

JACK

THE GIANT KILLER



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JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.



IN the reign of the famous King Arthur, there lived near the Land's End of England, in the county of Cornwall, a worthy farmer who had an only son named Jack. Jack was a boy of a bold temper; he took pleasure in hearing or reading stories of wizards, conjurors, giants, and fairies; and used to listen eagerly while his father talked of the brave knights of King Arthur's round table.

In those days there lived on St. Michael's Mount of Cornwall, which rises out of the sea at some distance from the mainland, a huge giant.

Jack therefore took a horn, a shovel, a pick-axe, and a dark lantern; and early in a long winter's evening, he swam to the mount. There he fell to work at once, and before morning, he had dug a pit twenty-two feet deep, and

almost as many broad. He covered it at the top with sticks and straw, and strewed some of the earth over them, to make it look just like solid ground. He then blew such a loud and long tantivy, that the giant awoke, and came towards Jack, roaring like thunder—"You saucy villain, you shall pay dearly for breaking my rest. I will broil you for my breakfast."

He had hardly spoken these words, when, advancing one step further, he tumbled headlong into the pit, and his fall shook the very mountain.



The giant now tried to rise, but Jack struck him a blow on the crown of the head with his pick-axe, which killed him at once.

A giant kept an enchanted castle in the midst of a lonely wood. As Jack was taking a journey to Wales, he passed through this wood, and sat down by the side of a pleasant fountain, and fell asleep. The giant came to the fountain for water, and found Jack there. He lifted him up, and laid him gently upon his shoulder; but as he passed through

the thicket, the rustling of the leaves waked Jack ; and he was sadly afraid when he found himself in the clutches of Blunderbore. The giant took him into a large room, where lay the hearts and limbs of persons that had been lately killed ; and he told Jack with a horrid grin, that men's hearts, eaten with pepper and vinegar, were his nicest food. He locked Jack up in that room, while he went to fetch another giant to enjoy a dinner of Jack's flesh with him.



"Now," thought Jack, "either my death or freedom is at hand." There were two strong cords in the room. Jack made a large noose with a slipknot at the end of both these, and as the giants were coming through the gates, he threw the ropes over their heads. He then made the other ends fast to a beam in the ceiling, and pulled with all his might till he had strangled them. Jack next took a bunch of keys from the pocket of Blunderbore, and went into the castle again. He found three ladies tied up by the hair of their heads, and almost starved to death. They told him that their husbands had been killed by the giants.

"Ladies," said Jack, I have put an end to the monster and his wicked brother, and I give you this castle and all the riches it contains."

Jack went further on his journey, and met King Arthur's only son, who was travelling into Wales to deliver a beautiful lady from the power of a magician. Jack saw the prince had no servants with him, and begged leave to attend him.



The prince gave his last penny to an old woman, and, turning to Jack, said, "How are we to get food for ourselves?" "Leave that to me, sir," said Jack, "I will provide for my prince." Night now came on. "Sir," said Jack, "be of good heart; two miles farther there lives a large giant whom I know well; he has three heads, and will fight 500 men. My lord, leave me to manage him and wait here till I return." Jack rode on to the gates of the castle, and gave a loud knock. The giant, with a voice like thunder, roared out, "Who is there?" Jack said "No one but your poor cousin Jack." "Well," said the giant, "what news, cousin Jack?" "Dear cousin," said Jack, "I have heavy news." "Pooh!" said the giant, "what

heavy news can come to me?" "Alas," said Jack, "here is the king's son coming with 2000 men to kill you, and to destroy the castle." "Oh, cousin Jack, this is heavy news indeed! But I have a large cellar underground, where I will hide myself, and you shall lock, bolt, and bar me in, and keep the keys till the king's son is gone."



When Jack had made the giant fast, he went back and fetched the prince, and they made themselves merry. He then let his uncle out, who asked Jack what he should give him as a reward for saving his castle. "I desire nothing," said Jack, "but the old coat and cap, with the old rusty sword and slippers, that are hanging at your bed's head." "You shall have them," said the giant, "for they are things of great use: the coat will keep you invisible, the cap will give you knowledge, the sword cut through any thing, and the shoes are of vast swiftness."

Jack resolved not to be idle for the future; taking with him his cap of knowledge, his sword of sharpness, his shoes of swiftness, and his invisible coat, he went along lofty mountains, and on the third day he came to a large forest.

He had hardly entered when he heard very dreadful shrieks, and saw a monstrous giant dragging along by their hair a handsome knight and his beautiful lady. Jack put on his invisible coat, under which he carried his sword of sharpness. When he came up to the giant, he made several strokes at him, and aiming with all his might, he cut off both the giant's legs; the trunk of his body tumbling to the ground, made the trees shake, and the earth itself tremble. Jack, setting his foot upon his neck, exclaimed, "Thou barbarous and savage wretch, behold I am come to execute upon thee the just reward for all thy crimes;" and immediately plunged his sword into the giant's body.



The knight and his lady returned Jack their hearty thanks for their deliverance, and invited him to their house. "No," said Jack, "I cannot be at ease till I find out the den that was this monster's habitation." The knight, hearing this, replied, "Noble stranger, it is too much to run a second hazard: this monster lived in a den under yon mountain, with a brother of his, more cruel than himself;

therefore let me persuade you to go with us, and desist from any further pursuit." "Nay," answered Jack, "if there be another, even if there were twenty, I would shed the last drop of blood in my body before one of them should escape my fury. When I have finished this task, I will come and pay my respects to you." He got on his horse, and went after the dead giant's brother.

