



Muriel Stuart in the 1930s

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OUR SUMMER 2006 BOOKS

By the time Rachel Ferguson wrote *Alas, Poor Lady*, Persephone Book

No. 65, in 1937 it was possible to look back with horror and disbelief at what had happened to the daughters of extravagantly large Victorian families, victims of 'parental incompetence' (p107), who did not manage, through ineptitude or plainness or bad luck, to catch a husband.

This novel is in the Lytton Strachey tradition of furious anger with those who had gone before. There were thousands of women who had been condemned to become distressed gentlefolk, dependent for their livelihood (unless they had been fortunate enough to inherit wealth) to seek work as governesses and companions, often in families that did not treat them well. When they could not find work they were reduced to virtual penury. In the opening, 1936, chapter the question is asked: 'But – *how* does it happen? How does it *happen*?'

The finger of blame in *Alas, Poor Lady* is cast less at the men (since the system favoured them in all respects why

would they seek to change it?) but at the matriarch who is too lazy, too unthinking to want to change things for her numerous daughters. It is Mrs Scrimgeour in her large house in Kensington who is the real culprit, being selfish, evasive and lacking in any concern for her daughters beyond that of trying to make sure they fulfil society's expectations of them. She fails to train them to be attractive to men or to find ways of occupying themselves; the most important thing, her daughters wearily accept, is that 'a family of your own, one saw, saved your face' (p117).

As Ruth Adam writes in her section headed 'The Superfluous Woman' in *A Woman's Place* (Persephone Book No. 20, which provides the historical background to many of the issues explored in Persephone novels): 'On the whole the man's world which came to an end with the Great War was a pleasant enough one for wives – at least compared with any previous period. But it

was a very harsh world indeed in which to be a spinster. Spinsters had to face the fact that they were a nuisance to everybody, because there was no provision for them to be independent of a man's help, in an economy set up by males for males.'

At the time of the 1911 census, when Grace Scrimgeour, the protagonist, is 40, 30% of women were unmarried; like other Persephone novels such as EM Delafield's *Consequences* (1919), and Lettice Cooper's *The New House* (1936), Persephone Books Nos. 13 and 47, *Alas, Poor Lady* focuses on society's failure to provide for this third, or to consider these spinsters anything but an embarrassment. 'The fear of tomorrow and all the tomorrows filled her. The *time* there was! Whereas men filled it to the brim, a woman's life was one of eternal waiting, to be taken out, called on, danced with or proposed to. How had it originated, this division of opportunity?'



An early twentieth-century banglello tapestry used for *Alas, Poor Lady*



'Fritillary' by Margaret Calhoun used for *Gardener's Nightcap*

As Winifred Holtby wrote at the end of the 1930s, 'the once traditional contempt of the spinster was a thing of the past' so that by then Rachel Ferguson's novel had become an indictment of the past rather than a polemic about continuing injustices. *Alas, Poor Lady*, which ends in 1936, traces the life of Grace Scrimgeour and her family over the decades from 1870 onwards: we watch what happens to her in relation to her soldier brother Charlie and her sisters (Gertie, Georgie, Aggie, Arabella, Mary, Queenie...). Imprisoned at home while some

of her sisters escape into marriage, she fills her days with trivia such as tapestry: the Victorian spinster, after all, sewed rather than spun ('Aggie was staring out of the window, Queenie working as if for a wager at a tapestry runner' – hence our endpaper). But eventually, because of her mother's financial improvidence, Grace has to become a governess; but at last finds some limited independence and happiness.

Alas, Poor Lady is Rachel Ferguson's best and most readable book (she is

also the author of *The Brontës went to Woolworths*; however, we consider this to be the stronger novel). 'Grace was thirty. A despairing knowledge that only frantic absorption in house and friends could temporarily stifle... [Her niece] had had a baby, years ago... Once, forgetful, she had told her mother of the baby's charm and cried, "I wish she was mine!" and Mrs Scrimgeour had been shocked. "You had better not go about saying that, Grace." You were a failure if you didn't have a baby, but a disgrace if you wanted one, and said so.'



*'A Bloomsbury Family' 1908. This painting by William Nicholson of the Dutch old master yet evokes the charmingly bohemian Wiene family, which rescues Grace Scrimgeour from destitution and gives *Alas, Poor Lady* a happy ending. © The Bridgeman Art Library/ Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.*

Gardener's *Nightcap* is our first gardening book. We have been looking for one for a long time, but it is not easy to find something useful but not too ponderous, nicely-illustrated but not kitsch, and well-written without being too prescriptive or too saccharine. Finally, here it is, a 1938 book that is perfect for the keen gardener or, in fact, for the aspiring, to buy for oneself or to give as a present. We hope this book will become as integral a part of the Persephone collection as, say, *How to Run Your Home without Help* – amusing, interesting, with historical resonance, and yet useful.

Muriel Stuart was a successful and well-known poet during and just after the First World War (she is in the *ODNB* because of her poems). She then had two children, gave up writing poetry and took to gardening with enormous enthusiasm and

dedication. She wrote only two books, *Fool's Garden* (1936), about creating a garden in Surrey, and the one we have chosen to reprint, *Gardener's Nightcap*.



Frontispiece to Gardener's Nightcap

After the Second World War, for thirty years, she was a well-known columnist for gardening magazines. Although a great beauty, as can be seen from the cover of this *PQ*, Muriel Stuart was shy and self-contained – and happiest in her garden.

This work of hers is indeed a 'nightcap': a soothing tonic to take in small doses just before bed. The subjects covered are many and variegated. They include: Meadow Saffron, Dark Ladies ('fritillary to me spells enchantment', which is why we have chosen them for the endpaper), Better Gooseberries, Good King Henry ('quite a good substitute for asparagus'), The Wild Comes Back and Phlox Failure. Each of these pieces is only a few lines in length yet tells the gardener far more than extensive essays or manuals. *Gardener's Nightcap*, a bestseller in its year of first publication, is illustrated by charming Rex Whistler-type drawings. And we end with the opening sentence: 'There is an hour

just before dark, when the garden resents interference. Its work, no less than the gardener's, is done. Do not meddle with the garden at that hour. It demands, as all living creatures demand, a time of silence...'

