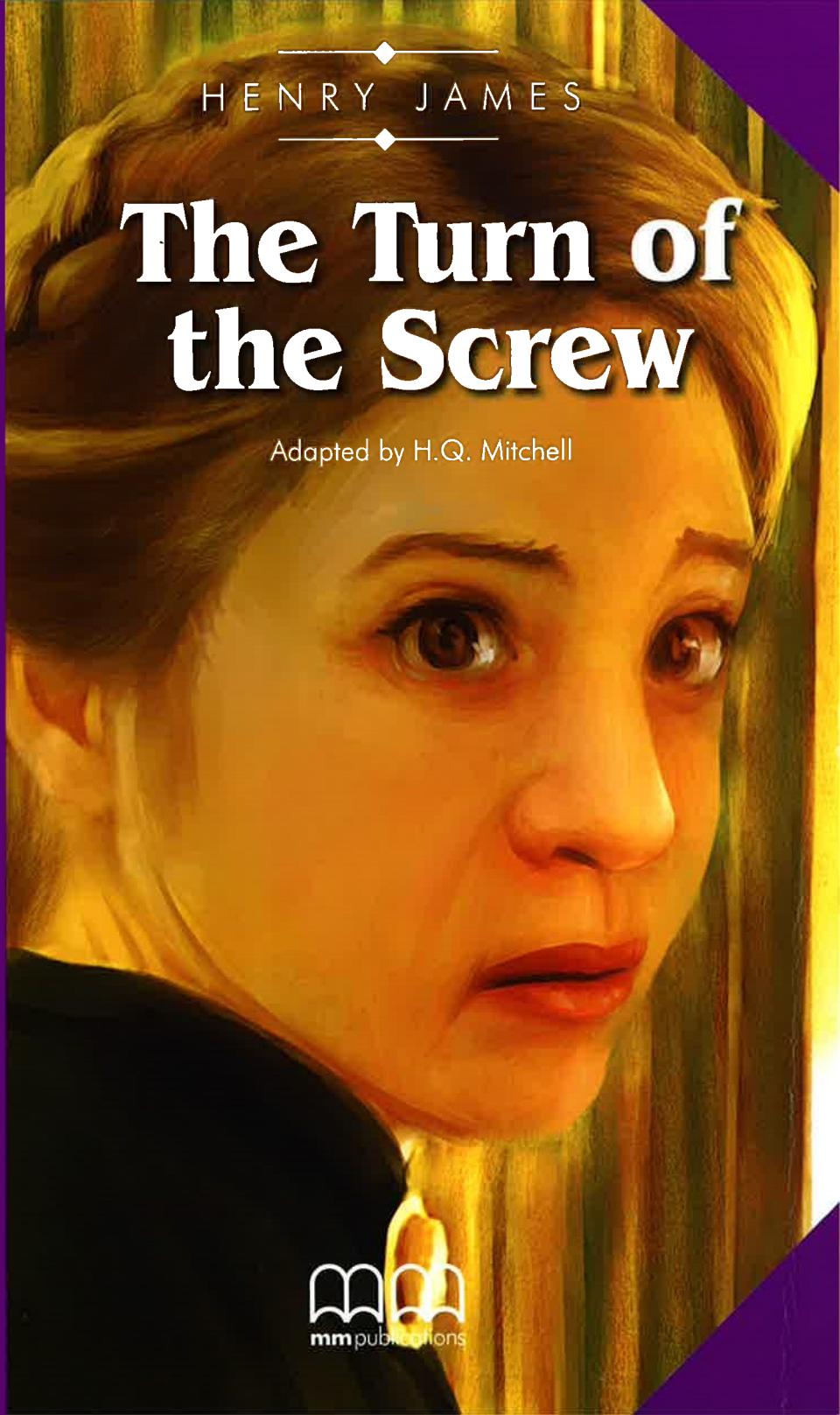
TOP READERS

HENRY JAMES

The Turn of the Screw

Adapted by H.Q. Mitchell



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CHAPTER 1

Our story takes place in the time of Queen Victoria. There lived in London two gentlemen who had been very close friends for many years. They were named Douglas and Griffin. One Christmas, they sat in front of the fireplace, in Douglas' home, telling stories. Griffin had just finished a ghost story involving a child.

Douglas smiled sadly and looked thoughtful for a long moment. "Well my friend, what do you say to this? I know a ghost story involving TWO children."

"Well, I should say that is like another turn of a screw: makes the excitement of it even stronger!"

