

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko
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Miriam Monfort A Novel

Catherine A. Warfield

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MIRIAM MONFORT:

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE."

"Fancy, *with* fact, is just one fact the more."

"Let this old woe step on the stage again,

Act itself o'er anew for men to judge;

Not by the very sense and sight indeed,

Which take at best imperfect cognizance.

Since, how heart moves brain, and how both move hand,

What mortal ever in entirety saw?

Yet helping us to all we seem to hear,

For, how else know we save by worth of word?"

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of one most dear, who saw it grow to completion with pleasure and approbation, during the last happy summer of a life since darkened by misfortune. Peace be his!

MONFORT HALL.

"Not one friend have we here, not one true heart;
We've nothing but ourselves."

"There's a dark spirit walking in our house,
And swiftly will the destiny close on us.

It drove me hither from my calm asylum;

It lures me forward – in a seraph's shape

I see it near, I see it nearer floating –

It draws, it pulls me with a godlike power,

And, lo, the abyss! and thither am I moving;

I have no power within me – but to move."

"He is the only one we have to fear, he and his father."

COLERIDGE'S *Translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein"*

MIRIAM MONFORT

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PART I.

MONFORT HALL.

CHAPTER I.

My father, Reginald Monfort, was an English gentleman of good family, who, on his marriage with a Jewish lady of wealth and refinement, emigrated to America, rather than subject her and himself to the commentaries of his own fastidious relatives, and the incivilities of a clique to which by allegiance of birth and breeding he unfortunately belonged.

Her own family had not been less averse to this union than the aristocratic house of Monfort, and, had she not been the mistress of her own acts and fortune, would, no doubt, have absolutely prevented it. As it was, a wild wail went up from the synagogue at the loss of one of its brightest ornaments, and the name of "Miriam Harz" was consigned to silence forever.

Orphaned and independent, this obloquy and oblivion made little difference to its object, especially when the broad Atlantic was placed, as it soon was, between her and her people, and new ties and duties arose in a strange land to bind and interest her feelings.

During her six years of married life, I have every reason to believe that she was, as it is termed, "perfectly happy," although a mysterious disease of the nervous centres, that baffled medical skill either to cure or to name, early laid its grasp upon her, and brought her by slow degrees to the grave, when her only child had just completed her fifth year.

My father, the younger son of a nobleman who traced his lineage from Simon de Montfort, had been married in his own estate and among his peers before he met my mother. Poor himself (his commission in the army constituting his sole livelihood), he had espoused the young and beautiful widow of a brother officer, who, in

dying, had committed his wife and her orphan child to his care and good offices, on a battle-field in Spain, and with her hand he had received but little of this world's lucre. The very pension, to which she would have been entitled living singly, was cut off by her second marriage, and with habits of luxury and indolence, such as too often appertain to the high-born, and cling fatally to the physically delicate, the burden of her expenses was more than her husband could well sustain.

Her parents and his own were dead, and there were no relatives on either side who could be called upon for aid, without a sacrifice of pride, which my father would have died rather than have made. He was nearly reduced to desperation by the circumstances of the case, when, fortunately perhaps for both, she suddenly sickened, drooped, and died, in his absence, during her brief sojourn at a watering-place, and all considerations were lost sight of at the time, in view of this unexpected and stunning blow – for Reginald Monfort was devoted, in his chivalric way, to his beautiful and fragile wife, as it was, indeed, his nature to be to every thing that was his own. Her very dependence had endeared her to him, nor had she known probably to what straits her exactions had driven him, nor what were his exigencies. Perhaps (let me strive to do her this justice, at least), had he been more open on these subjects, matters might have gone better. Yet he found consolation in the reflection that she had been happy in her ignorance of his affairs, and had experienced no strict privation during their short union, inevitably as this must later have been her portion, and certainly as, in her case, misery must have accompanied it.

Her child, in the absence of all near relatives, became his charge, and the little three-year-old girl, her mother's image, grew into his closest affections by reason of this likeness and her very helplessness. Two years after the death of his wife, he espoused my mother, a bright and beautiful woman of his own age, with whom he met casually at a banker's dinner in London, and who, fascinated by his Christian graces, reached her fair Judaic hand over all lines of Purim prejudice, and placed it confidingly in his own for life, thereby, as I have said, relinquishing home and kindred forever.

A hundred thousand pounds was a great fortune in those days and in our then modest republic, and this was the sum my parents brought with them from England—a heritage sufficiently large to have enriched a numerous family in America, but which was chiefly centred on one alone, as will be shown.