OUR READERS WRITE

'I want to let you know what a lovely book I think *Doreen* is. Firstly, it's so well written; secondly it brought back memories for me as a London child of that time! I was certainly emotionally scarred by well-meaning but badly advised parenting, which resulted in my partial evacuation – and at a much younger age. How I wish that Doreen could have stayed in the country!' GC, Oxford

'I read *Princes in the Land* shortly after I bought it – devoured it in a day and couldn't put it down. What incredible insight into families and women giving up so much they eventually almost lose themselves completely. It was quite a desolate book, and yet reaffirmed children's and women's rights to establish their own paths in life.' JB, Windsor

'I loved *The World that was Ours* so much and was amazed by the Bernstein family's heroism in the face of such grave political danger. The account of how they escaped South Africa was especially compelling, while one of the most beautiful aspects of the book is Bernstein's attention to domesticity and how the experience of home and family life sustained, invigorated, and gave shape and colour to her commitments to social and

political justice in South Africa and the broader world around her.' EH, Chicago

'*The Hopkins Manuscript* is a completely absorbing book, full of devastations and surprise – and bleak as hell with total justification. Indeed, quite applicable to the so-called here and now. It's wonderfully done, a classic. And up there with all the great novels of this type – Wells, Lindsay... A shining discovery.' TL, St Leonard's on Sea

'R C Sherriff's writing in *The Hopkins Manuscript* is as impressive here as it is in *Journey's End* and although the stories are very different there are similarities in the strong and convincing characterisation... At first this seemed an unlikely choice for Persephone but it is actually totally appropriate in its picture of mid-twentieth century English life and the struggle of ordinary people to cope with approaching disaster. For me it ranks alongside *They Were Sisters*, *Little Boy Lost*, *The Home-Maker*, *Miss Ranskill Comes Home* and *Doreen* as a favourite Persephone title and I shall look forward to reading more of Sherriff's work.' JM, Amersham

'I cannot say how absolutely superbly wonderful, pleasurable

and readable Molly Hughes's *A London Child of the 1870s* is. It must be *sui generis* and is easily in my top ten life books. *Operation Heartbreak* is equally superb – beautiful, beautiful – intensely readable.' TF, Rhode Island

'*A London Child* is on the surface just another nostalgic book about childhood memories but that first impression is deceptive. One needs the perceptive, even poetic preface by Adam Gopnik, pointing up the reality of Molly Hughes's autobiography and the background of life in Victorian London, to fill in the things left unsaid and to remind one that happiness and tragedy are only a step apart. It is only by being aware of this that one can judge the depth of Molly's artistic achievement. "We see light only because the shadows set it off," says Gopnik. In happier vein, there were, in the chapters about the grandparents' house in Cornwall, similarities with Mary's beloved Charbury, also in the West Country, in *Mariana*, and the description of the journey thither and its preparations reminded me also of the journey to Bognor Regis of the Stevens family in your forthcoming *The Fortnight in September*.' DT, London EC2

SARAH WATERS & 1940s LITERATURE

In writing *The Night Watch* [wrote Sarah Waters in the *Guardian*, in an article about the novels and diaries she read when she was doing the research for her latest book] I was drawn to the 1940s as a setting, but at first it seemed obvious to me that I ought to steer clear of the war itself – for how, I thought, could I possibly say anything new about it?

I began with a handful of characters all – as seemed to suit the period – more or less unhappy, and all with secrets; all involved in relationships and lifestyles which were, in one way or another, illicit. So far, so good. But soon, the novel began to languish, and I struggled. I wanted colour, life, pace, but every time I tried to move my characters forwards, I met resistance. I began to realise that the very things which had led me to the post-war scene – the blighted landscape, the austerity, the sense of inertia, the reticence – were weighing my writing down, or drying it out. ‘Don’t let’s talk about the war,’ my characters were muttering to each other, authentically; but the fact was, they had nothing else to talk about, no events to live through that were half as vivid as the experiences I imagined

they’d had in the previous six years. At last I saw that the novel might work best if I put its action in reverse – if I kept its opening in the post-war setting of 1947, but then plunged back into the trauma and excitement of the war itself.

Immediately, I was both captivated by what I began to discover about wartime Britain, and disconcerted by the sheer amount of material available. I had films, photographs, sound recordings, civil defence records, the physical ephemera of war, and – since so many people in the 1940s felt compelled to make a record of the startling events they saw unfolding around them – a staggering selection of diaries and memoirs. And so I discovered the many wonderful diarists and memoirists of the period: Frances Partridge, Denton Welch, George Beardmore, Julian Maclaren-Ross. I read evocative novels of wartime life by Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Elizabeth Taylor, Evelyn Waugh. I found less fashionable novels, too. Nevil Shute’s *Requiem for a Wren* is a muted, compelling account of post-war guilt and displacement, based around the suicide of its enigmatic heroine. Noel

Streatfeild’s unsettling *Saplings* describes the breakdown of middle-class family life. Henry Green’s *Caught*, inspired by his experiences of fire-fighting during the Blitz, captures the oddness as well as the vividness of many dramatic wartime incidents. There is a sadness, a bleakness – often, a bitterness – to many of the novels of the period: think of Bowen’s moody *The Heat of the Day*, Greene’s furious *The End of the Affair*. I had not guessed how much the feel of these novels would begin to dictate the mood and shape of my own book.

If the novels gave me a mood and an idiom for the period, the diaries gave me details. They came alive for me as their writers and my characters began to share dates, a set of priorities, a physical landscape. ‘The siren goes about 2 am or at almost any time,’ wrote George Beardmore in north London on 23 February 1944. ‘It always wakes me. I rouse Jean, and we leap into our outdoor things, and while Jean grabs a bagful of valuables and papers, I come down with Victoria in my arms...and we hurry out to the reinforced Shelter.’ ‘Noisy air-raid last Thursday and Friday,’ recorded Vere Hodgson in *Few Eggs and No Oranges* on 3 and 4 February. ‘Had a good view of the star flares. Most were gold – some blue – like glorious fireworks.’

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OUR REVIEWERS WRITE

In *The Bookseller* Caroline Sanderson chose Muriel Stuart's *Gardener's Nightcap* as her top gardening title for June: "This bedside gardening book, full of horticultural advice and other delightful prunings, is dedicated to "my husband, who led me down the garden path." First published in 1938, it is now available in distinctive Persephone grey."

Anna Carey highlighted *How to Run Your Home without Help* in *The Irish Times Magazine*: "Calling all undomestic goddesses. Does your daily cleaning routine consist of wiping a few crumbs off the kitchen counter? Does your kitchen bin overflow, does your kitchen floor lurk under a layer of grime and and do your bookshelves go undusted for weeks? Then you might need Kay Smallshaw's *How to Run Your Home without Help*, a 1949 guide that has been reissued in a typically stylish edition by Persephone. Aimed at middle-class housewives who were faced for the first time with the challenge of living without servants, Smallshaw's book is still surprisingly useful. It is also very amusing, a snapshot of a world in which the front steps should be scrubbed every week but your hair will be fine if you brush it every day and get "a shampoo every ten days or so." The perfect present for the slovenly."

