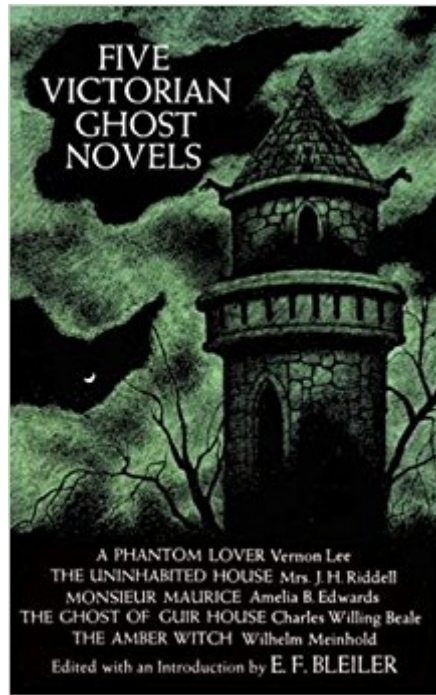


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Five Victorian Ghost Novels



Synopsis

In this volume are reprinted, complete and unabridged, five great classics of the Victorian supernatural novel: *The Uninhabited House* by Mrs. J. H. Riddell; *The Amber Witch* by J. W. Meinhold; *Monsieur Maurice* by Amelia B. Edwards; *A Phantom Lover* by Vernon Lee; and *The Ghost of Guir House* by Charles Willing Beale. These five novels present the entire panoply of Victorian thrills and chills at their best: pale ghosts wandering through the ancient chambers of a deserted mansion; the impingement of the restless, unquiet evil on the present; the Devil and bizarre witchcraft, strange magical dooms; love from the past and the no-boundary condition of death; hidden powers, occult knowledge, mental structures and weird magic not recorded elsewhere. These five novels, although recognized masterpieces of supernatural horror, are nowhere else in print. Indeed, three out of five of them have never before been reprinted since their initial appearance in fabulously rare periodicals and special publications. This is your first chance to read these fine products of the Victorian era.

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Customer Reviews

Many Victorian ghost novels were published in periodicals such as Routledge's Christmas Annual and never reprinted elsewhere. (A Christmas annual may seem incongruous, but apparently ghost stories were especially popular over the Christmas season as evening family entertainment around the fireplace.) E. F. Bleiler compiled these rare stories for this Dover publication, *Five Victorian Ghost Novels*. I enjoyed all five stories and highly recommend this collection. *The Uninhabited*

House (1875) by Mrs. J. H. Riddle (a pseudonym for Mrs. Charlotte E. Riddle) is a realistic depiction of a haunted house, one that is increasingly difficult to lease out. Although the property is well-maintained, accessible, and well-priced, one after another enthusiastic family quickly becomes disillusioned with their new home, even forfeiting the annual lease payments to quit the premises. Riddle's portrayal of law clerks, pensioners, and real estate speculators is sufficiently detailed to create an authentic setting and backdrop for this ghost story. The plot advances somewhat leisurely, but I never lost interest. I remained uncertain for a considerable period as to whether the apparition was real, or was a fraudulent fabrication by an unscrupulous real estate speculator. Mrs. Riddle weaves into the plot a Victorian romance, one that contributes to the storyline, but does not dominate it. The Amber Witch (1895) by Johannes Wilhelm Meinhold was quite popular among Victorian readers; it was translated twice into English and published in several editions. Written in a chronicle format, many elements in the plot are historically accurate and offer a surprising verisimilitude to this frightening account dating (supposedly) from the brutal Thirty Years War.

This collection offers something for everyone. By which I mean no two are in the least similar, and a couple are so disparate that I would venture to say that if you like one, you would not at all enjoy the other. The second novel in the book, "The Amber Witch," is the longest, as well as the least enjoyed by me. It is a fictional tale, but when first published claimed to be, as stated in the preface, a translation of a 15th century manuscript written by a pastor who endured much woe and trouble when marauders ravaged his village and his daughter is falsely accused of witchcraft. The "pastor's" style of writing is antiquated, but readable. My objection is the frequent interjections of Latin words with absolutely no explanations of their meanings in English. Presumably the average person in the Victorian era was much more familiar with Latin than today's reader, and also the scholarly reader of the 1970's (when this book was published) might have had an easier time. Personally, I had to keep near a computer and look things up quite frequently. Another issue, more personal to me, possibly, than the average person, was the philosophy of the narrator. No matter how many horrible calamities befall him, he is able to work it into his religion, while ascribing to his god both the impetus for his woe as well as the means to endure it. It is quite obvious that the malevolence of the people surrounding him is the sole cause of his hardship, and also that religion is the means by which they convince the general populace to go along with their evil schemes, yet his reliance on his God infrequently wavers. There are also no ghosts in this story. I much preferred "The Ghost of Guir House." It felt to me like the reward for slogging through the rest of the book.

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