



Yellow Lily

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Irish

Intermediate
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Once upon a time, when fairies were as plentiful as dandelions in the meadow, there dwelt in Ireland a mighty king and his good queen. The names of these great rulers have long since been forgotten by writers of history, for they lived hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

They ruled over Erin, and lived in a great stone castle built high upon a cliff overlooking the sea. Erin was the most beautiful part of Ireland, for its forests and great stretches of land were as green as the emerald, and its skies and waters were as blue as the turquoise.

This king and queen had but one child, who was known as the Prince of Erin. He was a bright, handsome boy, but he cared only to have a good time. His father had often told him how wrong it was for him to make bets, but the lad gave no heed to his advice.

One day the prince went out in the wood to hunt for deer. He tramped about all day long, carrying his bow and arrows, but no deer could he find. At last he sat down to rest.

He was almost asleep when he heard a shrill whistle behind him and the tramping of heavy feet upon the fallen timbers.

“Who are you?” cried a loud, gruff voice.

The prince turned quickly and saw a giant striding towards him down the hill. He was almost as tall as the

tallest tree, and his face was frightful to see. His eyes were like balls of fire and his nostrils belched forth black smoke.

“Woe is me; it is the Giant of Loch Lein!” cried the prince. He wanted to run away as fast as he could, but his feet would not move. He stood trembling in every limb, for he knew that the Giant of Loch Lein hunted in the wood for boys just as the boys hunted for game. Many a lad had been seized by the terrible creature, taken to his castle in the heart of the forest, and had never returned to his parents.

“Who are you?” again roared the giant.

“I am the son of the King of Erin,” replied the boy, trying to be brave.

“I have been waiting for you a long time,” said the giant with a laugh that sounded like a thunder clap. “I have never eaten a real prince, although I have heard that their meat is very tender.”

The prince turned away, weak with fright; but the giant seized him and said:

“Do not be frightened. As you are a son of the Ruler of Erin, I will give you a chance to escape. I understand that you can play fine games, and that you are fond of betting. Let us play a game on this hillside. If I win, I will take you to my castle, never to return to your home again.”

The prince was so fond of playing games that, even in his fright, he agreed to do as the giant wished.

“I have two fine estates, each containing a castle,” said the giant. “They are yours if you beat me at the game.”

“And I also have two estates which shall be yours, if you beat me,” replied the prince. “No man in Erin has ever beaten me at any game.”

So they played until dusk, the prince quite forgetting his fear of the giant. Although the Giant of Loch Lein was a skillful player, the Prince of Erin beat him badly.

“You may go,” grumbled the giant when the game was at an end. “You are surely a wonderful player—the best in all the land.”

Most of the old historians agree that the Prince of Erin did not tell his parents anything about his narrow escape from the giant. As soon as he reached home, he climbed to the top of the tallest tower where he could gaze at the forest in the distance, in which stood the castle of the giant.

“I will go again tomorrow and beat the giant, for it will be huge sport,” he said to himself. “Even if I be beaten, the giant dare not destroy the son of the King of Erin, for my father’s army will search for me and tear down the castle of the giant when I am found. Besides, I understand that he has three beautiful daughters, the fairest girls in all the land. I should like to see them.”

On the next morning, while the prince was preparing to go hunting, the wisest old man in the court, whose name was Glic, went to the king and said:

“The prince is about to go hunting. I beg you not to let him go, for I fear that some great danger will befall him.”

The king commanded his son to stay inside the palace all day; but when no one was looking, the prince stole away to the hillside near the forest. Again he heard a shrill whistle that shook the boughs of the trees like a gale, and in a few moments he saw the giant striding towards him.

“Ho, ho, my young prince!” cried the giant. “I knew that you would come back today. Let us have another game. What will you wager that you can beat me playing?”

“I will wager my herd of cattle,” said the prince, not so much frightened as before.

“And I will wager five hundred bullocks with gold horns and silver hoofs,” said the giant. “I am quite sure you cannot beat me again.”

“Agreed,” said the prince, and at once they began to play.