In *The Tablet* Isabel de Bertodano praised *There Were No Windows* 'strangely contemporary air... In spite of her grim subject, Hoult's story, though sad and raw, is never gloomy and often funny... In spite of her eccentricities the reader falls slightly in love with Claire, a romantic character who is here exposed in all the vulnerability of old age. It could easily become too depressing, but *There Were No Windows* has a lightness of touch, is beautifully written and Norah Hoult has produced an honest, compelling account of Alzheimer's without ever betraying her friend.'

In *House and Garden* Matthew Dennison chose *How to Run Your Home without Help* as one of the 'seven books published in 2005 which, though not aimed at the generalist reader, are quirky, unusual and noteworthy': Kay Smallshaw 'conjures a vanished world, where housework for the wife grappling with a new lack of domestic staff is continuous and standards rigorously high... Like many titles reissued by Persephone, this is a period piece, but one that combines insight with charm.'

*D*omino magazine in America called our books 'the prettiest paperbacks ever... These charming reprints of forgotten diaries, cookbooks and novels are anything but dusty. Hidden beneath their pearl-grey jackets are gorgeous endpapers

inspired by vintage textiles... Great reads, great gifts and gorgeous on the shelf!'

*T*he *World of Interiors* picked *Good Food on the Aga* 'to remind you of the wonders of owning an Aga. Organised by month, and headed with illustrations by Edward Bawden, this is the perfect cookbook for those with an old or new model of the classic stove' (shown in bright egg-yolk yellow).

*C*ountry Living quoted *Good Things in England* in which Florence White suggests a 'simple menu for May: "dressed crab, poached eggs on stewed cucumber, spitchcocked spring chicken and creamed nettles, cowslip pudding-pie, gooseberry fool and Mrs Raffald's nice whet." She adds, "It is important to remember that the portions served should be small; it is much more attractive to offer a second helping than a single one that is too large." So true, so true.'

In *Country Life* Leslie Geddes-Brown chose books by 'Five Grand Dames of British Cookery': Lady Clark of Tillypronie, Georgiana, Countess of Dudley, Dorothy Allhusen, Lady Maclean and Lady Jekyll DBE. 'Her *Kitchen Essays* [which is in fact the only one of the five books in print] has recipes for 'Edward VII's favourite boiled mutton and Mrs Gladstone's egg flip.'

THE PERSEPHONE 66

1. William - an Englishman by Cicely Hamilton: 1919 prize-winning novel about the effect of WW1 on a socialist clerk and a suffragette. Preface: Nicola Beauman

2. Mariana by Monica Dickens: First published in 1940, this very funny first novel describes a young girl's life in the 1930s. Preface: Harriet Lane

3. Someone at a Distance by Dorothy Whipple: 'A very good novel indeed' (*Spectator*) about the tragic destruction of a formerly happy marriage (pub. 1953). Preface: Nina Bawden

4. Fidelity by Susan Glaspell: 1915 novel by a Pulitzer-winning author brilliantly describing the long-term consequences of a girl in Iowa running off with a married man. Preface: Laura Godwin

5. An Interrupted Life by Etty Hillesum: From 1941-3 a young woman in Amsterdam, 'the Anne Frank for grown-ups', wrote diaries and letters which are among the great documents of our time. Preface: Eva Hoffman

6. The Victorian Chaise-longue by Marghanita Laski: A 'little jewel of horror': 'Melly' lies on a chaise-longue in the 1950s and wakes as 'Milly' 80 years before. Preface: PD James

7. The Home-Maker by Dorothy Canfield Fisher: Ahead of its time 'remarkable and brave 1924 novel about being a house-husband' (Carol Shields). Preface: Karen Knox

8. Good Evening, Mrs Craven: the Wartime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes: Superbly written short stories, first published in *The New Yorker* from 1938-44. Five of them were twice read on R4. Preface: Gregory LeStage

9. Few Eggs and No Oranges by Vere Hodgson: A 600-page diary, written from 1940-45 in Notting Hill Gate, full of acute observation, wit and humanity. Preface: Jenny Hartley

10. Good Things in England by Florence White: This comprehensive 1932 collection of recipes inspired many, including Elizabeth David.

11. Julian Grenfell by Nicholas Mosley: A biography of the First World War poet, and of his mother Ettie Desborough. Preface: author

12. It's Hard to be Hip over Thirty and Other Tragedies of Married Life by Judith Viorst: Funny, wise and weary 1960s poems about marriage, children and reality. Preface: author

13. Consequences by EM Delafield: By the author of *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, this 1919 novel is about a girl entering a convent after she fails to marry. Preface: Nicola Beauman

14. Farewell Leicester Square by Betty Miller: Novel (by Jonathan Miller's mother) about a Jewish film-director and 'the discreet discrimination of the bourgeoisie' (*Guardian*). Preface: Jane Miller

15. Tell It to a Stranger by Elizabeth Berridge: 1947 short stories which were twice in the *Evening Standard* bestseller list; they are funny, observant and bleak. Preface: AN Wilson

16. Saplings by Noel Streatfeild: An adult novel by the well-known author of *Ballet Shoes*, about the destruction of a family during WW11; a R4 ten-part serial. Afterword: Jeremy Holmes

17. Marjory Fleming by Oriel Malet: A deeply empathetic novel about the real life of the Scottish child prodigy who lived from 1803-11; now published in France; was a play on Radio Scotland.

18. Every Eye by Isobel English: An unusual 1956 novel about a girl travelling to Spain, highly praised by Muriel Spark: a R4 'Afternoon Play' in 2004. Preface: Neville Braybrooke

19. They Knew Mr Knight by Dorothy Whipple: An absorbing 1934 novel about a man driven to committing fraud and what happens to him and his family; a 1943 film. Preface: Terence Handley MacMath

20. A Woman's Place by Ruth Adam: A survey of C20th women's lives, very readably written by a novelist-historian: an overview full of insights. Preface: Yvonne Roberts

21. Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day by Winifred Watson: A delightful 1938 novel about a governess and a night-club singer. Read on R4 by Maureen Lipman; to be published in France this autumn. Preface: Henrietta Twycross-Martin

22. Consider the Years by Virginia Graham: Sharp, funny, evocative WWII poems by Joyce Grenfell's closest friend and collaborator. Preface: Anne Harvey

23. Reuben Sachs by Amy Levy: A fierce 1880s satire on the London Jewish community by 'the Jewish Jane Austen' who was a friend of Oscar Wilde. Preface: Julia Neuberger.

24. Family Roundabout by Richmal Crompton: By the *William* books author, 1948 family saga contrasting two matriarchs and their very different children. Preface: Juliet Aykroyd

25. The Montana Stories by Katherine Mansfield: Collects together the short stories written during the author's last year; with a detailed publisher's note and the contemporary illustrations. Five were read on R4 in 2002.

