



The Head of the House of Coombe

Frances Hodgson Burnett

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## The Head of the House of Coombe Details

Date : Published May 29th 2008 by BiblioLife (first published 1922)

ISBN : 9781426449406

Author : Frances Hodgson Burnett

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Fiction, Classics, European Literature, British Literature, Novels, Historical, Historical Fiction, Literature, American

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## **From Reader Review The Head of the House of Coombe for online ebook**

### **Bruiz says**

La verdad es que es un poco cansina tanta perfección y belleza

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### **Linda Orvis says**

Again...I can't believe this book is available for purchase! We live in an amazing age. My version, printed in 1922 (a first edition) practically fell apart as I read it.

Robin is born to a mother, Feather, who has no room in her life for a child. Robin is kept in the attic rooms of a house in London and is tended to by a servant who holds Robin's mouth shut and pinches her when she makes noise. By six years old, she doesn't know what a mother is, no less that she has one. On an excursion to the park one day, she meets Donal, a Scottish lad complete with a kilt and bonnet. Donal is Robin's first social contact outside her dreary life. At six, she is still in the attic with no toys, books, or love.

The Head of the House of Coombe follows Robin's life and the twists and turns it takes, until she is a young woman. At the end of my copy, there is an explanation that this book was a serial published in an English magazine. It was quite popular, and therefore decided that it should be made into 2 books. "Robin" is the sequel, and I have it in my library and will jump right into it.

Frances Hodgson Burnett, famous for The Secret Garden, wrote amazing adult novels as well as her children's books. Yes, they are written in the old style, but I've never been disappointed in any of the 20 out of 60 of her books that I've read.

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### **Wealhtheow says**

Beautifully written scenes, subtle in their understanding of the workings of societies and psyches, and truly interesting characters.

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### **MaryBliss says**

This novel was originally published as a serial, and then, when printed in book form, in two volumes. This is volume 1. Volume 2 is "Robin".

My first impression was that this was "A Little Princess" for grownups. There is much more fleshing out of adult characters in this saga of a neglected child and they are more complicated. Burnett's observations about pre-WWI London society are intriguing and woven pretty seamlessly into the narrative. You will find the reading much more interesting if you are familiar with late 19th and early 20th century European history as a number of historical events are referred to obliquely and you might miss what she's talking about if you are not. Burnett does, by 21st century standards, occasionally go a little bit overboard in narrating a child's

emotional response, but such things were de rigour in this genre at the time it was written and if you understand that, it's not annoying.

It was good enough that I got volume 2 and read that too.

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### **Nina says**

This is a very weird book. Written in 1922 it's part romance, part social commentary and part political commentary. The sequel, Robin was written the same year. I think it's really one book published as two. I'll be reading Robin right away.

As a period piece it's really thought provoking. In 1922 this book was number 4 on the bestselling list and number 10 was Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis (who won the Nobel for literature).

Unfortunately, my kindle edition was full of OCR errors that really detracted from the reading experience.

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### **Pkelsay says**

This book started like any other Frances Hodgson Burnett book; it starts with parents, but focuses on a young girl growing up. Robin is the neglected (on the verge of abuse) daughter of a vapid self-absorbed widow who accepts the charity of the Head of the House of Coombe so she doesn't have to give up her lavish entertaining lifestyle. Robin doesn't have friends, meets a boy in the park, etc. So far, so good (albeit fluffy). Then suddenly, deep and serious thoughts about the state of Europe are discussed via the character of Lord Coombe himself. Intimations of the upcoming Great War are made. Deep political thoughts. Then we're back to Robin, whose neglect is noted by Lord Coombe, and remedied by him in the form of a French governess and a low-class but loving nurse. She grows up and goes to her first party, during which Burnett lapses into several paragraphs of meditation on the nature of love. Then we're back with Robin, who meets the grown-up boy in the garden, and they've always been in love with each other - how twee. The end.

Seriously, that was the end. Robin and boy sort of gazed into each others eyes while dancing, and there was an offhand comment about some assassination of some guy in Sarajevo (hmm, what could that mean?), and that was it. Apparently she wrote a sequel to finish out the story, but this part of the story shifts pace in a broken way that doesn't have enough self-awareness to permit the reader to become immersed.

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### **Tabuyo says**

Me ha encantado y he quedado con ganas de leer la segunda parte, Robin. Espero que Alba la publique pronto.

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### **Mariano Hortal says**

Estupenda novela la de la escritora británica sobre todo porque, más allá de la típica trama victoriana como novela de formación de la protagonista, consiguió mezclarla con la situación histórica (los albores de la

primera guerra mundial) dotándole de elementos propios de la novela de espías y policíaca. Espero que Alba se decida a publicar la segunda novela (Robin), continuación de ésta, tengo que reconocer que me he quedado con las ganas de terminar la historia.

