

THE SPIRIT OF THE TREE

One of Dr. Hyde's Irish Stories.

"Ah! the pleasant time hath vanished, ere our wretched doubtings vanished... All the graceful spirit-people, children of the earth and sea—

—D. F. McCarthy.

In one of his racy, gossiping Irish letters to a Dublin paper—written when the present movement for the "Revival of the Ancient Language and Literature of Ireland was still in its incipency—

These stories were invariably recited in Irish—which the delighted listener spoke from his infancy—for, in another portion of the same letter, he mentions the "repugnance with which he heard the request to repeat them in English for the benefit of such of the audience as did not understand their forefathers' language."

This inborn trait of the boy's Celtic nature was more fully developed as he advanced in years and intellectual cultivation. To it may be traced the "spring of action" which impelled him to labor with unwearied perseverance, and scholarly research in every department of that noble undertaking, wherein he to-day stands pre-eminent among his talented associates. Here is a translation of one of Dr. Hyde's stories:—

THE SPIRIT OF THE TREE.

In the old times there was a man by the name of ("Foxy") Paddy O'Kelly, and he lived at the foot of "Little Crucie Nephin."

He was married, but he had no children except one only daughter, and she was blind since she was born.

The neighbors named her "Blind Nora," and they had a notion that she used to be with the "Good People." Paddy held but two acres of land, and for that reason, he was poor.

He was out every night—wet or dry, cold or hot, and he did not know what was bringing him out, but his mind was dissatisfied and he could not stay within.

In the old times, the people believed that every "phuca" (i.e. hobgoblin) and spirit in the land were abroad on "Hallow Eve night" blasting and destroying the blackberries, and after that night, they wouldn't put a blackberry in their mouth on any account. But Paddy had no fear of anything, dead or alive.

On "Hallow Eve night" Paddy went out as was customary with him, and he was walking until he came as far as an old churchyard. The moon was full and was giving fine light. Paddy looked up and he saw a big man leaping from tree to tree. Every hair on his head rose up standing, and the cold sweat began to fall from him. He couldn't stir a foot.

The spirit leaped down, stood in front of Paddy and said:—"Don't you be afraid of me, I won't do you any harm. Have good courage, and I will show you the Fairy hosts of Connaught and Munster, playing a hurling match on the top of 'Great Crucie Nephin.'"

He took a grip of Paddy's two hands and adding him upon his back as a woman would throw a year-old child. He leaped up a tree and off with him from tree to tree until he came to the top of Great Nephin, and he laid Paddy down fair and easy on top of the hill.

"Wasn't long till the Fairy hosts of Connaught and Munster arrived, and commenced hurling in presence of Paddy and the spirit, and no man living ever saw such sport as they had, and Paddy was laughing till he thought he'd burst. At length the King of the Fairy hosts of Connaught shouted:—

"Hello! Spirit of the Tree! Which host has won the goal?"

"The Connaught host," said the Spirit. "You're telling a lie," said the King of the Munster Fairy host, and well he might before we give the goal to the Connaught people."

The fight commenced, and 'twas no "sham-battle" they had. Heads were broken and hands and legs, and the hill was red with blood. At length the King of the Munster Fairy host shouted and said, "Peace! We've won the victory from ye this time, but we'll fight again on May Eve!"

Then the Spirit of the Tree said to the two kings:—

"Pay this live man that I brought here to your place of meeting. Ye could not play the hurling match without him."

"It's true for you," said the King of the Fairy host of Connaught, and he gave a purse of gold to Paddy.

"I won't be worse than him," said the King of the Fairy host of Munster, and he gave him another purse, and at the turning of your hand, the two hosts were gone."

Then the Spirit said to him: "You have plenty of money now, is there anything you wish for?" "Well, then, indeed there is," said Paddy. "I have a daughter, and she is blind since she was born, and I would like that she'd have her eyesight."

"She'll have her eyesight before sunset to-morrow evening," said the Spirit, "if you take my advice. There's a little whitethorn bush growing over the head of your mother's grave; get a thorn from it and put it through a pimple that is on the back of your daughter's head, and she'll have as good sight as you have yourself; but if you tell your secret to any one living, she'll be blind again. It is time for us to be going now, for I have to show you my dwelling-place before you go home."

Then he got a hold of Paddy's two hands, flung him on his back, and off with him, and he didn't stop till he laid him fair and easy under a big tree in the churchyard. Then he took hold of the tree, drew it up and said, "Follow me."

