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THE THREE BEDS IN HEAVEN. AN IRISH LEGEND.

I am not aware that the following legend has ever been in print, or ever been written. I heard it for the first time, very recently, from the lips of an esteemed young friend, to whom it was narrated by an Irishwoman whom she visited while confined by sickness to her humble home.

"I went," says my fair narrator, "to see good Biddy O'Connor, having heard in the morning by her little boy Pat, that she was ill. I found her sitting up in her arm chair, with a huge night cap, fringed with enormous ruffles, upon her head, and her shoulders wrapped in an old shawl.

"Ah! Biddy," said I, "I am sorry to find you ill. But as you are sitting up, I trust you are better?"

"Och! an' it's your own swate face 'ud make a dead woman better," answered Biddy, in her rich brogue. "It is the joy of my eyes iver to see ye, Miss. The sight of ye is welcome than the Docther, for pleasant words is better nor bitter medicines."

"Where is your bed, Biddy?" I asked, observing that her humble cot was gone.

"It's doin' God's service, I hope, Miss; kapin' the bones of a poor Canadian man from the hard boards of a jolt cart?"

"Have you given it away?"

"Yes, Miss," answered Biddy, crossing herself devoutly.

"What will you do for a bed, now you are sick?"

"Och, I have no fears! If I have no bed here again, I'll have a bed in Heaven on a golden bedstead."

"Who have you given it to?"

"It was a poor family of the Canady people, Miss, as stopt at my door last night. Seven of them, big and little, in a one-horse cart, and on the bare boards lay sick the auld father, while the poor wife led the horse. So I tuk pity on the poor sick man and give him my straw bed, puttin' it in the bottom of the cart an' helpin' his wife lay him on it. He was so thankful, and said he felt so easy there."

"But you were too poor, Biddy. You have been too generous?"

"Niver a bit, Miss, niver a bit, Miss," answered Biddy with zeal. "Have you niver heard of the story of 'The Three Beds in Heaven, Miss?"

"Nerer, Biddy."

"Then if ye will please be seated on that bit of a box there, fornest me, it's me will be happy and privileged to tell it to ye."

So, I took a seat as Biddy wished me to do, and prepared to listen to her story, which I give as follows, but not in Biddy's brogue:

THE THREE BEDS IN HEAVEN.

A great many years ago, there lived in old Ireland a very rich man who had no other family than a wife and a stout, honest-hearted Christian serving maid. The man's name was Brien O'Brien, and the maid's name was Bridget. The house in which Brien O'Brien lived was situated in an out-of-the-way lonely spot, upon a wide moor, two leagues from a town, on one side, and close to a wild range of dark "Banshee hills" on the other. The house was large, and had been the house of the O'Briens for three hundred years. There were large out-houses for grain and potatoes, a mill near for corn, and not far off in a little glen was a "distil."

The high road passed within a quarter of a mile of Brien's house, and from his front door, of a clear morning, he could see up and down it for a long way. There were but few houses visible over the wide moor, and on the heath hill sides, and these were the shepherds' cots or huts of rattle-waters.

Brien was a man of good temper and cheerful, and though not rich, he would have been liberal with his goods, but for his wife, who was very avaricious, and held such a tongue over Brien, that he was forced to do as she would have him, for the sake of peace.

Never a beggar came to her door when she was at home that ever went fuller away! Nay, she followed him with malediction, and threatened him with Brien's wolf-dogs if he came a second time. But when Brien, as sometimes it chanced, was at home alone, his wife and the maid being gone to the next market town, it was a merry entertainment the poor beggar had whose weary feet took him towards Brien's threshold. They sat at his board and drank ale and whiskey, and ate bread and bacon like lords. When his wife would come home at night and discover the intruders made upon her larder, she would scold Brien for half the night; but he took it easily, being, as we have said, of an easy nature.