In a short time the prince won the game, and the giant set up a howl of rage. Turning towards the forest he whistled loudly three times, and five hundred bullocks with gold horns and silver hoofs came forth.

“They are yours,” said the giant. “Follow them to your palace gate and come again tomorrow.”

The prince, filled with the delight of triumph, followed the cattle to the palace gate where the king's herder took charge of them. Then he hastened to his father and mother and bade them go to see the costly wager he had won from the Giant of Loch Lein.

The king and queen and all the court were delighted with the cattle, whose gold horns and silver hoofs shone in the sunlight.

On the third morning the Prince of Erin again put on his hunting clothes and started to the forest; but Glic, the fortune teller, again stopped him.

"No good can come from this gaming, for the giant will beat you at last, and you will never return to us again," said Glic.

"I am not afraid," laughed the prince, "for if he take me prisoner, I will have his head."

So he set forth again, singing a merry tune. Hardly had he seated himself upon the hillside when he heard the giant's whistle. The prince was not at all frightened, although the giant scowled with anger because he had been obliged to give up his herd of cattle.

"What will you wager today?" roared the giant.

"I will wager my head against yours," said the prince boldly.

"Ha, ha! you have grown quite brave," laughed the giant mockingly. "I will wager my head that I can beat you today. If you lose the game, I will have your head before the sun rises to-morrow."

They played on the hillside till dusk. The game was a close one, full of breathless interest and excitement; but the prince was beaten. With a shout of triumph the giant danced about, trampling down small trees and bushes.

The prince was indeed sorry that he had wagered such a useful piece of property as his head, but he did not complain.

“You are an honest lad, even though you are rash,” he said presently. “I will let you live one year and one day longer. Go home to the palace, but do not tell anyone that I am to have your head. When the time has passed by, come back again to the hillside to pay your wager.”

Then the giant vanished, leaving the poor prince alone, very sick at heart. He did not go home but wandered about, not caring whither he went.

Finally he found that he was in a strange land far beyond the border line of Erin. On each side were green pasture lands, and in the distance were high green hills; but not a house could be seen.

He wandered on and on, weak from hunger till he came to an old hut that stood at the foot of a hill. It was lighted by a candle. He entered and came face to face with an old woman who had been bending over a fire. Her teeth were as long as the staff he carried and her scant hair hung loosely about her face.

Before the prince could speak, the old woman said:

“You are welcome in my house, son of the King of Erin.”

Then she took him by the hand, led him into a corner of the room, and told him to wash his face and hands. In the meantime she made him some hot porridge and bade him eat a hearty meal.

The prince was much surprised because she knew his name, and he wondered why she remained so quiet. He thought she must be a witch; but hungry boys, no matter how high their station, are apt to forget danger when a good supper is set before them. After he had eaten and drunk all he wanted, he sat by the fire until she took him to a bedroom and told him to go to bed.

On the next morning he was awakened by the witch, who bade him rise and eat his breakfast of bread and milk.

He did as he was told, without so much as bidding her good morning.

“I know what is bothering you, son of the King of Erin,” she said. “If you do as I bid you, you will have no cause for regret. Here is a ball of thread. Hold to one end of the thread and throw the ball before you. When you start on your journey the ball will roll; but you must keep following it and winding the thread all the time or you will be lost again. You were with me last night; you will be with my sister tonight.”

The prince took the ball of thread; threw it before him, and began walking slowly and winding the thread into

another ball. With each step that he took, the ball moved further and further away from him. All day long he trudged up hill and down dell, faster and faster, until his feet and hands were so tired he could scarcely move them. At last the ball of thread stopped at the door of a hut that stood at the foot of a high hill. A candle flickered in the window. He picked up the ball and ran to the door where he met another old witch whose teeth were as long as crutches.

“Welcome, son of the King of Erin!” she cried. “You were with my youngest sister last night; you will be with me tonight; and tomorrow you will be with my eldest sister.”

She took him into the hut, bade him wash his hands and face, gave him a hearty supper of porridge and cakes, and sent him to bed.

The next morning she called him to breakfast. When he had finished eating, she gave him a ball of thread and told him to follow it as before.

