

The Ghost of the Old Spinner

By A. Le Braz

This took place at Kiribot, near Penvénan, in a two-storied house. I lived on the ground floor with my wife and children. Upstairs there lived an old spinner.

This old man died.

I was at that time, as I still am, a poor village tailor; only I was young and active, and was never in want of a job. Indeed, I generally had more work than I could get through. I often had to sit up half the night. My wife, who was a knitter, kept me company. The children were put to bed, and then we each took up our work.

One evening when we were sitting up thus, working in silence, my wife, Soëz, said to me, all at once, "Do you hear nothing?"

And she pointed to the ceiling above our heads. I listened.

It was for all the world as though the old weaver had returned and was beginning to turn his wheel upstairs in his former room. From time to time the sound ceased, as though one spindle was finished with, and the weaver was stopping to take another. Then the whirr would begin again.

"Charlo," entreated my wife, "do let us go to bed!" She was pale and frightened. "I have heard it said," she went on, "that it is not well to sit up after midnight on Saturday evening."

We went to bed, but we could not close our eyes, fear kept us awake, and not that only, for the weaver's wheel went on till early dawn. The next evening, being Sunday, work, of course, was out of the question. We went to bed almost as soon as the children, and that night our sleep was not disturbed.

But, on Monday night, on Tuesday night, and indeed on every night of the week, Saturday included, there was for ever in our ears the din and *whirr* of the wheel. It grew unbearable.

On Saturday night, as I was going to bed, I said to my wife, "This cannot go on. Tomorrow I shall go upstairs. I am determined to find out what it can be!"

I spent the afternoon in going to different inns and taverns, taking a pint at one, and a pint at another, to get up my courage, so that I came back to supper somewhat the worse of liquor.

My soup was waiting for me, kept hot on the fire. I took it quickly, and then said to my wife. "Light me a candle, Soëz, and I will go and see about the old spinner."

"Oh, no, Charlo. You will not really go up. It might bring us ill-luck!"

I am obstinate, especially after a few glasses of drink. I lighted the candle myself and went up the stairs, but I had not climbed above six steps when I remained rooted to the spot. There came a terrible wind from the upper storey, a cold, icy wind, which nearly blew me down.

In a moment I was sobered, and consequently all my courage evaporated.

I came down the stairs.

"This will be a lesson to you," said my wife.

You may believe me or disbelieve me, but I assure you that for a whole year we were obliged to resign ourselves to the noise of that wheel. And even when the year had

expired, our patience had not had any effect upon the dead man. Indeed we began to grow used to the annoyance. The *whirr* ceased to distress us as at first. Sometimes if it did not begin quite so early as usual, we were even a little anxious. We seemed to miss something.

I often used to say to Soëz, "It doesn't matter at all, so long as the old spinner doesn't wake the children."

But the children began to get bigger. One evening, one of them sprang up in its bed crying, "Mother, who is spinning?"

My wife rushed to him, and laid him down in bed again. "No one is spinning," she said.

I cried out from my work table, "It is the noise of sheep in the shed."

At last the child went to sleep again.

It now became evident that things could not continue thus. I went and looked up a son of the old spinner, who was a farmer in the neighbouring parish of Plonguiel.

"Look here," I said to him, "strange things are going on in our house. Your father comes back! He sits and weaves as of old in his room. It is my opinion that he stands in need of a Mass. If you do not get one said for him I will do so myself."

"I will see about it," he replied.

He went home with me, and he heard all that we had been so long hearing.

He was a good Christian man. At daybreak he went to the Presbytery of Penvénan, and made an offering of six francs for a Mass for his father's soul.

From that hour we lived in peace. And after that, I was never obliged to sit up after midnight on Saturday evening.

(Related by Charles Corre, a tailor at Penvénan, 1885.)