26. Brook Evans by Susan Glaspell: A very unusual novel, written in the same year as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, about the enduring effect of a love affair on three generations of a family.

27. The Children who Lived in a Barn by Eleanor Graham: A 1938 classic about five children fending for themselves; starring the unforgettable hay-box. Preface: Jacqueline Wilson

28. Little Boy Lost by Marghanita Laski: Novel about a father's search for his son in France in 1945, chosen by the *Guardian*'s Nicholas Lezard as his 2001 Paperback Choice. A R4 'Book at Bedtime' read by Jamie Glover. Afterword: Anne Sebba

29. The Making of a Marchioness by Frances Hodgson Burnett: A wonderfully entertaining 1901 novel about the ensuing melodrama when a governess marries well. Preface: Isabel Raphael, Afterword: Gretchen Gerzina

30. Kitchen Essays by Agnes Jekyll: Witty and useful essays about cooking, with recipes, published in *The Times* and reprinted as a book in 1922. 'This is one of the best reads outside Elizabeth David' wrote gastropoda.com.

31. A House in the Country by Jocelyn Playfair: An unusual and very interesting 1944 novel about a group of people living in the country during WW11. Preface: Ruth Gorb

32. The Carlyles at Home by Thea Holme: A 1965 mixture of biography and social history which very entertainingly describes Thomas and Jane Carlyle's life in Chelsea.

- 33. *The Far Cry*** by Emma Smith: A beautifully written 1949 novel about a young girl's passage to India: a great Persephone favourite. 'Book at Bedtime' in 2004. Preface: author
- 34. *Minnie's Room***: The Peacetime Stories of Mollie Panter-Downes 1947–1965: Second volume of short stories first published in *The New Yorker*, previously unknown in the UK.
- 35. *Greenery Street*** by Denis Mackail: A delightful, very funny 1925 novel about a young couple's first year of married life in a (real) street in Chelsea. Preface: Rebecca Cohen
- 36. *Lettice Delmer*** by Susan Miles: A unique 1920s novel in verse describing a girl's stormy adolescence and path to redemption, much admired by TS Eliot.
- 37. *The Runaway*** by Elizabeth Anna Hart: A Victorian novel for children and grown-ups, illustrated by Gwen Raverat. 'There never was a happier book' (*Country Life*, 1936). Afterwords: Anne Harvey, Frances Spalding.
- 38. *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*** by Julia Strachey: A funny and quirky 1932 novella by a niece of Lytton Strachey, praised by Virginia Woolf. Preface: Frances Partridge. *Also read on two cds or two cassettes by Miriam Margolyes*
- 39. *Manja*** by Anna Gmeyner: A 1938 German novel, newly translated, about five children conceived on the same night in 1920 and their lives until the Nazi takeover. Preface: Eva Ibbotson (daughter of the author)
- 40. *The Priory*** by Dorothy Whipple: A much-loved 1939 novel about three generations of a family, and their servants, living in a large country house. Preface: David Conville.
- 41. *Hostages to Fortune*** by Elizabeth Cambridge: 'Deals with domesticity without being in the least bit cosy' (Harriet Lane, *Observer*), a remarkable fictional portrait of a doctor's family in rural Oxfordshire in the 1920s.
- 42. *The Blank Wall*** by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding: 'The top suspense writer of them all' (Chandler). A 1947 thriller about a mother who shields her daughter from a blackmailer, filmed as both *The Reckless Moment* in 1949 and *The Deep End* in 2001.
- 43. *The Wise Virgins*** by Leonard Woolf: This is a wise and witty 1914 novel contrasting the bohemian Virginia and Vanessa with Gwen, the girl next door in 'Richstead' (Putney). Preface: Lyndall Gordon
- 44. *Tea with Mr Rochester*** by Frances Towers: Magical and unsettling 1949 stories, a surprise favourite, that are unusually beautifully written; read on R4 in 2003 and 2006. Preface: Frances Thomas
- 45. *Good Food on the Aga*** by Ambrose Heath: A 1932 cookery book for Aga users which can nevertheless be used by anyone; with numerous illustrations by Edward Bawden.
- 46. *Miss Ranskill Comes Home*** by Barbara Euphan Todd: An unsparing, wry 1946 novel: Miss Ranskill is shipwrecked and returns to wartime England. Preface: Wendy Pollard
- 47. *The New House*** by Lettice Cooper: 1936 portrayal of the day a family moves to a new house, and the resulting tensions and adjustments. Preface: Jilly Cooper.
- 48. *The Casino*** by Margaret Bonham: Short stories by a 1940s writer with a unique voice and dark sense of humour; they were read on BBC Radio 4 in 2004 and 2005. Preface: Cary Bazalgette.
- 49. *Bricks and Mortar*** by Helen Ashton: An excellent 1932 novel by a very popular pre- and post-war writer, chronicling the life of a hard-working and kindly London architect over thirty-five years.
- 50. *The World that was Ours*** by Hilda Bernstein: An extraordinary memoir that reads like a novel of the events before and after the 1964 Rivonia Trial. Mandela was given a life sentence but the Bernsteins escaped to England. Preface and Afterword: the author
- 51. *Operation Heartbreak*** by Duff Cooper: A soldier misses going to war – until the end of his life. 'The novel I enjoyed more than any other in the immediate post-war years' (Nina Bawden). Afterword: Max Arthur
- 52. *The Village*** by Marghanita Laski: This 1952 comedy of manners describes post-war readjustments in village life when love ignores the class barrier. Afterword: Juliet Gardiner
- 53. *Lady Rose and Mrs Memmery*** by Ruby Ferguson: A romantic 1937 novel about Lady Rose Targenet, who inherits a great house, marries well – and then meets the love of her life on a park bench. Preface: Candia McWilliam
- 54. *They Can't Ration These*** by Vicomte de Mauduit: A 1940 cookery book about 'food for free', full of excellent (and now fashionable) recipes.
- 55. *Flush*** by Virginia Woolf: A light-hearted but surprisingly feminist 1933 'life' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel, 'a little masterpiece of comedy' (*TLS*). Preface: Sally Beauman
- 56. *They Were Sisters*** by Dorothy Whipple: The fourth Persephone book by this wonderful writer, a 1943 novel that contrasts three very different marriages. Preface: Celia Brayfield
- 57. *The Hopkins Manuscript*** by RC Sherriff: What might happen if the moon crashed into the earth in 1946: 1939 science fiction 'written' by 'Mr Hopkins'. Preface: Michael Moorcock, Afterword: the late George Gamow
- 58. *Hetty Dorval*** by Ethel Wilson: First novel (1947) set in the beautiful landscape of British Columbia; a young girl is befriended by a beautiful and selfish 'Menace' – but is she? Afterword: the late Northrop Frye
- 59. *There Were No Windows*** by Norah Hoult: A touching and funny novel, written in 1944, about an elderly woman with memory loss living in Kensington during the blitz. Afterword: Julia Briggs.
- 60. *Doreen*** by Barbara Noble: A 1946 novel about a child who is evacuated to the country during the war. Her mother regrets it; the family that takes her in wants to keep her. Preface: Jessica Mann
- 61. *A London Child of the 1870s*** by Molly Hughes: A classic autobiography, written in 1934, about an 'ordinary, suburban Victorian family' in Islington, a great favourite with all ages. Preface: Adam Gopnik.
- 62. *How to Run Your Home Without Help*** by Kay Smallshaw: A 1949 manual for the newly servantless housewife full of advice that is historically interesting, useful nowadays and, as well, unintentionally humorous. Preface: Christina Hardymont
- 63. *Princes in the Land*** by Joanna Cannan: A novel published in 1938 about a daughter of the aristocracy who marries an Oxford don; her three children fail to turn out as she had hoped.
- 64. *The Woman Novelist and Other Stories*** by Diana Gardner: short stories written in the late 1930s and early 1940s that are witty, sharp and with an unusual undertone. Preface: Claire Gardner
- 65. *Alas, Poor Lady*** by Rachel Ferguson: A 1937 novel, which is polemical but intensely readable about the unthinking cruelty with which Victorian parents gave birth to daughters without anticipating any future for them apart from marriage.
- 66. *Gardener's Nightcap*** by Muriel Stuart: A huge variety of miniature essays on gardening – such as Dark Ladies (fritillary), Better Gooseberries, Phlox Failure – which will be enjoyed by all gardeners, keen or even lukewarm. First published in 1938.