The prince followed it through field and over common, hurrying faster and faster every minute, until late on the following evening, when it stopped at the door of a hut that stood at the foot of a hill. A candle sputtered in the window as if to welcome him. A witch, more homely than the others, stood by the fire making porridge.

She greeted the prince as her sisters had done, bade him wash his face and hands, gave him his supper, and sent him to bed. On the following morning after breakfast she gave him a ball of thread and said:

“Son of the Prince of Erin, you have lost your head to the Giant of Loch Lein, who lives near by in a great castle surrounded by spikes. Some day you will lose your head to his daughter. Follow this ball of thread to the lake behind the castle. When you reach the lake at midday, the ball will be unwound. In a few minutes more the daughters of the cruel Giant of Loch Lein will come to the lake to bathe. Their names are Blue Lily, White Lily, and Yellow Lily. The latter is the wisest and most beautiful of the three. Steal her clothing and do not give it up until she promises to help you, for she is the only person in the world that can outwit the Giant of Loch Lein.”

The prince thanked the witch for her advice, and followed the ball of thread to the Castle of Spikes, which was a dark, gloomy building hidden from view by great trees. When he reached the lake behind the castle, the ball of thread vanished.

He stood for a time looking at the lake, which looked like a brilliant turquoise in the sunshine. Presently he heard girlish shouts of laughter. He concealed himself behind a clump of bushes where he could see without

being seen. Three beautiful girls came tripping down to the edge of the water, where they stopped to look all about them.

It was very easy for the prince to make out their names. The tallest one, who wore a gown of pale blue, had eyes as blue as the skies above; he knew that she must be Blue Lily.

One of them was so fair that she looked as though she were carved from marble; he was sure that she was White Lily. But Yellow Lily was small and slender, with hair that shone like gold in the sunlight. She was wonderfully graceful and beautiful.

Yellow Lily threw off her robe of spun gold and stood dressed in a bathing suit of the same material. With a joyous shout she leapt into the water, followed by her sisters.

The Prince of Erin darted forth from his hiding-place, and seized the robe of spun gold. Yellow Lily saw him and cried at the top of her voice:

“Give me back my golden robe. My father will kill me if I lose it. Please do not run away.”

“What will you give me for it?” asked the prince, moving slowly backward from the pool.

“Anything that you wish, for I am guarded by a fairy godmother who makes all things possible,” replied Yellow Lily.

“I have come to give myself up to your father, the Giant of Loch Lein, according to my promise,” said the prince. “I would ask you to have him set me free. Here is your gown.”

He laid the robe upon the grass and walked away up the hill towards the castle. In a few moments he was joined by Yellow Lily dressed in her golden robe.

“You are the son of the King of Erin,” she said smiling sweetly, and catching step with him. “If you do as I say, you will not lose your head; but in the future I hope that you will never become so foolish as to wager your head or any other trifle you may have.”

“I promise you that I will not,” said the prince, looking at her admiringly. “If your father had wagered your pretty golden head, I believe I could have beaten him at the game.”

Yellow Lily tossed her curls and laughed merrily, saying: “Father has a soft bed for you in a deep tank; but do

not worry, for I will help you.”

They passed in silence through the stone gates of the Castle of Spikes. The great stone courts, balconies, and battlements were quite deserted. Yellow Lily took the prince into the kitchen, which was the largest one he had ever seen. The floor was made of white cobblestones, and a brass caldron boiled over the flames in the great fireplace. Yellow Lily hid the prince behind a curtain in one corner of the room.

Presently the Giant of Loch Lein appeared and sank down into a chair before the fireplace. He began to sniff the air and finally roared:

“The son of the King of Erin is here! Fetch him hither, Yellow Lily.”

The girl did as she was bidden. The prince could not keep from trembling as he stood before the fierce giant, although he felt that Yellow Lily would keep her promise.

“You must be very tired,” roared the giant, so loudly that the dishes on the shelves rattled. “I have a nice soft bed for you.”

He seized the prince, carried him across the kitchen, opened a tank, and threw him in. Splash! The prince fell head-first into three feet of water.

