



The Cricket on the Hearth

Charles Dickens

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This short tale by Charles Dickens, initially written under the title *The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home*, is a true Christmas story. The cricket that gives the title of the story is a creature that functions as a kind of sensor or life barometer in the Peerybingle house: he sits on the hearth and chirps when he witnesses happy events, but stays silent when there is sorrow and sadness in the house. The events he sees and accompanies with chirping or silence involve the Peerybingles, a married couple consisting of an older man, John and a much younger wife, Dot. There is a third human character, too, Tackleton, an old and jealous man who shatters John's confidence in his young wife, but when everything is about to turn for the worst, the cricket intervenes, using his magical, supernatural powers and restores the harmony in the couple. *The Cricket on the Hearth* belongs to the genre of short stories and it is indeed quite short, but full of emotions, passions and wise accounts of human nature, nevertheless. There is love, deception, trust, mistrust and reconciliation, all described in true Dickensian style in between romance and realism and there is the supernatural element as well, the cricket, the component that eventually solves the problem. This supernatural component also has an important guiding role in the story - he is the guardian spirit of the couple and the voice of reason that ultimately drives the story towards its happy ending. A true example of Dickensian prose, *The Cricket on the Hearth* offers plenty of masterful character depictions and it is written in easy to recognize language, with the well-known Dickensian humor there at every step - a perfect read for the Christmas period and for the rest of the year, too, for those who already love Dickens and for those who are just becoming familiar with his oeuvre.

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