

**THE DISTURBING ELEMENT,  
OR, CHRONICLES OF THE  
BLUE-BELL SOCIETY**

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The Disturbing Element, or, Chronicles of the Blue-Bell Society by Charlotte M. Yonge & Percy Macquoid

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**CHARLOTTE M. YONGE & PERCY MACQUOID**

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THE  
DISTURBING ELEMENT

OR

Chronicles of the Blue-bell Society

BY  
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE  
AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF REDCLIFFE"

Illustrated by Percy Macquoid



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## THE DISTURBING ELEMENT.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### TRUE BLUE.

**A**S an invalid, I am always supposed to have more time than any one else. I am not sure that it is the fact, for languor makes work go slowly even at the best, and, besides, those who are supposed to do work for everyone sometimes end in doing work for no one.

However, my friends are so kind to me that I am glad to be able to show my good-will in working for them, and fortunately my invalidism is not very severe or disabling, being chiefly a weakness of spine, which prevents my walking or driving for more than half-an-hour at a time, and—connected with that, as they say—an asthmatic affection which will not let me breathe anywhere

but at this little place of Poppleton St. Barbe, and not much there at night when the wind gets into the north-east.

My sister Susan and I stumbled into it by a sort of chance, when, on the break-up of an old home, we were trying all the world round for a place that would agree with me; and as my breath grew better here, and my bones rebelled at the notion of going up all the hills that fence it in, "we wintered and summered it," as our maid Rebekah says, and ended by setting up our staff, *i.e.*, by taking a long lease of this house, which we did *not* name "Violet Villa." Indeed we did our best to alter the name, so much did it disgust Susan's love of common sense; but custom has been too strong for her, and I see her dating her letters from V. V. without the slightest compunction.

Poppleton St. Barbe is an odd little town. It would fain be a watering-place, but fate is against it. The nearest station is twelve miles off, and between lie no less than three tremendous hills. Barbe Torr hill generally needs four horses to draw up a tolerably well-filled fly, and the leaders appear to be in a nearly perpendicular position above the head of the inmate. Ben Boldre, who shuts in the eastern side of our little bay, is not so severe, in spite of his name, but then he leads to