What was still more terrible, the giant fastened down the lid of the tank. The prince feared the dark far more than he did the water, but he did not cry out. He stood shivering for more than an hour, wondering if Yellow Lily had forgotten him, and wishing that he was safe at home in his bed of silk and gold.

At last the lid was raised, and Yellow Lily peeped down at him, smiling roguishly.

“Shall I steal your clothes and run away, as you tried to do today?” she said softly.

“No, do not let me stay in this place. I will do anything you may want me to do,” pleaded the prince, with chattering teeth.

“Then climb out; put on these dry, warm clothes I have for you; and have some supper,” she said.

It did not take the prince long to get out of his soft bed. He found the giant sound asleep before the fireplace, snoring loud enough to drown the most terrible crash of thunder.

Yellow Lily spoke not a word, but gave the prince some dry clothing and told him to stay in the corner until she returned. Before long she came back with a tempting supper smoking upon a tray, and told him to eat. He was very hungry and ate very heartily. Then she took him to another corner of the room and raised a curtain that hung there.

He saw a soft, white bed and a table that held fresh water and towels. Yellow Lily wished him happy dreams and hastened away.

At break of day she returned and said excitedly:

“Awaken, Prince of Erin! Do not lose a moment or we are lost. Put on the clothes you wore yesterday and follow me.”

The prince rose and dressed himself as quickly as possible. Then he drew back the curtain that hid his bed, and followed the girl.

“When the chickens begin to cackle, father will awaken,” she whispered. “Leap back into the tank and I will shut down the lid.”

The prince hesitated.

“Do as I say, or we are both lost,” said the girl.

The prince jumped into the tank, and Yellow Lily closed the lid. The splash aroused the giant, who stretched his heavy limbs, rubbed his nose, and yawned. Then he opened his eyes, gazed all about him, strode across the room, opened the tank, and shouted:

“Good morning, Prince of Erin; how did you like your nice soft bed last night?”

“I never slept better, thank you,” truthfully answered the prince.

“Then climb out,” commanded the giant.

The prince obeyed.

“Since you have slept so soundly, you shall do some hard work to-day,” said the giant. “I will spare you your head if you will clean out my stables. They contain five hundred horses and they have not been cleaned for

seven hundred years. I am anxious to find my great-grandmother's slumber-pin which was lost somewhere in these stables. The poor old soul never slept a wink after losing it, so she died for want of sleep. I want the slumber-pin for my own use, as I am a very light sleeper."

"I will do my best to get the pin," said the prince, almost discouraged, for he had never so much as cleaned the tips of his boots.

"Here are two shovels, an old one and a new one," said the giant gruffly. "You may take your choice. Dig away until you find the slumber-pin. I shall expect it when I come home to-night."

The prince took the new shovel and followed the giant to the stables where hundreds of horses began to neigh, making a most deafening noise.

"Remember, Prince of Erin, I will either have the slumber-pin or your head," said the giant, as he walked away.

The prince set to work, but every time he threw a shovelful out of the window, two shovelfuls came flying in to take its place. At last, tired and discouraged, he sat down to rest.

At that moment Yellow Lily appeared, more beautiful than ever in another gown of gold and silver, with yellow flowers in her golden hair.

"What are you trying to do, Prince of Erin?" she asked, dimpling with laughter.

"I am trying to find your great-great-grandmother's slumber-pin," was the pitiful reply.

"You are a mighty prince and my father is a mighty giant, yet you are both foolish as all men are," she said.

"How do you suppose my great-great-grandmother could lose her slumber-pin in the stables? I have the slumber-pin myself; here it is. I put it in father's pocket last night so he could not wake up and catch us."

"What a useful girl you are!" cried the Prince, beside himself with joy and admiration.

All day long they visited until Yellow Lily said that she must go, for she heard her father's footsteps a league away, and he would be there in two minutes.

When the giant saw that the prince had found the slumber-pin, he was greatly surprised.

“Either my daughter, Yellow Lily, has aided you, or else it was the Evil Spirit,” he muttered.