The maid Bridget, however, was the blessing of that house; for although Brien was kind at times, yet his fear of his wife often led him to treat with harshness those he would have entertained kindly. Harshness and cruelty, whether they proceeded from natural hardness of heart

or are put on from fear of others, is alike censurable. Bridget, however, was good throughout and always. If her mistress barred the door against the poor wayfarer, (and many a one passed that way and stopped at nightfall, seeking shelter, for the road and region were lonely), she would cast them a morsel from the window.

Bridget was a good Christian, and did all she could for Christ's love. She remembered that He had said he should be as pleased with a cup of cold water given to the poor, as if bestowed upon himself. She regarded all human beings as her brothers. She saw Christ's image in every poor man's face. The tones of her voice spoke the goodness and benevolence of her heart. Nerer were two persons, dwellers under one roof, so unlike as Dame O'Brien and her maid Bridget. We shall soon see how Bridget was rewarded for her good deeds.

One winter's night, Brien, his wife and Bridget were awakened by a knocking at the outer door and a voice supplicating admission. The night was stormy and blustering, and the icy winds howled over the moor like the roar of wolves.

"Do you hear that, Dame?" said Brien. "It is a hard night for man or beast to be abroad! Shall I get up and let him in?"

"No! What business has he to be out at such hours? He should time his journey better."

"Mistress," said Bridget, whom the voice had called out of her bed, and who came to the door of her mistress's room with her shawl cast over her head, and her shoes in her hand, "mistress, please let me open the door to him. The night is awful, and hear how he asks in the name of sweet Pity!"

"Good folks, for the love of Jesus, let a wayfarer enter and lodge with you to-night," said a voice of remarkable sweetness, in a tone of earnest pleading.

"You can't come in! We have but two beds in the house: one my husband and I occupy, and in the other sleeps my maid."

A third time the traveller knocked, and his voice was heard, calm and sweet to the ear, above the hoarse storm.

"The night is dark. The way is blocked up! Shelter is far! and I have travelled long!—Open, good people, and let me lodge with you in Christ's good name!"

"Oh, mistress, do you hear? How can you say nay to such a prayer!" cried Bridget.

"Yes, wife, you must not turn him away!" said Brien, hesitatingly, for he dared not speak his mind out.

"Oh, let me open the door to him, kind mistress!" said Bridget. "Give me the key and I will let him in. He shall occupy my bed, and I will sleep upon the hearth."

"If you will let him in, then," said the cruel mistress, to her weeping maid, "you may, but on condition that you relinquish four months of your wages!"

"That I will do most gladly, mistress," answered Bridget, and, taking the key from her mistress's pillow, she opened the door and let the traveller in. He was a young man, and his garments were covered with sleet and snow. In his hand he grasped a staff, with a handle shaped like a cross. His dress was humble, but his countenance was very mild and prepossessing.

The next morning he went away, expressing his gratitude for his reception, and particularly fixing his eye upon Bridget as he spoke.

The storm continued throughout all the day, and the next night seemed, if possible, to increase in vehemence. About midnight, Brien and his wife and Bridget were awakened by a knock at the door, and the voice of the traveller whom they had admitted the night previous.

"I have wandered far and long, kind friends, and night has come on and overtaken me in this wild moor, as before. Let me in, good people, in Jesus' name!"

A second time the faithful Bridget plead in his behalf to her enraged and cruel mistress.

"I will give him my bed as before, sweet mistress, if you will let him enter, and the hearth to-night will lie as pleasant as it did last night."

"If you will relinquish another third of your year's wages, you shall let him in," answered her mistress.

"This will I gladly do. Enter, weary traveller in Jesus' blessed name!" she added, as she threw wide the door. "You shall take my bed, as you did last night!"

Early in the morning, the traveller rose and took his leave, mildly and sweetly thanking them as before. Bridget would have detained him, for the storm still raged, but he said to her that he must depart on his way.

