

THE HOUSE WITH THE GREEN SHUTTERS

Her voice rose high and shrill as she read the great verses. Her large blue eyes shone with ecstasy. Janet looked at her in fear. This was more than her mother speaking, it was more than human, it was a voice from beyond the world. Alone, the timid girl would have shrunk from death, but her mother's inspiration held her.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

Janet had been listening with such strained attention that the "Amen" rang out of her loud and involuntary, like an answer to a compelling Deity. She had clung to this reading as the one thing left to her before death, and out of her nature thus strained to listen the "Amen" came, as sped by an inner will. She scarcely knew that she said it.

They rose, and the scrunt of Janet's chair on the floor, when she pushed it behind her, sent a thrilling shiver through her body, so tense was her mood. They stood with their hands on their chair-backs, and looked at each other, in a curious palsy of the will. The first step to the parlour door would commit them to the deed; to take it was to take the poison, and they paused, feeling its significance. To move was to give themselves to the irrevocable. When they stirred at length they felt as if the ultimate crisis had been passed; there could be no return. Mrs. Gourlay had Janet by the wrist.

She turned and looked at her daughter, and for one fleeting moment she ceased to be above humanity.

"Janet," she said wistfully, "I have had a heap to thole! Maybe the Lord Jesus Christ'll no' be owre sair on me."