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### **Mary Ronan Drew says**

Most people when they think of Frances Hodgson Burnett, if they think of her at all, remember *The Little Princess*, *The Secret Garden*, and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and dismiss her as a writer of children's books. But Burnett wrote many adult novels, including *The Making of a Marchioness*, which was republished not long ago by Persephone and has become popular among discerning novel readers. She wrote about 30 adult novels and 15 or more children's books, many short stories, and a few plays and some of this work is excellent.

The Head of the House of Coombe and its sequel, Robin, which were published in 1922, were the last books Burnett wrote. They tell the story of a flighty woman, so flighty people called her Feather, and her daughter, Robin. Feather's husband dies, leaving her with a child she does not want and an enormous load of debt. When the servants, long unpaid, leave her and the child alone in the house she is frantic. . . .

To see the rest of my review, go to my blog at:

[http://maryslibrary.typepad.com/my\\_we...](http://maryslibrary.typepad.com/my_we...)

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### **Doreen Petersen says**

Delightful classic full of twists and turns but with a happy ending.

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### **L. (Vacation All I Ever Wanted) says**

The story is set in England during the transition from the Victorian Era to the Edwardian Era. So expect lots of talk like, "You won't find anyone like that anymore," and "What is with the women these days wanting to get a job and support themselves? That's just crazy!" We follow the life of young Robin and her horrible, terrible, abusive childhood all thanks to Grace Gareth-Lawless, the most despicable character ever written. It's not that Grace is overtly evil so much as she's simply a complete failure as a human being. #IHateGrace.

As Robin ages up to late teens, we're building up steam up for World War I. There are German spies everywhere and, oh no!, part of their nefarious plans involve innocent Robin. Will Robin be rescued from the detestable Huns? Will she ever have a cordial relationship with Lord Coombe? Will Robin ever find love? Read the book, and then read the sequel (which I have no plans on doing).

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## **Gloriamarie says**

This novel follows the relationships between a group of pre-World War One English nobles and commoners. It also offers editorial commentary on the political system in prewar Europe that Burnett feels bears some responsibility for the war and some pointed social commentary which is a hallmark of all Burnett's work.

Lord Coombe is considered to be the best-dressed man in London. He is also a man whose public reputation, despite his formidable intellect and observant eye, is one of unmitigated wickedness. During one of his social forays, he meets a selfish young woman named 'Feather' with the face of an angel. Fascinated by her, he slowly drifts into her circle. When her husband dies unexpectedly, leaving her alone and desolate in London, he ends up taking her under his wing.

Feather has a daughter named Robin, of whom she takes little notice. She treats Robin with shocking neglect and once Coombe takes over responsibility for the household's finances, Feather readily abandons poor Robin to the less-than-kindly ministrations of her nurse. In fact, Robin doesn't even know Feather is her mother for her first six years, calling her 'The Lady Downstairs'. Robin also hates Coombe, having heard a conversation that blamed him for the loss of her first friend. This was a little boy named Donal who was in fact Coombe's heir. Donal's mother disapproves both of Coombe and Feather and when she discovers that her son has been playing with Robin, she whisks him away, leaving Robin heartbroken. However, Coombe does not return this dislike and in fact makes a point of serving as her guardian, albeit without Robin's knowledge. As Robin grows, he builds her a set of rooms, engages a loving nurse for her, and eventually secures a reputable governess for her. While her mother continues to behave with the selfish freedom of a wanton child.

As Robin grows, she becomes a lovely and intelligent though innocent, girl. Feather's circle includes some unsavory characters, one of whom, a German nobleman, tries to make Robin into his plaything. This caricature of Imperial German stereotypes uses Robin's desire to support herself to trap her in a house of ill repute. His plan fails mainly through the actions of Coombe, but the after-effects leave Robin crushed.

One of Coombe's few true confidants is a dowager Duchess - a woman of both great intellect and great understanding who has recently lost her long-time lady companion. After Robin's experiences with the German, Coombe suggests Robin as a suitable replacement. The Duchess is the one person who knows the secret of Coombe's determination to watch over Robin and why he is willing to tolerate the activities of her mother. This secret is finally communicated to the reader as well during one of Coombe's talks with the Duchess. The Duchess does indeed take in Robin and befriends her. Robin is introduced to the Duchess' children and their friends and finally sponsors a small dance for Robin. At the dance, Robin meets Donal again as Coombe and the Duchess learn that an Austrian Archduke has just been assassinated in Serbia.

