

WONDER-STORY
SERIES

JACK THE GIANT KILLER.



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JACK THE GIANT KILLER.



IN the days when King Arthur ruled in Britain, there were many giants in the land—huge, fierce monsters, who kept folks in constant terror. It was at this time that our hero, Jack, was born. He grew up a brave, fearless, little fellow; and before he was ten years old, he had made up his mind to gain a name for himself by ridding the land of some of the giants.

Of all those in Jack's part of the country, no giant was dreaded more than one named Cormoran, who dwelt on a hill called St. Michael's Mount, which rises out of the sea near the coast of Cornwall. He was so tall that when the tide was low, he could walk through the sea from his cave to Cornwall, and this he did quite often—never going back without carrying along some poor farmer's cattle or sheep.

Jack set his wits to work, and at last thought he had a plan by which he would be able to put an end to the misdeeds of this monster. He took, one evening, a pickaxe and shovel, a lantern, and a horn, and getting on a raft, paddled over to St. Michael's Mount. He went to work at once and dug a deep pit in front of the giant's cave. Next he placed sticks across the top of the pit, and on the sticks spread straw, while over the straw he strewed loose earth until all looked like solid ground.

By this time day had dawned; so Jack stepped back a short distance, and blew a loud blast upon his horn. It awaked Cormoran, who came out to see what it meant, and, when he beheld Jack, was in a great rage.

"You saucy little imp," said he, "just wait a moment, and I'll broil you for my breakfast."

With this he came running to catch Jack; but the pit was right in his way, and the instant he set foot on the earth covering it, the sticks broke, and down he crashed, into it.

"There, Mr. Cormoran," said Jack, "you see it is sometimes a bad thing to be in too much of a hurry for your breakfast."

At this the giant began to make frantic efforts to climb out, so Jack ran up with his pickaxe and gave him a blow on the head which killed him.



Jack returned home, and when the news spread of what he had done, the people were full of joy, and made a great hero of Jack, giving him the title of JACK THE GIANT KILLER; while the Duke of Cornwall made him a present of a sword and belt, upon which, in golden letters, were the words:—

"This is the gallant Cornish man
Who slew the Giant Cormoran."

But this only made Jack crave for more glory; so he started for Wales, where the number of giants was very great indeed. One day, as night fell, he came to a fine large house where he thought he would ask for lodgings. He knocked at the door, and was startled when a giant with two heads came to answer. The giant was civil, however, and asked Jack in, and gave him his supper and a

bed; but Jack did not trust him altogether, and made up his mind not to go to sleep. The giant seemed to have a habit of talking to himself—as would be natural to one having two heads—and presently he began to sing a kind of duet, some of which Jack was able to make out. First, one head sang, in a soft tenor voice:

"Although with me he stays this night,
He shall not see the morning light."

And then the other head growled, in a deep bass:

"For as he lies asleep in bed,
With my trusty club I'll smash his head."

"Oho!" said Jack, "that's your game, is it, Mr. Giant? Now for a plan to fool you."

Jack thought a moment, and then went to the fire-place, where he found a log of wood. He put this in his place in the bed, covered it up well, and then crawled under the bed.

In the middle of the night the giant stole into the room with a club in his hands. Drawing near the bed, he raised the club and gave the log of wood



CORMORAN FALLING IN THE PIT.



JACK SURPRISES THE TWO-HEADED GIANT.



a number of terrible whacks. Then, thinking Jack must surely be dead, he went away.

When Jack appeared in the morning, without a sign of hurt upon him, the giant could hardly believe his eyes.

"How did you sleep," he asked. "Did anything disturb you during the night?"

"O, at one time I thought I felt a rat switch me with his tail," said Jack, "but for the rest I slept very soundly."

The giant then went to get breakfast ready. While he was away Jack caught sight of a leather bag in a corner of the room. He thought of another

trick to play on the giant; so he put the bag under his coat, which was quite loose. The giant brought in two big bowls of porridge, to which he and Jack sat down. The giant took a spoon in each hand, and began to feed both mouths at once, which made his porridge go pretty fast; but not any faster than Jack's did, for he was stowing his away in the bag. The giant was so busy feeding that he did not take much notice of Jack until he had finished his bowl, when he looked up and was greatly surprised to find that the little fellow had emptied his also. While he was still wondering, Jack said:—

"Now I'll show you something strange. I can cut off my head or legs, or any other part of my body, and put them on again as good as ever. Just see this for instance." And he took a knife and cut the bag, so that all the porridge tumbled out on the floor.

