

The Eyes

Edith Wharton

This short story is written by an American writer who later became a British citizen after World War One. Edith Wharton has a collection of investigation of the psychology of character. She was interested in writing ghost stories. "The Eyes" is written in both the first and the third person point of view. It is about seven people, who have dinner talk about ghosts. They create these stories; they have a great talent in that.

We are introduced to the narrator who is sitting at the house of an old friend, Culwin, the hero. Fred Muchard tells them stories about ghosts. They are all eight in number. Each one tells his story, it is now the turn of the eighth member.

Andrew Culwin is a positivist, who is not interested in such stories about ghosts. He looks at things in a scientific way. He is a **"spectator and a humorous, detached observer of the immense muddled variety show of life"**. He is not a man of action. He is as charming little man with nice eyes; he is an idol. He is well-versed and different from all humans in that he never bothers about the normal things that may bother any human being. His study of the human race has concluded that all men are useless and women are only necessary because someone has to do the cooking. His mind is full of academic ideas. The narrator seems to admire him a lot. He is an old man, whose mind has become like a place for exchanging ideas. He has nothing to keep as he has become old. Though he is old, he enjoys sitting with youths. He wants the youths to grow and be more experienced. He is experienced in everything and believes in everything. His friends are sure that he has seen a ghost before.

Culwin wants to write a story, so he goes to his aunt to help him with her library. Instead of writing a book, he has fun with a girl. This proves that he is fake. He is deceiving her; he takes her as a bridge for pleasure and for having sex.

Culwin believes that whenever he does something good, the eyes appear to him. The first time to see the eye ghost is when he gives his cousin a ring and promises to marry her. He thinks that he is making her happy. However, he realizes that he does not want to get married to anybody as he does not want anybody to control him. Culwin describes the eyes that appear to him as scary and repulsive. Every time he does a thing or sleeps, he sees them. He tries to get away from it, but he cannot. At the beginning, he does not know the reason of their appearance, though he has an analytical mind. Thus, he decides to leave the

house without taking anybody with him, not even Alice. So, the eyes appear to him when he leaves Alice. This proves that they are mocking his evil nature.

The eyes represent his sub-conscious that mocks him. They are looking up at him. He left the house and the whole country to get rid of those eyes that appear to him. When he goes away, the eyes disappear. He forgets the whole thing. He wants to help the young man Alice has sent him. He thinks that by helping him he is doing Alice a favour. It is a kind of an apology for Alice. He wants to justify himself in his own way.

Gilbert is a young handsome man, but he is stupid and has no artistic talent or depth of feelings. He cannot be a good writer. Culwin never tells him so; he only wants to help him. He wants to tell him the truth, but each time he tries to do so, he stops. He cares about the young man's feelings. His conscience hurts him as he leaves the young man to complete something terribly wrong and encourages him to do so. He helps him in producing his first novel which is awful. He gives him another chance. He cannot tell the truth as he does not want to shatter his dreams. He also does not want to lose him as a friend.

Culwin likes Phil Frenham as he is intelligent. At that time, he sees the eyes again. So, he wants to go away from him in order to be satisfied and released. It is clear that the eyes appear to him when he does something good to people. Frenham becomes a victim because Culwin deceives him by not telling him the truth. So, it is the eyes of Culwin's real evil character. He leaves people to suffer. He is a traitor and the eyes that appear to him are the eyes of his evil spirit. At the end of the story, he realizes that it is the eyes of his own self rather than the eyes of a ghost. They appear to him when he harms someone; that's why they appear to him when he left Alice forever, **"The eyes had burned such a hole in my consciousness that for a long time I went on puzzling over the nature of the apparition, and wondering if it would ever come back"**.

In the end, when he feels that Phil is afraid of the eyes, he tries to calm him down and says that he has done nothing wrong to invoke the eyes to appear out of chaos again. However, they appear again in the end as he is deceiving Phil by not telling him the truth.