The Ghost of a Lonely Dog

Fred Jacob

Illustrated by

E. J. Dinsmore

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The Ghost of a Lonely Dog

In Petersville "the unforgivable sin is to be different," which explains Petersville's sinning in the matter of the ghost of a lonely dog

By Fred Jacob

Illustrated by E. J. Dinsmore

The haunted house did not look haunted; it only looked forlornly deserted. A brisk walker could reach it in ten minutes after leaving the outskirts of the town, but it had a history that made it an outcast among the other houses, most of them much less pleasing to look upon. In the year 1885, the eccentric spinster who had built the cottage was murdered by someone who believed the gossip that she kept gold coins on the premises, and the identity of the murderer was never discovered. If he had paid the penalty on the gallows, the haunted house might not have been shunned by the citizens of Petersville. The sinister reputation was augmented by the remoteness of the cottage. It stood on a roadside so little used that vehicles had to bump their way along three parallel ruts in the sod, in which flowering weeds grew bravely, and stiffened up again when the occasional horse that came that way tramped them down. People who walked there after dark grew nervous, and blamed the influence of the haunted house. For ten years it remained without a tenant.

When Anthony Pursford arrived, apparently from nowhere, and located in the haunted house, everybody suspected from the start that there must be something queer about him. In a surprisingly short time, the place ceased to be a crone, mistrusted by decent men and hiding away in waste places. Paint on the roof and green shutters gave the square stone building the appearance of having been scrubbed. He restored the gate and mended the picket fence and, with the organizing skill of an expert army officer, he marshaled the tangles of growth into disciplined flowerbeds. To celebrate their liberation

from the tyranny of wild morning-glory, the hollyhocks grew to the eaves during the first summer.

Nobody could deny that the haunted house had been transformed into a thing of beauty. After tea, on the July evenings, people strolled out to look at it. But they never wavered from the original conviction that there must be something wrong about Anthony Pursford, that he was a queer one.

Having found the verdict without more ado, the task of collecting the evidence went steadily ahead; they did things that way in Petersville. Pursford was a foreigner. They described his accent as English, but the station-master furnished the information that his furniture had come from the United States. He never went out of his way to explain why he should want to live so far from his home, wherever it was, and that fact alone was suspicious.

His only companion was Miss Pursford, presumably his sister, though he never actually gave out the information. She was many years older than her brother, and so gentle that it was impossible to think of her in any sinister connection. The presence of Miss Pursford in the household gave Mrs. Macready and Mrs. Meredith an excuse to call, though not together. Mrs. Macready regarded herself as the representative of the old families of the community, and Mrs. Meredith constituted herself, by right of aggression, the social leader of the newly prosperous.

In their method of approach, Mrs. Meredith and Mrs. Macready were much alike. They gave numerous openings for intimate confidences, but Anthony Pursford never responded. He pulled his thin white beard and contracted the skin on his high pale forehead in what Mrs. Meredith afterward described as a sarcastic manner.

Miss Pursford seemed a more promising source of information, but though she chattered, apparently irresponsibly, of Boston and New York, London and Paris, she left in the end on her curiosity seeking visitors only an abstract impression of gentility and wealth.

“She is a sly old thing,” was Mrs. Meredith’s conclusion. “She never lets anything slip.”

Miss Pursford was more sociable than her brother. She repaid the calls; she spent a little money at the garden parties given to raise funds during the summer, and volunteered to assist at the quilting bees when the long evenings arrived. She visited the different churches occasionally, dropping

in late and sitting near the back, but she showed no inclination to join one of them.

In October came Rally Sunday, and after the service of song Mrs. Meredith cornered her.

“Have you no preference?” she enquired. “I should think you would find it more satisfactory to be a regular member somewhere.”

“Well, of course, I am a Unitarian,” said Miss Pursford, “but I find the atmosphere of any church service restful, so long as I can avoid the sermon.”