THE RED BAIZE DOOR

BY ELLEN RYDER

As the train drew into Bath, Robert's face slid past the window like an enormously enlarged photograph in black and white, his eyes staring fixedly but without expression straight into Leda's. The shock made her cry, Forgive me, Robert; it was the meanness round your mouth I remembered – I had forgotten the fine shape of your head.

She sprang out. The wind rushed at her with a smell of sun and hot iron. 'I'm here,' she called, edging her way through the crowd and dropping her suitcase at his feet.

He turned unhurriedly. 'Ah, there you are... yes. Welcome home.' She would have hugged him, but he was already stooping for her case. 'Ticket handy? Let's go, then. Tottie will be out of school... I don't want her alone in the house.'

'I saw you, Robert. You flashed by. You were looking at me.'

'Was I? I didn't spot you.'

'How windy it is. There was no wind in London. No sun, either.'

He took her arm to guide her down the long wooden stairs. In London she had moved freely, as if drawing after her a wake of daring; now his thumb pressed into her elbow, and as they reached the bottom she heard

him muttering, in a tone of reproof: 'Nasty steps, those. Not at all well designed.'

The van stood outside, still caked with mud.

'So you didn't wash it?' she exclaimed.

'Afraid not. It will get you home, though.' He stowed her suitcase carefully on the back seat. 'I'll just wipe the wind-screen. I imagine you'll want to see out.'

She sat, her knees pressed together, aflame with hostility. Slowly the duster went back and forth. Once he licked it with his broad, coated tongue. 'All right now?' he asked, peering along the glass but not troubling to wipe his own side.

He speaks in gestures, she thought, not in words; he wants to prove how little he asks for himself. As he climbed in, his shoulder grazed against her arm, but though she felt the touch with extraordinary sharpness, she kept her arm still. The floor of the van was littered with matches and cigarette ends; in the glove compartment lay the same confusion of old envelopes, maps, pieces of string and empty cartons.

'Not too sorry to be home? Only two weeks – still, it seemed a long time this end. Battery's

low... I think she'll start. Yes, there she goes.' He pulled out in front of a large car. 'My right of way, I think! Your letters were a joy. I'd forgotten what good letters you write. Must be some years since I had one from you.' He glanced round, smiling sweetly. 'You're looking better ... less dark under the eyes. Enjoy yourself?'

'I missed Tottie.'

'She missed you too. I had to cross off the days. She's her mother's girl all right.'

'And her father's.'

'I like to think so. Tell me about yourself.'

'Oh, Robert, that's not easy. I liked being in my old room, but I felt rather like a revenant, especially walking round at night. I don't know anyone in town. You look in the telephone book and people simply aren't listed any more.'

'Anyone in particular?'

'I found my old address book. Some of the names I couldn't even remember. I've lived down here so long – perhaps other people see my name in their book and wonder who's Leda Paul.'

'Not likely they'd forget you, not with your looks.'

She smiled ruefully. 'I was rather good-looking when I was

young. The house is so shabby, Robert, with grime everywhere and flowers wilting in dirty vases. Mother's char is hopeless and she won't do a thing herself except the cooking. Oh yes, Phoebe's due tomorrow. Apparently she's pregnant again.'

Robert cleared his throat. 'Lucky woman.'

'I know. I'm sorry, Robert.'

Bath had dropped away as they climbed the hill; the valley opened before them, deep and very green. Only last night she had been sobbing in Charlotte's arms, saying again and again, 'I dread going home.' Now the argument recommenced: 'You see, Charlotte, we hardly ever make love, nothing flows between us. I'm like a desert, I burn so, and Robert's set in such loneliness he doesn't notice that we confront each other silently, like strangers. He has such patient love for his carving – why can't he approach me with the same patience, for the sake of love? And why tell me I have the sex, it's up to me to put it to work, when such a thing is not part of his language?' Moist with sweat, her palms clasped each other nervously as Robert laid a hand on her thigh.

'Time we got to know each other again... made a new start.'

She searched his face for some clue, some promise, but his lips were already a line pinched at each end between his full, colourless cheeks. 'I'd like to. I've thought of it so much, till I could hardly think of anything else. It must have been hard for you living with

me lately, I'm afraid.'

'I wouldn't say that, but I've been anxious. That's why I sent you off. And you do look better for it... more like the girl I once married.'

Feeling very far from that girl, she turned away, and, lowering the window, leant out to look across the valley. The curving fields rolled away like the limbs of an animal asleep, corn and pasture sharing the same electric green. From the bank came the smell of hawthorn blossom, reminding her of the time her father had crowned her with a wreath of may while Phoebe and Anne stood apart, their arms linked. 'Now you're my queen,' he had said, but with such tender pity that she received no joy from his gift, rather an intimation, as precious as it was awe-inspiring, of having been dedicated to the same doomed path as himself. Though at home, like him, in the terrible outer limits of love, it was the dull, stale centre that she could not tolerate.

