hasty violence was going to reprimand them for their carelessness, when the knight waved his hand, and looked so expressively at the baron, that the latter restrained his resentment, and passed on.

The knight, having descended a staircase, opened a secret door, which the baron had believed was only known to himself; and proceeding through several narrow and winding passages, came at length to a small gate that opened beyond the walls of the castle. Perceiving that these secret passages were so well known to a stranger, the baron felt inclined to turn back from an adventure that appeared to partake of treachery as well as danger. Then, considering that he was armed, and observing the courteous and noble air of his conductor, his courage returned, he blushed that it had failed him for a moment, and he resolved to trace the mystery to its source.

He now found himself on the heathy platform, before the great gates of his castle, where, on looking up, he perceived lights glimmering in the different casements of the guests, who were retiring to sleep; and while he shivered in the blast, and looked on the dark and desolate scene around him, he thought of the comforts of his warm chamber, rendered cheerful by the blaze of wood, and felt, for a moment, the full contrast of his present situation.

(Here Ludovico paused a moment, and, looking at his own fire, gave it a brightening stir.)

The wind was strong, and the baron watched his lamp with anxiety, expecting every moment, to see it extinguished; but though the flame wavered, it did not expire, and he still followed the stranger, who often sighed as he went, but did not speak.

When they reached the borders of the forest, the knight turned and raised his head, as if he meant to address the baron, but then closing his lips, in silence he walked on.

As they entered beneath the dark and spreading boughs, the baron, affected by the solemnity of the scene, hesitated whether to proceed, and demanded how much farther they were to go. The knight replied only by a gesture, and the baron, with hesitating steps and a suspicious eye, following through an obscure and intricate path, till, having proceeded a considerable way, he again demanded whither they were going, and refused to proceed unless he was informed.

As he said this, he looked at his own sword and at the knight alternately, who shook his head, and whose dejected countenance disarmed the baron, for a moment, of suspicion.

'A little farther is the place whither I would lead you,' said the stranger; 'no evil shall befall you—I have sworn it on the honour of a knight.'

The baron, reassured, again followed in silence, and they soon arrived at a deep recess of the forest, where the dark and lofty chestnuts entirely excluded the sky, and which was so overgrown with underwood that they proceeded with difficulty. The knight sighed deeply as he passed, and sometimes paused; and having at length reached a spot where the trees crowded into a knot, he turned, and with a terrific look, pointing to the ground, the baron saw there the body of a man, stretched at its length, and weltering in blood; a ghastly wound was on the forehead, and death appeared already to have contracted the features.

The baron, on perceiving the spectacle, started in horror, looked at the knight for explanation, and was then going to raise the body, and examine if there were any remains of life; but the stranger, waving his hand, fixed upon him a look so earnest and mournful, as not only much surprised him, but made him desist.

But what were the baron's emotions when, on holding the lamp near the features of the corpse, he discovered the exact resemblance of the stranger his conductor, to whom he now looked up in astonishment and inquiry! As he gazed he perceived the countenance of the knight change and begin to fade, till his whole form gradually vanished from his astonished sense! While the baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words:

(Ludovico started, and laid down the book for he thought he heard a voice in the chamber, and he looked towards the bed, where, however, he saw only the dark curtain and the pall. He listened, scarcely daring to draw his breath, but heard only the distant roaring of the sea in the storm, and the blast that rushed by the casements; when, concluding that he had been deceived by its sighings, he took up his book to finish his story.)

While the baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words:

'The body of Sir Bevys of Lancaster, a noble knight of England, lies before you. He was this night waylaid and murdered, as he journeyed from the holy city towards his native land. Respect the honour of knighthood, and the law of humanity; inter the body in Christian ground, and cause his murderers to be punished. As ye observe or neglect this, shall peace and happiness, or war and misery, light upon you and your house for ever!'

The baron, when he recovered from the awe and astonishment into which this adventure had thrown him, returned to his castle, whither he caused the body of Sir Bevys to be removed; and on the following day it was interred, with the honours of knighthood, in the chapel of the castle, attended by all the noble knights and ladies who graced the court of Baron de Brunne.

Ludovico, having finished this story, laid aside the book, for he felt drowsy; and after putting more wood on the fire, and taking another glass of wine, he reposed himself in the armchair on the hearth. In his dream he still beheld the chamber where he really was, and once or twice started from imperfect slumbers, imagining he saw a man's face looking over the high back of his armchair. This idea had so strongly impressed him, that, when he raised his eyes, he almost expected to meet other eyes fixed upon his own; and he quitted his seat, and looked behind the chair before he felt perfectly convinced that no person was there.

Thus closed the hour.

The count, who had slept little during the night, rose early, and, anxious to speak with Ludovico, went to the north apartment; but the outer door having been fastened on the preceding

night, he was obliged to knock loudly for admittance. Neither the knocking nor his voice was heard . . . he renewed his calls more loudly than before; after which a total silence ensued; and the count, finding all his efforts to be heard ineffectual, at length began to fear that some accident had befallen Ludovico, whom terror of an imaginary being might have deprived of his senses. He therefore left the door with an intention of summoning his servants to force it open, some of whom he now heard moving in the lower part of the château.

To the count's inquiries whether they had seen or heard anything of Ludovico, they replied, in affright, that not one of them had ventured on the north side of the château since the preceding night.

'He sleeps soundly, then,' said the count, 'and is at such a distance from the outer door, which is fastened, that to gain admittance to the chambers it will be necessary to force it. Bring an instrument, and follow me.'

The servants stood mute and dejected, and it was not till nearly all the household were assembled, that the count's orders were obeyed. In the meantime, Dorothee was telling of a door that opened from a gallery leading from the great staircase into the last ante-room of the saloon, and this being much nearer to the bedchamber, it appeared probable that Ludovico might be easily awakened by an attempt to open it. Thither, therefore, the count went; but his voice was as ineffectual at this door as it had proved at the remoter one; and now, seriously interested for Ludovico, he was himself going to strike upon the door with the instrument, when he observed its singular beauty, and withheld the blow. It appeared on the first glance to be of ebony, so dark and close was its grain, and so high its polish; but it proved to be only of larch wood, of the growth of Provence, then famous for its forests of larch. The beauty of its polished hue, and of its delicate carvings, determined the count to spare this door,

and he returned to that leading from the back staircase, which being at length forced, he entered the first ante-room, followed by Henri and a few of the most courageous of his servants, the rest waiting the event of the inquiry on the stairs and landing-place.

All was silence in the chambers through which the count passed, and, having reached the saloon, he called loudly upon Ludovico; after which, still receiving no answer, he threw open the door of the bedroom, and entered.

The profound stillness within confirmed his apprehensions for Ludovico, for not even the breathings of a person in sleep were heard; and his uncertainty was not soon terminated, since the shutters being all closed, the chamber was too dark for any object to be distinguished in it.

The count bade a servant open them, who, as he crossed the room to do so, stumbled over something, and fell to the floor, when his cry occasioned such a panic among the few of his fellows who had ventured thus far, that they instantly fled, and the count and Henri were left to finish the adventure.

Henri then sprang across the room, and, opening a window-shutter, they perceived that the man had fallen over a chair near the hearth, in which Ludovico had been sitting;—for he sat there no longer, nor could anywhere be seen by the imperfect light that was admitted into the apartment. The count, seriously alarmed, now opened other shutters, that he might be enabled to examine farther; and Ludovico not yet appearing, he stood for a moment suspended in astonishment, and scarcely trusting his senses, till his eyes glancing on the bed, he advanced to examine whether he was there asleep. No person, however, was in it; and he proceeded to the Oriel, where everything remained as on the preceding night; but Ludovico was nowhere to be found.

The count now checked his amazement, considering that

Ludovico might have left the chambers during the night, overcome by the terrors which their lonely desolation and the recollected reports concerning them had inspired. Yet, if this had been the fact, the man would naturally have sought society, and his fellow-servants had all declared they had not seen him; the door of the outer room also had been found fastened, with the key on the inside; it was impossible, therefore, for him to have passed through that; and all the outer doors of this suite were found, on examination, to be bolted and locked, with the keys also within them. The count, being then compelled to believe that the lad had escaped through the casements, next examined them; but such as opened wide enough to admit the body of a man were found to be carefully secured either by iron bars or by shutters, and no vestige appeared of any person having attempted to pass them; neither was it probable that Ludovico would have incurred the risk of breaking his neck by leaping from a window, when he might have walked safely through a door.

The count's amazement did not admit of words; but he returned once more to examine the bedroom, where was no appearance of disorder, except that occasioned by the late overthrow of the chair, near which had stood a small table; and on this Ludovico's sword, his lamp, the book he had been reading, and the remains of his flask of wine, still remained. At the foot of the table, too, was the basket, with some fragments of provision and wood.

Henri and the servant now uttered their astonishment without reserve, and though the count said little, there was a seriousness in his manner that expressed much. It appeared that Ludovico must have quitted these rooms by some concealed passage, for the count could not believe that any supernatural means had occasioned this event; yet, if there was any such

passage, it seemed inexplicable why he should retreat through it; and it was equally surprising, that not even the smallest vestige should appear by which his progress could be traced. In the rooms, everything remained as much in order as if he had just walked out by the common way.

The count himself assisted in lifting the arras with which the bedchamber, saloon, and one of the ante-rooms were hung, that he might discover if any door had been concealed behind it; but after a laborious search, none was found; and he at length quitted the apartments, having secured the door of the last ante-chamber the key of which he took into his own possession. He then gave orders that strict search should be made for Ludovico, not only in the château, but in the neighbourhood, and retiring with Henri to his closet, they remained there in conversation for a considerable time; and whatever was the subject of it, Henri from this hour lost much of his vivacity; and his manners were particularly grave and reserved, whenever the topic, which now agitated the count's family with wonder and alarm, was introduced.

Jane Austen

One of the most famous of all gothic novels is Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, and it is certainly the most charming because it is, in truth, not a gothic novel at all, but a magnificent satire of the whole genre. It was first written and sold to a publisher in 1797, but did not appear until after Miss Austen's death in 1818. The reason it was not published earlier was simple—gothics were riding so high, the authors were so important, and the publishers were doing so well with them that no editor had the effrontery to take on this delicious satire of the most popular of literary forms.

Everything from the title to the story is deliberately, enchantingly gothic. The very title, *Northanger Abbey*, rings with a gothic sound. There is an abbey, of course, and an interfering father and the traditional villain-lover, but none are portrayed as they are in the books of the other women writing at the time. The abbey is more comfortable than most people's houses. The interfering father is more cranky than vicious.

The lover is not a repulsive villain, but one of a type Miss Austen portrayed so very well, simply a silly bore.

But there are "palpitating scenes" of all kinds. Her secret wings of houses all open into sunny rooms. There are no maniacs, no prison walls, no skeletons, and no tortured nuns. As in so many gothic books, naturally there is an old manuscript to be discovered by the heroine, Catherine. She tries to read it, but her candle flickers out. In the morning sunshine comes the great discovery: the secret document is simply an old laundry list!

Here, in one of the most enchanting conversations between two girls ever written, is detailed the thrill of what it meant to young people to read these terrible tales of terror in their own time. Incidentally, the books that Miss Austen mentioned have been mostly thought to be figments of her imagination, but the truth is that each and every one of them was published and admired in its own time.

Novels, Gothic Novels

The progress of the friendship between Catherine and Isabella was quick as its beginning had been warm, and they passed so rapidly through every gradation of increasing tenderness, that there was shortly no fresh proof of it to be given to their friends or themselves. They called each other by their Christian name, were always arm in arm when they walked, pinned up each other's train for the dance, and were not to be divided in the set; and if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together. Yes, novels;—for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up

a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers. And while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens,—there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. 'I am no novel reader—I seldom look into novels—Do not imagine that I often read novels—It is really very well for a novel.'—Such is the common cant.—'And what are you reading, Miss—?' 'Oh! it is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame.—'It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda'; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. Now, had the same young lady been engaged with a volume of the Spectator, instead of such a work, how proudly would she have produced

the book, and told its name; though the chances must be against her being occupied by any part of that voluminous publication, of which either the matter or manner would not disgust a young person of taste: the substance of its papers so often consisting in the statement of improbable circumstances, unnatural characters, and topics of conversation, which no longer concern any one living; and their language, too, frequently so coarse as to give no very favourable idea of the age that could endure it. . . .

The following conversation, which took place between the two friends in the Pump-room one morning, after an acquaintance of eight or nine days, is given as a specimen of their very warm attachment, and of the delicacy, discretion, originality of thought, and literary taste which marked the reasonableness of that attachment.

They met by appointment; and as Isabella had arrived nearly five minutes before her friend, her first address naturally was—'My dearest creature, what can have made you so late? I have been waiting for you at least this age!'

'Have you, indeed!—I am very sorry for it; but really I thought I was in very good time. It is but just one. I hope you have not been here long?'

