

## Thomas Anstey Guthrie's Gothic Voices

"I ran down & got the meat chopper & smashed in panels of door..." This is the moment when the carefully concocted topsy-turviness for which *Vice Versâ* had made Thomas Anstey Guthrie famous (as 'F. Anstey') tips over into the raw terror of *The Shining*. Now that a manuscript of 1888 which Anstey kept under wraps has, in suitably Gothic style, come to light – and is forthcoming from Valancourt Books – a new dimension to his writing is emerging. "The Statement of V.M. patient at Bethnal House Asylum" was a remarkable experiment on Anstey's part, which not only saw him inhabit a female consciousness (the V stands for Violet, though this Violet is less for shrinking than for door-smashing) but drew upon an interest in mental and neurological disorders that for Anstey was increasingly close to home. His brother Leonard, later a leading neurologist, was about to start work at the Regent's Park Hospital for Nervous and Epileptic Diseases; and his sister's father-in-law had been Medical Superintendent at Bethnal House itself. What Violet suffers, auditory hallucinations and "the awful frenzy of a maddened brain," was to be downplayed in the novel into which, after seven years, Anstey would transform his suppressed manuscript. *The Statement of Stella Maberly* reverts to paradoxical topsy-turviness and deploys the supernatural simply for the sake of the substitution – a Una replaced by a Duessa – with which it enables Anstey to thicken the plot. But the painfully psychologised Gothic of the forgotten *Ur*-"Statement" is more compelling by far.