My father, a proud, shy, fastidious man, had always been galled by the consciousness of my mother's Israelitish descent, which she never attempted to conceal or deny, although, to please his sensitive requisitions, she dispensed with most of its open observances. That she clung to it with unflinching tenacity to the last I cannot doubt, however, from memorials written in her own hand—a very characteristic one—and from the testimony of Mrs. Austin, her faithful friend and attendant—the nurse, let me mention here, of my father's little step-daughter during her mother's lifetime, and her brief orphanage, as well as of his succeeding children.

Stanch in his love of church and country, we, his daughters, were all three christened, and "brought up," as it is termed, in the Episcopal Church, and early taught devotion to its rites and ceremonies. Yet, had we chosen for ourselves, perhaps our different temperaments might, even in this thing, have asserted themselves, and we might have embraced sects as diverse as our tastes were several. I shall come to this third sister presently, of whom I make but passing mention here. She was our flower, our pearl, our little ewe-lamb—the loveliest and the last—and I must not trust myself to linger with her memory now, or I shall lose the thread of my story, and tangle it with digression.

With my Oriental blood there came strange, passionate affection for all things sharing it, unknown to colder organizations—an affection in whose very vitality were the seeds of suffering, in whose very strength was weakness, perhaps in whose very enjoyment, sorrow. I have said my mother died of an insidious and inscrutable malady, which baffled friend and physician, when I was five years old. She had been so long ill, so often alienated from her household for days together, that her death was a less terrible evil, less suddenly so, at least, than if each morning had found her at her board, each evening at the family hearth, and every hour, as would have been the case in health, occupied with her children.

My father's grief was stern, quiet, solitary; ours, unreasonable and noisy, but soon over as to manifestation. Yet I must have suffered more than I knew of, I think, for then occurred the first of those strange lethargies or seizures that afterward returned at very unequal intervals during my childhood and early youth, and which roused my father's fears about my life and intellect itself, and gave me into the hands of a physician for many years thereof, vigorous, and healthy, and intelligent otherwise as I felt, and seemed, and *was*.

It was soon after the first settling down of tribulation in our household to that flat and almost unendurable calm or level that succeeds affliction, when a void is felt rather than expressed, and when all outward observances return to their olden habit, as a car backs slowly from a switch to its accustomed grooves, that a new face appeared among us, destined to influence, in no slight degree, the happiness of all who composed the family of Reginald Monfort.

It was summer. The house in which we lived was partly finished in the rear by wide and extensive galleries above and below, shaded by movable *jalousies*; and, on the upper one of these, that on which our apartments opened, my father had caused a hammock to be swung, for the comfort and pleasure of his children. With one foot listlessly dragging on the floor of the portico so as to propel the hammock, and lying partly on my face while I soothed my wide-eyed doll to sleep, I lay swaying in childish fashion when I heard Evelyn's soft step beside me, accompanied by another, firmer, slower, but as gentle if not as light. I looked up: a sweet face was bending over me, framed in a simple cottage bonnet of white straw, and braids of shining brown hair.

The eyes, large, lustrous, tender, of deepest blue, with their black dilated pupils, I shall never forget as they first met my own, nor the slow, sad smile that seemed to entreat my affectionate acquaintance. The effect was immediate and electric. I sat up in the hammock, I stretched out my hands to receive the proffered greeting, and then remained silently, child-fashion, surveying the new-comer.

"Kiss me," she said, "little Miriam. Have they not told you of me? I am Constance Glen—soon to be your teacher."

"Then I think I shall learn," I made grave reply, putting away the thick curls from my eyes and fixing them once more steadily on the face of the new-comer. "Yes, I *will* kiss you, for you look good and pretty. Did my mother send you here?"

"She is a strange child, Miss Glen," I heard Evelyn whisper. "Don't mind her — she often asks such questions."

"Very natural and affecting ones," Miss Glen observed, quietly, and the tears sprang to her violet eyes, at which I wondered. Yet, understanding not her words, I remembered them for later comprehension; a habit of childhood too little appreciated or considered, I think, by older people.

She had not replied to my question, so I repeated it eagerly. "Did my dear mother send you to me?" I said. "And where is she now?"

"No, tender child! I have not seen your mother. She is in heaven, I trust; where I hope we shall all be some day — with God. *He* sent me to you, probably — I fancy so, at least."

"Then God has got good again. He was very bad last week — very wicked; he killed our mother," whispering mysteriously.

"He is never bad, Miriam, never wicked; you must not say such things — no Christian would."

"But I am *not* a Christian, Mrs. Austin says; only a Jew. Did you ever hear of the Jews?"

Evelyn laughed, Mrs. Austin frowned, but Miss Glen was intensely grave, as she rejoined:

"A Jew may be very good and love God. That is all a little child can know of religion. Yet we must all believe God and His Son were one." The last words were murmured rather than spoken — almost self-directed.