As her eye followed the hill-crest that cut across a sky of gentian she began telling Robert a story the very opposite of this open, physical grandeur.

'One of Charlotte's patients had to make herself crawl up the stairs to her flat. She had three small children waiting for her, one of them a baby. Think of it, Robert, crawling like a dog!' She imagined the woman's hair falling over her eyes, the pointed elbows, the unwilling knees. Drag me, hands; push me, feet. Then she heard him ask, what

was the connection? 'Oh, none. Charlotte was telling me about her cases. Why, did you think I might come crawling out of the train on all fours?'

'You made the connection, not I.'

'Yes, so I did. But things look different when you've been away, as if a veil... She stopped. 'One feels queer...' She looked at him guiltily.

'Don't tell me if you'd rather not.'

'But you said we must get to know each other.'

'I meant it... you're only just back ... time enough later.'

'But, Robert, later you may not...'

'I'll be there.' Now he was smiling in the fatherly way which most reproached her.

The torrent froze in her mind; she recognised his need for the ordinary, his suspicion of anything violent or eccentric. 'Forgive me,' she said in a dull voice. 'It's the excitement of coming home, I'm much happier, really, and not tired any more.'

'That's my good girl.'

At the summit they turned east to cross the high plateau of farmland. The village came in sight, an eyebrow cocked on the edge of the world, now darkened by cloud-shadow. That's home, she told herself, it's nothing to be afraid of. I'm more than well; I'm charged like an electric power cable. But how I wish he'd drive faster! The edge of cloud stroked over the landscape like a paintbrush, turning the grass parrot green and the cock on the

church tower gold. A dot of pink came in sight, bobbing up and down. 'Robert, there's Tottie!'

'I thought she'd be along to meet us.'

Tottie was leaping along the verge, arms extended. Suddenly she fell and disappeared; her pink skirt reared up, again she was running and now the mouth showed wide open in the small brown face. 'Hi, Tots!' Leda called from the window. As the van came to a halt, she jumped out and caught Tottie in a boisterous hug. 'I saw you falling over, silly thing, flop into the grass. Oh, it's good to hug you again, darling pudding. Come and sit on my lap.'

'Mind Mummy's skirt,' Robert warned.

Tottie clambered in on top of Leda, burying herself in Leda's arms. 'I've missed you so terribly, Mummy. I couldn't wait for you to come home.' She sat up, her eyes sparkling. 'You've got scent on, and lipstick, and your hair's different! What a grand lady you are, for once!'

'Don't worry, it will all come out in the wash.'

They rocked with laughter and again clasped each other in a hug of joy. Now the van was turning north up a narrow lane by a row of cottages, past Robert's workshop and the long garden wall; it swung through a white gate on to the gravelled drive and halted outside the house.

'You shouldn't leave the front door open, Tottie,' Robert said, 'not when there's a wind. Strains the hinges.'

Tottie dragged Leda into the hall. Robert pointed and she nodded back vigorously. 'I'm to put the kettle on, Mummy; Daddy's orders. You're not to touch a thing, and no peeking in the dining-room either.' She darted into the kitchen, slamming the door.

Robert left the suitcase at the foot of the stairs. 'There's a fire in the drawing-room. I won't be a minute ... just get the van in the garage.'

Cautiously Leda stared round the hall. Lupins on the telephone table, the stone floor washed, no dust in the bar of sunshine, the banister polished – dear Pat, how good of her. She wandered into the drawing-room to her right; there lay her knitting in the corner of the sofa, and her book, marker in place, on the window-seat at the far end, and again there were flowers, iris, peony, white lilac, and the smell of polish. She knelt on the window-seat to look out across the garden. On either side of the path leading to the workshop the grass was inches thick and white with daisies. Damn Robert, why hadn't he done the mowing? Was it deliberate, a reminder: You've had your holiday ... now, back to work?

Tottie came through the panelled side-door. 'The kettle's on and I've poured out the milk. We made a surprise for you last night, Mummy. Wait till you see my tarts.' She shouted through the window, 'Hurry up, Daddy,' then grasped Leda's arm and said plaintively: 'Don't ever go

away again, Mummy, promise you won't. I don't like it here without you.'

'I'll take you with me next time, darling. Let me get my suitcase. There's a present in it for you.'

From the hall she caught a glimpse of Robert bending over the dining-room table, delicately lifting a sheet of polythene from an iced cake. She averted her eyes, hoping he had not noticed her.

'All my clothes are dirty,' she complained, opening her case. 'One forgets how filthy London is. Here's your present, Tots, and this is Daddy's.' As he came in she held out a narrow parcel, saying impulsively: 'Don't think I've been extravagant, Robert. Mother gave me a tip for washing down her stairs.'

'How nice of her ... and how nice of you.' He examined the parcel, pleased and evidently surprised. Tottie had already torn open hers.

'A paint-box, an enormous one! Look, Daddy.'

'Why, that is a beauty. You be careful with it, little one.'

'Oh, I will. I'll wash it every day.'

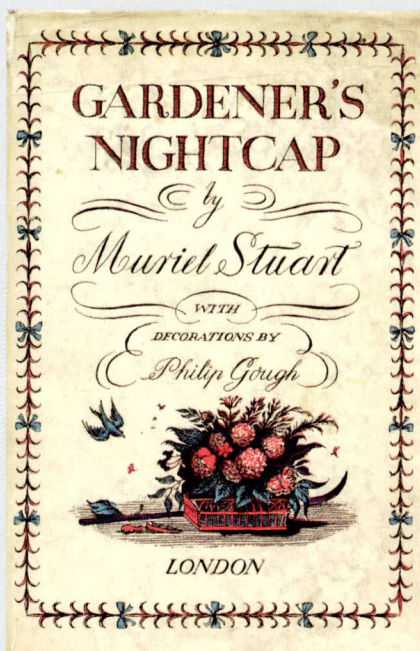
Neatly he opened his parcel, extracting a silk tie patterned in green and umber. He held it to the light, stroked it with his broad thumb, examined the label, the lining; his thumb, coarsened by work, grated slightly on the fine silk. 'Have to buy me a new suit to do honour to that. Thank you; thank you very much. You must wash your mother's stairs more often.'

She laughed, glad of her success. The corner of a block of cartridge paper showed in the open suitcase. Quickly she shut the lid. This was a present to herself, the symbol of a path forsaken long ago, bought secretly in the art shop because the sight of it had roused an excited craving in her hand, like hunger. She trembled to think Robert might have seen. The kettle whistled. 'Shall I make the tea?'

