

# DRUNKEN THADY — (A LEGEND OF LIMERICK)

Before the famed year Ninety-eight,  
In blood stamp'd Ireland's wayward fate;  
When laws of death and transportation  
Were served, like banquets, thro' the nation  
But let it pass—the tale I dwell on  
Has nought to do with red Rebellion:

Altho' it was a glorious ruction,  
And nearly wrought our foes' destruction,  
There lived and died in Limerick City,  
A dame of fame—Oh! what a pity  
That dames of fame should live and die,  
And never learn for what, or why!  
Some say her maiden name was Brady,  
And others say she was a Grady;  
The d—l choke their contradictions!  
For truth is murder'd by their fictions,  
'Tis true she lived—'tis true she died,  
'Tis true she was a Bishop's bride,  
But for herself, 'tis little matter  
To whom she had been wife or daughter,  
Whether of Bradys or O'Gradys!  
She lived, like most ungodly ladies;  
Spending his Reverend Lordship's treasure,  
Chasing the world's evil pleasure;  
In love with suppers, cards, and balls,  
And luxurious sin of festive halls,  
Where flaming hearts, and flaming wine,  
Invite the passions all to dine.  
She died—her actions were recorded—  
Whether in Heaven or Hell rewarded  
We know not, but her time was given  
Without a thought of Hell or Heaven.  
Her days and night were spent in mirth—  
She made her genial Heaven of earth;  
And never dreamt, at balls and dinners,  
There is a Hell to punish sinners.  
How quick time throws his rapid measure  
Along the date of worldly pleasure?  
A beam of light, 'mid cloudy shadows,  
Flitting along the autumn meadows;  
A wave that glistens on the shore,  
Retires, and is beheld no more;  
A blast that stirs the yellow leaves  
Of fading woods, in autumn eves;  
A star's reflection on the tide,  
Which gathering shadows soon shall hide—  
Such and so transient, the condition  
Of earthly joys and man's ambition,  
Death steals behind the smile of joy,  
With weapon ready to destroy;  
And, tho' a hundred years were past,  
He's sure to have his prey at last,  
And, when the fated hour is ready,  
He cares not for a lord or lady:  
But lifts his gun, and snaps the trigger  
And shoots alike the king and beggar.  
And thus the heroine of our tale,  
He shot, as fowlers shoot a quail;  
And, mid the flash of pomp and splendor,  
He made her soul the world surrender.  
She join'd her father's awful forms  
'Mid rolling clouds and swelling storms;  
And, lest the Muse would be a liar,  
I'm led to think she went no higher.  
But now I have some secret notion,  
She did not like her new promotion:  
For if she did she would remain,  
And scorn to come to earth again.  
But earth, the home of her affection,  
Could not depart her recollection!  
So she return'd to flash and shine,  
But never more to dance or dine!  
The story of her resurrection  
Flew out in many a queer direction!  
Each night, she roam'd, with airy feet,  
From Thomond Bridge to Castle-street;  
And those that stay'd out past eleven,  
Would want a special guard from Heaven,  
To shield them, with a holy wand,  
From the mad terrors of her hand!  
She knock'd two drunken soldiers dead,  
Two more with batter'd foreheads fled;  
She broke the sentry-box in staves,  
And dashed the fragments in the waves!  
She slash'd the gunners, left and right,  
And put the garrison to flight!  
The devil, with all his faults and failings,  
Was far more quiet in his dealings,  
(Notwithstanding all that he lost),  
Than this unruly, rampant she-ghost!  
No pugilist in Limerick town,

And breaking doors your whole employment!  
That you—at every drunken caper—  
Made windows change their glass for paper!  
That, sure as closed each Sunday night in,  
You set near half the parish fighting!  
That, with your constant droughty quaffing,  
You broke Moll Dea and Biddy Lavin!  
And drove the two poor widows begging,  
For not a drop you left their keg in!  
If Satan stood, with his artillery,  
Full at the gates of Stein's Distillery;  
With Satan's self you'd stand a tussle  
To enter there and wet your whistle!