"Is His Son a little boy, and will he be fond of my mother?" I asked. "Will she love him too? Oh, she loved me so much, so much!" and, in an agony of grief, I caught Miss Glen around the neck, and sobbed convulsively on her sympathetic breast. Again Evelyn smiled, I suppose, for I heard Miss Glen say, rebukingly:

"My dear Miss Erle, you must not make light of your little sister's sufferings. They are very severe, I doubt not, young as she is. All the more so that she does not know how to express them."

Revolving these words, I came later to know their import. They seemed unmeaning to me at the time, but the kind and deprecating tone of voice in which they were conveyed was unmistakable, and that sufficed to reassure me.

"And now, Miriam, let me go to my room and take off my bonnet and shawl, for I am going to stay with you. Perhaps you will show me the way yourself," she said, pausing. "Bring Dolly, too;" and we walked off hand-in-hand together to the large, commodious chamber Mrs. Austin pointed out as that prepared for our governess. I recognized my affinity from that hour.

There, sitting on her knee, with her gentle hand on my hair, and her sweet eyes fixed on mine, I learned at once to love Miss Glen, or "Constance," as she made us call her, because her surname seemed over-formal. She wished us to regard her as an elder sister, she said, rather than mere instructress, deeming rightly that the law of love would prove the stronger and better guidance in our case, and understanding well, and by some line magnetic sympathy as it appeared, my own peculiar nature, to which affection was a necessity.

Ours was a peaceful and happy childhood under her gentle and fostering rule; and, when it ceased, all the wires of life seemed jangled and discordant again.

She lived with us three years as friend and teacher. At the end of that time her vocation and sphere of action were enlarged, not changed, for she married my father, and thus our future welfare seemed secured.

Alas for human foresight! Alas for affection powerless to save! Alas for the vanity of mortal effort to contend with Fate!

Our home was in one of the chief Northern cities of that great republic which has for so many years commanded the admiration, respect, and wonder, of the whole world. The house we occupied was situated in the old and fashion-forsaken portion of the city. From its upper windows a view of the majestic Delaware and its opposite shores was afforded to the spectator; and the grounds

surrounding the mansion were spacious for those of a city-house, and deeply shaded by elms that had been lofty trees in the time of General Washington.

Four squares farther on, the roar of commerce swelled and surged, in storehouse and counting-room, on mart and shipboard and quay; but here all was quiet, calm, secluded, as in the country, miles beyond.

Two houses besides our own shared the whole square between them, though ours, the central one, possessed the largest inclosure, and was the finest residence of the three, architecturally speaking; and the inmates of these dwellings, with very few exceptions, constituted for years our whole circle of friends and visitors.

So it will be seen how secluded was the life we led, how narrow the sphere we moved in, despite our acknowledged wealth, which, with some other attributes we possessed, had not failed, if desired, to confer on us both power and position in the society we shunned rather than shared.

To my father's nature, however, retirement was as essential as routine. He was one of those outwardly calm and inwardly excitable and nervous people we sometimes encounter without detecting the fire beneath the marble, the ever-burning lamp in the sarcophagus, unless we lift the lid of rock to find it—an effort scarcely worth the making in any case, for at best it lights only a tomb.

Extremely mild and self-contained in manner, and chary of opinion and expression, he was at the same time a man of strong and implacable prejudices and even bitter animosities when once engendered. I do not think his affections kept pace with these. He loved what belonged to him, it is true, in a quiet, consistent way, and his good breeding and practised equanimity were alone sufficient to secure the peace, and even happiness, of a household; but of much effort or self-sacrifice I judge him to have been incapable.

He was a handsome man in his stiff and military way—well made, tall, commanding in figure and in demeanor, stately in movement. His features were regular, his teeth and hair well preserved, especially the first, his hands and feet aristocratically small and shapely, his manner vaguely courteous. He was a shy rather

than reserved person, for, when once the ice was broken, his nature bubbled over very boyishly at times, and his confidence, once bestowed, was irrevocable. Like most men of his temperament, he was keenly susceptible to deferential flattery, and impatient of the slightest infraction of his dignity, which he guarded punctiliously at all points. It was more this disposition always to wait for overtures from others, and to slightly repel their first manifestations, from his inveterate shyness, than any settled determination on his part, that made him such an alien from general association. Nervous, fastidious, exacting—what had he in common with the texture of the new society in which he found himself, and what right had he to fancy himself neglected where the "go-ahead" principle alone was recognized, and time was esteemed too precious to waste in ceremony?

Yet this injured feeling pursued him through life and made one of his peculiarities, so that he drew more and more closely, as years passed on, into his own shell, which may be said to have comprised his household, his comforts, his hobbies, and his narrow neighborhood, in which he was idolized, and the sympathy of which was very soothing to his fastidious pride.

