

**THE HERMIT AND  
WILD WOMAN,  
AND OTHER STORIES**

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The hermit and wild woman, and other stories by Edith Wharton

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**EDITH WHARTON**

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AND THE WILD WOMAN  
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BY  
EDITH WHARTON

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THE HERMIT AND THE WILD  
WOMAN



## THE HERMIT AND THE WILD WOMAN

### I

**T**HE Hermit lived in a cave in the hollow of a hill. Below him was a glen, with a stream in a coppice of oaks and alders, and across the valley, half a day's journey distant, another hill, steep and bristling, raised against the sky a little walled town with Ghibelline swallow-tails.

When the Hermit was a lad, and lived in the town, the crenellations of the walls had been square-topped, and a Guelf lord had flown his standard from the keep. Then one day a steel-coloured line of men-at-arms rode across the valley, wound up the hill and battered in the gates. Stones and Greek fire rained from the ramparts, shields clashed in the streets, blade sprang at blade in passages and stairways, pikes and lances dripped above huddled flesh, and all the still familiar place was a stew of dying bodies. The boy fled from it in horror. He had seen his father go forth and not come back, his mother drop dead from an arquebuse shot as she leaned from the platform of the tower, his little sister fall with a slit throat across the altar steps of the chapel—and he ran, ran for his life.