

The Warlock

By Unknown

There was once a Moujik, and he had three married sons. He lived a long while, and was looked upon by the village as a *Koldun* [or wizard]. When he was about to die, he gave orders that his sons' wives should keep watch over him [after his death] for three nights, taking one night apiece; that his body should be placed in the outer chamber, and that his sons' wives should spin wool to make him a caftan. He ordered, moreover, that no cross should be placed upon him, and that none should be worn by his daughters-in-law.

Well, that same night the eldest daughter-in-law took her seat beside him with some grey wool, and began spinning. Midnight arrives. Says the father-in-law from his coffin:

'Daughter-in-law, art thou there?'

She was terribly frightened, but answered, 'I am.' 'Art thou sitting?' 'I sit.' 'Dost thou spin?' 'I spin.' 'Grey wool?' 'Grey.' 'For a caftan?' 'For a caftan.'

He made a movement towards her. Then a second time he asked again— 'Daughter-in-law, art thou there?'

'I am.' 'Art thou sitting?' 'I sit.' 'Dost thou spin?' 'I spin.' 'Grey wool?' 'Grey.' 'For a caftan?' 'For a caftan.'

She shrank into the corner. He moved again, came a couple of yards nearer her.

A third time he made a movement. She offered up no prayer. He strangled her, and then lay down again in his coffin.

His sons removed her body, and next evening, in obedience to his paternal behest, they sent another of his daughters-in-law to keep watch. To her just the same thing happened: he strangled her as he had done the first one.

But the third was sharper than the other two. She declared she had taken off her cross, but in reality she kept it on. She took her seat and spun, but said prayers to herself all the while.

Midnight arrives. Says her father-in-law from his coffin—

'Daughter-in-law, art thou there?'

'I am,' she replies. 'Art thou sitting?' 'I sit.' 'Dost thou spin?' 'I spin.' 'Grey wool?' 'Grey.' 'For a caftan?' 'For a caftan.'

Just the same took place a second time. The third time, just as he was going to rush at her, she laid the cross upon him. He fell down and died. She looked into the coffin; there lay ever so much money. The father-in-law wanted to take it away with him, or, at all events, that only some one who could outdo him in cunning should get it.