Jack had not rode a mile, before he came in sight of the



mouth of the cavern ; and nigh the entrance of it he saw the other giant sitting on a block of timber, with a knotted iron club lying by his side.

The giant could not see him so Jack came quite close to him, and struck a blow at his head with his sword of sharpness, but missed his aim, and only cut off his nose. So he slipped nimbly behind him, and, jumping upon the block of timber, as the giant rose from it, he stabbed him in the back, when he dropped down dead.

Jack grew weary of an idle life, and set out again in search of new adventures. At the foot of a high mountain he knocked at the door of a very small house, and an old

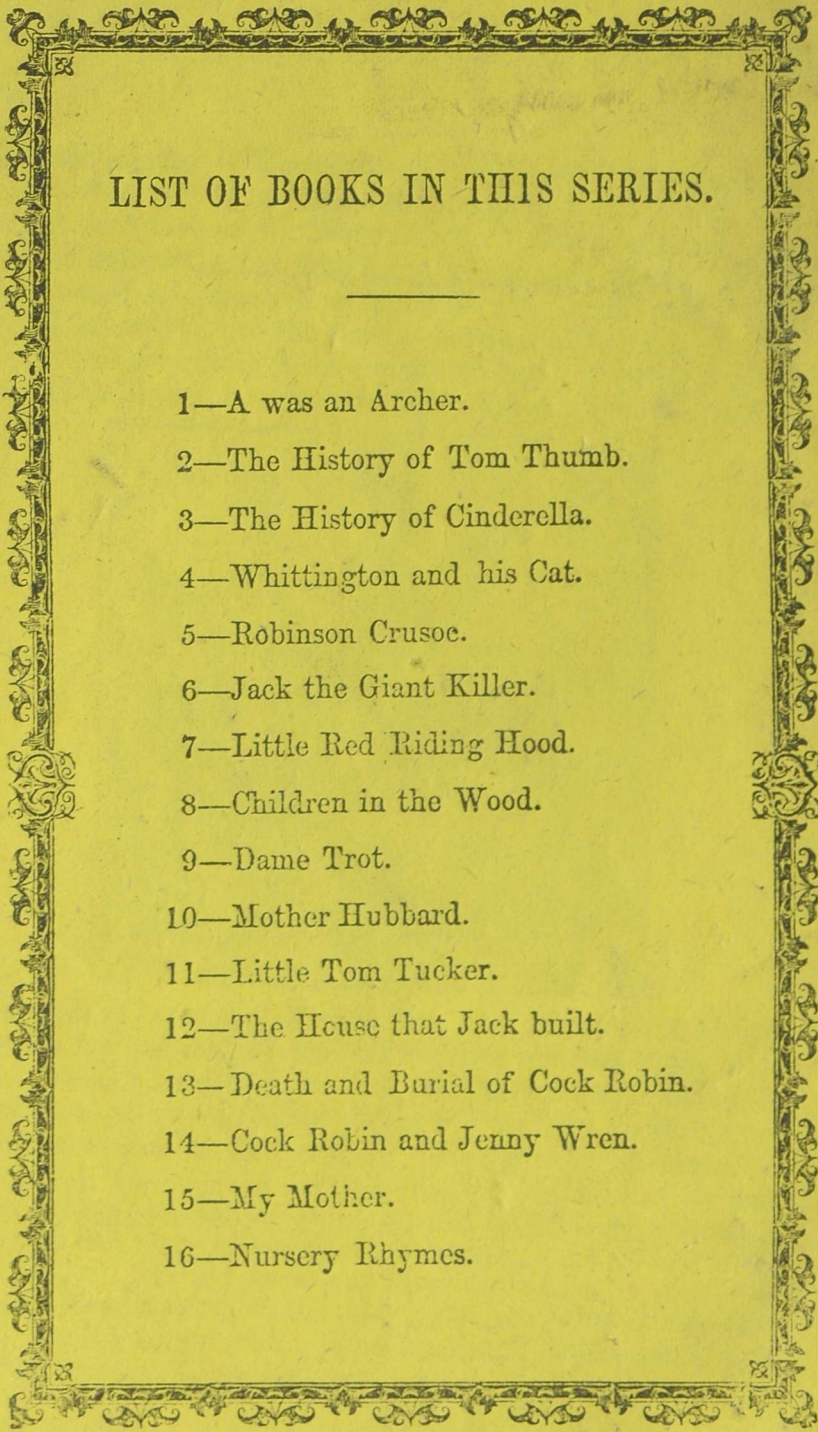
man let him in. "Good father," said Jack, "can you lodge a traveller?" "Yes," said the hermit, "I can, if you will accept such fare as my house affords." Jack entered, and the old man set before him some bread and meat. When Jack had eaten as much as he chose, the hermit said, "My son, I know you are the famous conqueror of giants: on the top of this mountain is an enchanted castle kept by a giant named Galligantus, who gets many knights into his castle.



Above all, I lament the hard fate of a duke's daughter, whom they had seized, and turned her into the shape of a deer. Many knights have tried to deliver her, yet none have been able to do it, by reason of two fiery griffins, who guard the gate of the castle." Jack put on his invisible coat, and, passing the fiery griffins, got to the castle-gate. On it he found a golden trumpet, and underneath written:

Whoever can this trumpet blow,
Shall cause the giant's overthrow.

Jack blew a shrill blast on the trumpet, which made the castle vanish like smoke. He soon killed Galligantus, and sent his head to King Arthur.



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