In vain the Priest reproved his doings—  
Even as the ivy holds the ruins—  
He caution'd, counsel'd, watch'd, and track'd him,  
But all in vain—at last he whack'd him;  
And with a blackthorn, highly seasoned,  
He urged the argument he'd reasoned.  
But Thady loved intoxication,  
And foil'd all hopes of reformation;  
He still rais'd rows and drank the whiskey,  
And roared just like the Bay of Biscay,  
In every grog-shop he was found,  
In every row he fought a round;  
The treadmill knew his step as well  
As e'er a bellman; new his bell;  
The jail received him forty times  
For midnight rows and drunken crimes;  
He flailed his wife and thump'd her brother,  
And burned the bed about his mother,  
Because they hid his fine steel pike  
Deep down in Paudh Molony's dike!  
The guard was called out to arrest him,  
Across the quarry loch they chased him;  
The night was dark, the path was narrow,  
Scarce giving room to one wheelbarrow;  
Thade knew the scanty passage well,  
But headlong his pursuers fell  
Into the stagnant, miry brook  
Like birds in birdlime sudden stuck.  
The neighbours said the devil steel'd him,  
For if the garrison assail'd him  
Inside King John's strong Castle-wall,  
He would escape unhurt from all!  
All day he drank "potheen" at Hayes's,  
And pitch'd the King and Law to blazes!  
He knocked his master on the floor,  
And kiss'd Miss Lizzy at the door!  
But ere his drunken pranks went further,  
The host and he had milla murder!  
The window panes he broke entire,  
The bottles flew about the fire;  
The liquor, on the hearth increasing,  
Caught fire and set the chimney blazing!  
The Reverend sage this deed admonish'd,  
The congregation stood astonish'd—  
He said that Thady was an agent  
Employ'd on earth by hell's black Regent!  
And if he would't soon reform,  
His place and pay would be more warm!  
His vital thread would soon be nick'd,  
And into Hades he'd be kick'd!  
Even there he would not be admitted,  
Except the Porter he outwitted!  
For, if he got inside the wall,  
Most likely, he'd out-devil 'em all!  
The people heard the sad assertion,  
And pray'd aloud for his conversion!  
While Thady in the public-house  
Was emptying kegs and "brewing" rows!  
For him the Priest prognosticated  
A woeful doom and end ill-fated!  
And truth hath rarely disappointed  
The sayings of the Lord's Anointed!  
But many a one in heaven takes dinner,  
Who died a saint and lived a sinner!  
'Twere better far, and safer surely,  
To live a saint and die one purely!  
All ye who're ready to condemn  
A fellow child of clay, like him!  
Try if yourselves need no repentance,  
Before you pass the bitter sentence!  
And ere you judge your brother, first  
Remember that ourselves are dust!  
But if your conscience tells you then  
That your own heart is free from sin—  
Cry, with the Pharisee, "Thank God!  
I am not like that wicked clod!"

But to our story of this queer boy  
Thady the drunken devil-may-care-boy!

Again the deal was Jack Fitzsimon's,  
He turned them up, and trumps were diamonds;

The ace was led by Billy Mara,  
An beat with five by Tom O'Hara;  
The queen was quickly laid by Thady!  
Jack threw the king and douced the lady!  
Bill jink'd the game and cried out, Waiter!  
Bring in the round, before 'tis later!  
The draughts came foaming from the barrel;  
The sport soon ended in a quarrel;—  
Jack flung a pint at Tom O'Hara,  
And Thady level'd Billy Mara;  
The cards flew round in every quarter,  
The earthen floor grew drunk with porter;  
The landlord ran to call the Watch,  
With oaths half Irish and half Scotch,  
The Watch came to the scene of battle,  
Proclaiming peace, with sounding wattle:  
The combatants were soon arrested,  
But Thady got off unmolested.

