

extent for an open space of ground in the neighbourhood of London. I learned its area was about five hundred acres.

This park, from my first occupation of Dr. Stoker's house, had always possessed a strange fascination for me. It was a weird and desolate stretch of ground, planted here and there with trees of giant growth—haggard-looking, careworn trees, which seemed to become more haggard looking in the effort to send forth fresh foliage. In the early spring a sickly greenness enveloped them, which faded and rotted before the autumn tints had dyed the trees on the neighbouring roadway. The ground, so far as I could see, was encumbered with black and rotting boughs, and a tall, unhealthy growth, which could scarcely be called grass, covered the ground, which rose unevenly on all sides from the black, decaying paling, until the summit of a small hill was reached. Here the trees grew close together, and almost shut out the view of a high, gaunt dwelling-house.

It may have been that my morbid imagination invested this house and park with a more weird aspect than they actually possessed. I cannot tell. I can see only with my own eyes, and I have no knowledge of the effect which such a prospect as my study window afforded would have offered to a vision more wholesome than mine.

I am not—perhaps the statement is now unnecessary—inclined for gossip or given to curiosity, but I own I felt curious to know the secrets of Redpost House, for secrets there must be, it seemed to me. Yet I forebore to ask questions