Paddy took a step in, and the Spirit drew the tree after him. They went down a fine stairs—until they came to a great door. They opened the door and went in. When Paddy looked about he saw a good many people, neighbors of

his own, who died years before that. Some of them welcomed Paddy and asked him what time did he die. "I didn't die yet," says Paddy.

"The joking you are," said they; "and if you did not die you wouldn't be here among the 'Host of the dead!'"

The Spirit came near them then and said:—"Don't believe those people; there's a long and happy life before you. Come with me now, 'tis time for you to go home. Here's a little pot for you and any time you want food strike three blows on the lid and say, 'Food and drink and attendants,' and you'll have all you require; but if you part with it you'll repent it, and here's a little whistle and at any time you are in need blow it, and you'll get help. But, on your soul, don't part with it."

Then he took Paddy up and left him on the road, and said:—"On your soul don't tell any living person anything you saw to-night!"

Paddy came home at the dawn of day and his wife asked him "Where did he pass the night?"

"Tien't going astray I was," says he. He laid down the little pot and said:—"Food and drink!" but he forgot to strike the three blows on the lid, and nothing came. He bethought himself then and he struck the three blows, and two young women leaped out and laid a table and everything to eat and drink on it as good as was on the King's table.

Paddy and his wife and blind Nora ate and drank enough, and when they were done the young women went into the pot and Paddy put the lid on it. Then he said to his wife:—"Noreen won't be long blind. I'll get a cure for her without delay; but don't put any questions to me about it, for I cannot tell."

"'Tis joking with me you are," says the woman, "she was born blind."

"Wait till you see," says Paddy, and out with him and didn't stop till he came to the bush that was growing on his mother's grave. He found the thorn and he came home. He got hold of Nora, and put the thorn through the pimple, and she cried out:—"I see everything!" And her mother clasped her hands with joy and said to Paddy:—"Love and pulse of my heart, you are 'Tis you're the best man in the world."

With that he struck three blows on the lid of the little pot and said:—"Food and attendants!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the two women leaped out and laid the table before Paddy, and everything on it better than was on the King's table. Himself and his wife and Nora ate and drank enough, and when they were satisfied the young women put everything into the pot and went in themselves, and Paddy put the lid on the pot.

The report went abroad among the people that Paddy was rich and had everything he wished for. They were full of jealousy and said to each other that he had no right to live, and they had a strong design to kill him. But a friend was among them—Paddy's wife's brother—and he gave him warning. He put the whistle to his mouth and he blew it, and before long there came a whisper to his ear saying:—"Go out and get the herb that's in your garden at the foot of the wall. Eat some of it and give the rest to your wife and daughter to eat and every one of ye will have a man's strength for every hair that is on your heads. With the washing stick in the wall of your house you'll be able to beat all the people in the parish."

On the next morning the men and women of the parish came to kill Paddy. They cried out that he was a "Fairy-man" and a "Largadan," and said that if he didn't come out they'd burn the house over his head. Paddy came to the door and told them to go home, that he'd no harm to any of them. But nothing would satisfy them at all but to kill Paddy.

Paddy got hold of the washing-stick and his wife grasped a turf-spade and his daughter a hand-stick, and out with them. The people who were outside around the house attacked them, but before long Paddy put them to flight and he left half of them stretched on the ground, and from that day they never troubled him.

"Tis a true saying that 'women don't know how to keep a secret,' and that same saying came true now. Paddy's wife told another woman, and in that way the story went from mouth to mouth until it came to the landlord's ears. He came to Paddy and said:—"I heard you have a wonderful pot—would you sell it?"

Paddy showed him the little pot and then the landlord said to him:—"Show me the 'Food and attendants' pot."

Paddy struck three blows on the lid of the pot and said:—"Food and attendants!"

No sooner had he said the words than the two young women leaped out and laid the table with food and drink on it before Paddy and the lord.

"By my hand," said he, "that's a good pot; you ought to give me a loan of it for one day out, for there are gentlemen coming to visit me next week."

Paddy reflected on what he should do, and at last he said:—"The pot would not be any good if I was not with it."

"You can come, and welcome," said the landlord, "but be well prepared."

"I will," said Paddy, but he felt proud at being among the gentlemen.

On Monday morning he, at my house, and, on your soul, don't deceive me."

