

Children's short stories

Children have always liked to tell and be told stories. Below are stories from Kerry, Limerick, Louth, Tipperary, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal. Within the Schools Manuscript Collection many of the children recorded stories about 'hidden treasure', fairy stories, ghost stories and folk tales as well as stories about the Banshee, and the Leipreachán. However they are not of the Hollywood variety, rather they are old Irish stories recounted to children by their parents and grandparents where the fairy is not always 'good' and the gorier the story the better as far as the children were concerned. A variety of these stories are provided below. Please note that the stories were written by boys and girls aged between 10 – 14 years of age nearly eighty years ago, so no grammar, spelling errors or colloquialism have been corrected or removed.

The Banshee and Fairies



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A banshee is a little woman about three or four feet high with fairly long golden hair. When anyone dies it cries under the window of the room. There is a story told about John Armitage who was in Errill bog when a banshee caught him up by the hair and he fell to the ground. At Castlefleming church-yard, a coach is supposed to rise out of the ground. First of all it over across a field, out through a yard near home, then it comes back and passes through Mr Mitchells yard at 12 o'clock in the night. About 100 years ago fairies used to come from the derries to the Lodge playing harps. If you danced they would keep you dancing for twenty four hours.

NFC Vol 480 pg 31 **Limerick**

Fairies- going to a fair

Once upon a time two men were going to a fair. One went into a house to light his pipe. He lit it. When he came out, the other man told him there was no house there. He said there was. While he was inside lighting his pipe the tongs and shovel began to dance. So he put a large furze bush outside the house in order he would know the house. When coming back he could see no house.

NFC Vol 480 pg 31 **Limerick**

Hidden Treasure

The Treasure is supposed to be hidden near Glin Old Castle. It was hidden by one of the former Knights of Glin. His castle was about to be besieged and he gathered his gold and valuable ornaments together. He wrapped them up in a horse hide and buried them near his residence. During the attack he himself was killed. People of Glin in some way heard of the treasure and made attempts to unearth it but in vain. The treasure is supposed to be values at about five or six thousand pounds. It is supposed to be guarded by a big bull-dog. NFC 481 pg 3 **Limerick**

Another story of 'Hidden Treasure'

This treasure is supposed to be buried in a field near The Old Castle. It is under an old root of a big oak. It was hidden by the constable in charge of the castle when it was besieged by Carew. The Knight of Glin was not at home. He was helping O'Neill and O'Donnell in the Nine Years' War. The constable knew that when Carew would take them prisoners with the castle he would find the riches of his master. He secretly slipped one man out of the back with the order to bury the treasure but if he was caught to dump it into the river afore it could be found again.

About 20 years after the famine two men went to find the wealth. The first night they went, after digging until they sweated they struck something hard. They danced for joy but they saw two dogs running towards them.

They took off running so fast as they could against the wind. One of their hats went in front of his face and a bit of it its wool went into his mouth and when he looked back he could see the gold and ornaments glittering in the darkness. On the second nights the same thing happened but on the third night they both chewed a bit of the wool of the hat they saw the treasure but they had not time to dig when the two dogs already mentioned appeared on each side of a black horse



afterwards recognized to be one of the horses that had died after a gun-shot would while fighting with the constable against Carew. You can imagine the fright they got when they were chased by two dogs and a horse. The treasure is gold and gold and silver ornaments. The diet (if you could call it a diet) is the wool of a cap. Those on guard over the treasure are two hounds and a horse. There was often a light seen there since. The treasure is valued at about twenty thousand

pounds nowadays but I suppose it was worth more then. No wonder it is worth putting a big guard over it. Some say that if the treasure is found it will not be found for a long time.

NFC 481 pg 8-10 **Limerick**

A Fairy Story

Once upon a time there was a man living in Lower Bavan (a townland in the Omeath district) called "Boot Mc Manus". One night he had to go over to the Essmore for a calf. As he was taking home the calf he met a band of fairies all of whom were mounted on horseback. They saluted Manus and asked to come for a ride. Manus said he would go if he had a horse to ride on. They told him to ride on the calf. So Manus got up on the calf and rode off with the fairies. They cautioned him not to speak. They rode on without stopping until they reached the Boyne river. Here they turned and came back the way they had come. When they reached the Essmore they all jumped across it and Manus said "Boys, that a great leap for a calf". No sooner had he said these words than he woke up and found himself in the field to which he had come to look for the calf. The calf was grazing peacefully at the other end of the field. NFC Vol 658 pg 105 **Louth**

Patchy, the ass and the Fairies

About fifty years ago "Patchy" (Paddy Traynor) came home from Omeath very late one night. He arrived home about two o'clock in the morning and as he was going to draw sods next day nothing would do him but to go to the mountain for his ass. His wife tried to persuade him to remain at home but he would not. So off he went to the Gearr drummin for the ass. When he arrived there he saw thousands of asses and mounted on every one was a fairy. They were all going round in rings and coming nearer to "Patchy" at every turn. "Patchy" was getting uneasy when he saw them coming so near. He was just going home when one of the asses jumped over him. When he looked he saw them all getting ready to jump over him so he ran home as hard as he could. When he arrived home he saw his own ass tethered in the field beside the house where he had left him the previous evening.