All day the tempest continued, and the day, closed as the two preceding ones had done, in a storm. The winds were laden with icy rain, and the roar of the sweeping blast was terrific.

"If that traveller is abroad to-night," said the wife of Brien O'Brien, as she listened from her pillow to the tempest, "he won't trouble me again with his call for lodging, for he will be

sure to perish ere he could reach the threshold."

She had hardly got the words out of her mouth ere a strong rap was heard upon his door. Three knocks were given, just as the stranger of two preceding nights gave them. Dame O'Brien trembled between superstitious fear and anger as she heard them.

"It is the same man again," said Brien O'Brien, with amazement. "He must be a demented person, ever wandering about the moors, and never reaching any inn or town. He shall not come in again."

"That he shall not," responded his wife.

"Good Christian friends," said a voice at the door, a low, sweet, calm voice, yet heard distinctly above the uproar of the elements; "I come a third time to seek a lodging for the night and a shelter from the keen blasts. Open to me, I pray you, and let me come in."

"Never shall you again cross that threshold," cried Dame O'Brien, with great vehemence.

"Oh, my sweet mistress," cried good Bridget, kneeling by her bedside and clasping her hands together; oh, for the love of Christ, let not a fellow-creature perish."

"He has come twice for lodging, and we have given it to him. What does he do here again?"

"If the storm was a plea for him the first night and the second night, sweet mistress, so is it to-night, also," said Bridget, "for it beats upon his head more fiercely than it did then.—Why he should lose his way thrice, I know not; but that he has lost his way and needs our aid is plain. Oh, kind mistress, give me the key, and let me open to him! I will again give him the use of my bed. The hearth is warm, and methinks I slept more soundly there than in my bed!"

"If you will remit the remaining third part of your year's wages, the traveller shall also come in to-night," answered her avaricious mistress.

"This I will do, good mistress, and cheerfully, too," cried Bridget, as she took the key and opened the door, letting in, as she did so, the same dripping young man who had the two previous nights craved their hospitality. As before, he occupied Bridget's bed—she sleeping upon the hearth; and in the morning he rose up early and went away as before.

The day was bright and beautiful—the birds sang—the skies were soft and blue, and at evening the round moon rose, lighting up the scene with the beauty of enchantment. The long night passed, the morning came, and the traveller had not appeared. Days, weeks passed away, and he was no more seen, and almost forgotten.

At length, just one year from the night on which he had first appeared, the wife of Brien O'Brien sickened, and on the third night she died.

Another year passed away. It was night—Brien was seated in his hall, making over his accounts. Bridget, still the faithful servant of his household, was near by at a table brewing. Her master's face was towards her, and, as she happened to look up, she saw a sight that made her blood run cold. She had never before seen a ghost; but she knew the horrible being she beheld standing by her master's shoulder, a little behind him, was the ghost of his avaricious wife.

"Master, look! Jesus have mercy on us!" she cried, crossing herself; which she had no sooner done than she took courage.

"What do you see?"

"Your wife's ghost!"

"Where?"

"Look behind you!"

He did so, and, beholding her, he fell to the floor insensible.

"Bridget," said the spirit.

"My poor mistress," answered the maid, sadly, for she knew from the looks of the ghost that it was in a state of suffering.

"Bridget, I am sent hither to tell thee that thou hast three beds in Heaven."

"Three beds in Heaven!"

"Yes. Thou didst three nights give up thy bed to a storm-driven traveller, and didst sacrifice a year's wages for three nights' lodging for one a stranger to thee. Know that those who deny themselves here shall be rewarded threefold in the world to come. For the three beds thou didst give up to the traveller, three beds or places are there in Heaven. One of these is for thy own use when thou comest there; the other two which thou hast earned by thy charity thou canst bestow on whom thou wilt. Any two thou mayest name that are now on earth, or doing penance in purgatory, shall instantly be translated to Heaven. Wouldst thou know now who the traveller was who sought shelter, and which I, alas! denied, but which thou didst purchase for him with thy bed and wages?"