'No ... my job.' Robert was already on his way.

She took her dirty clothes to the linen basket in the kitchen, only to find it full and stinking of sweat. At once she was besieged by anger: the van caked, the lawn unmown, and now this! With revulsion she stuffed her things in and, Tottie at her heels, ran up to her bedroom with her case. More flowers, white and yellow in a glass bowl – she must remember to thank him – and on the dressing-table one of Tottie's posies thrust into a jam jar. From the window came the note of a starling perched on the garden wall, who flew away in alarm as she raised the sash. She looked towards the far downs as blue as speedwell and over the immense stretch of arable land reaching to a sky a thousand times wider than the sky of London. Below ran the long border, ragged with wallflowers; to the left, in the rough ground by the north wing, the grass rippled like corn, the lilac stems rocked flower-heads already browned at their tips,

and some dusters, which Pat must have washed, flapped from the washing-line. The old attachment to her garden claimed her. She saw the apple trees in the kitchen garden were in bud, she wondered if the young carrots had grown and if Robert had watered the tomato plants in the greenhouse, and when Tottie said, 'What's this



Original cover for Gardener's Nightcap

grey thing, Mummy?' she started as from a trance.

'Oh, just cartridge paper. It's a secret. Put it in my bottom drawer.'

'Are you going to do some painting?'

'Perhaps, one day. Don't tell Daddy.'

Tottie struggled with the heavy drawer. 'You could borrow my paint-box, if you like. You ought to be an artist again, you're so marvellous at drawing. It's silly just doing gardening and

housework the whole time.'

'Someone has to do it. Look at the wallflowers. Look at that lawn.'

'Daddy meant to cut it, but he spent all Sunday staking the chrysanthemums.'

'He couldn't have!'

'Well, all Sunday morning. He said you'd be cross if he didn't do it properly. In the afternoon we went to the White Horse. I ran up and down its tummy. His eye's as big as this room; you could put a tent on it and live there. But it's dull without you, Mummy. Daddy never sees things the way you do; he can't make up stories and he doesn't dance or jump about.' She laughed mischievously. Her wide-apart, tilted eyes were like escape valves for some inner blaze of merriment, but as Robert called they grew serious and she ran out, saying, 'Come on, Mummy, we're supposed to be downstairs.'

Robert ushered Leda into the dining-room with a slight bow from the waist and a formal sweep of the hand. The table was laid with the best linen mats, his mother's tea-service, the silver knives and spoons, the lustre tea-pot; he had filled the Worcester plates with small sandwiches, and set, in the centre, his magnificent white cake iced to represent a station, with a tiny train, and tracks that led to the word 'London' and back to the word 'Bath'. Round the sides of the cake he had piped swags of roses.

'Robert, it's a masterpiece.'

'Yes ... I'm rather pleased with

it myself.'

Tracing the design with her finger, Tottie chanted, 'You climb in the train here, the man blows his whistle, you go clackety-clack to London'

'Don't poke it, child.'

Tottie had stabbed the word 'London'. She tried to push the icing together, glanced guiltily at her father and shrugged as if to say, I don't care.

Robert paled, the corners of his mouth sucked in.

Leda said: 'She didn't mean to. It was an accident.'

'Well, we'll let you off this time, young woman, but you must learn to watch those clumsy fingers.' Opening his penknife, he worked at the damaged icing until the letters were more or less recognisable. 'Took me one and a half hours to do this. I don't like seeing good work wantonly spoiled.'

Tottie flopped down in her chair, her back to Robert. A tremor of pure hate ran through Leda; she gripped the rail of her chair to keep herself from dashing out of the room. Robert, settling himself, poured the tea. 'Do sit down, at least,' he said, and with the silver tongs dropped two lumps into a cup and passed it to her. She sat down; she stared at the cake, the sandwiches, the lustre tea-pot over which Robert was slipping the cosy, and then with relief at Tottie's burnt tarts. 'I like your tarts, Tots. I think I'll start with one.'

Tottie said indifferently, 'I can't make super things like Daddy.'

'When I was six my tarts weren't nearly as good as yours. Mother wouldn't have them on the table.'

'Coo, I don't think that was very nice of Granny.'

Robert cut the damaged piece of cake and put it ostentatiously on his own plate. Catching Tottie's eye, Leda winked from the sheer desire to ridicule him. She thought, He moves from one position to another like a spider shoring up its web; now he's passing the cake, not to me, but to his wife who has just come home. His hands are stained with work – 'It took me one and a half hours to stain that doodle-do' – but he's scrubbed them, his hair is brushed, he's wearing his new tie. How presentable he is, modest, handsome, attentive, and now his expression has softened: he wants something from me.

'Tottie hasn't heard about your trip yet.'

'Yes, Mummy, go on, tell me. Did you see the animals in the Zoo?'

'Without you, Tots? Impossible.'

'Did you do anything exciting?'

'Not really, darling. I took a sleeping pill every night and didn't get up once before ten.'

'You lazy thing.'

'Mummy wasn't lazy. She was enjoying a well-earned rest.'

'But Tottie's right. I meant to visit the art galleries, but I just snoozed or went for long, fast walks. I did go to the Tate once, but I started crying in the Blake room and had to leave.'

Intensely interested, Tottie asked, 'What made you cry?'

'There's a terrible picture, Tots, a green devil of pestilence with a whip, and rows of poor chaps laid out dying, and God above with his arms stretched out but his eyes shut, not looking, not even caring.'

'God does care because he loves us.'

'So I've heard, but I think God's more loved than loving.'

She saw pillars of devotion rising from a thousand hearts while God's immense eyelids remained shut; the pillars swept back like a rain of sorrow, the hands rose to catch what was only rejected tears. 'Ah yes,' she said, dragging herself back. 'About the north wing. You remembet those friends of Gladys Williams who wanted a flat in the country? Mother spoke to them over the telephone yesterday. She says it's a historian and his sister – he was on the same faculty as Gladys at one time, so of course that makes him okay by Mother's standards. We ought to be hearing any day now. Mother insists on our having her old electric cooker. She even suggested dividing the garden with a fence.'

'She's got a cheek!'

'Of course we wouldn't, darling. You know how Granny exaggerates. Still, she's right; this house is far too big. I'm not young enough to do the work. I can't – there's so much.' She caught her lip. The unmown lawn, the sour linen basket, the dying wallflowers – resolutely she

refused to pity herself. 'Their name is Paget, by the way. Gladys said he's taking a year off to write a book.'

Tottie grumbled, 'I suppose that means I can't play hide and seek in the north wing any more.' When Robert suggested he and Leda might discuss it later, she grinned and said, 'I know, Daddy, par devong.'

