

Seeing he was not the kind of man to be easily offended, I requested him to relate the story, which he proceeded to do in the following words :—

“Near the village where I passed my boyhood, lived an old, old man. He was the surliest of mortals, did his own housework and no visitor was ever seen to cross his threshold. He was a miser, for although he had once owned all the land on which the village stood, and sold it a good price too, he never spent anything. We boys always shunned his hut for he kept a huge, black mastiff, and had the unenviable reputation of having dealings with the evil one.

“One dark night in autumn, as the clock was striking twelve, I sallied forth to meet my two chums. We were bound on an orchard-robbing expedition, I think. Taking a short cut through the woods, I arrived first at the edge of the ravine. Observing the glimmer of a light among the trees on the opposite bank, and thinking it was my friends, who, being afraid to pass the village churchyard, had brought a lantern, I conceived the brilliant idea of giving them a fright.

“Down the winding pathway I crept, into the darkness of the ravine, my bare feet making no noise on the hard pathway. At last the light was directly in front, only a thin screen of underbrush between. Now was the time : I noiselessly parted the leaves. The yell that was on my lips died away. For a moment I had a glimpse of an old, gaunt man, his long grey hair dishevelled, one claw-like hand upholding a lantern, as he stooped forward to gaze into a fresh dug hole. I turned to run. Two wild eyes burning like living coals in the darkness barred my way. Then a huge black body sprang on me and bore me to the ground. The next thing I remember was hearing the voice of the miser ordering his dog to let me go.

“‘So you would spy on me?’ he snarled, dragging me to the edge of the hole. ‘Listen ! I do not want more blood on my hands. Swear that you will never tell anyone what you have seen to night.’ I would have sworn to anything, so, after repeated warnings, I was allowed to escape.

“I hardly know how I got home, and until we moved into Toronto, a couple of years later, I always went about in dread of meeting the old miser. Since then circumstances have combined to prevent me from returning to find out what is buried there.”

Being exceedingly interested in this story, which he assured me was true, I gave him my address and requested him to write and let me know if he found anything. This he kindly promised to do. Then my talkative friend, saying the seat was rather crowded, proposed to take his valise and put it in the vestibule of the car. I asked him as a favour to take mine also—he did.

The train stopped at a small station and started again, but the little fat man did not return. An old lady seated behind me jabbed me