As Mrs. Meredith had never heard anything like that said about churchgoing, she had no reply ready. Then there was the confession. Miss Pursford had said she was a Unitarian, “of course.” Didn’t she realize that there were no Unitarians in Petersville? You might belong “of course” to any of the accepted denominations, but it was arrogant and in bad taste to link up an “of course” with any other religion. Imagine saying, “Of course, I am a Mohammedan.”

In less than a week, everybody in the village knew that Anthony Pursford and his sister held the most outlandish views about God, and that Mrs. Meredith had been forced to rebuke Miss Pursford for some flippancy, no one knew quite what, on the subject. By the majority they were henceforth called unbelievers, but as the pastors did not forbid Miss Pursford to enter their churches, she trotted from one to another according to the impulse of the moment. She even went occasionally to the Church of the Holy Family because she liked Father Gagnon’s voice and his French accent.

It was while the town seethed with surmises about the religious views of the Pursfords that Rural Dean Horkins began calling upon them, but that, as Mrs. Meredith said, was to be expected. The rural Dean seemed to glory in the disapproval of his fellow clergy. He smoked a large pipe in public, with no thought of the effect that it might have on the impressionable minds of the young people.

Mrs. Meredith summed up the general attitude toward Rural Dean Horkins, outside of his own congregation, when she said: “It is a pity that Englishmen locate in this country when they have no conception of the spirit of Canada. It only leads to friction.”

Still, he went on his brusque and cheery way, with his puffing pipe, and was apparently quite unconscious of any disapproval. That attitude was described as uppish—not sufficiently democratic.

The friendship between Horkins and Anthony Pursford created the impression that Pursford, also, was uppish.

Nothing more damning could be alleged against a newcomer to Petersville than uppishness.

Anthony Pursford's mail was studied as carefully as letters can be examined without being opened, for that seemed to be the only way of learning more about him. He wrote a neat and readable hand; everybody said at once that it was like copperplate. At regular intervals, he sent away bulky envelopes addressed to the editors of *The New World Review* or *The Boston Magazine* or *Hopkirk's Monthly*: none of these magazines was known in Petersville. They were published without pictures and severe in appearance, and the Library Board subscribed only for illustrated periodicals.

Sometimes similar envelopes came back again, addressed in his own handwriting. That in itself was peculiar, anybody would admit. He constantly received packages marked "Proofs only." The phrase suggested criminal trials, but the oddest part of it was that he sent them away again in less than a week, also marked "Proofs only." Once a thing had been proved to his satisfaction, he apparently took no more interest in the documents.

The librarian, who had a reputation for cleverness, asked the Public Library Board for permission to buy a few single copies of *The New World Review*. She did not tell anyone her intention, but she searched the magazine diligently month after month until she was rewarded by finding an article "by Anthony Pursford." Her discovery explained his mail, but did not greatly help his reputation. If it had been a sprightly love story in a popular monthly, they might have felt proud of him. But here were a dozen pages of gibberish, and sarcastic, too; yes, you could see it was intended to be sarcastic, even though you could not entirely understand it.

"Evidently, he thinks he knows it all," said the librarian.

Others believed that they could detect what they described as "slams" at Petersville; at least, he held views with which none of the librarian's friends could agree.

Microscopic examination of *The New World Review* strengthened the conviction that only a queer one would have written for it.

Another portion of Anthony Pursford’s mail, the meaning of which was not so easily unearthed, consisted of blue envelopes with “Philip Bryson, M.D.” in the corner. They arrived frequently, and at least once a month, Pursford despatched an envelope addressed to Dr. Bryson; occasionally he added to the address “The Bryson Retreat.” These letters were registered.

During Pursford’s second winter in Petersville, he received a telegram —“Come at once. Critical”—signed “Philip Bryson.” He left by the next train, quite unconscious of the curious eyes that followed him. The whole town chattered, and not a few predicted that it was the last they would see of Anthony Pursford. But the following day he telegraphed to Miss Pursford: “Danger Past. No recognition. Waiting until next week.”