'Oh! these ten ages at least. I am sure I have been here this half hour. But now, let us go and sit down at the other end of the room, and enjoy ourselves. I have an hundred things to say to you. In the first place, I was so afraid it would rain this morning, just as I wanted to set off; it looked very showery, and that would have thrown me into agonies! Do you know, I saw the prettiest hat you can imagine, in a shop window in Milsom-street just now—very like yours, only with coquelicot ribbons instead of green; I quite longed for it. But, my dearest

Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning?—Have you gone on with Udolpho?'

'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'

'Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?'

'Oh! Yes, quite; what can it be?—But do not tell me—I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.'

'Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.'

'Have you, indeed! How glad I am!—What are they all?'

'I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocket-book. Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time.'

'Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?'

'Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them. I wish you knew Miss Andrews, you would be delighted with her. She is netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive. I think her as beautiful as an angel, and I am so vexed with the men for not admiring her!—I scold them all amazingly about it.'

'Scold them! Do you scold them for not admiring her?'

'Yes, that I do. There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature. My attachments are always excessively strong. I told Capt. Hunt at one of our assemblies this winter, that if he was to tease me all night, I would not dance with him, unless he would allow Miss Andrews to be as beautiful as an angel. The men think us incapable of real friendship you know, and I am determined to shew them the difference. Now, if I were to hear any body speak slightingly of you, I should fire up in a moment:—but that is not at all likely, for *you* are just the kind of girl to be a great favourite with the men.'

'Oh! dear,' cried Catherine, colouring, 'how can you say so?'

'I know you very well; you have so much animation, which is exactly what Miss Andrews wants, for I must confess there is something amazingly insipid about her. Oh! I must tell you, that just after we parted yesterday, I saw a young man looking at you so earnestly—I am sure he is in love with you.' Catherine coloured, and disclaimed again. Isabella laughed. 'It is very true, upon my honour, but I see how it is; you are indifferent to every body's admiration, except that of one gentleman, who shall be nameless. Nay, I cannot blame you—(speaking more seriously)—your feelings are easily understood. Where the heart is really attached, I know very well how little one can be pleased with the attention of any body else. Every thing is so insipid, so uninteresting, that does not relate to the beloved object! I can perfectly comprehend your feelings.'

'But you should not persuade me that I think so very much about Mr. Tilney, for perhaps I may never see him again.'

'Not see him again! My dearest creature, do not talk of it. I am sure you would be miserable if you thought so.'

'No, indeed, I should not. I do not pretend to say that I was not very much pleased with him; but while I have Udolpho to read, I feel as if nobody could make me miserable. Oh! the dreadful black veil! My dear Isabella, I am sure there must be Laurentina's skeleton behind it.'

'It is so odd to me, that you should never have read Udolpho before; but I suppose Mrs. Morland objects to novels.'

'No, she does not. She very often reads Sir Charles Grandison herself; but new books do not fall in our way.'

'Sir Charles Grandison! That is an amazing horrid book, is it not?—I remember Miss Andrews could not get through the first volume.'

'It is not like Udolpho at all; but yet I think it is very entertaining.'

'Do you indeed!—you surprise me; I thought it had not been readable. But, my dearest Catherine, have you settled what to wear on your head to-night? I am determined at all events to be dressed exactly like you. The men take notice of *that* sometimes you know.'

'But it does not signify if they do;' said Catherine, very innocently.

'Signify! Oh, heavens! I make it a rule never to mind what they say. They are very often amazingly impertinent if you do not treat them with spirit, and make them keep their distance.'

'Are they?—Well, I never observed *that.* They always behave very well to me.'

'Oh! they give themselves such airs. They are the most conceited creatures in the world, and think themselves of so much importance!—By the bye, though I have thought of it a hundred times, I have always forgot to ask you what is your favourite complexion in a man. Do you like them best dark or fair?'

'I hardly know. I never much thought about it. Something between both, I think. Brown—not fair, and not very dark.'

'Very well, Catherine. That is exactly he. I have not forgot your description of Mr. Tilney;—"a brown skin, with dark eyes, and rather dark hair."—Well, my taste is different. I prefer light eyes, and as to complexion—do you know—I like a sallow better than any other. You must not betray me, if you should ever meet with one of your acquaintance answering that description.'

'Betray you!—What do you mean?'

'Nay, do not distress me. I believe I have said too much. Let us drop the subject.'

Catherine, in some amazement, complied; and after remaining a few moments silent, was on the point of reverting to what interested her at that time rather more than any thing else in the world, Laurentina's skeleton; when her friend prevented her, by saying,—'For Heaven's sake! let us move away from this end of the room. Do you not know, there are two odious young men who have been staring at me this half hour. They really put me quite out of countenance. Let us go back and look at the arrivals. They will hardly follow us there.'

Away they walked to the book; and while Isabella examined the names, it was Catherine's employment to watch the proceedings of these alarming young men.

'They are not coming this way, are they? I hope they are not so impertinent as to follow us. Pray let me know if they are coming. I am determined I will not look up.'

In a few moments Catherine, with unaffected pleasure, assured her that she need not be longer uneasy, as the gentlemen had just left the Pump-room.

'And which way are they gone?' said Isabella, turning hastily round. 'One was a very good-looking young man.'

'They went towards the churchyard.'

'Well, I am amazingly glad I have got rid of them! And now, what say you to going to Edgar's Buildings with me, and looking at my new hat? You said you should like to see it.'

Catherine readily agreed. 'Only,' she added, 'perhaps we may overtake the two young men.'

'Oh! never mind that. If we make haste, we shall pass by them presently, and I am dying to shew you my hat.'

'But if we only wait a few minutes, there will be no danger of our seeing them at all.'

'I shall not pay them any such compliment, I assure you. I have no notion of treating men with such respect. *That* is the way to spoil them.'

Catherine had nothing to oppose against such reasoning; and therefore, to shew the independence of Miss Thorpe, and her resolution of humbling the sex, they set off immediately as fast as they could walk, in pursuit of the two young men.

Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley always said that her aim in writing was "to awaken thrilling horror." She succeeded in doing so, far beyond her fondest wishes. She was, of course, the author of that strange, still incredibly alive book *Frankenstein,* but she was also the author of short stories that were far superior, at least in structure, to the convoluted narrative of *Frankenstein.*

As a matter of fact, Mary Shelley had intended *Frankenstein* to be a short story, but her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, influenced by the long novels that were coming off the presses in those days, encouraged her to turn it into a full-length novel.

She was one of the first to explore terror with an almost scientific thoroughness. She was also one of the first writers to give a specific sense of locality to her writing.

In this story, *The Dream,* she uses many facets of the gothic tale effectively. Dreams inspired many gothic writers and encouraged the early development of the gothic novel and the short story. *Frankenstein,* for example, came to Mary Shelley

in a dream, but she said that of many of her other writings as well. Mrs. Shelley also used the gothic love for romantic, far-away places. This story takes place in France, the France that so excited her compatriots of the time. It also is based, in part, on an old legend—another device used frequently in the gothic novel.

Mary Shelley was the daughter of two remarkable people. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was the most important intellectual woman of her day, and the first to express cogently her belief in rights for women. Her father, William Godwin, was one of the greatest literary figures in London. His friends ranged from Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth; all visited his home; all inspired Mary. Her mother had described herself as the first professional woman writer, "a completely new type of person," she said, and Mary Shelley was to continue that tradition.

The Dream

The time of the occurrence of the little legend about to be narrated, was that of the commencement of the reign of Henry IV of France, whose accession and conversion, while they brought peace to the kingdom whose throne he ascended, were inadequate to heal the deep wounds mutually inflicted by the inimical parties. Private feuds, and the memory of mortal injuries, existed between those now apparently united; and often did the hands that had clasped each other in seeming friendly greeting, involuntarily, as the grasp was released, clasp the dagger's hilt, as fitter spokesman to their passions than the words of courtesy that had just fallen from their lips. Many of the fiercer Catholics retreated to their distant provinces; and while they concealed in solitude their rankling discontent, not less keenly did they long for the day when they might show it openly.

In a large and fortified château built on a rugged steep overlooking the Loire, not far from the town of Nantes, dwelt the

last of her race, and the heiress of their fortunes, the young and beautiful Countess de Villeneuve. She had spent the preceding year in complete solitude in her secluded abode; and the mourning she wore for a father and two brothers, the victims of the civil wars, was a graceful and good reason why she did not appear at court, and mingle with its festivities. But the orphan countess inherited a high name and broad lands; and it was soon signified to her that the king, her guardian, desired that she should bestow them, together with her hand, upon some noble whose birth and accomplishments should entitle him to the gift. Constance, in reply, expressed her intention of taking vows, and retiring to a convent. The king earnestly and resolutely forbade this act, believing such an idea to be the result of sensibility overwrought by sorrow, and relying on the hope that, after a time, the genial spirit of youth would break through this cloud.

A year passed, and still the countess persisted; and at last Henry, unwilling to exercise compulsion,—desirous, too, of judging for himself of the motives that led one so beautiful, young, and gifted with fortune's favours, to desire to bury herself in a cloister,—announced his intention, now that the period of her mourning was expired, of visiting her château; and if he brought not with him, the monarch said, inducement sufficient to change her design, he would yield his consent to its fulfilment.

Many a sad hour had Constance passed—many a day of tears, and many a night of restless misery. She had closed her gates against every visitant; and, like the Lady Olivia in 'Twelfth Night', vowed herself to loneliness and weeping. Mistress of herself, she easily silenced the entreaties and remonstrances of underlings, and nursed her grief as it had been the thing she loved. Yet it was too keen, too bitter, too burning, to be a fa-

voured guest. In fact, Constance, young, ardent, and vivacious, battled with it, struggled and longed to cast it off; but all that was joyful in itself, or fair in outward show, only served to renew it; and she could best support the burden of her sorrow with patience, when, yielding to it, it oppressed but did not torture her.

Constance had left the castle to wander in the neighbouring grounds. Lofty and extensive as were the apartments of her abode, she felt pent up within their walls, beneath their fretted roofs. The spreading uplands and the antique wood, associated to her with every dear recollection of her past life, enticed her to spend hours and days beneath their leafy coverts. The motion and change eternally working, as the wind stirred among the boughs, or the journeying sun rained its beams through them, soothed and called her out of that dull sorrow which clutched her heart with so unrelenting a pang beneath her castle roof.

There was one spot on the verge of the well-wooded park, one nook of ground, whence she could discern the country extended beyond, yet which was in itself thick set with tall umbrageous trees—a spot which she had forsworn, yet whither unconsciously her steps for ever tended, and where now again, for the twentieth time that day, she had unaware found herself. She sat upon a grassy mound, and looked wistfully on the flowers she had herself planted to adorn the verdurous recess—to her the temple of memory and love. She held the letter from the king which was the parent to her of so much despair. Dejection sat upon her features, and her gentle heart asked fate why, so young, unprotected, and forsaken, she should have to struggle with this new form of wretchedness.

'I but ask,' she thought, 'to live in my father's halls—in the spot familiar to my infancy—to water with my frequent tears the graves of those I loved; and here in these woods, where such

a mad dream of happiness was mine, to celebrate for ever the obsequies of Hope!'

A rustling among the boughs now met her ear—her heart beat quick—all again was still.

'Foolish girl!' she half muttered; 'dupe of thine own passionate fancy: because here we met; because seated here I have expected, and sounds like these have announced, his dear approach; so now every coney as it stirs, and every bird as it awakens silence, speaks of him. O Gaspar!—mine once—never again will this beloved spot be made glad by thee—never more!'

Again the bushes were stirred, and footsteps were heard in the brake. She rose; her heart beat high; it must be that silly Manon, with her impertinent entreaties for her to return. But the steps were firmer and slower than would be those of her waiting-woman; and now emerging from the shade, she too plainly discerned the intruder. Her first impulse was to fly:—but once again to see him—to hear his voice:—once again before she placed eternal vows between them, to stand together, and find the wide chasm filled which absence had made, could not injure the dead, and would soften the fatal sorrow that made her cheek so pale.

And now he was before her, the same beloved one with whom she had exchanged vows of constancy. He, like her, seemed sad; nor could she resist the imploring glance that entreated her for one moment to remain.

'I come, lady,' said the young knight, 'without a hope to bend your inflexible will. I come but once again to see you, and to bid you farewell before I depart for the Holy Land. I come to beseech you not to immure yourself in the dark cloister to avoid one as hateful as myself,—one you will never see more. Whether I die or live, France and I are parted for ever!'

'That were fearful, were it true,' said Constance; 'but King

Henry will never so lose his favourite cavalier. The throne you helped to build, you still will guard. Nay, as I ever had power over thought of thine, go not to Palestine.'

'One word of yours could detain me—one smile—Constance'—and the youthful lover knelt before her; but her harsher purpose was recalled by the image once so dear and familiar, now so strange and so forbidden.

'Linger no longer here!' she cried. 'No smile, no word of mine will ever again be yours. Why are you here—here, where the spirits of the dead wander, and claiming these shades as their own, curse the false girl who permits their murderer to disturb their sacred repose?'

'When love was young and you were kind,' replied the knight, 'you taught me to thread the intricacies of these woods—you welcomed me to this dear spot, where once you vowed to be my own—even beneath these ancient trees.'

