

**THE MODERN  
STUDENT'S LIBRARY.  
ETHAN FROME**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649577842

The Modern Student's Library. Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**EDITH WHARTON**

**THE MODERN  
STUDENT'S LIBRARY.  
ETHAN FROME**



*BY EDITH WHARTON*

A SON AT THE FRONT  
THE GREATER INCLINATION  
THE TOUCHSTONE  
CRUCIAL INSTANCES  
THE VALLEY OF DECISION  
SANCTUARY  
THE DESCENT OF MAN  
THE HOUSE OF MIRTH  
THE FRUIT OF THE TREE  
THE HERMIT AND THE WILD WOMAN  
TALES OF MEN AND GHOSTS  
ETHAN FROME  
THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY  
KINGU  
THE WRITING OF FICTION  
IN MOROCCO  
FIGHTING FRANCE  
ITALIAN BACKGROUNDS  
A MOTOR FLIGHT THROUGH FRANCE  
ARTEMIS TO ACTÆON  
THE DECORATION OF HOUSES

*CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS*

*THE MODERN STUDENT'S LIBRARY*

---

# ETHAN FROME

BY  
EDITH WHARTON  
//

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

BOSTON

813.4  
W55c  
cop. 2

**777313**

COPYRIGHT, 1911, 1922, BY  
**CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

Printed in the United States of America

C



Gift of  
Alvin C. Eurich

## INTRODUCTION

I had known something of New England village life long before I made my home in the same county as my imaginary Starkfield; though, during the years spent there, certain of its aspects became much more familiar to me.

Even before that final initiation, however, I had had an uneasy sense that the New England of fiction bore little—except a vague botanical and dialectical—resemblance to the harsh and beautiful land as I had seen it. Even the abundant enumeration of sweet-fern, asters and mountain-laurel, and the conscientious reproduction of the vernacular, left me with the feeling that the outcropping granite had in both cases been overlooked. I give the impression merely as a personal one; it accounts for Ethan Frome, and may, to some readers, in a measure justify it.

So much for the origin of the story; there is noth-

## INTRODUCTION

ing else of interest to say of it, except as concerns its construction.

The problem before me, as I saw in the first flash, was this: I had to deal with a subject of which the dramatic climax, or rather the anti-climax, occurs a generation later than the first acts of the tragedy. This enforced lapse of time would seem to anyone persuaded—as I have always been—that every subject (in the novelist's sense of the term) implicitly *contains its own form and dimensions*, to mark "Ethan Frome" as the subject for a novel. But I never thought this for a moment, for I had felt, at the same time, that the theme of my tale was not one on which many variations could be played. It must be treated as starkly and summarily as life had always presented itself to my protagonists; any attempt to elaborate and complicate their sentiments would necessarily have falsified the whole. They were, in truth, these figures, my *granite outcroppings*; but half-emerged from the soil, and scarcely more articulate.

This incompatibility between subject and plan

## INTRODUCTION

would perhaps have seemed to suggest that my "situation" was after all one to be rejected. Every novelist has been visited by the insinuating wraiths of false "good situations," siren-subjects luring his cockle-shell to the rocks; their voice is oftenest heard, and their mirage-sea beheld, as he traverses the waterless desert which awaits him half-way through whatever work is actually in hand. I knew well enough what song those sirens sang, and had often tied myself to my dull job till they were out of hearing—perhaps carrying a lost masterpiece in their rainbow veils. But I had no such fear of them in the case of *Ethan Frome*. It was the first subject I had ever approached with full confidence in its value, for my own purpose, and a relative faith in my power to render at least a part of what I saw in it.

Every novelist, again, who "intends upon" his art, has lit upon such subjects, and been fascinated by the difficulty of presenting them in the fullest relief, yet without an added ornament, or a trick of drapery or lighting. This was my task, if I were to tell the story of *Ethan Frome*; and my scheme of

## INTRODUCTION

construction—which met with the immediate and unqualified disapproval of the few friends to whom I tentatively outlined it—I still think justified in the given case. It appears to me, indeed, that, while an air of artificiality is lent to a tale of complex and sophisticated people which the novelist causes to be guessed at and interpreted by any mere looker-on, there need be no such drawback if the looker-on is sophisticated, and the people he interprets are simple. If he is capable of seeing all around them, no violence is done to probability in allowing him to exercise this faculty; it is natural enough that he should act as the sympathizing intermediary between his rudimentary characters and the more complicated minds to whom he is trying to present them. But this is all self-evident, and needs explaining only to those who have never thought of fiction as an art of composition.

The real merit of my construction seems to me to lie in a minor detail. I had to find means to bring my tragedy, in a way at once natural and picture-making, to the knowledge of its narrator. I might