Finally Douglas started narrating his story. "Griffin, my dear friend, I will tell you that story, as it was told to me by someone who experienced the whole thing directly. She has been dead for 20 years. She was a



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charming young woman called Elizabeth. She was the youngest of several daughters of a priest. At the age of twenty, she came here to London, to be interviewed for a teaching position. The gentleman who interviewed her was the uncle of two young children, whose parents had died in India. He wanted a governess to stay with them, in the great country house named Bly. She was very impressed with his appearance and the way he talked. After a long conversation, he decided to hire her as a governess for his niece and nephew. However, he insisted she should deal with all matters involving the children, leaving him free to carry on with his own business. She happily agreed to this.

When she travelled to Bly, it was a hot summer evening in June. Her mind kept swinging between joy and doubt. There was the obvious joy of success at having gained the teaching work. But then came the doubts: would the children like her? Could she win the respect of the servants as the leader in the house?



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Elizabeth tried to put these thoughts aside, and concentrate on the pleasant carriage ride, and the sweet summer countryside. Then they passed through the wide iron gates, and she had her first view of Bly. She looked at the green lawns, the bright flowers, and ravens circling over tree-tops. The house had open windows, and fresh-looking curtains.

Waiting outside the main doors was a large, middle-aged woman, and a young eight-year old girl. The woman curtsied to her, and introduced herself as Mrs Grose, the housekeeper. The young girl was named Flora and was one of the children. She looked like an angel, beautiful and pretty, with lovely blonde hair in curls.

That night Elizabeth could not sleep: the day's events and the beautiful new room made her much too excited. The bed was large and soft. She had a mirror in which she could see herself fully for the first time in her life. Elizabeth had only one small worry: Mrs Grose did not seem as pleased to see her as she had expected. But she soon forgot this, focusing on the thought of Flora.

As dawn approached, she thought she heard the cry of a child far away. Then the sound of someone walking softly past her room. 'I must be imagining things,' she thought to herself. Later on, she wasn't so sure.

The next day, Flora's small bed was carried over to her room. It had been agreed that, from now on, the girl would sleep in Elizabeth's room.

That night the three of them, Elizabeth, Mrs Grose and Flora sat eating supper by candlelight. Elizabeth looked at Flora lovingly. "Is her brother as wonderful as her?"she asked.

"Miss, you will see he is quite as marvellous as Flora!" replied Mrs Grose.

Elizabeth laughed. "It looks as if I'll be just as excited meeting the children as I was meeting the Master! But now, tell me, when does Miles arrive?" she asked the woman.

"Friday, Miss, by the same carriage as you did," Mrs Grose replied.

The following morning, Elizabeth asked Flora to take her on a tour of the house as this would help her greatly to make friends with the little girl. Flora was very glad to do this, talking about every place

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they went to. Together, they walked through all the corridors, empty rooms and crooked staircases. They even climbed to the top of a square tower, and the height was dizzying! Soon the pair were good friends.

That evening, a big envelope arrived for Elizabeth. Inside was a letter from the Master, and also a smaller envelope. The Master's letter said he was enclosing an envelope from Miles' school, and she was to deal with the matter without involving him. The school's letter gave her a sleepless night. Next morning, she discussed it with Mrs Grose. "Miles has been expelled from school!" she said. "He'll come home for the school holidays, but they won't let him return!" The housekeeper's eyes filled with tears. "What do they say about him? What has he done?" she asked.

"They are not specific about what he's done. They simply express regret they can't take him back. Mrs Grose, I'm worried he's harmed others in some way."

Now the housekeeper's face turned red as flame with anger. "Miles would never injure others! He's only ten years old! You might as well believe such things of little Flora as believe them of him!"

The woman said nothing more, but in the evening Elizabeth felt a desire to question Mrs Grose more.

"Has Miles ever been bad?" she asked.

Mrs Grose looked at the governess thoughtfully. "Well, Miss, he has sometimes been a little naughty." Now her face looked stronger. "But I like a young boy to be a little naughty!"

"So do I. As long as he does not harm others…" Mrs Grose laughed. "Don't worry, Miss, he won't harm you!" This comment made Elizabeth feel ridiculous, and she too laughed. But the following day, she had new questions for Mrs Grose. "Tell me about the previous governess."

"Well, Miss Jessel was young and pretty," said the housekeeper, looking at the floor. "Just the way he liked them." As soon as she said that, she looked at Elizabeth, startled. "I mean the Master, of course."

Elizabeth was certain that the housekeeper had been talking about someone else, but she did not insist.

"What happened to Miss Jessel?" she asked.

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