'A wicked sin it was,' said Constance, 'to unbar my father's doors to the son of his enemy, and dearly is it punished!'

The young knight gained courage as she spoke; yet he dared not move, lest she, who, every instant, appeared ready to take flight, should be startled from her momentary tranquillity; but he slowly replied:—'Those were happy days, Constance, full of terror and deep joy, when evening brought me to your feet; and while hate and vengeance were as its atmosphere to yonder frowning castle, this leafy, starlit bower was the shrine of love.'

'*Happy?*—miserable days!' echoed Constance; 'when I imagined good could arise from failing in my duty, and that disobedience would be rewarded of God. Speak not of love, Gaspar!—a sea of blood divides us for ever! Approach me not! The dead and the beloved stand even now between us: their pale shadows warn me of my fault, and menace me for listening to their murderer.'

'That am not I!' exclaimed the youth. 'Behold, Constance, we are each the last of our race. Death has dealt cruelly with us, and we are alone. It was not so when first we loved—when parent, kinsman, brother, nay, my own mother breathed curses on the house of Villeneuve; and in spite of all I blessed it. I saw thee, my lovely one, and blessed it. The God of peace planted love in our hearts, and with mystery and secrecy we met during many a summer night in the moonlit dells; and when daylight was abroad, in this sweet recess we fled to avoid its scrutiny, and here, even here, where now I kneel in supplication, we both knelt and made our vows. Shall they be broken?'

Constance wept as her lover recalled the images of happy hours. 'Never,' she exclaimed, 'O never! Thou knowest, or wilt soon know, Gaspar, the faith and resolves of one who dare not be yours. Was it for us to talk of love and happiness, when war, and hate, and blood were raging around! The fleeting flowers our young hands strewed were trampled by the deadly encounter of mortal foes. By your father's hand mine died; and little boots it to know whether, as my brother swore, and you deny, your hand did or did not deal the blow that destroyed him. You fought among those by whom he died. Say no more—no other word: it is impiety towards the unreposing dead to hear you. Go, Gaspar; forget me. Under the chivalrous and gallant Henry your career may be glorious; and some fair girl will listen, as once I did, to your vows, and be made happy by them. Farewell! May the Virgin bless you! In my cell and cloister-home I will not forget the best Christian lesson—to pray for our enemies. Gaspar, farewell!'

She glided hastily from the bower: with swift steps she threaded the glade and sought the castle. Once within the seclusion of her own apartment she gave way to the burst of grief that tore her gentle bosom like a tempest; for hers was that worst

sorrow which taints past joys, making remorse wait upon the memory of bliss, and linking love and fancied guilt in such fearful society as that of the tyrant when he bound a living body to a corpse. Suddenly a thought darted into her mind. At first she rejected it as puerile and superstitious; but it would not be driven away. She called hastily for her attendant, 'Manon,' she said, 'didst thou ever sleep on St Catherine's couch?'

Manon crossed herself. 'Heaven forefend! None ever did, since I was born, but two: one fell into the Loire and was drowned; the other only looked upon the narrow bed, and returned to her own home without a word. It is an awful place; and if the votary have not led a pious and good life, woe betide the hour when she rests her head on the holy stone!'

Constance crossed herself also. 'As for our lives, it is only through our Lord and the blessed saints that we can any of us hope for righteousness. I will sleep on that couch tomorrow night!'

'Dear, my lady! and the king arrives tomorrow.'

'The more need that I resolve. It cannot be that misery so intense should dwell in any heart, and no cure be found. I had hoped to be the bringer of peace to our houses; and if the good work to be for me a crown of thorns Heaven shall direct me. I will rest tomorrow night on St Catherine's bed: and if, as I have heard, the saint deigns to direct her votaries in dreams, I will be guided by her; and, believing that I act according to the dictates of Heaven, I shall feel resigned even to the worst.'

The king was on his way to Nantes from Paris, and he slept on this night at a castle but a few miles distant. Before dawn a young cavalier was introduced into his chamber. The knight had a serious, nay, a sad aspect; and all beautiful as he was in feature and limb, looked wayworn and haggard. He stood silent in Henry's presence, who, alert and gay, turned his lively blue

eyes upon his guest, saying gently, 'So thou foundest her obdurate, Gaspar?'

'I found her resolved on our mutual misery. Alas! my liege, it is not, credit me, the least of my grief, that Constance sacrifices her own happiness when she destroys mine.'

'And thou believest that she will say nay to the gaillard chevalier whom we ourselves present to her?'

'Oh, my liege, think not that thought! it cannot be. My heart deeply, most deeply, thanks you for your generous condescension. But she whom her lover's voice in solitude—whose entreaties, when memory and seclusion aided the spell—could not persuade, will resist even your majesty's commands. She is bent upon entering a cloister; and I, so please you, will now take my leave:—I am henceforth a soldier of the cross.'

'Gaspar,' said the monarch, 'I know woman better than thou. It is not by submission nor tearful plaints she is to be won. The death of her relatives naturally sits heavy at the young countess's heart; and nourishing in solitude her regret and her repentance, she fancies that Heaven itself forbids your union. Let the voice of the world reach her—the voice of earthly power and earthly kindness—the one commanding, the other pleading, and both finding response in her own heart—and by my say and the Holy Cross, she will be yours. Let our plan still hold. And now to horse: the morning wears, and the sun is risen.'

The king arrived at the bishop's palace, and proceeded forthwith to mass in the cathedral. A sumptuous dinner succeeded, and it was afternoon before the monarch proceeded through the town beside the Loire to where, a little above Nantes, the Chateau Villeneuve was situated. The young countess received him at the gate. Henry looked in vain for the cheek blanched by misery, the aspect of downcast despair which he had been taught to expect. Her cheek was flushed, her manner animated,

her voice scarce tremulous. 'She loves him not,' thought Henry, 'or already her heart has consented.'

A collation was prepared for the monarch; and after some little hesitation, arising from the cheerfulness of her mien, he mentioned the name of Gaspar. Constance blushed instead of turning pale, and replied very quickly, 'Tomorrow, good my liege; I ask for a respite but until tomorrow;—all will then be decided;—tomorrow I am vowed to God—or—'

She looked confused, and the king, at once surprised and pleased, said, 'Then you hate not young De Vaudemont;—you forgive him for the inimical blood that warms his veins.'

'We are taught that we should forgive, that we should love our enemies,' the countess replied, with some trepidation.

'Now, by Saint Denis, that is a right welcome answer for the novice,' said the king, laughing. 'What ho! my faithful serving-man, Don Apollo in disguise! come forward, and thank your lady for her love.'

In such disguise as had concealed him from all, the cavalier had hung behind, and viewed with infinite surprise the demeanour and calm countenance of the lady. He could not hear her words: but was this even she whom he had seen trembling and weeping the evening before?—this she whose very heart was torn by conflicting passion?—who saw the pale ghosts of parent and kinsman stand between her and the lover whom more than her life she adored? It was a riddle hard to solve. The king's call was in unison with his impatience, and he sprang forward. He was at her feet; while she, still passion-driven overwrought by the very calmness she had assumed, uttered one cry as she recognized him, and sank senseless on the floor.

All this was very unintelligible. Even when her attendants had brought her to life, another fit succeeded, and then passionate floods of tears; while the monarch, waiting in the hall, eyeing the half-eaten collation, and humming some romance in

commemoration of woman's waywardness, knew not how to reply to Vaudemont's look of bitter disappointment and anxiety. At length the countess' chief attendant came with an apology: 'Her lady was ill, very ill. The next day she would throw herself at the king's feet, at once to solicit his excuse, and to disclose her purpose.'

'Tomorrow—again tomorrow!—Does tomorrow bear some charm, maiden?' said the king. 'Can you read us the riddle, pretty one? What strange tale belongs to tomorrow, that all rests on its advent?'

Manon coloured, looked down, and hesitated. But Henry was no tyro in the art of enticing ladies' attendants to disclose their ladies' council. Manon was besides frightened by the countess' scheme, on which she was still obstinately bent, so she was the more readily induced to betray it. To sleep in St Catherine's bed, to rest on a narrow ledge overhanging the deep rapid Loire, and if, as was most probable, the luckless dreamer escaped from falling into it, to take the disturbed visions that such uneasy slumber might produce for the dictate of Heaven, was a madness of which even Henry himself could scarcely deem any woman capable. But could Constance, her whose beauty was so highly intellectual, and whom he had heard perpetually praised for her strength of mind and talents, could *she* be so strangely infatuated! And can passion play such freaks with us?—like death, levelling even the aristocracy of the soul, and bringing noble and peasant, the wise and foolish, under one thraldom? It was strange—yes she must have her way. That she hesitated in her decision was much; and it was to be hoped that St Catherine would play no ill-natured part. Should it be otherwise, a purpose to be swayed by a dream might be influenced by other waking thoughts. To the more material kind of danger some safeguard should be brought.

There is no feeling more awful than that which invades a

weak human heart bent upon gratifying its ungovernable impulses in contradiction to the dictates of conscience. Forbidden pleasures are said to be the most agreeable;—it may be so to rude natures, to those who love to struggle, combat, and contest; who find happiness in a fray, and joy in the conflict of passion. But softer and sweeter was the gentle spirit of Constance; and love and duty contending crushed and tortured her poor heart. To commit her conduct to the inspirations of religion, or, if it was so to be named, of superstition, was a blessed relief. The very perils that threatened her undertaking gave zest to it;—to dare for his sake was happiness;—the very difficulty of the way that led to the completion of her wishes at once gratified her love and distracted her thoughts from her despair. Or if it was decreed that she must sacrifice all, the risk of danger and of death were of trifling import in comparison with the anguish which would then be her portion for ever.

The night threatened to be stormy, the raging wind shook the casements, and the trees waved their huge shadowy arms, as giants might in fantastic dance and mortal broil. Constance and Manon, unattended, quitted the château by a postern, and began to descend the hillside. The moon had not yet risen; and though the way was familiar to both, Manon tottered and trembled; while the countess, drawing her silken cloak around her, walked with a firm step down the steep. They came to the river's side, where a small boat was moored, and one man was in waiting. Constance stepped lightly in, and then aided her fearful companion. In a few moments they were in the middle of the stream. The warm, tempestuous, animating, equinoctial wind swept over them. For the first time since her mourning, a thrill of pleasure swelled the bosom of Constance. She hailed the emotion with double joy. It cannot be, she thought, that Heaven will forbid me to love one so brave, so generous, and so good as

the noble Gaspar. Another I can never love; I shall die if divided from him; and this heart, these limbs, so alive with glowing sensation, are they already predestined to an early grave? Oh no! life speaks aloud within them. I shall live to love. Do not all things love?—the winds as they whisper to the rushing waters? the waters as they kiss the flowery banks, and speed to mingle with the sea? Heaven and earth are sustained by, and live through, love; and shall Constance alone, whose heart has ever been a deep, gushing, overflowing well of true affection, be compelled to set a stone upon the fount to lock it up for ever?

These thoughts bade fair for pleasant dreams; and perhaps the countess, an adept in the blind god's lore, therefore indulged them the more readily. But as thus she was engrossed by soft emotions, Manon caught her arm:—'Lady, look,' she cried; 'it comes—yet the oars have no sound. Now the Virgin shield us! Would we were at home!'

A dark boat glided by them. Four rowers, habited in black cloaks, pulled at oars which, as Manon said, gave no sound; another sat at the helm: like the rest, his person was veiled in a dark mantle, but he wore no cap; and though his face was turned from them, Constance recognized her lover. 'Gaspar,' she cried aloud, 'dost thou live?'—but the figure in the boat neither turned its head nor replied, and quickly it was lost in the shadowy waters.

How changed now was the fair countess' reverie! Already Heaven had begun its spell, and unearthly forms were around, as she strained her eyes through the gloom. Now she saw and now she lost view of the bark that occasioned her terror; and now it seemed that another was there, which held the spirits of the dead; and her father waved to her from shore, and her brothers frowned on her.

Meanwhile they neared the landing. Her bark was moored

in a little cove, and Constance stood upon the bank. Now she trembled, and half yielded to Manon's entreaty to return; till the unwise *suivante* mentioned the king's and De Vaudemont's name, and spoke of the answer to be given tomorrow. What answer, if she turned back from her intent?

She now hurried forward up the broken ground of the bank, and then along its edge, till they came to a hill which abruptly hung over the tide. A small chapel stood near. With trembling fingers the countess drew forth the key and unlocked its door. They entered. It was dark—save that a little lamp, flickering in the wind, showed an uncertain light from before the figure of Saint Catherine. The two women knelt; they prayed; and then rising, with a cheerful accent the countess bade her attendant good-night. She unlocked a little low iron door. It opened on a narrow cavern. The roar of waters was heard beyond. 'Thou mayest not follow, my poor Manon,' said Constance,—'nor dost thou much desire:—this adventure is for me alone.'