Leda laughed. Her mood changed abruptly. The moment Robert had finished she jumped up to start clearing away, but Robert took the plates from her. 'Not today,' he insisted.

'You're to sit in the drawing-room with your feet up,' Tottie said, dragging her to the door.

'But I feel so restless. Perhaps I'll pick some flowers in the garden.'

From behind came Robert's voice, tinged with reproach. 'I doubt if you'll find many vases left to fill.'

She spun round. 'Oh, I saw your flowers everywhere, even by my bed. I meant to thank you, but like a fool I forgot.'

Mollified, he said, 'We did try to make everything nice for you.'

'And I'm so grateful. It all looks lovely, and the tea was absolutely marvellous.' Methinks I bloody well do protest too much, she thought, going through the kitchen into the garden. Once free of Robert the separate parts of her mind flew together; she could have hooted with mirth or burst into a flood of tears with no sense of disparity. The shadow cast by the house gave way to an embrace of sunshine. She crossed the lawn to

the arched dark-green door of her kitchen garden. There stood her rows of vegetables and soft fruits, the old apple trees along the south wall, the shed and greenhouse on her left, the rhubarb, the metal wheelbarrow half full of rain, while over the earth lay a bright veil of weed seedlings. Everything had shot up; the carrots were small feather dusters, the broad beans were at last in flower. She mooned along the stone path, dreaming, planning, at rest in this private heaven. Presently she found a patch where Tottie had been at play. A trowel lay half buried beside a potted wild pansy; within a square of smoothed earth the word 'MUMMY' had been traced and surrounded with limestone chips. The square told so much: Tottie's rescue of the wild flower; her game shot through with thoughts of Mummy, at last a pang and the magic word inscribed to bring Mummy back; then the wandering off, the pansy forgotten, the trowel left out.

She crouched down on the path and with the trowel began making designs within Tottie's edging of chips. As the warmth of stone burnt through her skirt, she became the tall, thin child sitting on a hot wall in Italy while her parents wrangled on the beach below, and felt again that gratitude to stone for its comfort and solidity. People tear at one so, but stone and earth, these are one's happiness. How I love them, she thought, lifting a handful of soil, her palm pierced with sensuality. And the Earth

itself with its eternity and Tottie – once she had tried to explain to her mother how these two loves grew from the source of love itself. 'Don't pester me, child.' Such words reverberate throughout a lifetime. And the phrase, 'I cannot imagine' – what a barrier between mother and child when the child's imagination asks only to stretch itself to the very rim of the world. But in Tottie lived a mind both free and daring.

Intently she compared her childhood with Tottie's, the two so alike in precocity of feeling, so overshadowed by adult unhappiness. Could she strengthen Tottie by allowing her the scope she herself had been denied after her father's death? She thought of those others: Robert, her mother, Phoebe and Anne; what could one offer them but silence? And why could she not rage openly as her father had done? Was it kindness? Or cowardice? lack of self-esteem? The latch clicked. She sprang to her feet. As Robert peered in she cried, Not here, in my sanctum! and quickly masked her features as one throws a sheet over a naked body. Raising the trowel, she said, 'I've been weeding,' as if to excuse her very existence.

This is the opening chapter of a novel we hope to publish in the future. When it first appeared in 1964 the original publisher, Hutchinson, wrote: 'The Red Baize Door will place Ellen Ryder among our best contemporary women novelists.' She wrote two more novels, Kate (1967) and The Forest Pool (1968). © Ellen Ryder 1964

FINALLY

We have often been asked to run a **Persephone Book**

Group: this will take place at the shop from 6.30–8 on the first Wednesday of the month, except in August and will cost £10. Madeira and bread and cheese (from the deli next door) will be served. We will read through the Persephone list, starting with **William – an Englishman**; the format will be a quarter of an hour introduction by either Nicola or Emily alternating, and then discussion. We greatly look forward to seeing some of you on Wednesday 5 July, 6 September and thereafter. On Wednesday 13 September we are holding a **Persephone Day at Newnham**. Between 10 am and 6.30 pm coffee, madeira, lunch, a cream tea and sherry will be served. Two of the speakers, both of whom have given hugely enjoyable talks at Newnham before, are Pamela Norris, whose book *Words of Love* is published this summer: she will talk about Women Writers and The Romantic Hero; and Anne Sebba, who is finishing a book on Jennie Churchill, will focus on Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Shuttle* (which we publish in 2007) and other novels about American heiresses marrying English aristocrats. There will be two further speakers. The cost is £85 (inc. vat) which includes a free copy of one of the September

books for the Newnham Book Group. Then on Tuesday 21 November the (rarely shown) film of *They Knew Mr Knight* will be put on at the British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street W1; lunch and tea will be served



between 1 and 4 pm. The cost is £28. Lastly, following on from Salley Vickers's memorable lecture last year, on Tuesday 28 November Hermione Lee, author of *Virginia Woolf*, will give **The Second Persephone Lecture** on 'Edith Wharton: Work in Progress' (her biography comes out in 2007). This again takes place at the Art Workers Guild 6 Queen Square WC1 from 6–8 pm and the cost, to include a glass of wine before and after the lecture, is £20. Please note that we cannot refund payment for any event except in exceptional circumstances. NB: There will be Persephone teas in Chichester and Bath in November; details in the next PQ.

As well as *The Far Cry* jackets, aprons, pinnies and dressing-gowns, we

now have scarves (£15 each) and fabric (£15 a metre); we also of course have Persephone Mugs; the Fifty Books We Wished We Had Published; postcards of Six Views of Bloomsbury by Ann Usborne for 50p each; Persephone Cards for £1.50 (post-free for more than ten); the Book Bag for £5 (post-free); and a changing selection of vintage books. And now we are selling three fabrics supplied by the excellent Borderline Fabrics: Black Goose, used for *Farewell, Leicester Square*; a variation on Star, used for *The Hopkins Manuscript*; and Fritillary, used for *Gardener's Nightcap*. The fabrics are 137 cm wide and cost £50 per metre, which is, alas, not cheap but half a metre would make a couple of cushions.

Should you receive this PQ before Sunday 11 June at 7.45 pm do try and listen to the last of the repeat readings on R4 of five stories from Frances Towers' *Tea with Mr Rochester*.

Our September books are *The Fortnight in September* by RC Sherriff, a gentle but profound bestselling 1931 novel by the author of *Journey's End* and *The Hopkins Manuscript*, (Persephone Book No. 57); and *The Expendable Man* by the acclaimed American crimewriter Dorothy B Hughes, a brilliant and very unusual thriller set in Arizona in 1963.

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If we have failed to acknowledge something that appears in *The Persephone Quarterly*, please let us know.

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