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Outside The Door Like The Mother Of St. Peter

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If there is no response when you ring the bell or knock at a door in the Azores, you have to stay "outside the door like the mother of St. Peter," they say. This is the story which tells why the mother of St. Peter had to stay outside:

The very stingiest woman in the whole city was St. Peter's mother. She was so stingy that she never gave away a single thing to a beggar. No matter if the beggar were old or sick or blind or crippled or even a mother with a babe in her arms, she always made the same reply, "I have nothing to give away."

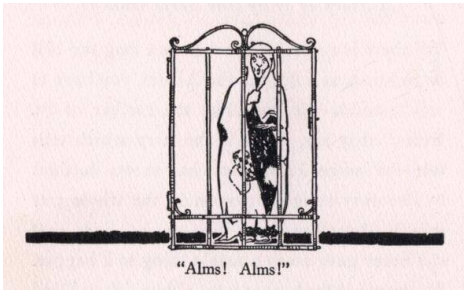
Not even when there was famine in the land, but plenty in her own home, would the mother of St. Peter share with the unfortunate.

When St. Peter was made the guardian of the keys of Heaven, of course he tried to bring his mother inside the celestial gate.

"When your mother lived upon the earth did she ever share her plenty with any of my poor unfortunate children?" was the question.

St. Peter thought hard. His mother had been a worthy, virtuous woman in many respects, but he could recall nothing which she had ever given to the poor and the unfortunate.

At last he remembered a day when she had gone into the garden to get vegetables for the soup.


"Alms! Alms!"

A poor beggar woman had stood outside the garden gate, crying: "Alms! Alms, for the love of God!"

"Get away from my garden," said St. Peter's mother. "I have no alms to give you. If I give away the vegetables from my garden, I'd soon have nothing left to feed my own family. I'd be begging myself."

The poor beggar woman started to turn away with tears in her eyes. An onion stalk fell from the hand of St. Peter's mother. It was bruised by its fall and

covered with mud, but the beggar seized it eagerly.

"Keep it. I wouldn't use it anyway," snapped St. Peter's mother.

St. Peter could remember nothing else to tell, so he related this story.

"Go and find the onion," was the comment.

When St. Peter at last found that onion stalk, it was still dirty with the mud of the garden and crumpled by its fall, just as it had been when his mother had given it to the beggar.

"Hold out the onion and pull your mother in," was the order.

St. Peter held out the onion stalk. It did not reach very far down into Purgatory, but his mother jumped up as high as she could and seized it eagerly.

Slowly and very carefully he pulled her up by it to the Heavenly Gate. Just as she was about to enter the door the onion stalk broke.

"I'm sorry. You'll have to stay outside," said St. Peter. "I've done the best I could for you. The onion stalk was not strong enough to pull you through."

Thus it happens that the mother of St. Peter has to stay outside the door of Heaven.

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