On the next day Paddy bought a new suit of clothes, and when he put them on he looked so comely that his wife and daughter hardly knew him.

On Monday morning he took the little pot with him and went to the lord's house. There was a great gathering of gentlemen before him. The lord brought Paddy and the little pot into a spacious chamber and said:—"Get food and drink ready until I see if there be sufficient to satisfy these gentlemen."

Paddy struck three blows on the lid of the pot and said, "Food, drink and attendants." On the spot six young women leaped out, laid a fine table and everything to eat and drink on it was better than another. The lord then invited the gentlemen and they walked in. They wondered when they saw the fine table

and all that was on it. They ate and drank enough, and not long until a heavy sleep came on them all, and when they awoke the roof of the house was gone and no account of it. The little pot, the whistle and the two purses of gold were gone from Paddy and he was as poor as ever he was. When he was in his drunken sleep a "Largadan" came and ran away with them all. And misfortune came upon Paddy because he did not keep the secret of his friend.—M. C., in Boston Pilot.

BEST FOR WASH DAY USE SURPRISE SOAP BEST FOR EVERY DAY.

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RELICS OF CHRIST SEEN.

Swaddling Clothes of the Infant Jesus Shown from Aix-la-Chapelle Cathedral.

The pilgrims who have recently returned to this country after a tour of the famous shrines in Europe were especially fortunate from the fact that their visit to Aix-la-Chapelle during the summer occurred in a year which is marked by the exposition of the great relics in the cathedrals there. The relics are to be seen only at intervals of seven years.

When Charlemagne had finished the building of the Church of Our Lady in Aix-la-Chapelle he set himself to the collecting of these relics. The occasion of their display is a fête in the city. The relics are shown amid most imposing ceremonies from a lofty balcony on the exterior of the church, to the left of the entrance.

The relics include the tunic of the Blessed Virgin, the swaddling clothes of the infant Jesus, the linen cloth upon which the body of St. John the Baptist was placed after the beheading and the linen cloth which was bound about the loins of Christ upon the cross. The tunic of the Virgin is yellowish in color, five feet and a half in length and three feet and a quarter in circumference.

The swaddling clothes of the Infant Jesus are folded thrice in double folds. Ribbons are the sole decorations, which border them in the fashion of a collar. They are brownish yellow, loosely woven. The linen of St. John the Baptist is one of fine texture, folded and bound with red ribbons. It is stained with blood. The linen cloth bound about Christ's loins upon the cross is of a heavy texture, folded and showing great blood stains. It is folded in triangular shape, having a length of four feet two and a half inches and a width of four feet and ten inches.

In addition to these there is a leathern girdle of Christ, which is sealed at the ends with the seal of the Emperor Constantine; a small piece of the cord with which Christ was bound during the flagellation; a circlet of the Virgin, a bit of the sponge which was offered to Christ on the cross, a fragment of the cross, a lock of hair from the head of St. Bartholomew, a bone of St. Zachary, the father of St. John the Baptist; two of St. Thomas the Apostle's teeth; one of the arms of the old Simon, another fragment of the cross, which was given to Charlemagne by Pope Leo III., and which he bore continually on his person.

In addition, there are a bone of the leg of the Emperor Charlemagne, a tooth of St. Catherine, the point of a nail with which Christ was attached to the cross, a bit of the rod which served in the mocking of Christ, a lock of hair from the head of St. John the Baptist; a bust in gilded silver of Charlemagne, in which is enclosed the Emperor's skull; in a reliquary shaped like an arm the right arm of Charlemagne, presented by Louis XI., King of France, in 1481; a link of the chain which bound St. Peter in the Rome prison; bones of Leo XIII. and many other lesser relics of saints.—The Republic.

THE NEW ENGLISH PENNY.

Ever since the bronze coinage was issued in England its design has remained the same. For thirty-five years the youthful bust has been reproduced on each successive coinage, although the Queen continued to grow old. In the meantime there have been two changes in the coin struck in the noble metal. That adopted in the jubilee year, which, on account of its ugliness, was discarded in 1892 and that which superseded it, with a more beautiful obverse. It is this obverse that has been adopted on the new penny, making the obverse of all the coins of Great Britain the same in design. The reverse is much the same as that of the old penny except that the figure Britannia is more spirited in execution, and the ship and lighthouse in the distance are wanting, which were ever present on the old to remind the true Briton that Britannia still rules the waves.

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