



Spirit Treasures

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Russian

Easy
4 min read

A certain farmer had two houses,—one in which he lived with his family in summer time, the other a winter house, provided with an oven, and called istopka. The farmer took a fancy one day to sleep in the istopka alone. He went there and lay down—it was a bright moonlight night—but, being unable to sleep, he lay with his eyes open staring at the walls. Suddenly the figure of a man rose up from beneath the floor, walked heavily across it, and as it moved made a noise like a purse full of money. It walked straight towards the farmer. The farmer crossed himself, said a prayer, and began to whisper, “Chur! Cher!” It was fortunate that he thus protected himself. The spectre passed the farmer by, and went into the yard; there it stayed some time, when it returned to the room. Again the farmer crossed himself, and whispered, “Chur, Chur!” Just at this moment the cock crowed, and the spectre instantly disappeared somewhere beneath the floor.

The farmer went home and related all that he had seen. He and his family considered the matter of the apparition over, and came to the conclusion to consult some “wise-man” about it. The next day they found a wise-man, and told him all the story.

“Ah!” said the wise-man, “you have lost a famous chance, countryman.”

“What chance?”

“Why, it was a treasure.”

“Is it possible!”

“Yes.”

“Could we not get it somehow?”

“You can.”

“How, then?”

“Listen, and I will tell you. When the spectre again rises from beneath the floor, and approaches you, permit it to do so. When it is within two steps of you, seize it three times by the head, repeating each time, ‘Amen! Amen! crumble thou into pieces.’”

The farmer did as he was told. The spectre crumbled into old copper money of five-copeck pieces. The money altogether was worth more than two hundred and fifty roubles.

II.

A moujik used once to sleep in a deserted room. Sometimes, just as he was about to fall asleep, a cat of a reddish colour would jump up from he knew not where, and run about the room. The cat shone like gold, and when its tail came into contact with anything hard it made a ringing noise like that of small money. The moujik took council with the wise-men about this apparition. Their answer was,—

“Catch the cat by the tail, and before it can escape from your hands, call out three times, “Amen! Amen! crumble thou into pieces!”

The moujik followed the advice. At the third repetition of the words the cat crumbled into gold pieces of five roubles each.

III.

In a certain village the moujiks had noticed that, for several years past, and as they had heard, for at least a century before, in the spring, when the rain came on or the snow melted, a hole that was in the back grounds becoming full of water there would appear a duck swimming about on it, whence no one knew. If driven away, it would return in a short time, and begin again to swim in the pond. Many people had tried to kill it, but

somehow it always escaped death. On St. John's Day, if the weather were dry, a little candle would be seen to burn in the hole; if it were wet, the same duck would be seen swimming about on the water.

The moujiks took council together, and agreed that there must be a hidden treasure in that hole, and began to dig for it. They dug and dug, and at last found a cauldron, but with nothing in it. They then consulted some wise-men, who thus advised them,—

“Dig in the hole on the night of St. John; dig, and say ‘Chur!’ Dig, and say ‘Chur!’ When the spade of any one of you strikes against a cauldron, cry out immediately, ‘Amen! Amen! Amen!’ Then dig again and you will dig the money out.”

The moujiks followed these directions to the letter, and dug out an enormous cauldron full of ancient gold coins. They divided the money amongst them, and each of them received so much that they all became merchants of the highest guild, and made their village into a city.

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