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## **Nancy says**

Frances Hodgson Burnett has her faults; I am the first to admit it. She can be sententious, foolishly sentimental, even tedious. But when you read one of her adult novels, you come away with a powerful sense

of the world she was writing about; she's a one-woman Sociology of the Early Twentieth Century course.

The eponymous head of the House of Coombe is the Earl of Coombe who, early in the novel, mysteriously consents to pay the bills of the pretty, spiteful and wholly nitwitted Feather Gareth-Lawless, who has been left penniless on the death of her irresponsible husband Robert. The arrangement is a scandal to the respectable society of London, who assume, mistakenly, that the Earl is enjoying Feather's sexual favors. Feather and her friends are unconcerned about the rumors; the impact is felt most by little Robin, Feather's innocent, neglected daughter.

Robin is the real focus of the novel. Her neglected childhood, wicked nanny, and isolated existence are drawn in the bleakest colors. Luckily for the wretched Robin, young Donal (who happens to be the Earl's heir) briefly enters her life; he is a beacon of light, teaching 6-year-old Robin about kisses and mothers and picture books. But alas, Robin is tainted by her mother's scandalous life, and Donal's mother snatches Donal away from Robin, breaking her wee heart. Her obvious grief brings her to Lord Coombe's attention, and he begins to interest himself in her life.

This is a bit of a "sensation" novel; I loved the parts about the wicked German lustng after Robin's innocence as she struggles to support herself. Robin herself is a clear portrait of the schizophrenic view of women in this pre-WWI time period: she rockets back and forth from utter passivity to fierce assertiveness between lunch and dinner, with hardly a moment to rest between moods. Whatever. I loved it. There is a sequel ("Robin"), and there is no sense reading one without the other; they were originally one novel, appearing in serial form.

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### **Cristina says**

Esta es una de las novelas (desconocidas) que Frances Hodgson Burnett escribió para un público adulto. Muchos lectores solo conocen "El jardín secreto", "La princesita" o "El pequeño Lord", pero lo cierto es que la autora escribió cerca de 30 novelas ahondando en el tema de las clases sociales, la belleza, la buena educación, la inocencia y la crueldad humana.

El señor de la casa de Coombe fue publicado en su época como parte de una serie de dos volúmenes, siendo este libro el primero y su continuación titulada "Robin" (que espero que la editorial publique muy pronto) el segundo.

La trama del libro narra la misteriosa conducta de Coombe, un señor a la moda, culto y del que se cuentan cosas perversas en un contexto ambiguo, al hacerse cargo de los gastos de una viuda joven, Pluma, que ha quedado endeudada por la falta de previsión de su descocado marido y la despiadada actitud de ésta hacia su pequeña hija, Robin.

Robin es el centro de la trama. Su desdichada niñez al lado de una niñera aborrecible y la falta de afecto maternal con la que crece. Sin embargo es su inexplicable odio hacia el Señor Coombe lo que resume al final la decepción con la que mira al mundo. Pero es el personaje de Coombe el que se roba ese protagonismo con todo ese aire de misterio y arrogancia. Tan bien desarrollado está su personaje que uno no sabría decir en la primera mitad del libro los motivos o la verdadera personalidad de este hombre.

Exquisitamente escrita y con una traducción impecable, con expresiones y actitudes propias de la época que hacen verdaderamente una delicia de leer, la novela hace una alusión política a la tragedia que se avecinaba, La I Guerra Mundial y los entramajes de espías alemanes que pululaban por Inglaterra. La disparidad de las clases sociales y su desdén hacia las personas que no cumplían con las reglas de conducta de la época acorralándolas al ostracismo socialmente, pero es quizás el sentimentalismo de la autora sobre la inocencia humana y su progresiva muerte, lo que vendría siendo una parte intrínseca de la historia.

Espero que pronto publiquen la segunda parte y podamos conocer cómo termina la historia de Robin, la que vendría siendo la última novela escrita por la autora. Como dato curioso este libro ocupó el puesto número cuatro en la lista Bestseller del año 1922 según Publishers Weekly.

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### **Kilian Metcalf says**

Finished reading Head of the House of Coombe by Frances Hodgson Burnett. I knew her from The Secret Garden, Little Lord Fauntleroy, and The Little Princess. Can't count the number of times I've reread The Little Princess. I was so pleased to find that she wrote many more books, and they are all free for Kindle. Coombe was originally a longer book, but her publishers made her cut it into two parts, and this book is Part One, ending with the assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo. The main characters are young and in love and have no idea what is coming. Need to read the sequel, called Robin, to find out what happens and hope for a happy ending. Don't know that I'll get it. WWI was pretty rough on the young men who served. May be a bittersweet ending.

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