Before the prince could reply, the giant picked him up, carried him back to the kitchen, and again threw him into the tank. Then he sat down by the fire, holding the slumber-pin. Soon he began to snore like a thousand locomotives.

Up went the lid of the tank, and Yellow Lily, sweet and smiling, shouted down at the top of her voice:

“Get up from your soft bed, Prince of Erin; eat the supper I have prepared, and talk as loudly as you wish, for father has gone to sleep holding great-great-grandmother’s slumber-pin.”

The evening they spent together was a merry one, and after Yellow Lily had joined her sisters in the watch-tower, the prince again slept in the soft bed in the corner of the kitchen. At dawn Yellow Lily again awakened him and told him to hurry back to the tank.

Up went the lid of the tank, and Yellow Lily sweet and smiling.

As soon as the lid was closed, Yellow Lily rushed to her father’s side, seized the slumber-pin, and threw it upon the floor. The giant gave a roar and fell sprawling upon the cobblestones.

“Who woke me up?” he growled, trying to gain his feet.

“I did, dear father,” said the girl meekly. “You would have slept forever had I not pulled the slumber-pin from your grasp. It is very late.”

“You are a good, trustworthy daughter,” said the giant. “I will get you something pretty.”

He went to the tank and commanded the prince to get out of his nice, soft bed.

“You have lain in bed so long, you must work still harder to-day,” he added. “My stables have not been thatched for many years, and I want you to do it to-day. They cover many acres, but if you finish them before dark I will spare you your head. They must be thatched with feathers, to be put on one at a time, and no two of them must be alike.”

The prince was again cast down, but he said that he would do his best.

“But where shall I find the birds?” he asked after a period of helpless silence.

“Where do you suppose? I hope you would not try to find them in the frog pond,” was the impatient answer.

“Here are two whistles, an old one and a new one. You may take your choice.”

“I’ll take the new one,” said the prince, and the giant gave him a whistle that looked as though it had never been used.

“Some day you will learn that old things are best,” said the giant scornfully.

When the giant had gone, the prince blew the whistle until his lips were puckered out of shape, but not a fowl came to his rescue. At last he sat down upon a rock, almost ready to cry.

But Yellow Lily came again, lovelier than ever in another yellow gown trimmed with the wings of dragon flies, and with pearls in her glorious hair.

“Why do you sit whistling instead of working?” she asked. “Poor prince, you must be hungry. Here is a little table set for two under this big tree. When things worry you, don’t give up. The man who keeps his appetite has no cause to despair.”

So they sat down and ate peacock tongues and frosted cakes and almonds and many other delicacies, and were happier than ever.

“But it is growing late, and the stable is still unthatched!” cried the prince, suddenly remembering his task as soon as his appetite was satisfied.

“Look behind you,” said the girl.

The prince, to his utter surprise, saw that the stables were thatched with downy bird feathers, no two of them alike.

“You are a wonder,” he said, grasping her hands in gratitude.

“Not at all,” she replied. “How could the birds work for you while you stood there blowing that terrible whistle? Birds would be as good friends to people as dogs are, if people did not frighten them so. But say no more. I hear father drinking at the spring two miles away, and he will be here in four minutes.”

She drew her skirts closely about her and with a sweet smile hastened into the castle.

“Who thatched that roof?” shouted the giant as soon as he arrived.

“My own strength did it,” said the prince humbly, feeling that he had not told a falsehood, for Yellow Lily was even more than strength to him.

The giant, instead of thanking him for his services, seized him again, and threw him headlong into the kitchen tank. Then he sat down by the fire. No sooner had his head begun to nod than Yellow Lily placed the slumber-pin over his nose to be sure that he could not wake up. Then she set the prince free, and they spent the evening as before, except that there was much more merriment.

On the following morning the giant opened the tank and ordered the prince to climb out.

“I have a task for you to do that even a prince cannot do,” he said. “I am sure that I shall have your head before night. Near the castle is a tree nine hundred feet high. It has but one branch and that is near the top. This branch contains a crow’s nest. In the nest is one egg. I want that egg for supper tonight. If you do not get it, you will be sorry.”