NFC Vol 658 pg 114 **Louth**



A Croc of Gold Fairy Story

Once upon a time there was a poor man and woman who lived in a wee house. One day there came an old man and he asked the woman of the house to make him some tea and the poor woman said I have got very little tea in the house and I cannot make you any. The man said if you would make it for me you will be lucky. The woman made the tea and when the man finished it he said there is a crock of gold in the garden at the side of a tree and the man of the house wet out to dig and came on the crock of gold. A few days after that an old woman came in, and asked for tea she got the tea and after she was finished she looked down at the crock of gold and there was writing on the crock. No one could understand the writing and the old woman said the writing on the crock said "Same in the other side" and the man went out to the garden and dug for a while he got the crock of Gold on the other side of the tree.

NFC Vol 1036 pg 1708 **Donegal**



Fairy story

This happened in my grandfather's time. In a small field in our farm there is a large rock. Under the rock there is a crevice. On one Summer's evening my grandfather was strolling around. He saw a lot of little men hurling a ball around the rock. He rambled over to see who were they. As he was going over towards them one of them struck the ball towards him and as it came nearer to him he recognised it as a man's skull. He picked it up and fired it towards them, one of them

hurled it in to the fissure of the rock and they all followed it. He often afterwards went to the field in the evening but never saw the fairies again. NFC Vol 547 pg 32 **Tipperary**

The Leipreachán

A lepreachan is to be found in a rath or fairy fort. He wears a red cap and cloak and shoes with the toes turned up. When passing a fairy fort after twelve o'clock at night the "click-click-click" of his hammer on the shoes, is to be heard. Shoe making is his only occupation. The people would not break a branch from the tree under which he works as some misfortune would befall them if they did so. It is said that if a person was able to catch the lepreachan and not let him go until he tells where a crock of gold is hidden, he would get one from him. The lepreachan has a cat protecting each pot of gold so that people are afraid to dig for it.

Years ago a man named Johny Tierney caught a lepreachan and got a crock of gold from him on condition that he never would interfere with the lepreachan's residence. Johny agreed with the Leipreachan but when he went home he discovered that it was withered leaves that were in the pot instead of gold. It is said that a lepreachan keeps house for the fairies and repairs shoes for them. A lepreachan is only the size of a man's hand. There is one old fairy fort situated in the townland of Loughross. It is guarded by brushes and is of a round shape. All the people living in the townland would not touch it because it is said that the hand would fall off them if they did so. Every year at Halloween there are lights to be seen round it and all the fairies are dancing round it.



NFC Vol 197 pg 455 **Leitrim**

The 'good people'

When I was a youngster, my Mother used often tell us and we sitting around the fire about the fairies, or "good people" as she used to call them. She called them the "good people" because



she, as well as everybody else, who spoke about them called them by this name, because they were afraid that if they did not name them, they might do them some harm.

She said that there were many places in the Parish, Barony of Carbury, Co Sligo where they lived. She did not tell me or any of the family where these places were. I think the reason was that she was afraid that we might go to them if we knew the exact positions. I remember her saying that one time some people were building a home and as stones were scarce they took some from an old "forth" on the land. That same night the people were kept awake by terrible shriekings and howlings around the house. The same thing occurred the next two nights. The stones were left back at the "forth" and the dreadful noises ceased. She also told us that if a person carried a black-handled knife in his pocket, the fairies could not harm him.

NFC Vol 155 pg 478-9 **Sligo**

Ghost Story

Some years ago a doctor from Dublin was visiting a friend in Beale. While walking along the beach one evening after upper he noticed far out in the water a very bright light which he took to be a flare ignited by fishermen. He watches the light come smoothly and steadily towards the spot where he was standing. When it touched the shore, it disappeared and a cloaked woman bearing a child in her arms now hurried across the sand in front of him and vanished in a moment. When the doctor returned to his friend's house he asked his friend to account for what he had seen. The friend told him that in 1834 there was a ship wrecked called the Taylus just at the point where the light had struck the shore and a woman and child had been cast dead on the beach. This ghost is not seen often but people of the district say it appears at the time of year the ship-wreck occurred.