No messenger boy was permitted to deliver that telegram. Mr. Nichols, who operated the telegraph office in his drug store, carried the message out to Miss Pursford, and nimbly stepped inside the door with the suggestion that there might be a reply. She read it, and then carefully folded the yellow paper without a word.

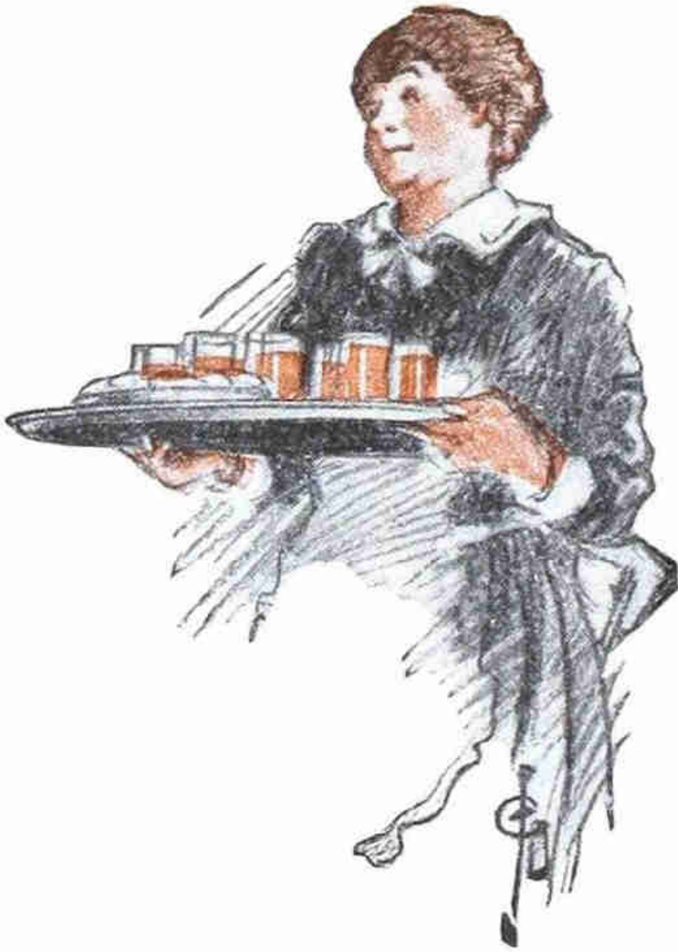
“Is it good news?” he enquired, although he could have recited the eight words.

Then she remembered to smile, “Oh, yes, indeed. My brother has telegraphed to say that he is coming home.”

Did she think the contents of a telegram were secret?

Anthony Pursford came back with dark rings round his eyes. All who saw him alight from the train agreed that he looked like a man who had been ill.

Nothing more happened. The Pursfords altered no item in their habits, and their letters came and went as usual. They were not conscious that the miasma of suspicion was settling more and more thickly about the haunted house.



Miss Pursford's raspberry vinegar was the reddest drink the boys had ever been offered.

The children of the town did not follow the lead of their elders. Soon after Anthony Pursford and his sister settled in the white cottage, they began to make friends of the boys and girls, who were undeterred by the vague disapproval that they heard in their homes.

Miss Pursford's raspberry vinegar was the first bait to draw them. One sultry August day, she invited a party of sonnies, as she called them, to come inside the shady garden for a rest. They giggled and squirmed and grinned, but accepted. Miss Pursford's laconic questions and their furtive answers did

not keep conversation alive for long. Then she disappeared into the house, and shortly returned with an assortment of goodies. On a big tray were glasses containing the reddest drink that the boys had ever been offered; quite apart from the flavor, the color would have recommended it. Homemade root beer that frothed recklessly and tasted like the sarsaparilla tonic doled out in March and April, was the only fancy drink that most of them knew. Raspberry vinegar was beautiful to look upon, and indescribably different in its appeal to the palate.

