

I was the ghost. My hand placed the lights in the windows, my form flitted about among the poplar trees, my voice uttered the shrieks that chilled the hearts of the villagers. Not all mine was the work though, for Jack Charters shared in the glory, or discredit, of the transaction.

Naturally fond of a practical joke, we had again and again availed ourselves of the character of place to spread terror through the whole neighbourhood, and with such success that our exploits frequently found their way into the monstrosity paragraphs of the local newspaper.

At last we were all astonished to hear that the White House was let, and our surprise soon culminated by the fact that it was occupied.

The family that came to it consisted simply of three persons. An elderly, white-haired, smooth-faced gentleman, a beautiful young lady of nineteen, and a small maid of all work. They led a peculiarly retired life, and there was about them an air of mystery, that would have made them objects of considerable curiosity, had they not possessed the attraction of living in a haunted house. As it was every eye was turned upon them, and every tongue talked of them.

But the gossips could make nothing of them. Mr. Garston, the gentleman, followed no occupation, was very reserved in his conversation, made no acquaintances, and repelled the advances of the doctor, the parson, and other respectable inhabitants, who tendered him on his first arrival various little courtesies. Miss Foster, the young lady, although called upon by the *élite* of our fair society, was universally "engaged," and made no friends. The maid-of-all-work was impenetrable and unpumpable. Not a word could be got out of her, even when subjected to the hydraulic pressure of the cross questioning of the vicar's eldest and elderly daughter.

At length came the dreadful news—they didn't go to church. Only those who have lived in a country village can understand the full meaning of this discovery. Is it to be wondered at then, that in the course of a few weeks it was universally agreed upon on all sides that they were no better than they ought to be. These damaging aspersions soon gained additional colour by the fact that Mr. Garston was addicted to talking to himself—an eccentricity, that, in the minds of the neighbours, gave rise to many unpleasant surmises. These were strengthened by the story of the curate, who asserted that walking down a by-lane one afternoon, he suddenly turned a corner, and came upon the stranger, beating his breast, wringing his hands, and vociferating wildly.

The reverend gentleman could not clearly understand what he uttered, but he distinctly heard the words "murder," and "remorse;" and upon making himself seen, Mr. Garston, displaying the deepest confusion, hurried away in the opposite direction.

Again, Miss Foster was noticed to be sad and pensive, as though perpetually depressed by some hidden grief. All these facts, added to the perverse silence of the diminutive hand-maiden, substantiated the impressions of the villagers, and various surmises were afloat respecting the strangers. Moreover, who but some utterly hardened and fearless evil doers would consent to occupy a house known to be haunted? why that fact alone was enough to condemn them as out-casts from society.