It was hardly fair to leave the trembling servant in the chapel alone, who had neither hope nor fear, nor love, nor grief to beguile her; but, in those days, esquires and waiting-women often played the part of subalterns in the army, gaining knocks and no fame. Besides, Manon was safe in holy ground. The countess meanwhile pursued her way groping in the dark through the narrow tortuous passage. At length what seemed light to her long darkened sense gleamed on her. She reached an open cavern in the overhanging hill's side, looking over the rushing tide beneath. She looked out upon the night. The waters of the Loire were speeding, as since that day have they ever sped—changeful, yet the same; the heavens were thickly veiled with clouds, and the wind in the trees was as mournful and ill-omened as if it rushed round a murderer's tomb. Constance shuddered a little, and looked upon her bed,—a narrow ledge of

earth and a moss-grown stone bordering on the very verge of the precipice. She doffed her mantle,—such was one of the conditions of the spell;—she bowed her head, and loosened the tresses of her dark hair; she bared her feet; and thus, fully prepared for suffering to the utmost the chill influence of the cold night, she stretched herself on the narrow couch that scarce afforded room for her repose, and whence, if she moved in sleep, she must be precipitated into the cold waters below.

At first it seemed to her as if she never should sleep again. No great wonder that exposure to the blast and her perilous position should forbid her eyelids to close. At length she fell into a reverie so soft and soothing that she wished even to watch; and then by degrees her senses became confused; and now she was on St Catherine's bed—the Loire rushing beneath, and the wild wind sweeping by—and now—oh whither?—and what dreams did the saint send, to drive her to despair, or to bid her be blest for ever?

Beneath the rugged hill, upon the dark tide, another watched, who feared a thousand things, and scarce dared hope. He had meant to precede the lady on her way, but when he found that he had outstayed his time, with muffled oars and breathless haste he had shot by the bark that contained his Constance, nor even turned at her voice, fearful to incur her blame, and her commands to return. He had seen her emerge from the passage, and shuddered as she leant over the cliff. He saw her step forth, clad as she was in white, and could mark her as she lay on the ledge beetling above. What a vigil did the lovers keep!—she given up to visionary thoughts, he knowing—and the consciousness thrilled his bosom with strange emotion—that love, and love for him, had led her to that perilous couch; and that while dangers surrounded her in every shape, she was alive only to the small still voice that whispered to her heart the dream which

was to decide their destinies. She slept perhaps—but he waked and watched; and night wore away, as now praying, now entranced by alternating hope and fear, he sat in his boat, his eyes fixed on the white garb of the slumberer above.

Morning—was it morning that struggled in the clouds? Would morning ever come to waken her? And had she slept? and what dreams of weal or woe had peopled her sleep? Gaspar grew impatient. He commanded his boatmen still to wait, and he sprang forward, intent on clambering the precipice. In vain they urged the danger, nay, the impossibility of the attempt; he clung to the rugged face of the hill, and found footing where it would seem no footing was. The acclivity, indeed, was not high; the dangers of St Catherine's bed arising from the likelihood that any one who slept on so narrow a couch would be precipitated into the waters beneath. Up the steep ascent Gaspar continued to toil, and at last reached the roots of a tree that grew near the summit. Aided by its branches, he made good his stand at the very extremity of the ledge, near the pillow on which lay the uncovered head of his beloved. Her hands were folded on her bosom; her dark hair fell round her throat and pillowed her cheek: her face was serene: sleep was there in all its innocence and in all its helplessness; every wilder emotion was hushed, and her bosom heaved in regular breathing. He could see her heart beat as it lifted her fair hands crossed above. No statue hewn of marble in monumental effigy was ever half so fair; and within that surpassing form dwelt a soul true, tender, self-devoted, and affectionate as ever warmed a human breast.

With what deep passion did Gaspar gaze, gathering hope from the placidity of her angel countenance! A smile wreathed her lips; and he too involuntarily smiled, as he hailed the happy omen; when suddenly her cheek was flushed, her bosom heaved, a tear stole from her dark lashes, and then a whole shower fell,

as starting up she cried, 'No!—he shall not die!—I will unloose his chains!—I will save him!' Gaspar's hand was there. He caught her light form ready to fall from the perilous couch. She opened her eyes and beheld her lover, who had watched over her dream of fate, and who had saved her.

Manon also had slept well, dreaming or not, and was startled in the morning to find that she waked surrounded by a crowd. The little desolate chapel was hung with tapestry—the altar adorned with golden chalices—the priest was chanting mass to a goodly array of kneeling knights. Manon saw that King Henry was there; and she looked for another whom she found not, when the iron door of the cavern passage opened, and Gaspar de Vaudemont entered from it, leading the fair form of Constance; who, in her white robes and dark dishevelled hair, with a face in which smiles and blushes contended with deeper emotion, approached the altar, and, kneeling with her lover, pronounced the vows that united them for ever.

It was long before the happy Gaspar could win from his lady the secret of her dream. In spite of the happiness she now enjoyed, she had suffered too much not to look back even with terror to those days when she thought love a crime, and every event connected with them wore an awful aspect. Many a vision, she said, she had that fearful night. She had seen the spirits of her father and brothers in Paradise; she had beheld Gaspar victoriously combating among the infidels; she had beheld him in King Henry's court, favoured and beloved; and she herself—now pining in a cloister, now a bride, now grateful to Heaven for the full measure of bliss presented to her, now weeping away her sad days—till suddenly she thought herself in Paynim land; and the saint herself, St Catherine, guiding her unseen through the city of the infidels. She entered a palace, and beheld the miscreants rejoicing in victory; and then, de-

scending to the dungeons beneath, they groped their way through damp vaults, and low, mildewed passages, to one cell, darker and more frightful than the rest. On the floor lay one with soiled and tattered garments, with unkempt locks and wild, matted beard. His cheek was worn and thin; his eyes had lost their fire; his form was a mere skeleton; the chains hung loosely on the fleshless bones.

'And was it my appearance in that attractive state and winning costume that softened the hard heart of Constance?' asked Gaspar, smiling at this painting of what would never be.

'Even so,' replied Constance; 'for my heart whispered me that this was my doing; and who could recall the life that waned in your pulses—who restore, save the destroyer? My heart never warmed to my living, happy knight as then it did to his wasted image as it lay, in the visions of night, at my feet. A veil fell from my eyes; a darkness was dispelled from before me. Methought I then knew for the first time what life and what death was. I was bid believe that to make the living happy was not to injure the dead; and I felt how wicked and how vain was that false philosophy which placed virtue and good in hatred and unkindness. You should not die; I would loosen your chains and save you, and bid you live for love. I sprung forward, and the death I deprecated for you would, in my presumption, have been mine,—then, when first I felt the real value of life,—but that your arm was there to save me, your dear voice to bid me be blest for evermore.'

Harriet Prescott Spofford

The British and European gothic story crossed the Atlantic with its metaphors flying as high as the sails on the ships that bore the books and magazines from across the water. Here in our own country, writers were to explore frontier wilderness landscapes in their contribution to the world of the gothic.

One of the most important American contributors to the gothic short story was Mrs. Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford. Born in 1835, the eldest of five children, she was determined to make a success of herself as a writer. The Prescotts had always been a distinguished family. New England's history was filled with their names. There had been military heroes and sea captains, clergymen, merchants and, for that matter, writers too, but no important woman writer until Harriet remedied that at the ripe age of sixteen.

As in so many families of that time, economic reverses occurred frequently and suddenly. One ship owner had but to lose his ship and all of a family's investment could vanish over-

night. When Harriet Prescott's family lost their money, her father took off for distant Oregon. Harriet, her mother, and the younger children went to Newburyport, Massachusetts. The Putnam Free School and Pinkerton Academy, both in advance of their time in education, fostered the girl's obvious literary talent.

When she was only sixteen, she won a prize for writing an essay on Hamlet's madness. Soon she was being talked about in Boston, the heart of literary America in that day. It was the great period of the Boston magazines and such distinguished editors as James Russell Lowell and Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

Stories poured from Harriet's pen, many touched with gothic romanticism, legends of local history, and hints of the supernatural.

For nearly sixty years she wrote short stories, novels, poems, articles on the home, travel books, children's books, and all sorts of literary reminiscences. Her "at homes" were an important part of New England's cultural history.

Mrs. Spofford (she married the lawyer Richard Smith Spofford in 1865) was a great supporter of other women writers. She wrote extensively about the Brontës, George Eliot, and George Sand. She was distinctly the center of the coterie of New England writers, who, unlike Mary Wilkins Freeman, "distrusted naturalism," preferring instead the old romantic gothic paths. She was, as they said when she died in her eighty-seventh year, the last "romantic survival of another time."

The Mount of Sorrow

Never did anything seem fresher and sweeter than the plateau on which we emerged in the early sunset, after defiling all day through the dark deep mountain-sides in the rain.

We had promised Rhoda to assault her winter fastness whenever she should summon us; and now, in obedience to her message, a gay party of us had left the railway, and had driven, sometimes in slushy snow and sometimes on bare ground, up the old mountain-road, laughing and singing and jangling our bells, till at length the great bare woods, lifting their line forever before us and above us, gave place to bald black mountain-sides, whose oppressive gloom and silence stifled everything but a longing to escape from between them, and from the possible dangers in crossing bridges, and fording streams swollen by the fortnight's thaws and rains. Now and then the stillness resolved itself into the murmuring of bare sprays, the rustling of rain, the dancing of innumerable unfettered brooks glittering with

motion, but without light, from the dusky depths; now and then a ghastly lustre shot from the ice still hanging like a glacier upon some upper steep, or a strange gleam from the sodden snow on their floors lightened the roofs of the leafless forests that overlapped the chasms, and trailed their twisted roots like shapes of living horror. What was there, I wondered, so darkly familiar in it all? in what nightmare had I dreamed it all before? Long ere the journey's end our spirits became dead as last night's wine; we shared the depression of all nature, and felt as if we had come out of chaos and the end of all things when the huge mountain gates closed behind us, and we dashed out on the plateau where the grass, from which the wintry wrapping had been washed, had not lost all its greenness, and in the sudden lifting of the rain-cloud a red sparkle of sunset lighted the windows, as if a hundred flambeaux had been kindled to greet us.

A huge fire burned in the fireplace of the drawing-room when we had mounted the stairs and crossed the great hall, where other fires were blazing and sending ruddy flames to skim among the cedar rafters; and all that part of the house sacred to Colonel Vorse, and opened now the first time in many winters, was thoroughly warm and cheerful with lights and flowers and rugs and easy-chairs and books. We might easily have fancied ourselves, that night, in those spacious rooms, when, toilets made and dinner over, we re-assembled around the solid glow of the chimney logs, a modern party in some old mediaeval chamber, all the more for the spirit of the scene outside, where the storm was telling its rede again, rain changing to snow, and a cruel blast keening round the many gables and screaming down the chimneys. After all, Rhoda's and Merivale's plan of having us in the hills before late-lingering winter should be quite gone, and doing a little Sintram business with skates and wolves and

hill visions, should have been carried out earlier. To them it was all but little less novel than it was to me, and Rhoda, who, although a year or two my junior, had been my intimate, so far as I ever had an intimate, would not rest till she had devised this party, without which she knew she could not have me, even persuading our good old Dr. Devens to leave his pulpit and people, and stamp the proceeding with his immaculate respectability. As it was, however, it looked as though we were simply to be shut in by a week of storm following the thaw. Well, there are compensations in all things: perhaps two people in whom I had some interest would know each other a trifle better before the week ended then.

The place was really the home of Rhoda and Merivale, or was now to become so. Colonel Vorse, their father, who had married so young that he felt but little older than they, and was quite their companion, was still the owner of the vast summer hostelry, although no longer its manager. After accumulating his fortune he had taken his children about the world, educating them and himself at the same time, with now an object lesson in Germany and now another in Peru, and finally returning to this place, which, so far as we could see, was absolute desolation, without a neighbor, but which to him was bristling with memories and associations and old friends across the intervale and over the mountain and round the spur. There was something weird to me, as I looked out at the flying whiteness of the moon-lit storm, in those acquaintances of his among the hollows of these pallid hills; it seemed as though they must partake of the coldness and whiteness, and as if they were only dead people, when all was said. Perhaps Dr. Devens, who half the way up had been quoting,

> "Pavilioned high, he sits
> In darkness from excessive splendor born,"

had another phase of the same feeling. I heard him saying, as I passed him five minutes before, where he sat astride a chair in front of the long oriel casement: "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light." He is expecting a convulsion of nature, I remember thinking, as I went by and paused at another window myself. A convulsion of nature! I fancy that he found it.

"There is something eerie here," I said, as I still gazed at the scene; for the dim gigantic shapes of the hills rose round us like sheeted ghosts, while the flying scud of the storm, filled with the white diffusion of unseen light, every now and then opened to let the glimpses out. "And see the witch-fires," as the rosy reflections of our burning logs and lights danced on the whirling snow without. "Is there anything wanting to make us feel as if we had been caught here by some spell, and were to be held by some charm?"

"I wish I knew the charm," said Colonel Vorse, by my side, and half under his breath. And then I felt a little angrier with myself for coming than I had felt before.

