Exploring the character of the middle-aged narrator Arthur Kipps

Happily married to Esmé for 14 years having been tragically widowed from his first wife, Stella, when 23.

Caring husband and doting stepfather. Kipps says of Edmund: ‘I ... loved him more deeply than any.’ (p. 17)

Melancholy, emotionally frail and sensitive to external factors: ‘My spirits have for many years now been excessively affected by the ways of the weather...’ (p. 10).

Has lived in Monk’s Piece for 14 years. Aged 35 when he first discovered the house. Feels an uncanny spiritual connection with the place: ‘I had no sense of having been here before, but an absolute conviction...that the house was already mine, bound to me invisibly.’ (p. 12)

Even at the age of 35, Kipps was still deeply affected by the loss of his family to the evil woman in black: ‘I had no taste at all for social life and...was prone to occasional nervous illnesses...’ (p. 11).

Decides to write down the horrific story of his account with the demonic spirit of Jennet Humfrye in an attempt to exorcise the lingering impact of his memory of her: ‘I would write my own ghost story. Then perhaps I should finally be free of it for whatever life remained for me to enjoy.’ (p. 22)

Married Esmé ‘some years later’ after his first discovery of Monk’s Piece. This, combined with the purchase of the property itself, did much to improve his state of mind: ‘For some fourteen years now Monk’s piece had been the happiest of homes...’ (p. 14)

The pressure from his fond step children for him to participate in the round of telling ghost stories elicits an unusually abrupt response from the normally mild man who quickly vacates their company: ‘Behind me, in the house, I knew that I must have left the family in a state of consternation and bewilderment, for they knew me normally as an even-tempered man of predictable emotions.’ (p. 21)

However, on the Christmas Eve in the near present when the novel begins, he becomes increasingly stressed as he hears his step children tell ghost stories: ‘At first, I was amused, indulgent, but as I sat on... I was trying to suppress my mounting unease, to hold back the rising flood of memory.’ (p. 19)

On the fateful day when he finally became the owner of Monk’s Piece and Esmé agreed to marry him, Kipps wrongly believed that he had ‘at last come out from under the long shadow cast by the events of the past...’ (p. 14)