

**EAST AND WEST.
THE CONFESSIONS
OF A PRINCESS**

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East and West. The confessions of a princess by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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BY — ?



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DEDICATED
TO
KENNETH ACKROYD
IN
MEMORY OF
THE SUNSHINE AND THE SHADOWS
AT
INVERARY.

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BOOK I—CHILDHOOD

EAST AND WEST

BOOK I—CHILDHOOD

My earliest recollection is of a drab lodging at Shepherd's Bush, in a small house—long since swept away—that boasted a cat-walk at the back, called by courtesy a garden, in which was one soot-beladen tree, and a tethered goat. This animal returned good for evil—as animals will—giving milk for the use of the disagreeable inmates of the still more disagreeable house.

My parents were spoken of as "the ground floor," in the enigmatical language of landladies, and their child as "that brat!"

I can see across the space of years the sitting-room, with its mustard-coloured linoleum, on which was laid a pocket-handkerchief of faded carpet; the suite of furniture covered with imitation American leather; the work-box in the window, covered by an antimacassar; the cracked mirror over the mantelshelf, with the clock that never went—flanked by two vases filled with bills and letters. There was also the painfully libellous portrait of the Queen in her coronation robes. Folding doors gave into the bedroom—an indescribably melancholy place, associated in my mind with violent attacks of bronchitis and other minor troubles.

Even as a tiny child, "the ground floor" made me want to run away and cry. We were, needless

to say, very poor. My father had got into political trouble in Ireland, which had alienated his relations, robbed him of his business, and left him stranded on this bare and inhospitable shore. He was a scholar and a gentleman—his enemies called him a visionary and fanatic. Not possessed of an adaptable temperament, he was quite unfitted to turn round and make money as other men can—distinguished in appearance and with delightful manners, he had succumbed under the blow that had fallen on him at the early age of forty.

My mother—who was a Spaniard—had both zeal and ambition. She refused to suffer failure with submission, or reconcile herself to existing on the small soul-contracting allowance possessed between them—one pound a week from her father, who had been furious at her marriage, and two pounds given to my father by his only brother, on the strict understanding that he never asked for more!

My mother, who was only twenty-four, and a fervent Roman Catholic, obtained a post—through the influence of the priests—as daily governess, in Portman Square, to a little boy who bore a great title and was the last of his race.

Like myself, he was an only child—his mother, a widow, whose sole distraction was the cultivation of extreme forms of ill-health, seldom saw her son, being content to leave his earthly welfare to the servants, and his heavenly future to her own confessor. The boy was weakly, arrogant and fretful, which was not to be wondered at. Many a long and bitter hour did my poor mother spend planting the glories of Latin, Spanish and French in that unresponsive soil. How tired she was when she returned to us of an evening.