"I often hear you talking of your belief in certain telluric forces that must have most power among the mountains where they first had play, and where earth is not only beneath, but is above you and around you. Well, we are here in the stronghold of these telluric forces. I am their old friend and ally: let me see what they will do for me."

It was true. And I half shivered with an indefinite fear that I might be compelled, in spite of all wish and prejudice, and birthright—I, the child of proud old colonial grandees of the

South; he, the son of a mountain farmer, who had married a mate of his own degree, and had kept a mountain inn till fortune found him and death took her. My father at least was the child of those proud old colonials, and I had lived with his people and been reared on their traditions. Who my mother was I never knew; for my father had married her in some romantic fashion—a runaway match—and she had died at my birth, and he had shortly followed her. I had nothing that belonged to her but the half of a broken miniature my father had once painted of her, as I understood. I always wore it, with I know not what secret sentiment, but I showed it to nobody. I had sometimes wondered about the other half, but my life had not left me much time for sentiment or wonder—full of gayety till my grandfather's death left me homeless; full of gayety since his friend Mrs. Montresor had adopted me for child and companion, subject to her kind whims and tyrannies. But if she took me here and took me there, and clad me like a princess, I was none the less aware of the fact that I was without a penny—morbidly aware of it without doubt. But it disposed me to look with favor on no rich man's suit, and the lover as penniless as I and as fine as my ideal lover had not yet appeared. It made me almost hate the face and form, the color, the hair, that they dared to call Titianesque, speak of as if it were the free booty of pigment and canvas, and wish to drag captive in the golden chains of their wealth. When I had met Colonel Vorse, a year ago, twice my age though he was, he was the first one I had wished as poor as I—he the plebian newly rich. Yet not so newly rich was he that he had not had time to become used to his riches, to see the kingdoms of the earth and weigh them in his balance, to serve his country on the battle-field, and his State in the council-chamber; and, for the rest, contact with the world is sadly educating.

"I often look at Colonel Vorse among the men born in the

purple," said Mrs. Montresor once—she thought people born in the purple were simply those who had never earned their living—"and he is the superior of them all. What a country it is where a man keeping a common tavern in the first half of his life may make himself the equal of sovereigns in the other half! I don't understand it; he is the finest gentleman of them all. And he looks it. Don't you think so, Helena?"

But I never told Mrs. Montresor what I thought. It is all very well to generalize and to be glad that certain institutions produce certain effects; but of course you are superior to the institutions, or you wouldn't be generalizing so, and all the more, of course, superior to the effects, and so I don't see how it signifies to you personally.

"You ought to have your head carried on a pike," said Mrs. Montresor, again. "You will, if we ever have any *bonnets rouges* in America. You are the aristocrat pure and simple. The Princess Lamballe was nothing to you. You think humanity exists so that *nous autres,* by standing on it, may get the light and air. You are sure that you are made of different clay—the canaille of street mud, for instance, and you of the fine white stuff from which they mould Dresden china. You are quite a study to me, my love. I expect to see you marry a pavior yet, either one who lays down or one who tears up paving-stones." But I had only laughed again. She plumed herself on being cosmopolitan even to her principles.

"You give me credit for too much thinking on the subject," I said, "if it is credit. Indeed, I don't concern myself about such people; and as for marrying one of them, I could as soon marry into a different race, African or Mongolian. They *are* a different race."

And I remembered all this as Colonel Vorse stood leaning his hand above me on the jamb of the window-frame—for al-

though I was tall, he was a son of Anak—with that air which, never vaunting strength, always made you aware of its repression. I could fancy hearing Mrs. Montresor say, "That air of his! it always fetches women!" for she loved a little slang, by some antipodal attraction of her refinement, and I instinctively stiffened myself, determined it should never fetch *me*. And here he was calling his allies, the spirits and powers of the dark and terrible mountain heights and depths, and openly giving battle. I don't know why it depressed me; I felt as if the very fact that it did was a half surrender; I looked up at him a moment; I forgot who he was; I wished he was as poor as I. But to become the mother of Rhoda, my friend, and of Merivale, that laughing young giant—what absurdity, if all the rest were equal! And that other, the dead woman, the first wife—should one not always be jealous of that sweet early love? Could one endure it? Here among these hills with all their ghostliness she would haunt me. And then I turned and swept away to the fireside, holding out my hands to the flame, and glad to sink into the chair that some one had left empty there.

I hardly knew what world I was living in when, perhaps a half-hour later, I heard Colonel Vorse's voice. "The trouble is that men are *not* born free and equal," he was saying. "Free? They are hampered by inheritance and circumstance from the moment of birth. Equal? It is a self-evident lie. And the world has rhapsodized for a hundred years over so clumsy a statement. All men are born with equal rights. That is the precise statement. My rights—rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are equal to the rights of all the princelings of the earth; their rights equal only to mine. So far as they interfere with my rights they are public enemies, and are to be dealt with; and so far as I interfere with their rights, I am a trespasser to be punished. Otherwise, prince or peasant, each is a man,

whether he wears a blouse or a star and garter; and if man was made in the image of God, let us do no indignity to that image in one or in another."

Did I understand him? Was Colonel Vorse proclaiming himself the equal of Prince San Sorcererino who had entertained us in his palaces last year? Well. And was he not? All at once something seemed to sift away from before my eyes—a veil that had hidden my kind from me. Was there no longer even that natural aristocracy in which Shakespeare or Homer or Dante was king? Was the world a brotherhood, and they the public enemy, the enemy of the great perfect race to come, who helped one brother take advantage of another? Were those ribbons in the buttonhole, the gifts of kings, of no more worth than the ribbons of cigars?

Mrs. Montresor was toying with her fan beside me, and talking in an undertone behind it. "What prince of all that you have seen or read of," said she, "if born on a meagre mountain farm, would have made his fortune and have educated himself, as this man has done? I think the kings who founded races of kings were like him. And what prince of them all alive looks so much the prince as he? This one as fat as Falstaff and as low, that one with a hump on his back, the other without brains, the next with brains awry, and none of them made as becomes a man. Tell me, Helena?"

"I think you are in love yourself," I said.

She laughed. "As tall as Saul, as dark, as lordly in all proportions, as gentle as Jonathan, and with a soul like David's—why shouldn't I be?" she said. "And he not the equal of the granddaughter of a South Carolina planter! Tell me again, Helena, what has she ever done to prove herself his equal?"

She had had a fancy—Heaven knows why—that her young mother, who had run away with her father, was the daughter of a noble foreign family; or else why should the match have

been clandestine? She had had a fancy that she was therefore noble, as her mother was—the mother even whose name her child did not know other than as the slaves had told her the young bridegroom called her Pansy because of a pair of purple-dark eyes. That was about all. That was all the answer I could have made, had I spoken, to her gentle raillery, half mockery, in which she did not quite believe herself. But even were it so, and the daughter noble as the mother, could blood that had filtered through generations of oppressors lounging in laps of luxury be pure as this blood that had informed none but simple and innocent lives, and seemed just now as if it had come fresh from the hands of the Maker? I surveyed him from behind the hand-screen that failed to keep the ruddy flames from my face, and if I felt him in that glance to be one of the sons of God, and I but one of the daughters of men, again I did not tell Mrs. Montresor.

But the witch could always read my thoughts. "Still," she said, "he has kept a tavern. There is no getting round that fact by all the poetry in the world. Then why try to get round it? He has furnished food and shelter to the tired and roofless—as noble a way to make money, surely, as working the bones and muscles of slaves, and accepting the gold they earn."

"That is the last I have of such gold," I cried, in a stifled way; and I unclasped the old bracelet on my wrist and tossed it behind the back-log—people were too gaily engaged to observe as at the moment. "I think," I said then, turning upon her, "that you are employed as an advocate, unless—you are really weary of me."

"Weary of you!" she exclaimed, half under her breath though it was—"weary of you, when you are such unceasing variety to me that if you married ten thousand tavern-keepers I should always have a room in the inn!"

"Thank Heaven," I answered her, gaily, "it is an impossibil-

ity that I should ever marry *one.*" And then there was a lull in the laughter and the snatches of song and conversation on the other side of the room; and while I was still gazing after my bracelet and into the chimney-place, where the flames wallowed about unhewn forest logs that took two men to cast to them, Colonel Vorse came over to us.

"You will turn into salamanders," he said.

"It is bad enough to be in hot water," said Mrs. Montresor, lightly. "I will leave the fire to you and Helena."

"Where you sit," said Colonel Vorse then to me, "if you turn your head slightly to the left, and shade your eyes, you can see the side of the darkest and sternest of our mountains. You know we do not call our hills by the names they have in maps and government surveys; the old settlers who first came here called this one, for unknown reasons of their own, the Mount of Sorrow. It has always been the Mount of Sorrow."

"An ominous name for so near a neighbor," I said.

"Ah! you think this region is oppressive, or perhaps dull and tame, without life or stir—desolate, in fact. What if I should tell you that it bubbles, like a caldron over the bottomless pit, with griefs and sins!—that in lives condemned to perpetual imprisonment on these bare rocks, feeding on themselves, traits intensifying, the loneliness, the labor, the negation, slowly extract the juices of humanity, and make crime a matter to be whispered of among them? If they feel they are forgotten by God, what matters the murder or the suicide more or less that gives release? It is hell here or hell there: they are sure of this—they have it; the other may not come to pass."

"What do you mean?" I said, with white lips; for as he spoke it seemed as if I had come into a land of lepers. "Here in this white solitude, among lives fed from the primitive sources of nature and the dew of the morning—"

"I mean," he said, "that I refuse to accept the factitious aid your thoughts have lately been bringing to me. You see I have preternatural senses. Because I was born in the snows of the mountains I am no whit whiter than those born in the purlieus of the police stations of the cities. We are simply of the same human nature. When I win regard, it must be for no idle fancy, but for my own identity."

"Well," I said, "I do not believe you."

"Ah!" he replied, "have I gained a point, and found an advocate in an ideal of me? That would be as romantic as any of the romance of the hills. And there *is* romance here, whether it is born of crime, or of joy or of sorrow. There is romance enough on that old Mount of Sorrow that you see when the storm opens and strips it in that sudden white glory. Keep your eye, if you please, on a spot half-way up the sky, and when the apparition comes again you will find the dark outline of a dwelling there. It was a dwelling once; now it is only a ruin, hut and barn and byre. Why do you shudder? Do you see it? It is only a shadow. But a shadow with outlines black enough to defy the whitest blast that ever blew. Sometimes it seems to me as though that old ruin were itself a ghostly thing, a spectre of tragedies that will not down; for the avalanches divide and leave it, and the storms whistle over and beat against it, and it is always there when the sun rises. I don't know what it has to do with my fortunes; I don't know why it is a blotch upon the face of nature to me; but if ever I grow sad or sick at heart I feel as though I should be made whole again could that evil thing be removed."

"Why not remove it?"

"It does not belong to me. I can do nothing with it. I am not sure that it belongs to any one—which adds to the spectral, you see—although I suppose there is somewhere a nameless heir. How restless you are!" he said, gently. "Will you come out in

the long hall where the great window gives an unobstructed view of the thing, and walk off this nervousness? The storm is lifting, I think; the moon is going to overcome. One may see by the way the fire burns out that the temperature is mounting. Perhaps we shall have a snow-slide as we walk."

Rhoda and Merivale were singing some of the songs they had learned since they came into the hill country, Mrs. Montresor was nodding behind her fan an accompaniment to Dr. Devens's remarks, Adèle was deep in her novel, and a flirtation and some portfolios of prints occupied the rest. To refuse was only to attract attention; besides, I should like to walk. I rose and went out with him into the hall that shut off the wing from the great empty caravansary.

" 'And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor,' " I quoted as we walked; and despite the fire burning on either side, he had brought me a fur for my shoulders.

"Yes," he said, "there comes the moon at last. Now you shall see the black and white of it."

"Oh!" I cried, clasping my hands, as all the silvery lights and immense shadows burst out in a terrible sort of radiance. "The world began to be made here! Poets should be born here!"

"Instead of tavern-keepers," said he, "which brings me to my story. I am forty-three years old. Of course I was younger twenty-three years ago. That must have been not long before you came into the world yourself. Do you insist upon thinking twenty years' difference in age makes any disparity, except in the case of him who has lost just that twenty years' sweetness out of his life?"

"I hardly see what that has to do with the story of the Mount of Sorrow," I said, as we turned from the window to measure the length of the hall again.

"I hope," said he, "that the suffrage reform, which is to

admit women to the ballot, will never let them sit on the judicial bench, for mercy is foreign to the heart of a woman."

"Is it not a strange way of telling a story?" I exclaimed.