The giant took the prince to the tree, which rose like a great pillar of smooth glass, so slippery that not even an ant could crawl upon it without sliding off.

When the giant had gone, the prince tried a dozen times to climb to the top, but each time he slipped back to the earth quicker and harder than before. He was glad indeed when Yellow Lily came.

And now comes the bloodcurdling part of the tale that I would rather omit; but I must tell it all to you just as the dear little Irish children heard it centuries ago, or I should feel that I had marred this ancient bit of fairy folklore.

Yellow Lily, as usual, brought something to eat, and after they had eaten, she, for the first time, turned upon the prince a sorrowful face.

“I am sorry father gave you this task to do; but we must submit to what cannot be helped,” she said. “Alas! dear prince, you must kill me.”

“Kill you!” he cried in horror. “Never! I would rather lose my head a thousand times.”

“But, if you are careful, I shall come to life again,” persisted the girl. “My fairy godmother will care for me. You will find it easy to strip off my flesh, for you have only to say, ‘Yellow Lily of Loch Lein.’ Say it again and my bones will all separate. You will find that my bones will stick to this tree like little steps. On the ladder of bones you can climb to the top of the tree. Get the egg and climb down carefully, each time pulling one of my bones from the tree until you have reached the earth. Then pile the bones in a heap upon my flesh and say, ‘Come back, Yellow Lily of Loch Lein,’ and lo! I will be myself again. But be careful—be careful not to leave one of my bones on the tree.”

For a long time the prince refused to obey her request until Yellow Lily grew vexed and said:

“Then I will tell father that I have been helping you, and he will kill us both. Make haste, for the time is short.”

“Yellow Lily of Loch Lein!” shouted the prince, without looking at her. “Yellow Lily of Loch Lein!” he shouted again.

Then he looked down and saw at his feet a stack of little white bones. He gathered them up and, climbing slowly, made a little ladder by sticking them against the tree. He soon reached the crow’s nest, found the egg, placed it in his pocket, and climbed down again, plucking the bones from the tree as he went. Then he piled them upon the flesh and garments of the girl and, with tears in his eyes, shouted:

“Come back, Yellow Lily of Loch Lein.”

And immediately Yellow Lily stood before him, but no longer smiling.

“Wretch!” she cried. “You have made me a cripple for life! You are nothing but a careless boy after all.”

“Oh, what have I neglected to do?” cried the prince, sick with fear.

“There is one of my little toes still hanging to the tree. Oh, what an awkward creature a prince is!”

The prince on his knees begged her pardon, and finally Yellow Lily broke into her old, sweet smile and said:

“I am thankful it is no worse. What a sight I would be if you had forgotten my backbone!”

So they became merry and talkative again until it was time for the giant to arrive. Then Yellow Lily went to her tower and the prince took his stand at the castle gate holding the crow’s egg.

“You are certainly a magician!” gasped the giant when he saw the prince. “I cannot take your head, lest a worse fate befall me. Go home at once. Do not linger here a minute.”

The prince wanted to bid farewell to Yellow Lily, but of course, that was impossible, so he hastened home as fast as he could.

When he reached the Palace of Erin, the king, the queen, old Glic, and all the court ran out to greet him. Never before had there been such rejoicing there. For days they feasted and danced to melodious music, and a tournament was held in which the best archers in the kingdom tested their skill.

A year later, old Glic, who was always making trouble, told the king that it was time for the prince to marry some noble lady of great wealth. The prince would have liked to marry Yellow Lily, but the king said that he must choose a princess whose rank was equal to his own. In despair the prince told Glic to select him a wife soon or he would go roaming again and never return.

“I have found a suitable lady,” said Glic. “Her father is the King of Loch Lein, the kingdom that is next to ours. Her father is powerful, her family is famous, her wealth cannot be counted, and she is as beautiful as the Queen of the Fairies.”

“If she will have me, I will marry her,” said the prince, “but I will not seek her myself.”