"I know, poor mistress, he was one for whom Christ died. I ask no more to know."

"Thou must hear whom thou didst do such service unto. The wayfarer was the Lord Christ. He came to try thy faith and reprove my sin.—

For thy charity thou art rewarded; while for my cruelty I am punished in purgatory."

"Poor mistress! poor mistress! what am I that I should be thus honored while you suffer," said Bridget, after her first surprise at what she had heard passed by. "If I have three beds in Heaven, one shall be for me, one for my master, and one for thee."

Thus spoke the good maid; and hardly had she ceased, when the suffering ghost became transformed into a bright smiling angel—and, spreading its wings, seemed to ascend through the roof, and the next moment became invisible. Bridget fell on her knees and crossed herself, and remained several minutes in devotion.

The next year Bridget's master died, leaving her all his wealth. She lived to a good old age, doing good with it, and at length was taken to rest for ever in one of the Three Golden Beds in Heaven her sweet charity had won for her.

This legend goes to show that no act of benevolence remains without its reward. What we do for the stranger, we know not that we are not doing it for the Lord."

"It shows, too," devoutly said Biddy O'Connor to the narrator, "how that by their good works, Christians in this world, are able to help poor burnin' souls out of purgatory, and give them a bed in Heaven. If Bridget had given up her bed only one night, it's but one bed the darlint would have had in Heaven—but enough for herself, that same any how, sure. But by givin' it up two nights more, she earned two more good places in Heaven for her master and mistress. So it's the truth, we can help each other! It is not onct we must do good, but as many times over onct as we can, and then it's many a one o' our kith and kin we'll help out o' the pit o' purgatory."

We end our story with the following reflections upon it by our fair narrator:

"What exquisite touches of beauty, in all the pictures presented to us in this simple legend, so delicate and full of significance that they reach the soul ere the eye has time to behold them, and with a mysterious language fill us with deepest musings on the link that binds the life in Time to that in Eternity."

"The sweet, earnest voice of him who seeks shelter from the storm, his mild face, and the cross topped staff he bears, revealed to us, ere we are told, that again in the human form our Lord is travelling on earth, to know whom Love hath made His."

"The words 'sweet mistress' from Bridget to one, whom the tale tells us, was not ever gentle and kind, were beautifully natural from one whose heart was too serene, through devotion and pious works, to reflect the evils in another."

"The tale simply says she slept more sweetly on the hearth than she had ever done on her couch, and leaves us to feel why it could be so. Then, in a view of the other world, it shows us *three beds in Heaven*, purchased with *three beds on earth*, and we are again left to muse in silence on which is more to be desired—a rest on earth, or a rest in Heaven."

"The repose, with her, of two whom she loved on earth, granted on account of her three acts of self-denial, when one giving up of her bed to the weary traveller would have procured rest for herself, shows us the efficiency of a life of patient well-doing; in relieving others from the heaviness of sin, by its holy influence, though occasional acts of sacrifice of self, might test our love for Heaven upon earth, and give to our souls rest."

"At a first glance, it might seem unnatural that the gentle traveller should have been willing to take the couch of the poor maid, Bridget;—but he was taking the cross of earth give her back the seven times tried gold of Heaven.—Upward he bore her treasure, while the sun three times rose and set upon her earthly way."

"Only one of deep piety, who had himself known the sacrifice of the pleasures of this life, could have made this legend. It is not of the intellect, but of the pure heart, which may see God."

"REPEAL OF THE UNION."

A NEW ORGANISATION.
(From the Irishman.)

It is but a fortnight ago since we stated that we had received of late communications from several quarters on the subject of the so-called "representatives" upon the one only question which an Irish Member in an English Parliament has in truth a right to regard as of any real importance there. And in reply to those communications we declared our belief that a general public National demand for the REPEAL OF THE UNION, (though confined only to that,) if it could be made, would be at the present moment a highly useful and even important manifesto of the National Will of the Irish People.