"Patience!" he laughed. "The story is so short it needs a little preface. As I was saying then, when I was twenty years old or so, the name of old Raynier, of the Mount of Sorrow, was a by-word of terror through the region round, as the name of his father was, and his father before him. He had no other property than the sterile farm half-way up the mountain, and almost inaccessible—in winter entirely inaccessible—where he raised not half a support on the slips of earth among the ledges; his few starved sheep and goats did what they could for him, and his rifle did the rest. The first Raynier of them all was possibly an escaped convict, who fortified his retreat by these mountain-sides. He had no money; the women spun and wove all that was worn. He had no education; no Raynier had ever had; no Raynier had ever had occasion to sign his mark, let alone his name. There had been one son in each generation; neither church nor school ever saw him; his existence was scarcely known till he was ready to marry, and then he came down, and by no one knows what other magic than a savage force of nature took the prettiest girl of the valley to his eyrie—sometimes his wife, sometimes not. When she died, and she always died, the Raynier of the day replaced her. He did not always wait for her to die before replacing her. But sudden deaths were no uncommon thing in that house; there was a burial-ground scooped in the hillside. And who was there to interfere? Perhaps no one knew there had been a death till the year was out. What if a woman went mad? That happened anywhere. People below might prate of murder, or suicide, or slow poison; there was nobody to whom it was vital enough to open the question seriously; and then they feared the Raynier with an

uncanny fear, as people fear a catamount in the woods, or the goblin of old wives' tales after dark. There were horrible stories of bouts and brawls, of tortures, gags, whips, and—oh, no matter! Nor was all the crime on the shoulders of the Raynier men. It was understood that more than one woman of the name found life too intolerable to endure its conditions, when the fumes of a charcoal fire after a drunken feast, or a quick thrust over the edge of a precipice, or a bit of weed in the broth, made life easier, till remorse brought madness. And finally, if any Raynier died what may be called a natural death, it was either from starvation or from delirium tremens. You see they were a precious lot."

"A precious lot!" I said, trembling. "Ah, what is heaven made of? Poor wretches, they could not help it. From generation to generation the children of such people must needs be criminal."

"I don't know. If removed from such influence. To my mind environment is strong as heredity, quite as strong. It destroys the old and creates the new. However, environment and heredity worked together up there. In my day—to continue—the Raynier family was larger than usual. The last wife still lived, a miserable cowed creature, white as ashes, face and hair and bleached scared eyes, eyes that looked as if they saw phantoms rather than people. Her mind was partially gone. I was a famous mountaineer then, and climbing wherever foot of man had been before, I once in a while came upon some or other of that family, and sometimes paused at the door, where I had first to teach the bloodhounds a lesson. I never entered the filthy place but once. There were two sons and a daughter. Oh, how immortally beautiful that girl was! Such velvet darkness in the eye, such statuesque lines, such rose-leaf color, such hair—'hair like the thistle-down tinted with gold,' as John Mills, the

Scotch poet-player, sang. The old man Raynier worshipped her, perhaps as a wild beast loves its whelp. But he had all sorts of fanciful names for her, Heart's-ease and Heart's Delight, and Violet and Rose and Lily. He grew almost gentle when he spoke to her; and he never knew that she was feeble-minded. She just missed being an imbecile. Perhaps you would not have known that all at once; you might not have found it out at all only meeting her casually. The old man Raynier sent her down to school—the first that had ever been there: she could never learn to read. She could not always tell her name. Still, her mind was innocent—perhaps because it was a blank. I have sometimes thought that blank mind of hers may have been a dead-wall through which the vices of her forebears could not pass, and so her children, if she had them, may have escaped the inheritance, and found a chance for good again, as if crime should at last estop itself. That may be."

"Oh, I think this is terrible!" I said, as we turned again in our walk. "Make haste, please, and be through."

"Yes, it is. But I would show you that life can be anything but commonplace in this wilderness. Well, blank or not, she had a lover, who had found her out in his sketching rambles, a young painter from some distant parts, and the first boarder I ever had, by the way. And all the Rayniers swore they would have his life sooner than he should have her. One day I had been hunting on old Mount Sorrow, as it happened; there had been a sudden frost following rain that had frozen the water in the cracks of the cliffs, and made the way not only slippery, but dangerous; for in the heat of the noon sun the ice was melting, and every now and then its expansion was rending some fragment of rock so that your footing might vanish from beneath, or some shower of stones come rattling down from above; and I was tired when I reached the Raynier place, led

by a blaze of maple boughs that started out like torches to show the way, and stopped to rest. I looked up at an enormous shelf of rock, half clad with reddened vines that fluttered like pestilence flags—a shelf that, although some hundred feet or so away from it, yet overhung the place and cast a perpetual shadow there. I wondered then why Nature had no secret springs of feeling to thrill her and cause her to rend the rocks and cover such a den of iniquity as we all held the spot to be. But Nature was just as fair that ambrosial September day as if there was not a dissonance. Perhaps she knew the right of the Rayniers to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A delicious scent of the balsam from the pines filled the air, the sunshine swept over the hills below in waves of light, and the hills themselves were like waves of a golden green and purple sea where now and then a rainbow swam and broke. Peace and perfectness, I said, peace and perfectness. These people live and are happy. On the other side one looked into the dreary defile of the mountain gate, with its black depths hung with cloud, and remembered that if there was not a hell, there ought to be. I was thinking this as I sat there, when I heard a wild cry, an agonized shriek, blood-curdling, repeated and repeated from within. It was the girl's voice. I was on my feet, and, in spite of the bloodhounds, making for the spot and among the crew. The old woman cowered in the corner, the two brothers held the girl, the old man towered over her, his great eyes blazing in his ashen face. I can't tell you what they were doing. Sometimes I have thought old Raynier was burning her with a hot iron he held—"

"Oh, horrible! horrible!"

"Burning her with a hot iron to make her give up her lover! Sometimes I have thought he was only demolishing the little likenesses of him and of herself, which that lover had painted,

and which she cherished, perhaps as his work, perhaps for the unwonted gewgaw of the slender golden frame, for the one picture was already in fragments, and although she clutched half of the other, the broken half had fallen and rolled away. I have it somewhere. I will show it to you. I had no time, indeed, to see what it was they were doing, for behind me bounded that lover like a whirlwind, thrust one brother and the other aside, seized the girl, darted over the door-sill with her, and down the crags of the mountain path. He should have what help I could give. I was after him, stooping to catch up the fragment of painting as I turned, down the cliff's edge, they following. And all at once I stopped as if paralyzed to the marrow by a clap of thunder, and turned my head to see the old man with his white hair streaming, and his arms uplifted in his cursing, as he came leaping on, and the next moment the shelf of overhanging rock had fallen, had cleft the house in twain, and mother and father and sons and hounds were dust with the dust flying over the precipices. I saw it."

"Oh!" I cried, with my hands over my eyes. "Why did it not strike you blind?"

"And here," said Colonel Vorse, leading my steps to an old cabinet in an alcove, "ought to be the half of that little likeness I picked up as I ran. I wonder what became of the other half—what became of the girl—if the lover married her—if she knew enough to know he didn't marry her—if she lived long enough for him to find out she was a fool—if she was the last of the Rayniers?" As he ceased, he put the half of the little miniature into my hands.

It was a broken bit of ivory, and on it the upper part of a face, sketchily done, with pansy-dark eyes and blush-rose skin —without a frame. I had the frame.

A heart-beat, a fluttering breath, a reeling sense of the world

staggering away from me, and then my bewildered senses were at work again, and an agony like death was cutting me to the heart as we resumed our walking.

Should I tell him? Should I go on with my secret, my inheritance, my curse, and let no man know? If it ate out my heart, the sooner to end; my heart was broken now. Never, never now could fireside shine for me, could lover's lips be mine, could little faces sun themselves in my smile.

We paused before the great window, with those vague white shapes before us, for my feet would not obey me, and the light behind us shone on the bit of ivory. If I told him, it would be easier for him to bear; he would see the impossibility, he would desire my love no longer. My fearful inheritance would yawn like a gulf between us with its impassable darkness.

"And the ruin on the hill-side is an eye-sore," I said. "But it is easy to remove it. I suppose it belongs to me. For—look here—it is I who must be the last of the Rayniers." And I drew from my breast the broken thing, the halved miniature, that in my mock sentiment I had worn so long.

"You!" cried he. "You!" And his feet tottered, and he leaned against the casement for support—he who an hour or so ago had seemed so full of repressed strength that he could have pulled his house down about his ears. Well, had he not done so?

I moved to his side, and held the thing that he might see where the pieces matched, the line of the cheek flowing into the lovely curve of the chin, the flickering sweetness of the lovely mouth, the lambent glance of the lovely eye. "It is my mother, you see," I said. "And it needs no words to say it."

"It needs no words to say it," he repeated, hoarsely. "It is your image. Oh, my God. What have I done! what have I done! My darling, my darling, you must let me repair it by a

lifetime of devotion." And he had his arms about me, and was drawing me to his heaving breast, his throbbing heart.

"No! no! no!" I sobbed. "It is impossible. I am wrecked; I am ruined; I can be no man's wife. You see yourself—I will never—" But his lips were silencing mine, and I lay there with those arms about me a moment; I lay there like one in heaven suspended over hell.

"What do I care," he whispered, "for all the Rayniers in Christendom or out of it, but you? I have learned in this moment that you love me! I will never give you up."

"You must," I groaned.

"I tell you I never will," he said, his voice husky and low and trembling, but his eye and his grasp firm. "I have assured you that environment, education, art, can supplement nature and heredity. They have done so with you. You are your father's child. You received from your mother only the vital spark, only this beauty, this fatal beauty. If you inherited all that the Rayniers ever had, then I love, I love, I love all that the Rayniers ever were, for I love you. I have your love, Helena, and I will never let you go." While speaking he had touched the bell at his hand, and now he sent the answering servant for Dr. Devens, who came at once, supposing some sight of the snow was in store.

"Bid them all out here, Doctor," cried Colonel Vorse. "Ah, here they come! In this part of the country we need no license for marriage. Here are a bride and groom awaiting your blessing. Perform your office, sir." And before I could summon heart or voice, making no response, bewildered and faint, I was the wife of Colonel Vorse, and my husband's arms were supporting me as the words of the prayer and benediction rolled over us.

"There is no time like the present," he cried, gaily, his tones

no longer broken, "as I have always found." And suddenly, before he ceased, and while they all thronged round me, there came a sharp strange sigh singing through the air, that grew into the wild discordant music of multitudinous echoes, and we all turned and sprang intuitively to see, rent in the moonlight and sheathed in the glorious spray of a thousand ice-falls, the Mount of Sorrow bow its head and come down, and, while the whole earth shook and smoked back in hoar vapors, the great snow-slide in its swift sheeting splendor flash and wipe out before our eyes the last timber of the hut and barn and byre of the Rayniers.

Isak Dinesen

One of the greatest of all twentieth-century gothic writers was that remarkable woman Baroness Karen Blixen, who wrote under the name of Isak Dinesen. When her book *Seven Gothic Tales* was published, it delighted the literary world. Here was something new and strange, romantic and different.

Isak Dinesen, a Dane, was greatly influenced by the rich folklore and mythology of her own country, as well as by the strange stories that emanated from that other mysterious northern land, Lapland, a country rich in its history of witchcraft. It was rumored in years gone by that every Lapp, man or woman, was by nature a witch or warlock. Here in this haunting story Isak Dinesen chooses one of the earliest of gothic themes—because next to a ghost, nothing was dearer to the heart of the early gothic writer than a witch.

Many of the early gothic writers used a method called "the explained supernatural." Their literary efforts did everything to terrify their readers; but suddenly, at the last moment, they

backed away and would give a realistic reason for what had appeared to be supernatural.

Isak Dinesen disdained such equivocation. To her there was a very distinct supernatural world, a world in which there are subtle refinements of old gothic themes—a world in which there are real witches.

The Sailor Boy's Tale

The barque *Charlotte* was on her way from Marseille to Athens, in grey weather, on a high sea, after three days' heavy gale. A small sailor-boy, named Simon, stood on the wet, swinging deck, held on to a shroud, and looked up towards the drifting clouds, and to the upper top-gallant yard of the main-mast.

A bird, that had sought refuge upon the mast, had got her feet entangled in some loose tackle-yarn of the halliard, and, high up there, struggled to get free. The boy on the deck could see her wings flapping and her head turning from side to side.

Through his own experience of life he had come to the conviction that in this world everyone must look after himself, and expect no help from others. But the mute, deadly fight kept him fascinated for more than an hour. He wondered what kind of bird it would be. These last days a number of birds had come to settle in the barque's rigging: swallows, quails,

and a pair of peregrine falcons; he believed that this bird was a peregrine falcon. He remembered how, many years ago, in his own country and near his home, he had once seen a peregrine falcon quite close, sitting on a stone and flying straight up from it. Perhaps this was the same bird. He thought: "That bird is like me. Then she was there, and now she is here."

At that a fellow-feeling rose in him, a sense of common tragedy; he stood looking at the bird with his heart in his mouth. There were none of the sailors about to make fun of him; he began to think out how he might go up by the shrouds to help the falcon out. He brushed his hair back and pulled up his sleeves, gave the deck round him a great glance, and climbed up. He had to stop a couple of times in the swaying rigging.