The king sent Glic to the court of Loch Lein, bearing rich gifts and guarded by soldiers and attendants. In a few weeks he returned and told the King of Erin that the King of Loch Lein had consented to give the prince his daughter in marriage.

Preparations were at once made for a great wedding. All kinds of sports, several dances, and other amusements were to be enjoyed at court, and the royal families of many different kingdoms, even from the

isles of the sea, were to be present.

The prince himself finally grew much interested in getting ready for the great event. In fact he almost forgot about Yellow Lily and the help she had given him to save his head. Yet he bade his father invite the Giant of Loch Lein to be present at the feast to be given before the day of the wedding. It was also agreed to invite Blue Lily, White Lily, and Yellow Lily, and to treat them as princesses of the royal blood.

In time the King of Loch Lein, who was an aged man, arrived with his daughter and a shipful of attendants. The gatekeeper blew his bugle and the whole court of Erin ran out to greet them. The King and Princess of Loch Lein were taken into the reception hall where the Queen and Prince of Erin welcomed them.

The prince was much disappointed when he beheld the princess, and was very angry with Glic, for she was haughty and not at all pretty. She seemed to be more pleased with the costly furniture and tapestries than with the prince.

The day of the feast came at last. The table in the banquet hall was loaded with fruits and costly meats of all kinds to be served upon plates of solid gold. Every one appeared to be happy, especially old Glic, who was to receive a large sum of money for finding the prince a wife.

At the close of the feast, the King of Erin sang a ballad and the King of Loch Lein told a story. In those days the people were fond of deeds of magic, so the prince requested Glic to call the mighty Giant of Loch Lein, that he might perform some tricks.

In a few moments the giant entered the room, bowing sternly as the people clapped their hands and cheered. He did not look at the prince but bowed low to the two kings.

“Your Majesties,” he said, “it is my daughter who is the real magician. I know that she will be glad to entertain you for a short time. In fact she has consented to take my place.”

Just then Yellow Lily entered the room in a gown of gold that swept the floor. Her golden hair shone like the sun. No one present had ever seen such glorious hair nor such a beautiful face and form. All were too much amazed at her beauty and elegance to utter a word of welcome.

Yellow Lily sat down at the table and threw two grains of wheat into the air. They lit upon the table and turned into a male and a female pigeon. Immediately the former began to peck at his mate, almost driving her from

the table. To the surprise of all, the female pigeon shrieked:

“You didn’t treat me thus on the day I cleaned the stable for you and found the slumber-pin.”

Yellow Lily laid two grains of wheat before them, but the male pigeon greedily devoured them and continued to abuse his mate.

“You would not have done that to me the day I thatched the stables for you with the feathers of birds, and no two of them alike,” shrieked the female pigeon.

When some more wheat was laid before them, the male pigeon ate more greedily than before, and after he had eaten every grain he pushed his mate off the table. She fluttered to the floor screaming:

“You wouldn’t have done that the day you killed me and took my bones to make steps on the glass tree nine hundred feet high, to get the crow’s egg for the supper of the Giant of Loch Lein—and forgot my little toe, and made me lame for life!”

The Prince of Erin rose to his feet, red with shame, and turning to the King of Loch Lein, said:

“When I was younger I roamed about hunting and playing games. Once while away from home, I lost the key to a valuable chest. After a new key was made I found the old one. Which of the two keys should be kept, the old one or the new one?”

The King of Loch Lein looked puzzled, but he answered promptly:

“Keep the old one by all means, for it will fit better and you are more accustomed to it.”

“I thank you for your sound advice,” continued the prince with a smile. “Yellow Lily, the daughter of the Giant of Loch Lein, is the old key to my heart, and I will wed no other girl. Your daughter, the princess, is the new key that has never been tried. She is only my father’s guest, and no more; but she will be better for having attended my happy wedding in Erin.”

Great astonishment of both royal families and their guests when the prince took Yellow Lily by the hand and led her to a seat beside him. But when the musicians began to play a brilliant air, the palace re-echoed from tower to dungeon with joyous shouts of “Long live the Prince of Erin and his future bride, Yellow Lily of Loch Lein!”

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