The night was stormy, cold and late,  
No human form was in the street;  
The virgin snow lay on the highways,  
And chok'd up alleys, lanes, and byeways.  
The North still pour'd its frigid store,  
The clouds look'd black and threaten'd more;  
The sky was starless, moonless, all  
Above the silent world's white pall,  
The driving sleet-shower hiss'd aloud—  
The distant forest roar'd and bow'd;  
But Thady felt no hail nor sleet,  
As home he reel'd through Castle-street.  
The whistling squall was beating on  
The batter'd towers of old King John,  
Which guarded once, in warlike state,  
The hostile pass of Thomond-gate,  
The blinding showers, like silvery balls,  
Rustled against the ancient walls,  
As if determined to subdue  
What William's guns had failed to do!  
Old Munchin's trees, from roots to heads,  
Were rocking in their churchyard beds;  
The hoary tombs were wrapt in snow,  
The angry Shannon roar'd below.  
Thade reel'd along, in slow rotation,  
The greatest man in Erin's nation;  
Now darting forward like a pike,  
With upraised fist in act to strike;  
Now wheeling backward, with the wind,  
And half to stand or fall inclined;  
Now sidelong, 'mid the pelting showers,  
He stumbled near the tall round towers;

With nodding head and zig-zag feet,  
He gained the centre of the street;  
And, giddy as a summer-midge,  
Went staggering towards old Thomond Bridge,  
Whose fourteen arches braved so clever,  
Six hundred years, the rapid river;  
And seem'd, in sooth, a noble picture  
Of ancient Irish architecture.

But here the startled Muse must linger,  
With tearful eye and pointed finger  
To that dark river once the bed  
Of Limerick's brave defenders dead—  
There half the glorious hope she cherished,  
In one sad hour, deluded, perish'd;  
The fatal draw-bridge open'd wide  
And gave the warriors to the tide;  
The flood received each foremost man,  
The rear still madly pressing on;  
Till all the glory of the brave  
Was buried in the whirling wave;  
And heroes' frames—a bloodless slaughter—  
Chok'd up the deep and struggling water.

Now Thady ne'er indulged a thought  
How Limerick's heroes fell or fought;  
This night he was in no position  
For scripture, history, or tradition.  
His thoughts were on the Bishop's Lady—  
The first tall arch he'd crossed already;  
He paused upon the haunted ground,  
The barrier of her midnight round.  
Along the Bridge-way, dark and narrow,  
He peer'd—while terror drove its arrow,  
Cold as the keen blast of October,  
Thro' all his frame and made him sober

And shoots alike the king and beggar,  
 And thus the heroine of our tale,  
 He shot, as fowlers shoot a quail;  
 And, mid the flash of pomp and splendor,  
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 'Mid rolling clouds and swelling storms;  
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 But never more to dance or dine!  
 The story of her resurrection  
 Flew out in many a queer direction!  
 Each night, she roam'd, with airy feet,  
 From Thomond Bridge to Castle-street;  
 And those that stay'd out past eleven,  
 Would want a special guard from Heaven,  
 To shield them, with a holy wand,  
 From the mad terrors of her hand!  
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 And dashed the fragments in the waves!  
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 And put the garrison to flight!  
 The devil, with all his faults and failings,  
 Was far more quiet in his dealings,  
 (Notwithstanding all that he lost),  
 Than this unruly, rampant she-ghost!  
 No pugilist in Limerick town,  
 Could knock a man so quickly down,  
 Or deal an active blow so ready  
 To floor one, as the Bishop's Lady!  
 And thus the ghost appeared and vanished,  
 Until her Ladyship was banish'd  
 By Father Power whom things of evil  
 Dread as mortals dread the devil!  
 Off to the Red Sea shore he drove her,  
 From which no tide nor time can move her,  
 From numbering sands upon the coast  
 That skirts the grave of Pharaoh's host!  
 A lady of her high-born station  
 Must have acquired great education  
 For such a clerkship—numbering sands,  
 With no account-book—save her hands!