The news of the beverage that looked red enough to be wicked spread through Petersville. Other young visitors came to the Pursford's gate, and they were always taken in. When departing, they were invited to come again, and no one was ever known to refuse.

Very soon, Anthony Pursford began to join the parties in the garden, and then they became something more than silent orgies of food and drink. He knew all about birds and their nests and the color of their eggs; the boys had never before met a man who was their equal in this fascinating branch of knowledge. As they sat under the trees, he could identify the notes and twitters among the foliage, and if a rare one baffled them, he was the most eager of all to get a glimpse at the songster.

Sometimes a boy had an observation of his own to describe, and then Mr. Pursford listened, with a question here and there, as though it were entirely new to him. His manner was most flattering.

He had many novel possessions that he showed to them later when the cold weather drove them indoors. The bigger boys liked his electric battery, and they stood in circles while he sent the current tingling through their arms; they called it having their nerve tested. The girls preferred to look at his tiny watch that struck the hours with an almost inaudible tinkle when little springs were touched. All were fascinated by an Italian cane, the carved head of which drew out with a long ugly blade; he told them the cruel part it had taken in the fate of a family that had played gallantly at the making of history in the days when a forest rustled year in and year out on the soil that was now Petersville.

He had an inexhaustible supply of stories. They came out of a land of wonderful adventure, and he told them so that for the time being they were true.

Once Jackie Dyer asked: "Are they founded on fact?" His mother never permitted him to read a novel unless he could assure her that it was founded on fact.

“What is fact, Jackie?” enquired Anthony Pursford. “Is it a fact that men were made so that they will not be able to fly among the birds except in great unmanageable balloons? If my stories are not founded on facts of the past, they may be founded on facts of the future.”

They were puzzled by Mr. Pursford’s quizzing, but they did not feel rebuffed by it.

For the smaller children he recited. When they got him started, they demanded more and more and more. His verses were mixtures of nonsense that made you laugh, even though, in the twilight, you shuddered as he intoned them.

I heard the Bejum singing,
Its voice was soft and low.
I heard the Bejum singing—
The song, I did not know.

But while I stood to listen
Out on the upland fair,
The Bejum came a-flying,
And seized me by the hair . . .

When Mr. Pursford sat there, looking twice his size, with his right arm extended and an ominous finger shaking, you did not know whether to laugh or to hug your nearest companion in convulsive fright. Then there was the horror of going home in the autumn gloaming, and darting across the open spaces where the Bejum might pounce upon you.

Mr. Pursford’s verses and stories were never repeated.

The children had learned that anything Anthony Pursford did or said offended the grown-ups.

One evening, Jackie Dyer, who had a way of taking liberties, remarked: “You live in a haunted house, Mr. Pursford.”

“Of course I do,” he assented.

“Don’t you mind?”

“Why, it is the only sort of house that I should want to live in.”

The boys were agog.

He went on: “That is what I like about Europe. All the houses are haunted over there, and the people who live with ghosts gather lots of ideas

from them."

That meant nothing to them. Then Jackie asked the question that all wanted to put.

"Is there really a ghost here? Have you ever seen it?"

"It is the most innocent little ghost that ever was. All the ghosts are innocent and young and pathetic in this country."

"What is it like?"

They leaned forward in the gloom to hear his answer.

"It is only the ghost of a lonely dog," he told them.

"It is only the ghost of a lonely dog," he told them.

"Why a lonely dog?"

"You have no idea how lonely a dog can be; everybody wants to chivy it because it is a stray."

One or two of them felt guilty; they feared that Mr. Pursford had been spying on them.

"This poor little dog wanted so much to be patted, and all his life people threw sticks at him," he said. "When he came near to them and wagged his tail so hopefully, they only gave him a kick . . . Listen!"

They listened.

“Do you hear a soft pat, pat, pat?”

They were certain they could hear it.

