

A GIFT FROM THE GRAVE

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A gift from the grave by Edith Wharton

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EDITH WHARTON

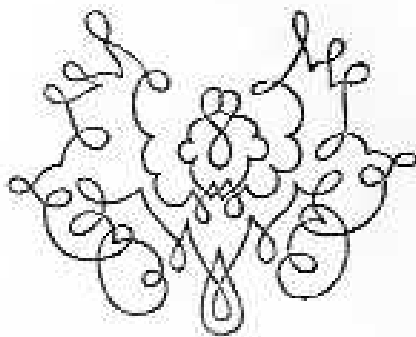
**A GIFT FROM
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BY EDITH WHARTON

AUTHOR OF 'THE GREATER INCLINATION'



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1900

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty

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NOTE BY THE PUBLISHER

The title of this little book calls for a word of explanation from me.

In the United States the story appears as *The Touchstone*. While it was passing through the press over here, I was informed that a novel under this name was already in circulation. In accordance with the usual rule of courtesy and convenience which is observed in such matters, I decided to alter the title, and wrote at once to the author, asking permission to call her book *The Touch of a Vanished Hand*. As the author was travelling in Italy, a month elapsed before I received a reply, by telegraph, instructing me to adopt another title which unfortunately has also been forestalled. Meanwhile the sheets had all been printed off, when I was informed that a novel was published in 1889 called *The Touch of a Vanished Hand*.

In telegraphing, the author gives me no address, and as a decision has to be made without further delay, I have ventured to give the book the title which it now bears—*A Gift from the Grave*; and I hope that no other claimant to this will now arise.

I must ask to be allowed to bear all the responsibility—the blame, if there be any—of this change; but the circumstances are peculiar, and may, I hope, plead my excuse.

JOHN MURRAY.

June 1906.

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‘PROFESSOR JOSLIN, who, as our readers are doubtless aware, is engaged in writing the life of Mrs. Aubyn, asks us to state that he will be greatly indebted “to any of the famous novelist’s friends who will furnish him with information concerning the period previous to her coming to England. Mrs. Aubyn had so few intimate friends, and consequently so few regular correspondents, that letters will be of special value. Professor Joslin’s address is 10 Augusta Gardens, Kensington, and he begs us to say that he will promptly return any documents intrusted to him.”’

Glennard dropped the *Spectator* and sat looking into the fire. The club was filling up, but he still had to himself the small inner room with its darkening outlook down the rain-streaked prospect of Fifth Avenue. It was all dull and

dismal enough, yet a moment earlier his boredom had been perversely tinged by a sense of resentment at the thought that, as things were going, he might in time have to surrender even the despised privilege of boring himself within those particular four walls. It was not that he cared much for the club, but that the remote contingency of having to give it up stood to him, just then, perhaps by very reason of its insignificance and remoteness, for the symbol of his increasing abnegations; of that perpetual paring-off that was gradually reducing existence to the naked business of keeping himself alive. It was the futility of his multiplied shifts and privations that made them seem unworthy of a high attitude — the sense that, however rapidly he eliminated the superfluous, his cleared horizon was likely to offer no nearer view of the one prospect toward which he strained. To give up things in order to marry the woman one loves is easier than