

Story: Legend of the Big Hill

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[Translator's Note: This story about spirits moving across the hills near Brienne, Bessarabia, during the night, lists no author or when written. It is in a folder containing newspaper articles, reports about Bessarabia, letters and other stories.]

[Begin Translation]

Legend of the Big Hill

On the edge of the valley on the upper section of Brienne rises the silent and motionless big rolling hill (*Kanonhügel*), in front of which is the wide valley of the Kogelnik [River] with a crown of German villages full of hustle and bustle; behind it the flat steppe going off into the distant horizon.

It overlooks all the other rolling hills in the surrounding area, which are scattered here and there along the valley edge of the steppe. Many centuries have passed over it. And down through the ages, the hot sun burned down relentlessly on it every summer and innumerable were the rainstorms that flooded over it. But today it appears as a silent and motionless guard of the valley and looks eastward.

In the bosom of the hill, under a large stone slab, there is supposed to have been buried, in ancient times, a ferocious chief along with the carcass of his horse, his entire family, and his servants. Many weapons, precious gold and silver jewelry, and all kinds of objects were to have been buried with him in the grave. Even food and drink were included because of his chieftaincy. However, he was unable to find any rest in his tomb. Every grandmother in Bessarabia knew and talked about this.

When the moon lights up the valley during the night and the plain is flooded with its silver light, when the people down in the valley are sleeping and the steppe is full of eerie silence, then things get lively at the big hill. Shadows move here and there. The grass rustles as if someone were silently treading over it. When the moon sets and the hill is enveloped in darkness, then the inhabitants gather at its highest point and squat in a circle and wag their heads. In the middle sits the chief with his huge bundle. Should the winds of a storm sweep through during the night and drive the clouds and the witches before it over the steppe, then the chief becomes enraged and angry. He swings onto his horse, his eyes glowing, in his hand a curved saber, he bursts into the darkness, moaning and wailing fill the air. From the other rolling hills ruffled shapes emerge and sharpen their knives. Trampling and weapon clashes, moans and groans fill the air.

It is said that the inhabitants on the hill are not pleased that people in the steppe are living so peacefully and diligently working. They would prefer rather that there be war and famine, plague and fire. However, it is no use. As soon day breaks and the farmer goes into the vineyard with the hoe, or into the field with the plow, the ghastly figures disappear into their dismal chamber. This thing is known by everyone in the whole area and talked about.

[End of Translation]