But, ere the Priest removed the Lady,  
 There lived a "Boy" call'd "Drunken Thady!"  
 In Thomond-gate, of social joys,  
 The birth-place of the "Devil's Boys!"  
 Thady knew his country's history well,  
 And for her sake would go to hell!  
 For hours he'd sit and madly reason  
 Upon the honours of high treason!  
 What Bills the House had lately got in,  
 What Croppies nimbly danced on nothing!  
 And how the wily game of State  
 Was dealt and played in Ninety-eight!  
 How Wexford fought—how Ross was lost!  
 And all to Erin's bloody cost!  
 But had the powers of Munster 'risen,  
 Erin had England by the weasan'!  
 He told long tales about those play-boys,  
 Call'd Terry Alts and Peep-o'-day Boys  
 Who roused at night, the sleeping country,  
 And terrified the trembling gentry.

Now who dare say that Irish history  
 To Thady's breeding was a mystery?  
 Altho' the Parish Priest proclaim'd him,  
 And first of living devils named him!  
 In heart he was an Irish Lumper,  
 But all his glory was a bumper!  
 He believed in God, right firm and well,  
 But served no Heaven and feared no Hell!  
 A sermon on Hell's pains may start him!  
 It may convince but not convert him!  
 He knew his failing and his fault  
 Lay in the tempting drop of malt;  
 And every day his vice went further,  
 And, as he drank, his heart grew harder,  
 Ah, Thady! oft the Parish Priest  
 Call'd you a wicked drunken beast!  
 And said you were the devil's handle  
 Of brazen, bare-faced, public scandal!  
 An imp,—without the least contrition—  
 At whiskey, discord and sedition!  
 That drinking was your sole enjoyment,

The Reverend sage this deed admonish'd,  
 The congregation stood astonish'd—  
 He said that Thady was an agent  
 Employ'd on earth by hell's black Regent!  
 And if he would'nt soon reform,  
 His place and pay would be more warm!  
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 I am not like that wicked clod!"

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 'Twas Christmas Eve—the gale was high—  
 The snow-clouds swept along the sky;  
 The flaky drift was whirling down,  
 Like flying feathers thro' the town.  
 The tradesman chatted o'er his "drop,"  
 The Merchant closed his vacant shop  
 Where, all day long, the busy crowd  
 Bought Christmas fare, with tumult loud.  
 The Grocer scored the day's amounts,  
 The Butcher conn'd his fat accounts;  
 The Farmer left the noisy mart,  
 With heavy purse and lighten'd heart,  
 In every pane the Christmas light  
 Gave welcome to the holy night;  
 In every house the holly green  
 Around the wreathed walls was seen;  
 The Christmas blocks of oak entire,  
 Blazed, hiss'd and crackled in the fire;  
 And sounds of joy from every dwelling,  
 Upon the snowy blast came swelling.

The flying week, now past and gone,  
 Saw Thady earn two pounds one!  
 His good employer paid it down,  
 And warn'd him to refrain from town;  
 And banned the devilment of drinking,  
 But Thady scorned his sober thinking;  
 He fob'd the coin, with spirit light,  
 To home and master bade good-night,  
 And, like a pirate-frigate cruising,  
 Steer'd to the crowded City, boozing!

The sweet-toned bells of Mary's tower,  
 Proclaim'd the Saviour's natal hour!  
 And many an eye with pleasure glisten'd!  
 And many an ear with rapture listen'd!  
 The gather'd crowd of charm'd people  
 Dispersed from gazing at the steeple;  
 The homeward tread of parting feet,  
 Died on the echoes of the street;  
 For Johnny Connell, that dreaded man  
 With his wild-raking Garryowen clan,  
 Clear'd the streets and smash'd each lamp,  
 And made the watchmen all decamp!