It was indeed, he found when he got to the top of the mast, a peregrine falcon. As his head was on a level with hers, she gave up her struggle, and looked at him with a pair of angry, desperate, yellow eyes. He had to take hold of her with one hand while he got his knife out, and cut off the tackle-yarn. He was scared as he looked down, but at the same time he felt that he had been ordered up by nobody, but that this was his own venture, and this gave him a proud, steadying sensation, as if the sea and the sky, the ship, the bird and himself were all one. Just as he had freed the falcon, she hacked him in the thumb, so that the blood ran, and he nearly let her go. He grew angry with her, and gave her a clout on the head, then he put her inside his jacket, and climbed down again.

When he reached the deck the mate and the cook were standing there, looking up; they roared to him to ask what he had had to do in the mast. He was so tired that the tears were in his eyes. He took the falcon out and showed her to them, and she kept still within his hands. They laughed and walked off. Simon set the falcon down, stood back and watched her.

After a while he reflected that she might not be able to get up from the slippery deck, so he caught her once more, walked away with her and placed her upon a bolt of canvas. A little after she began to trim her feathers, made two or three sharp jerks forward, and then suddenly flew off. The boy could follow her flight above the troughs of the grey sea. He thought: "There flies my falcon."

When the *Charlotte* came home, Simon signed aboard another ship, and two years later he was a light hand on the schooner *Hebe* lying at Bodö, high up on the coast of Norway, to buy herrings.

To the great herring-markets of Bodö ships came together from all corners of the world; here were Swedish, Finnish and Russian boats, a forest of masts, and on shore a turbulent, irregular display of life, with many languages spoken, and mighty fights. On the shore booths had been set up, and the Lapps, small yellow people, noiseless in their movements, with watchful eyes, whom Simon had never seen before, came down to sell bead-embroidered leather-goods. It was April, the sky and the sea were so clear that it was difficult to hold one's eyes up against them—salt, infinitely wide, and filled with bird-shrieks —as if someone were incessantly whetting invisible knives, on all sides, high up in Heaven.

Simon was amazed at the lightness of these April evenings. He knew no geography, and did not assign it to the latitude, but he took it as a sign of an unwonted good-will in the Universe, a favour. Simon had been small for his age all his life, but this last winter he had grown, and had become strong of limb. That good luck, he felt, must spring from the very same source as the sweetness of the weather, from a new benevolence in the world. He had been in need of such encouragement, for he was timid by nature; now he asked for no more. The rest

he felt to be his own affair. He went about slowly, and proudly.

One evening he was ashore with land-leave, and walked up to the booth of a small Russian trader, a Jew who sold gold watches. All the sailors knew that his watches were made from bad metal, and would not go, still they bought them, and paraded them about. Simon looked at these watches for a long time, but did not buy. The old Jew had divers goods in his shop, and amongst others a case of oranges. Simon had tasted oranges on his journeys; he bought one and took it with him. He meant to go up on a hill, from where he could see the sea, and suck it there.

As he walked on, and had got to the outskirts of the place, he saw a little girl in a blue frock, standing at the other side of a fence and looking at him. She was thirteen or fourteen years old, as slim as an eel, but with a round, clear, freckled face, and a pair of long plaits. The two looked at one another.

"Who are you looking out for?" Simon asked, to say something. The girl's face broke into an ecstatic, presumptuous smile. "For the man I am going to marry, of course," she said. Something in her countenance made the boy confident and happy; he grinned a little at her. "That will perhaps be me," he said. "Ha, ha," said the girl, "he is a few years older than you, I can tell you." "Why," said Simon, "you are not grown up yourself." The little girl shook her head solemnly. "Nay," she said, "but when I grow up I will be exceedingly beautiful, and wear brown shoes with heels, and a hat." "Will you have an orange?" asked Simon, who could give her none of the things she had named. She looked at the orange and at him. "They are very good to eat," said he. "Why do you not eat it yourself then?" she asked. "I have eaten so many already," said he, "when I was in Athens. Here I had to pay a mark for it." "What is your name?" asked she. "My name is Simon,"

said he. "What is yours?" "Nora," said the girl. "What do you want for your orange now, Simon?"

When he heard his name in her mouth Simon grew bold. "Will you give me a kiss for the orange?" he asked. Nora looked at him gravely for a moment. "Yes," she said, "I should not mind giving you a kiss." He grew as warm as if he had been running quickly. When she stretched out her hand for the orange he took hold of it. At that moment somebody in the house called out for her. "That is my father," she said, and tried to give him back the orange, but he would not take it. "Then come again tomorrow," she said quickly, "then I will give you a kiss." At that she slipped off. He stood and looked after her, and a little later went back to his ship.

Simon was not in the habit of making plans for the future, and now he did not know whether he would be going back to her or not.

The following evening he had to stay aboard, as the other sailors were going ashore, and he did not mind that either. He meant to sit on the deck with the ship's dog, Balthasar, and to practise upon a concertina that he had purchased some time ago. The pale evening was all round him, the sky was faintly roseate, the sea was quite calm, like milk-and-water, only in the wake of the boats going inshore it broke into streaks of vivid indigo. Simon sat and played; after a while his own music began to speak to him so strongly that he stopped, got up and looked upwards. Then he saw that the full moon was sitting high on the sky.

The sky was so light that she hardly seemed needed there; it was as if she had turned up by a caprice of her own. She was round, demure and presumptuous. At that he knew that he must go ashore, whatever it was to cost him. But he did not know how to get away, since the others had taken the yawl with

them. He stood on the deck for a long time, a small lonely figure of a sailor-boy on a boat, when he caught sight of a yawl coming in from a ship farther out, and hailed her. He found that it was the Russian crew from a boat named *Anna,* going ashore. When he could make himself understood to them, they took him with them; they first asked him for money for his fare, then, laughing, gave it back to him. He thought: "These people will be believing that I am going in to town, wenching." And then he felt, with some pride, that they were right, although at the same time they were infinitely wrong, and knew nothing about anything.

When they came ashore they invited him to come in and drink in their company, and he would not refuse, because they had helped him. One of the Russians was a giant, as big as a bear; he told Simon that his name was Ivan. He got drunk at once, and then fell upon the boy with a bearlike affection, pawed him, smiled and laughed into his face, made him a present of a gold watch chain, and kissed him on both cheeks. At that Simon reflected that he also ought to give Nora a present when they met again, and as soon as he could get away from the Russians he walked up to a booth that he knew of, and bought a small blue silk handkerchief, the same colour as her eyes.

It was Saturday evening, and there were many people amongst the houses; they came in long rows, some of them singing, all keen to have some fun that night. Simon, in the midst of this rich, bawling life under the clear moon, felt his head light with the flight from the ship and the strong drinks. He crammed the handkerchief in his pocket; it was silk, which he had never touched before, a present for his girl.

He could not remember the path up to Nora's house, lost his way, and came back to where he had started. Then he grew deadly afraid that he should be too late, and began to

run. In a small passage between two wooden huts he ran straight into a big man, and found that it was Ivan once more. The Russian folded his arms round him and held him. "Good! Good!" he cried in high glee, "I have found you, my little chicken. I have looked for you everywhere, and poor Ivan has wept because he lost his friend." "Let me go, Ivan," cried Simon. "Oho," said Ivan, "I shall go with you and get you what you want. My heart and my money are all yours, all yours; I have been seventeen years old myself, a little lamb of God, and I want to be so again tonight." "Let me go," cried Simon, "I am in a hurry." Ivan held him so that it hurt, and patted him with his other hand. "I feel it, I feel it," he said. "Now trust to me, my little friend. Nothing shall part you and me. I hear the others coming; we will have such a night together as you will remember when you are an old grandpapa."

Suddenly he crushed the boy to him, like a bear that carries off a sheep. The odious sensation of male bodily warmth and the bulk of a man close to him made the lean boy mad. He thought of Nora waiting, like a slender ship in the dim air, and of himself, here, in the hot embrace of a hairy animal. He struck Ivan with all his might. "I shall kill you, Ivan," he cried out, "if you do not let me go." "Oh, you will be thankful to me later on," said Ivan, and began to sing. Simon fumbled in his pocket for his knife, and got it opened. He could not lift his hand, but he drove the knife, furiously, in under the big man's arm. Almost immediately he felt the blood spouting out, and running down in his sleeve. Ivan stopped short in the song, let go his hold of the boy and gave two long deep grunts. The next second he tumbled down on his knees. "Poor Ivan, poor Ivan," he groaned. He fell straight on his face. At that moment Simon heard the other sailors coming along, singing, in the by-street.

He stood still for a minute, wiped his knife, and watched

the blood spread into a dark pool underneath the big body. Then he ran. As he stopped for a second to choose his way, he heard the sailors behind him scream out over their dead comrade. He thought: "I must get down to the sea, where I can wash my hand." But at the same time he ran the other way. After a little while he found himself on the path that he had walked on the day before, and it seemed as familiar to him, as if he had walked it many hundred times in his life.

He slackened his pace to look around, and suddenly saw Nora standing on the other side of the fence; she was quite close to him when he caught sight of her in the moonlight. Wavering and out of breath he sank down on his knees. For a moment he could not speak. The little girl looked down at him. "Good evening, Simon," she said in her small coy voice. "I have waited for you a long time," and after a moment she added. "I have eaten your orange."

"Oh, Nora," cried the boy. "I have killed a man." She stared at him, but did not move. "Why did you kill a man?" she asked after a moment. "To get here," said Simon. "Because he tried to stop me. But he was my friend." Slowly he got on to his feet. "He loved me!" the boy cried out, and at that burst into tears. "Yes," said she slowly and thoughtfully. "Yes, because you must be here in time." "Can you hide me?" he asked. "For they are after me." "Nay," said Nora, "I cannot hide you. For my father is the parson here at Bodö, and he would be sure to hand you over to them, if he knew that you had killed a man." "Then," said Simon, "give me something to wipe my hands on." "What is the matter with your hands?" she asked, and took a little step forward. He stretched out his hands to her. "Is that your own blood?" she asked. "No," said he, "it is his." She took the step back again. "Do you hate me now?" he asked. "No, I do not hate you," said she. "But do put your hands at your back."

As he did so she came up close to him, at the other side of the fence, and clasped her arms round his neck. She pressed her young body to his, and kissed him tenderly. He felt her face, cool as the moonlight, upon his own, and when she released him, his head swam, and he did not know if the kiss had lasted a second or an hour. Nora stood up straight, her eyes wide open. "Now," she said slowly and proudly, "I promise you that I will never marry anybody, as long as I live." The boy kept standing with his hands on his back, as if she had tied them there. "And now," she said, "you must run, for they are coming." They looked at one another. "Do not forget Nora," said she. He turned and ran.

He leapt over a fence, and when he was down amongst the houses he walked. He did not know at all where to go. As he came to a house, from where music and noise streamed out, he slowly went through the door. The room was full of people; they were dancing in here. A lamp hung from the ceiling, and shone down on them; the air was thick and brown with the dust rising from the floor. There were some women in the room, but many of the men danced with each other, and gravely or laughingly stamped the floor. A moment after Simon had come in the crowd withdrew to the walls to clear the floor for two sailors, who were showing a dance from their own country.

Simon thought: "Now, very soon, the men from the boat will come round to look for their comrade's murderer, and from my hands they will know that I have done it." These five minutes during which he stood by the wall of the dancing-room, in the midst of the gay, sweating dancers, were of great significance to the boy. He himself felt it, as if during this time he grew up, and became like other people. He did not entreat his destiny, nor complain. Here he was, he had killed a man, and had kissed a girl. He did not demand any more from life, nor did life now demand more from him. He was

Simon, a man like the men round him, and going to die, as all men are going to die.

He only became aware of what was going on outside him, when he saw that a woman had come in, and was standing in the midst of the cleared floor, looking round her. She was a short, broad old woman, in the clothes of the Lapps, and she took her stand with such majesty and fierceness as if she owned the whole place. It was obvious that most of the people knew her, and were a little afraid of her, although a few laughed; the din of the dancing-room stopped when she spoke.

"Where is my son?" she asked in a high shrill voice, like a bird's. The next moment her eyes fell on Simon himself, and she steered through the crowd, which opened up before her, stretched out her old skinny, dark hand, and took him by the elbow. "Come home with me now," she said. "You need not dance here tonight. You may be dancing a high enough dance soon."

Simon drew back, for he thought that she was drunk. But as she looked him straight in the face with her yellow eyes, it seemed to him that he had met her before, and that he might do well in listening to her. The old woman pulled him with her across the floor, and he followed her without a word. "Do not birch your boy too badly, Sunniva," one of the men in the room cried to her. "He has done no harm, he only wanted to look at the dance."

At the same moment as they came out through the door, there was an alarm in the street, a flock of people came running down it, and one of them, as he turned into the house, knocked against Simon, looked at him and the old woman, and ran on.

While the two walked along the street, the old woman lifted up her skirt, and put the hem of it into the boy's hand. "Wipe your hand on my skirt," she said. They had not gone far

before they came to a small wooden house, and stopped; the door to it was so low that they must bend to get through it. As the Lapp woman went in before Simon, still holding on to his arm, the boy looked up for a moment. The night had grown misty; there was a wide ring round the moon.

