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### THE OLD STONE HOUSE.

MANY years ago, upon the eastern bank of the great Susquehanna river, in the State of Pennsylvania, and just where a small mill stream broke through a great pine-clad hill and emptied its bright waters into the river, stood an old stone house.

When the lumbering business first became valuable in that region, and long years before the time of which we write, some wealthy adventurer had built that old house and made it his home until he had become rich, and was murdered in his bed one night for his money. His family had encoffined his remains and taken them away somewhere for burial, and had never returned to their old home to live, or even to visit or look after the place.

From the day of the murder down to the date at which our story commences, the old house had been uninhabited by any one, unless, as was reported, and quite generally believed, by the ignorant woodsmen and their families, who lived in that neighborhood, it had been held, occupied, and inhabited by the ghost of its former owner and murdered master. The fences that once surrounded the lawn in front of the house and the garden, had long since fallen into decay and disappeared. The lawn had become almost a forest of roses and other flowering trees run wild. Where once had been a garden was now a dense mass of woods and briars. Wild vines had clambered over the old house until it was completely covered by their clinging tendrils and bright green leaves.

The house was situated on a narrow, level strip of land bordering on the river, and between it and the great hill, or, more properly, mountain, that commenced its ascent just in rear of the house.

The hill was here cleft in two by the small mill stream before spoken of.

The sides of the hill, from base to summit, were covered by tall pine trees, whose branches seemed almost to touch the sky, and through whose branches the winds seemed to be ever singing a mournful, solemn song—now loud and roaring like long drawn peals of thunder, and anon low and sad like a dismal death chant.

There were but few inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of the old house, most of whom were woodsmen who lived by cutting timber for sawing or rafting purposes. One only of these will claim our notice in this story sufficiently to need a description or personal mention.

That one was named Aaron Clark.

He and his family, consisting of his wife and daughter, lived about one and a half miles up the river from the old house.

Aaron Clark was reputedly a sawyer, and pretended to work in a saw mill situated about one mile further up the river.

He was, however, known to be an almost constant idler, and instead of being found at his post in the mill, he was generally straggling about in the woods and hills—no one seemed to know where. Yet, with all his idleness, Clark seemed to be well supplied with money; but where he got it, he said "was his business, and no one else's."

Mistress Clark was a tall, delicate looking woman, and although much broken apparently by troubles and sorrow, yet she had evidently at one time been a beautiful woman, and a woman highly cultivated and refined.

As to the daughter Eunice, who was not more than some nineteen years of age, no