NFC Vol 400 pg 150-1 **Kerry**

Hidden Treasure

A gold pig is supposed to be hidden in some hill in Tubrid. Long ago in the year 1730 a ship was seen from Bally-heigue castle in danger. Mr Crosbie who lived in the castle at that time did all in his power to bring the ship in safely. He put lights up on the castle to guide the crew safely into

Ballyheigue bay but their ship was wrecked which was loaded with gold. Mr Crosbie and his wife did all in their power to put the gold to safety and to keep the crew until the ship was mended. At the same time Mr Crosbie got sick. The doctor said he would die. The people who owned the ship thought they could get away with their treasure. Mrs Crosbie claimed a third of the treasure. They would not give it to her. She gathered all the people around the place. They fought the Danes and hunted them without the treasure. They divided it between themselves and gave a third of it to the woman. It is said that a pot of gold was hidden in Carraighlea quarry and is there yet.

NFC Vol 414 pg 75 Kerry

Ship wreck

Long ago a ship was lured into Ballyheigue. When the pirates from another ship got in among the rocks they fired shots at it and raided it. The treasures that the ship possessed of were; a golden sow, a litter of bonhams and a golden calf. The pirates from the strange ship sooner than give up the treasures ran away and buried the golden calf in Ballybroman glen. No one has ever tried to unearth them or any light has not been seen in the glen where it is buried. Many stories are told about people who dreamed of where gold is hidden. Next night they went digging for the gold. After a while a

very big bull came over to them. They did not stop digging for the gold and the bull vanished. Next came a shower and they had to go home. When they arrived home they found out that their clothes were covered with blood and what they thought was a shower of rain was a shower of blood.

NFC Vol 414 pg 69 Kerry



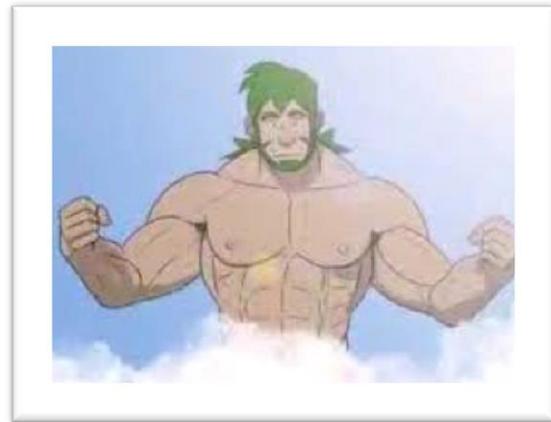
The Tailor and the Giants



Once there was a tailor sitting inside a window threading a needle. A robin flew up on the window sill outside. The tailor cast the needle and put it in on one eye and out the other. He turned to his mother and told her of the deed he had done. He also said he would go and ask a king for the job of minding a castle which was being knocked down every night after the day's work.

He went away and asked the king for the job which he got. The first night he went up a high oak tree that was growing over the castle first filling his pockets with stones. He waited up on the tree and saw three giants come along with big sledges. The first giant hit the wall and put stones all over the place. The tailor who was up on the tree dropped a stone and hit the giant on the

crown of the head. The giant turned to his brother and said "Stop 'crusting' me or if you do it again it will be worse for you". He hit the wall again as before and the tailor hit him. He got very vexed and killed his brother. Then he said to the brother that was left "We shall go home now and he won't be crusting me tomorrow night", so saying they went home.



The tailor came down and cut the head off the dead giant, took it to the king and got two hundred pounds for minding the castle that night. The next night he went up the tree again and waited until the two giants came. The same giant hit the wall and the tailor hit him on the head. He turned to his brother and said "I killed my other brother last night and it was you who was 'crusting' me. Do it again and I will kill you too". He hit the wall again and the tailor hit him on the head. He then got very angry and killed his other brother and went home. The tailor came down and cut the head off the dead giant and took the head to the king getting four hundred pounds. The third night came and the tailor was up on the tree as usual when the remaining giant came, hit the wall and the tailor hit him. He looked around and saw the tailor up on the tree. He knew then it was the tailor that was doing the harm. "Come down out of that" said the giant. "I will not" said the tailor. "I will climb up to you" said the giant. "Won't mind it" said the tailor. But the giant started to climb and the tailor hit him with one big stone on the temple and killed him dead. This was the end of the 'knocking of the castle' and the king gave six hundred pounds for his trouble.

NFC Vol 509 pg 231- 5 Limerick