The old woman's room was narrow and dark, with but one small window to it; a lantern stood on the floor and lighted it up dimly. It was all filled with reindeer skins and wolf skins, and with reindeer horn, such as the Lapps use to make their carved buttons and knife-handles, and the air in here was rank and stifling. As soon as they were in, the woman turned to Simon, took hold of his head, and with her crooked fingers parted his hair and combed it down in Lapp fashion. She clapped a Lapp cap on him and stood back to glance at him. "Sit down on my stool, now," she said. "But first take out your knife." She was so commanding in voice and manner that the boy could not but choose to do as she told him; he sat down on the stool, and he could not take his eyes off her face, which was flat and brown, and as if smeared with dirt in its net of fine wrinkles. As he sat there he heard many people come along outside, and stop by the house; then someone knocked at the door, waited a moment and knocked again. The old woman stood and listened, as still as a mouse.

"Nay," said the boy and got up. "This is no good, for it is me that they are after. It will be better for you to let me go out to them." "Give me your knife," said she. When he handed it to her, she stuck it straight into her thumb, so that the blood spouted out, and she let it drip all over her skirt. "Come in, then," she cried.

The door opened, and two of the Russian sailors came and stood in the opening; there were more people outside. "Has anybody come in here?" they asked. "We are after a man who

has killed our mate, but he has run away from us. Have you seen or heard anybody this way?" The old Lapp woman turned upon them, and her eyes shone like gold in the lamplight. "Have I seen or heard anyone?" she cried, "I have heard you shriek murder all over the town. You frightened me, and my poor silly boy there, so that I cut my thumb as I was ripping the skin-rug that I sew. The boy is too scared to help me, and the rug is all ruined. I shall make you pay me for that. If you are looking for a murderer, come in and search my house for me, and I shall know you when we meet again." She was so furious that she danced where she stood, and jerked her head like an angry bird of prey.

The Russian came in, looked round the room, and at her and her blood-stained hand and skirt. "Do not put a curse on us now, Sunniva," he said timidly. "We know that you can do many things when you like. Here is a mark to pay you for the blood you have spilled." She stretched out her hand, and he placed a piece of money in it. She spat on it. "Then go, and there shall be no bad blood between us," said Sunniva, and shut the door after them. She stuck her thumb in her mouth, and chuckled a little.

The boy got up from his stool, stood straight up before her and stared into her face. He felt as if he were swaying high up in the air, with but a small hold. "Why have you helped me?" he asked her. "Do you not know?" she answered. "Have you not recognised me yet? But you will remember the peregrine falcon which was caught in the tackle-yarn of your boat, the *Charlotte,* as she sailed in the Mediterranean. That day you climbed up by the shrouds of the top-gallantmast to help her out, in a stiff wind, and with a high sea. That falcon was me. We Lapps often fly in such a manner, to see the world. When I first met you I was on my way to Africa, to see my younger

sister and her children. She is a falcon too, when she chooses. By that time she was living at Takaunga, within an old ruined tower, which down there they call a minaret." She swathed a corner of her skirt round her thumb, and bit at it. "We do not forget," she said. "I hacked your thumb, when you took hold of me; it is only fair that I should cut my thumb for you tonight."

She came close to him, and gently rubbed her two brown, claw-like fingers against his forehead. "So you are a boy," she said, "who will kill a man rather than be late to meet your sweetheart? We hold together, the females of this earth. I shall mark your forehead now, so that the girls will know of that, when they look at you, and they will like you for it." She played with the boy's hair, and twisted it round her finger.

"Listen now, my little bird," said she. "My great grandson's brother-in-law is lying with his boat by the landing-place at this moment; he is to take a consignment of skins out to a Danish boat. He will bring you back to your boat, in time, before your mate comes. The *Hebe* is sailing tomorrow morning, is it not so? But when you are aboard, give him back my cap for me." She took up his knife, wiped it in her skirt and handed it to him. "Here is your knife," she said. "You will stick it into no more men; you will not need to, for from now you will sail the seas like a faithful seaman. We have enough trouble with our sons as it is."

The bewildered boy began to stammer his thanks to her. "Wait," said she, "I will make you a cup of coffee, to bring back your wits, while I wash your jacket." She went and rattled an old copper kettle upon the fireplace. After a while she handed him a hot, strong, black drink in a cup without a handle to it. "You have drunk with Sunniva now," she said; "you have drunk down a little wisdom, so that in the future all your thoughts shall not fall like raindrops into the salt sea."

When he had finished and set down the cup, she led him to the door and opened it for him. He was surprised to see that it was almost clear morning. The house was so high up that the boy could see the sea from it, and a milky mist about it. He gave her his hand to say good-bye.

She stared into his face. "We do not forget," she said. "And you, you knocked me on the head there, high up in the mast. I shall give you that blow back." With that she smacked him on the ear as hard as she could, so that his head swam. "Now we are quits," she said, gave him a great, mischievous, shining glance, and a little push down the doorstep, and nodded to him.

In this way the sailor-boy got back to his ship, which was to sail the next morning, and lived to tell the story.

Biographical Notes

CELIA FREMLIN is the pen name of Mrs. Celia Margaret Goller, English novelist and short story writer. She was born in London in 1914 and spent much of her childhood in the Kentish village of Ryarsh, where her father's family have lived for nearly four hundred years. She attended Berkhamsted School for Girls and won a scholarship in Classics to Somerville College, Oxford, where she obtained the degrees of B.A. and B. Litt. Miss Fremlin is married to Dr. E. S. Goller and they have three children. Her book *The Hours Before Dawn* was awarded an "Edgar" by the Mystery Writers of America in 1960. Some of her better-known novels are *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* (1939), *Wait for the Wedding* (1961), and *The Trouble Makers* (1963). She has contributed short stories, articles, and humorous verse to English and American publications.

RUTH RENDELL, English novelist and short story writer, is a former journalist. Her novels include *A Guilty Thing Surprised, The Best Man to Die, the Secret House of Death, One Across, Two Down,* and *Some Lie and Some Die. Wolf to the Slaughter* has been purchased for movie production. She and her husband and son live outside London.

MARY WILKINS FREEMAN, American writer, was born in Randolph, Massachusetts, in 1852, of Puritan ancestry. Her early education, chiefly from reading and observation, was supplemented by a course at Mount Holyoke Seminary, South Hadley, Massachusetts. She subsequently lived in Brattleboro, Vermont, until her marriage in 1902 to Dr. Charles M. Freeman of Metuchen, New Jersey. She contributed poems and stories to magazines and published several books for children, including *Young Lucretia and Other Stories* (1892) and *Once Upon a Time and Other Child Verses* (1887). *A Humble Romance and Other Stories* (1887) and *A New England Nun and Other Stories* (1891) gave her a prominent place among American short story writers. Her writing showed great skill in interpreting the psychological effects of the severe and frustrating life of rural New England. She died at Metuchen, New Jersey, in 1930.

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS, American poet, novelist, and short story writer, was born in Perryville, Kentucky, in 1881, but grew up in the nearby village of Springfield. She was the daughter of Simpson and Mary Elizabeth (Brent) Roberts, both of pioneer stock. Miss Roberts attended high school in Covington, Kentucky, and although she was admitted to the State College of Kentucky, did not attend because of poor health and lack of money. In 1917, when she was thirty-five years old, she was able to fulfill her ambition for a college education, and in 1921 she graduated from the University of Chicago with the Ph.B degree and Phi Beta Kappa honors. The years before college, when she was teaching in rural schools, supplied her with a vast knowledge of the folkways of her region which she later made use of in her novels and short stories. Among her best known novels are *The Time of Man* (1926), *My Heart and My Flesh* (1927), *The Great Meadow* (1930), *He Sent Forth a Raven* (1935), and *Black is My Truelove's Hair* (1938). Her short stories are collected in two volumes, *The Haunted Mirror* (1932) and *Not by Strange Gods* (1941). Her poetry was awarded the Fisher Prize of the University of Chicago in 1921, the John Reed Memorial Prize of Poetry in 1928, and the Poetry Society of South Carolina Prize in 1931. Miss Roberts died in 1941.

EMILY JANE BRONTË, poetess and novelist, was born at Thornton, Yorkshire, England, in 1818. She was the second of the three Brontë sisters, daughters of the eccentric Patrick Brontë, who were

brought up in the Haworth parsonage in the wilds of the Yorkshire Moors. Emily had no formal schooling except for some months at Cowan Bridge when she was six, and a short time with her older sister, Charlotte, at Roe Head ten years later. All her life she resented restraint and was the stormiest as well as, in the opinion of many, the most talented of the sisters. In 1845 Charlotte discovered the manuscript of Emily's poems, some of which dealt with the imaginary country of Gondal which Emily and her younger sister, Anne, had created in their childhood, and persuaded her to let them be published. Out of this discovery, a joint volume of verse by the three girls was worked out. Each sister selected twenty-one of her own poems, and chose a pseudonym to fit her own initials. The small volume was printed at the authors' expense in 1846 with the title *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.* Although only two copies were sold, disappointment turned the girls more determinedly to their novels already in progress. Emily's novel was, of course, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and its dark and passionate intensity make it one of the greatest gothic romances ever written. She died in 1848.

ANN RADCLIFFE, novelist, was born in London, England, in 1764, the daughter of William Ward, a tradesman. Ann Ward included among her ancestors the celebrated classical scholar Dr. S. Jebb. Widely read, she delighted as a child in daydreams of things supernatural, but she was not encouraged by her elders either to express herself or exercise her abilities. In 1787 she married William Radcliffe, a law student who became editor and owner of a weekly newspaper, *The English Chronicle.* Living in London, intimate with literary people, and childless, she began to write. Her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), gave little promise of her future success as a novelist. However, her second book, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), attracted attention by its vivid descriptions and startling incidents. Next came *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), with which she established a wide reading public. Her fourth book, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), was an immediate success. She published *The Italian* in 1797 and her novel *Gaston de Blondeville* was published posthumously in 1826. Mrs. Radcliffe's novels had great influence on other writers of the time, particularly Scott and Byron. She died in 1823.

JANE AUSTEN, English novelist, the second daughter and seventh of eight children of a clergyman who had been a Fellow of St. John's

College, Oxford, was born in Hampshire in 1775. In 1784 she was sent to a school at Reading, but for the most part she was taught by her father and thus had a far better education than the average English girl of her class. She learned French, Italian, some history, and gained a thorough knowledge of Shakespeare and Milton in addition to the essayists, novelists, and poets of the eighteenth century. In 1801 the family moved to Bath, the scene of so many episodes in her books, and, after the death of her father in 1805, to Southampton and then to Chawton Cottage near Alton, in Hampshire, where most of her novels were written. Although she began writing at a very early age, and her book *Love and Friendship* dated from her teens, she was thirty-five when her first novel was published. This was followed by five other novels, the fruit of an early and devoted apprenticeship to literature. The novels which were published in Jane Austen's lifetime were *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Emma* (1816). She died in 1817 and *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published posthumously in 1818.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN SHELLEY, novelist and short story writer, was born in London, England, in 1797. She was the only daughter of William Godwin, the social reformer and free thinker, and Mary Wollstonecraft, the early feminist and author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women.* Although she had no formal education, she was constantly exposed to the atmosphere of intellectual discussion and debate which enveloped her father and his many visitors. One of those visitors was a young man whose intellectual accomplishments had made a favorable impression on William Godwin. And it was this young man, Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poet, with whom Mary Godwin eloped a month before her seventeenth birthday. While abroad, the Shelleys saw much of Lord Byron, and it was at his villa on the Lake of Geneva that she conceived the idea of her famous novel *Frankenstein.* She wrote other novels, short stories, contributed biographies of foreign artists and authors to *Lardner's Cabinet Encyclopaedia,* and edited her husband's poems after his death. Mary Shelley died in 1851.

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD, American novelist, poet and short story writer, was born in Calais, Maine, in 1835. She married Richard Smith Spofford in 1865. The best of her several hundred stories appeared in the *Atlantic, Scribner's* and the *Century;* some of

these were included in *A Scarlet Poppy and Other Stories* (1894) and *Old Madame and Other Tragedies* (1900). She was one of the most popular women writers of her time. Some of her other works are *Sir Rohan's Ghost* (1860), *The Amber Gods* (1863), *New England Legends* (1871), and *Poems* (1881). She died in 1921.

ISAK DINESEN was the pen name of the Danish author Baroness Karen Blixen. She was born at Rungsted, Denmark, in 1885, the daughter of a Danish officer and writer on hunting subjects. Karen Dinesen was educated in Copenhagen and later studied painting in Paris and Berlin. On her marriage in 1914 to Baron Blixen, she went to British East Africa and lived on a coffee plantation until 1931, when she returned to her family home near Elsinore. Her *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934) and *Winter's Tales* (1943), with early nineteenth century settings, contain a good deal of "gothic" strangeness and terror. She wrote with equal facility in either Danish or English and most of her books were published almost simultaneously in both languages. Her autobiographical *Out of Africa* was published in 1937. *The Angelic Avenger* (1947), first published in German-occupied Denmark, was a political allegory written under the pseudonym Pierre Andrézel. *Last Tales* was published in 1957. She died in 1962.

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