At half-past one the town was silent,  
 Except a row rais'd in the Island,  
 Where Thady—~~forth~~ sober thinking—  
 With comrade boys sat gaily drinking!  
 A table with a pack of cards  
 Stood in the midst of four blackguards,  
 Who, with the bumper-draught elated  
 Dash'd down their trumps, and swore, and cheated!  
 Four pints, the fruits of their last game,  
 White-foaming to the table came;  
 They drank, and dealt the cards about,  
 And Thady brought "fifteen wheel out!"

With nodding head and zig-zag feet,  
 He gained the centre of the street;  
 And, giddy as a summer-midge,  
 Went staggering towards old Thomond Bridge,  
 Whose fourteen arches braved so clever,  
 Six hundred years, the rapid river;  
 And seem'd, in sooth, a noble picture  
 Of ancient Irish architecture.

But here the startled Muse must linger,  
 With tearful eye and pointed finger  
 To that dark river once the bed  
 Of Limerick's brave defenders dead—  
 There half the glorious hope she cherished,  
 In one sad hour, deluded, perish'd;  
 The fatal draw-bridge open'd wide  
 And gave the warriors to the tide;  
 The flood received each foremost man,  
 The rear still madly pressing on;  
 Till all the glory of the brave  
 Was buried in the whirling wave;  
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 For scripture, history, or tradition.  
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 The first tall arch he'd crossed already;  
 He paused upon the haunted ground,  
 The barrier of her midnight round,  
 Along the Bridge-way, dark and narrow,  
 He peer'd—while terror drove its arrow,  
 Cold as the keen blast of October,  
 Thro' all his frame and made him sober.  
 Awhile he stood in doubt suspended,  
 Still to push forward he intended;  
 When lo! just as his fears released him,  
 Up came the angry ghost and seized him!  
 Ah, Thady you are done!—Alas!  
 The Priest's prediction comes to pass—  
 If you escape this demon's clutch,  
 The devil himself is not your match!

He saw her face grim, large and pale,  
 Her red eyes sparkled through her veil!  
 Her scarlet cloak—half immaterial—  
 Flew wildly round her person aerial.  
 With oaths, he tried to grasp her form,  
 'Twere easier far to catch a storm;  
 Before his eyes she held him there,  
 His hands felt nothing more than air;  
 Her grasp press'd on him cold as steel;  
 He saw her form but could not feel;  
 He tried not, tho' his brain was dizzy,  
 To kiss her, as he kissed Miss Lizzy,  
 But pray'd to Heaven for help sincere—  
 The first time e'er he said a prayer.

'Twas vain—the Spirit, in her fury,  
 To do her work was in a hurry;  
 And, rising, with a whirlwind strength,  
 Hurl'd him o'er the battlement.  
 Splash went poor Thady in the torrent,  
 And roll'd along the rapid current,  
 Towards Curragour's mad-roaring Fall  
 The billows tost him, like a ball;  
 And who dare say, that saw him sinking,  
 But 'twas his last full round of drinking?  
 Yet, no—against the river's might  
 He made a long and gallant fight;  
 That stream in which he learned to swim,  
 Shall be no watery grave to him!  
 Near, and more near he heard the roar  
 Of rock-impeded Curragour,  
 Whose torrents, in their headlong sway,  
 Raged mad as lions for their prey!  
 Above the Fall he spied afloat  
 Some object like an anchored boat,  
 To this, with furious grasp, he clung,  
 And from the tide his limbs upswung.  
 Half-frozen in the stern he lay,  
 Until the holy light of day  
 Brought forth some kind assisting hand  
 To row poor Thady to the strand.  
 'Mid gazing crowds, he left the shore  
 Well sober'd, and got drunk no more!  
 And in the whole wide parish round,  
 A better Christian was not found;  
 He loved his God and served his neighbour,  
 And earn'd his bread by honest labour.