

A Window in Thrums

by

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INTRODUCTION

When the English publishers read "A Window in Thrums" in manuscript they thought it unbearably sad and begged me to alter the end. They warned me that the public do not like sad books. Well, the older I grow and the sadder the things I see, the more do I wish my books to be bright and hopeful, but an author may not always interfere with his story, and if I had altered the end of "A Window in Thrums" I think I should never have had any more respect for myself. It is a sadder book to me than it can ever be to anyone else. I see Jess at her window looking for the son who never came back as no other can see her, and I knew that unless I brought him back in time the book would be a pain to me all my days, but the thing had to be done.

I think there are soft-hearted readers here and there who will be glad to know that there never was any Jess. There is a little house still standing at the top of the brae which can be identified as her house, I chose it for her though I was never in it myself, but it is only the places in my books about Thrums that may be identified. The men and women, with indeed some very subsidiary exceptions, who now and again cross the square, are entirely imaginary, and Jess is of them. But anything in her that was rare or beautiful she had from my mother; the imaginary woman came to me as I looked into the eyes of the real one. And as it is the love of mother and son that has written everything of mine that is of any worth, it was natural that the awful horror of the untrue son should dog my thoughts and call upon me to paint the picture. That, I believe now, though I had no idea of it at the time, is how "A Window in Thrums" came to be written, less by me than by an impulse from behind. And so it wrote itself, very quickly. I have read that I rewrote it eight times, but it was written once only, nearly every chapter, I think, at a sitting.