“The ghost of the lonely dog is wagging his stumpy tail. He is crouching at your feet, and looking up at you so pleadingly with his bright eyes. All you can ever see of him are his eyes, gleaming up at you, but the room must be dark.”

Feet were drawn gingerly under chairs.

“No, don’t be afraid. Put down your hand and pat the lonely dog’s head. You won’t feel it, but you will be making the little fellow happy. The ghost of a lonely dog has waited all these years for kindness.”

After that, when it grew dark at the haunted house, they looked anxiously for the two gleaming eyes, creeping close about their feet. They made a boast of seeing them. Sometimes, in dark halls at home, they heard the pat, pat, pat of the lonely dog’s tail, but though the timid ones cried out with fear and were promptly questioned, the secret of Mr. Pursford’s ghost remained inviolate.

The first telegram had ceased to be a topic for surmises when a second one came from Philip Bryson. It was a stormy day in March, and the station-master warned Pursford that the train might not get through the snow in the cutting twenty miles below Petersville, but he bought a ticket for Boston without a word.

“He was terrible white,” said the station-master at home that night, “and he looked right at me when I was speaking as though he had never seen me before.”

“There is something about that man that he doesn’t want known,” declared Mrs. Station-Master.

“That’s easy enough to guess,” snapped her husband. “He acts like a criminal in hiding.”

During the week of Anthony Pursford’s absence, it was repeated a hundred times that he behaved like a criminal in hiding.

Then he returned. He landed from the afternoon train, and, carrying his valise, started off to walk home through the slush, though a hungry bus was yawning for passengers. He was haggard, and spoke to no one on the station platform. They looked after him and waggled their heads.

At the cottage, he found Miss Pursford sick in bed. She had let the fires go out and the result was a chill and a bad cold. She would be quite well in a few days, now that the weather was so much warmer.

"There was plenty of fuel in the house," he remonstrated, "and you promised to be careful."

"I forgot." Miss Pursford took a pride in being forgetful. "Jackie Dyer came in next morning and started the stoves again."

In the night, Anthony Pursford heard his sister fighting for breath. He made a mustard plaster and placed it on her chest, hoping to give her relief. The morning was breaking, bright but bleak, when he rattled at the doctor's door, and asked the weary man, only recently in bed to return with him. When they entered Miss Pursford's bedroom, she was sitting up against the pillows, with feverish eyes, and talking of someone whom she described as an irresponsible girl.

How the doctor could have speeded up the wagging of tongues if he had reported even a part of what he heard that day!

"Love cannot save her, Tony," she kept crying. "It is in her family. Her grandmother killed herself after childbirth. She is more than flighty."

Before night Miss Priscilla Pursford was dead.

For three days the haunted house became the main thoroughfare of the town. People passed in and out as though it had ceased to be private property. Anthony Pursford sat in his own room, but the hum of subdued voices came to him constantly. The only outsider whom he wanted to see was Rural Dean Horkins.

In Petersville, everybody, except the very busy and those who affected superior social airs, turned up to inspect the dead. You went to a house of mourning and knocked solemnly at the door. It opened quickly, as friends and neighbors delighted to be in attendance, and you asked in a hollow voice: "May I see the corpse?"

For five minutes or so, you stood beside the coffin gazing at the peaceful face. There were certain routine comments for the occasion, about being at rest, or release, or the untimeliness of the demise, and you uttered them with the same intonation that the local elocutionist used when reciting "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold." Then, perhaps you stood at the doorway and asked questions about the final illness, if the facts were not already public property.

At first, Anthony Pursford was inclined to order the door shut in the faces of all strangers, but he changed his mind when Horkins told him that they called it showing respect to the dead.

Nobody paid much attention to the husky voice of the Rural Dean delivering the familiar words of the burial service. Eyes were too busy trying to discover how Anthony Pursford had been affected by the death of his sister. Someone suggested that he looked haunted, and that word was accepted as accurately descriptive.