Even since then a movement has been commenced; and one which, though it approves indeed the form of a petition to the English

House of Commons—a form which cannot, of course, receive the concurrence of those in Ireland who do not feel it possible to recognise the supremacy of that "august" assembly—is yet a movement quite in the right direction, because apart from forms it is practically intended by way of simple public protest against the long-continued violation of the right of Ireland to Self-Government, and is confined to the simple demand of restoration of our Domestic Legislature.

In another page will be found the text of an admirably drawn Petition—the alteration of a few empty formal words in which would make it altogether a worthy National Declaration on the part of the People of Ireland to-day. It is destined, we believe, to be but the first step of a series—the first step of a new National Movement throughout the country. It is true that the initiative is taken by the people of a small borough, and that, too, a borough not the most fortunate in its choice of a patriotic "representative." But the fact is that in this Petition Youghal expresses the sentiments of every honest-thinking Irishman in the country; and they are sentiments, and sentiments on this occasion couched in language, sure to find abundant echo all over Munster—all over Ireland—in the great cities, as well as in the little villages—and in all the rural parishes of many a county besides the great counties of Cork and Tipperary.

We are glad of it. We feel with pleasure the oner presented by this Petition. We feel that its echo will be heard even beyond Ireland,—even in France, and in other countries, too, where, perhaps, our own special objection to "Petition" forms will not be understood to the prejudice of what essentially means a National Protest after all. And in reference to this document, we can frankly repeat what we declared in general terms a fortnight ago: By all means let us have any reasonable form of Protest that may be; it is right that all honest Irishmen (and we are very sure of such are our Youghal friends) should find means of expressing themselves in the form and to the extent that most exactly expresses their particular view of what is practical. And surely such a petition as this is far better work, and nobler, than any work done or attempted to be done by the late (for, thank heaven, we can no longer refer to an existing) "Independent Opposition Parliamentary Party!" We shall be delighted to see the many honest Irishmen whom that delusion so long deceived, hestir themselves now, as the men of Youghal have done, to take at last a step in the right direction—the first practical step, according to the ideas prevalent during the last eight or ten years, being, we presume, a petition such as this.

But there is another objection than any formal one to the practical usefulness of a Petition (where the Petition is addressed to a hostile power), to which we would ask the serious attention of the country; it is, that the matter ends there. So far as Youghal is concerned so it does, literally. As to the rest of the country, all Ireland, or a great number of such towns in Ireland as Youghal, may doubtless join in the movement by adopting a similar form of Petition; and thus it will be indeed a National Protest, such as if not attended to by England, will at least not fail to engage the serious notice of our friends in France, whose attention just now is perhaps rather better worth having of the two. By all means, then, all over Ireland let those who still can sign a Petition, any Petition, to the English Parliament, sign this Petition; and as for those who, like ourselves, cannot conscientiously make use of that form, let them do the same thing in a form which they can use,—let them sign and publish a Declaration, embodying the same principles, and we may surely add, as nearly as may be in the same words, for we believe the language of the Petition in question is such as scarcely to admit of improvement.

Yet, after all this is done,—after, every parish in Ireland shall have signed its petition to the English House of Commons, or its Declaration to England and the World,—the matter ends there. And indeed so far as immediate practical result is concerned, all these Petitions and Declarations, though they were signed by the whole Irish people, would we know produce none at all. They would simply vindicate the National Will in public reputation throughout the world,—they would give the lie, in solemn form to the false representations of England in our regard,—they would effect a formal assurance of the truth to France, to all Europe; that Ireland is still as invincibly unreconciled as ever to English rule, and that her people still pant for the day of Independence as warmly as in O'Connell's time, or even as in 1848. But they could effect no more than this.

After all this is done, then, the matter ends there. One single Protest,—and no more.—And after that comes another season, and another year,—probably one pregnant with the