

The Dog and the Corpse

By Unknown

A moujik went out in pursuit of game one day, and took a favourite dog with him. He walked and walked through woods and bogs, but got nothing for his pains. At last the darkness of night surprised him. At an uncanny hour he passed by a graveyard, and there, at a place where two roads met, he saw standing a corpse in a white shroud. The moujik was horrified, and knew not which way to go—whether to keep on or to turn back.

‘Well, whatever happens, I’ll go on,’ he thought; and on he went, his dog running at his heels. When the corpse perceived him, it came to meet him; not touching the earth with its feet, but keeping about a foot above it—the shroud fluttering after it. When it had come up with the sportsman, it made a rush at him; but the dog seized hold of it by its bare calves, and began a tussle with it. When the moujik saw his dog and the corpse grappling with each other, he was delighted that things had turned out so well for himself, and he set off running home with all his might. The dog kept up the struggle until cock-crow, when the corpse fell motionless to the ground. Then the dog ran off in pursuit of its master, caught him up just as he reached home, and rushed at him, furiously trying to bite and to rend him. So savage was it, and so persistent, that it was as much as the people of the house could do to beat it off.

‘Whatever has come over the dog?’ asked the moujik’s old mother. ‘Why should it hate its master so?’

The moujik told her all that had happened.

‘A bad piece of work, my son!’ said the old woman. ‘The dog was disgusted at your not helping it. There it was fighting with the corpse—and you deserted it, and thought only of saving yourself! Now it will owe you a grudge for ever so long.’

Next morning, while the family were going about the farmyard, the dog was perfectly quiet. But the moment its master made his appearance, it began to growl like anything.

They fastened it to a chain; for a whole year they kept it chained up. But in spite of that, it never forgot how its master had offended it. One day it got loose, flew straight at him, and began trying to throttle him.

So they had to kill it.