The women agreed. “Death must seem awful to Mr. Pursford with his outlandish views.”

A few said: “I should like to know the truth about that man and his sister, if she was his sister.”

During the break-up of the winter, Anthony Pursford was away in the United States, but he came back when the hepaticas were banked white in the maple copse behind the house. He took up life there alone, and under his coaxing the flowers bloomed more beautifully than ever. He engaged a woman to clean his rooms, and had most of his meals at the hotel; otherwise his routine was unaltered.

In the evenings the children gathered in the garden as before, but the cookies and raspberry vinegar were missing. Sometimes, Mr. Pursford took long walks with Jackie Dyer, and they talked together in the quiet of the evening for hours at a time.

When Jackie was late getting home, Mrs. Dyer questioned him closely about this strange friendship. “What can a man like Mr. Pursford find to talk about to you?”

Scenting hostility in the motive, Jackie avoided satisfactory replies.

In September, Anthony Pursford did the thing that even the Rural Dean regarded as ill-advised. He wrote a letter to the village paper in which he discussed the probable origins of local social customs, “such as gaping at other people’s beloved dead.” Nobody pretended to understand the meaning of all the references in the letter, and an array of typographical errors did not make it any more lucid, but everybody concluded that the adjectives “primitive” and “ghoulish” and “heartless” were intended especially for the procession that followed the password “May I see the corpse?”

For days after the publication of the letter, the heat of the resentment mounted steadily.

With one accord, the parents of Petersville undertook to find what hold Anthony Pursford had upon their children. Sons and daughters were questioned with a pressure that had never before been brought to bear. Parts of “The Bejum” were repeated and dismissed as silly. “And they call that man clever!” “The magazines nowadays publish terrible rot!”

On the ghost of the lonely dog they fastened tenaciously.

“What a horrid idea to put into the heads of innocent children.”

“It is so morbid.”

“I knew from the first that there was something unhealthy about that man’s mind.”

Mrs. Dyer insisted that her husband must help her take Jackie in hand. They badgered him about the hours that he had spent alone with Anthony Pursford and, when his replies became a nervous jumble, they asked him if he meant this or didn’t he mean that. That night a new horror about life entered into the imagination of Jackie Dyer. What were his father and mother driving at? He was ashamed to think that they thought about the vague beastliness at which they appeared to be hinting. Jackie sat staring stupidly; he was seeing new and vile people where his father and mother had stood.

Suddenly, Mrs. Dyer burst out crying, and catching him in her arms exclaimed: “Oh, my dear, innocent little son.”

Because the town desired proof that Anthony Pursford was an unspeakable person, they made up their minds that the investigation had justified itself. They had discovered only the ghost of the lonely dog, but that was sufficient.

“He is no fit companion for growing boys and girls,” they said.

The finding ran through the town like an alarm bell. Women recalled the article in *The New World Review*, the wickedness of which no one seemed to have fully appreciated at the time. Why was he so secretive? Why did he slip off at times to the United States? Why did he come back again looking so broken? Why did he do a hundred and one things that nobody in Petersville had ever been known to do? And such notions—the ghost of a lonely dog, forsooth!

The children were warned to keep away from the haunted house. Some of them obeyed; the talk in their homes frightened them. There were others to whom the order seemed unreasonable; they were at that period of adolescence when the boyish mind is very logical in matters of fair play. When Anthony Pursford met Jackie Dyer and invited him for a walk, he accepted.

Mrs. Dyer appealed to Reeve Smithfield to do something in the matter.

“If I’d a’ not done what my father told me when I was a kid, I’d a’ been whaled proper,” said the reeve, but he did not interfere.

As the children would not stay away from the haunted house, then Anthony Pursford would have to be told that he must not entice them to his home. That was the decision of Mrs. Dyer. She found it difficult to gather a committee to deliver the edict. Three prominent citizens were rude to her about it, and even her own pastor failed her. He suggested that she was going too far.