Nothing so fosters haughtiness and egotism as a sphere like this, and it may be doubted whether the crowned heads of the world receive more adulation from their households than men so situated.

From the moment he set his foot on the threshold of his own house, nay, on the broad, quiet pavement of his own street, with its stately row of ancient Lombardy poplars on one side, and blank, high-walled lumber-yard on the other, he felt himself a sovereign—king of a principality! king of a neighborhood;—what great difference is there, after all?

It was only the hypochondriacal character of his mind that shielded him from that chief human absurdity, pomposity. He needed all the praise and consolation his friends could bestow simply to sustain him—no danger of inflation in his case! He was shut away from self-complacency (the only vice to which virtue is subjected) by the melancholy that permeated his being, and which was probably in his case an inheritance—constitutional, as it is said to be with things.

Perhaps it will be well to give, in this place, some more vivid idea of our home, which, after all, like the shell of the sea-fish, most frequently shapes itself to fit the necessities and habits of its occupants.

Our house had been built in early times, and was essentially old-fashioned, like the part of the city in which it was situated.. My father, soon after his arrival in America, had fancied and purchased this gloomy-looking gray stone edifice, with its massive granite steps (imported at great cost, before the beautiful white-marble quarries had been developed which abound in the vicinity of, and characterize the dwellings of, that rare and perfect city), and remodelled its interior, leaving the outside front of the building, with its screens of ancient ivy, untouched and venerable, and changing only the exterior aspect of the back of the mansion. Very striking was the contrast between the rear and front and exterior and interior of "Monfort Hall," as it was universally called.

The dark panel-work within had all been rent away, to give place to plaster glossy as marble, or fine French papers, gilded and painted, or fresco-paintings done with great cost and labor, and indifferent success. The lofty ceilings and massive walls formed outlines of strength and beauty to the large and well-ventilated apartments, which made it easy to render them almost palatial by the means of such accessories and appliances as wealth commands, and which were lavished in this instance.

The back of the house was, however, truly picturesque. Here a bay window was judiciously thrown out; there a portico appended or hanging balcony added to break the gray expanse of wall or sullen glare of windows; and a small gray tower or belfry, containing a clock that chimed the hours, and a fine telescope, rose from the octagon library which my father had built for his own peculiar sanctum after my mother's death, and which formed an ell to the building. The green, grassy, deeply-shadowed lawn lay behind the mansion, sloping down into a dark, deep dell, across which brawled a tiny brook long since absorbed by the thirsty earth thrown out from many foundations of stores and tenements and great warehouses hard by; a dell where once roses, lilacs, guelder-globes, and calacanthus-bushes, grew with a vigor that I have nowhere seen surpassed.

It was not much the fashion then to have rare garden-flowers. Our conservatory contained a fair array of these, but we had beds of tulips, hyacinths, and crocuses, basking in the sunshine, and violets and lilies lying in the shadow such as I see rarely now, and which cost us as little thought or trouble in their perennial permanence, whereas the conservatory was an endless grief and care, although superintended by a thoroughly-taught English gardener, and kept up at unlimited expense.

My sister—for so I was taught to call Evelyn Erle—revelled in this floral exclusiveness, but to me the dear old garden was far more delightful and life-giving. I loved our sweet home-flowers better than those foreign blossoms which lived in an artificial climate, and answered no thrilling voice of Nature, no internal impulse in their hot-house growth and development. What stirred me so deeply in April, stirred also the hyacinth-bulb and the lily of the valley deep in the earth—warmth, moisture, sunshine and shadow, and sweet spring rain—and the same fullness of life that throbbed in my veins in June called forth the rose. There was vivid sympathy here, and I gave my heart to the garden-flowers as I never could do to the frailer children of the hot-house, beautiful as they undeniably are.

"Miriam has really a *vulgar* taste for Nature, as Miss Glen calls it," Evelyn said one day, with a curl of her slight, exquisite lip as she shook away from her painted muslin robe, the butter-cups, heavy with moisture and radiant with sunshine, which I had laid upon her knee. "She ought to have been an Irish child and born, in a hovel, don't you think so, papa?" and she put me aside superciliously. Dirt and Nature were synonymous terms with her.

My father smiled and laid down his newspaper, then looked at me a little gravely as I stood downcast by Evelyn.

"You *are* getting very much sunburnt, Miriam, there is no doubt of that. A complexion like yours needs greater care for its preservation than if ten shades fairer. Little daughter, you must wear your bonnet, or give up running in the garden in the heat of the day."

"I try to impress this on Miriam all the time," said Mrs. Austin, coming as usual to aid in the assault, "but she is so hard-headed, it is next to impossible to make her mindful of what I tell her. Miss Glen is the only one that seems to have any influence over her now-