“You had better call it off,” suggested Mr. Dyer.

Mrs. Dyer was defiant.

“I can get together several men who have the moral well-being of the community at heart,” she said.

And she did, although they were not the committee she would have preferred.

Five visitors, whose nervous faces were unknown to him, called on Anthony Pursford, and he treated them with a dignified friendliness that made them uncomfortable. They refused his invitation to sit down, and each one looked hesitatingly at the others, desiring not to be the speaker. In an apologetic voice, Pursford was informed that his interest in the children was undesirable. The parents of Petersville wanted him to understand that their sons and daughters must not, in future, be invited to visit him.

What answer they expected, none of the quintet could have said, but they resented being politely bowed to the door. Anthony Pursford showed no resentment whatever.

The men were relieved to gain the outer air, but Mrs. Dyer stood her ground.

“You have been defiling their minds long enough.” She almost screamed the words. “My Jackie is a different boy since he began to come here. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

“So you are the mother of Jackie Dyer,” was all that he said. Mrs. Dyer spoke afterward of his tone as mean and defiant.

Then they were out on the walk, and the door was shut.

When Rural Dean Horkins heard the story, he was troubled, but refused to admit to Pursford that there was any serious cause for concern.

“To these people,” he said, “the unforgivable sin is to be different. Really, they are kindly folk, in many ways, to one another, but only to such as talk and think and do as they do. If I had been sensitive, I should have left the county years ago.”

Pursford smiled. He could associate the burly Englishman with commonsense, but not with sensibilities.

“Still, it came as a shock,” he said. “I did not suspect the existence of so much antipathy.”

“Better forget about it,” suggested Horkins. “It was probably the action of a small group.”

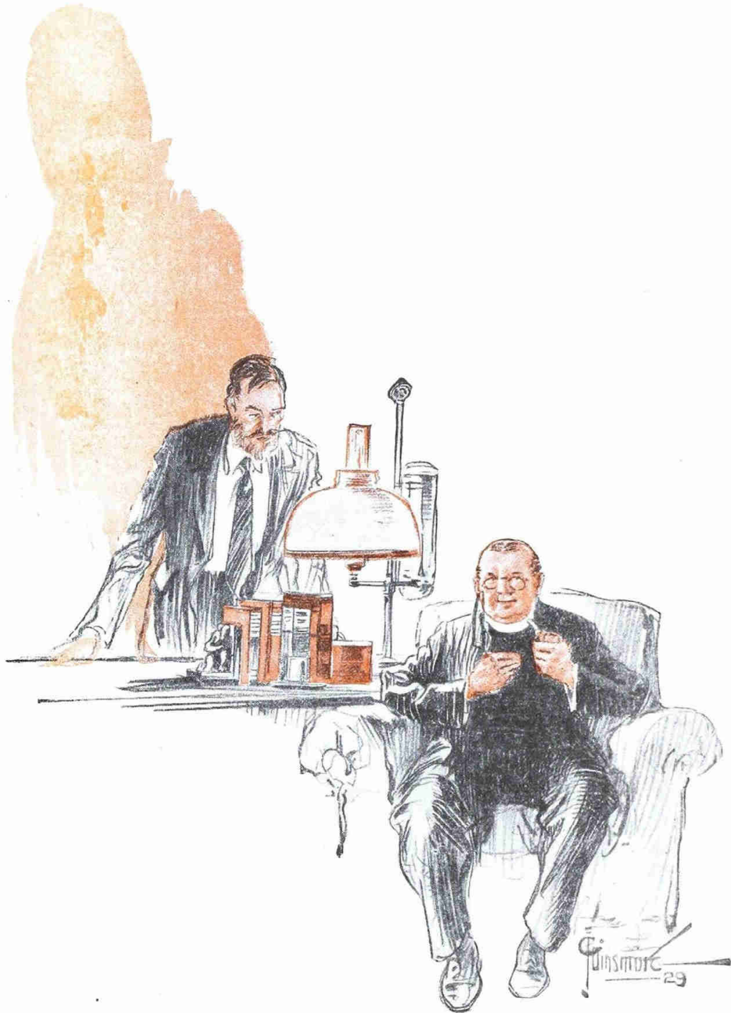
“But a man hardly likes to be regarded as a plague.”

“I suppose Mrs. Dyer was with them?” the clergyman asked.

“The mother of Jackie? She was the only one who gave her name.”

“God gave that woman too much vitality,” the Rural Dean commented. “She demands action when others would be content to gossip.”

“There is something of the fanatic about her. I could see that.”



"A person like Mrs. Dyer makes one feel that there is something to be said for the woman who strangles her child in infancy," said Horkins from the depths of his chair.

"An occasional person growing up like Mrs. Dyer makes one feel that there is something to be said for the woman who strangles her child in infancy."

The conversation had grown emotional, and Rural Dean Horkins had hoped to lighten it with a heavy jocularity. He was startled to have Anthony Pursford turn on him like a man suddenly ill, the pouches of his cheeks livid.

“What made you say that?” he cried. “A baby, killed by the hand of its own mother. No man can carry a more terrible memory through life.”

Horkins got up and crossed the room to where the blue decanter stood on the sideboard.

“You have let your nerves get the better of you,” he said. “I am going to give you a glass of your own brandy. Then we’ll talk of something more exhilarating than the bigotry of well-meaning villagers.”

That night, the Rural Dean sat silent for so long over his tea that his wife enquired: “Did anything go wrong to-day?”

“I do not think that Pursford should stay on alone at the cottage,” he replied.

Mrs. Horkins was surprised.

“You have always said he was the sort of a man that made a happy recluse.”

He played a tattoo on the table with the stubby ends of his heavy fingers.

“I do not know what to think,” he admitted, and then added, as she thought irrelevantly, “Mrs. Dyer is a good woman, but may the Good Lord forgive one of his priests for what I think of her sort.”

He made it his business to see Anthony Pursford every day after that, but found him as he had always been in the months before that one outburst. Perhaps, after all, his own imagination had exaggerated it.

Then one day, Anthony Pursford came to the rectory with his valise in his hand.

“I am leaving for Boston to-day,” he said, quite as though it were a matter of course.

“You have made up your mind suddenly,” exclaimed Horkins.

“I received a telegram two hours ago that tells me my wife is dead.” To the look of surprise he responded, “She died insane. She has not known me for twenty years. It is all over now.”

Pursford’s bearing forbade a word of sympathy.

“I am going to ask you a great favor,” he said. “Will you ship some things after me, and then sell the remainder.”

“You are not coming back?”

“Not if you will look after my house. I’ll write you a letter of instruction next week.”

“I shall miss you, Pursford.” He spoke with hearty sincerity. “I have not found many companionable men in this town.”

“I have had many pleasant hours here.”

“And you intend to live in Boston?”

“No, I think I shall spend the remainder of my life in France. I wanted to go there years ago, but my sister thought she could find more understanding among her own kind. She never ceased to believe it.” He smiled sadly, rather than bitterly. “She loved our New England towns, and she found the same atmosphere in Petersville.”

“And you prefer Europe?”

“In foreign surroundings it is easier to forget the past.”

Horkins dreaded any appearance of prying, so he changed the subject abruptly.

“And your charming cottage will fall into decay again,” he said.

“Yes, I suppose nobody will want to live there now. Haunted!”

“Haunted!” with blustery contempt.

Pursford laughed unexpectedly. “Yes, by the ghost of a lonely dog.”

When Anthony Pursford was walking toward the railroad station, he passed Mrs. Dyer but did not recognize her. She turned round on the sidewalk and gazed after him with a look of resentment. She had the appearance of a woman who had just been addressed by a remark that appalled all her moral conceptions of what was what.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

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[The end of *The Ghost of a Lonely Dog* by Fred Jacob]