The giant's conceit had already been very much hurt at being outdone by such a little chap as Jack, and now he lost his wits completely. "Odds splutter my nails," said he, "I can do that myself." So he took the knife, and stuck it in where his porridge was,—and dropped dead on the floor.

Jack continued his journey, and fell in before long with the son of King Arthur, who had come into Wales to deliver a lovely lady from a magician who held her captive. Jack offered his services, and the prince was glad, of course, to accept them.

They came to the castle of a giant who had three heads, and by his own account could whip five hundred men. Jack told the prince to stay behind while he went to ask for lodging. He knocked loudly, and the giant roared: "Who is there?" "Only your cousin Jack come with news," was the reply.

The giant, as Jack happened to know, had so many cousins that he could

not keep track of them, so he said: "Well, what news, cousin Jack?" "Dreadful news, dear cousin," said Jack. "King Arthur is coming with two thousand men to kill you."

The giant was really an awful coward; and, if he did have three heads, was not gifted with very much brains. When he heard this news he trembled so that his heads began to knock one another very hard, at which Jack could scarcely help laughing in his face—I should say in his faces.

"Oh dear! Oh dear! What shall I do?" said the giant. "I'll go and hide in the cellar until they are gone. Here are my keys, cousin. Lock me in, and let me know when it is safe to come out."

So off he went to hide, and Jack, after he had locked him up, let the prince in. They stayed all night, and in the morning Jack opened the giant's treasure-room, and helped the prince to a good share of the treasure, after which he started him on his way. Then he went and told his "cousin" that the coast was clear, and took great credit to himself for helping him to escape. The giant was very grateful, and told Jack that he would give him something precious for a reward. He brought forth a coat, a sword, and a pair of shoes, and said: "When you put on the coat no one can see you, the sword will cut through anything, and with the shoes you can run with the speed of the wind."

With the help of these useful articles, Jack and the prince soon found the magician, and overcame him, and set the lady free. The prince led her to his father's court, where he married her; while Jack, for his gallantry, was made a Knight of the Round Table, an honor which was conferred only on the very bravest.

But Jack would not be idle while there were any giants left; so he soon set out once more to do battle against them. One day, as he passed through a wood, he saw a giant dragging a knight and a handsome lady along by their hair. Jack put on his magic coat of darkness, and drawing his sword of sharpness, thrust it into the giant's leg, and gave him such a wound that he fell to the ground, upon which Jack cut his great ugly head off.





JACK BRINGS NEWS TO THE THREE-HEADED GIANT.



TAKING THE GIANTS' HEADS TO KING ARTHUR.



his brother's, to the king, in a wagon—and a good big wagon-load they made.

Then Jack went to the castle of the knight and the lady. While he was there the news came that Thundel, a savage giant, and a cousin of the two others, was coming to avenge their deaths. Everyone except Jack was filled with terror. He assured them that he would dispose of Thundel, and gave orders that the drawbridge over the moat around the castle should be sawn nearly through, so that it would barely stand, and that a rope with a loop at the end should be made ready. Then, after putting on his shoes of swift-ness, he went out to meet the giant. As soon as he came within hearing, Jack began to taunt him, and when the giant started in chase, he ran back to the castle and over the drawbridge, which remained strong enough to support his light weight. But when the giant followed, it crashed beneath him, and down he went into the water. As soon as his head bobbed up, Jack threw the loop of the rope over it, and drew him to the bank and cut his head off.

After spending a few days with the knight and his lady, Jack set out again. He met with an old hermit who told him of a giant named Galligantus, who lived on a hill near by, and whose destruction would be a task worthy of him.

The knight and his lady invited Jack to their castle, but he said that before he went he wished to see the giant's den.

"O, do not go near it!" said the lady. "He has a brother there fiercer and stronger than himself."

But this only made Jack more determined to go. He found the cave easily enough, for the giant was sitting at the mouth of it, with a great spiked club in his hands. Jack ran up and gave him a stab with his sword. The giant could see nobody, but began laying blows all about with his club. Jack easily kept out of the way, and, meanwhile, continued slashing him with his sword until he killed him. Then he cut off his head, and sent it, along with

"He is a magician," said he, "and always goes about with a great owl on his shoulder. He has an enchanted castle, in which he holds captive a number of knights and ladies, whom, by his magic, he has turned into beasts. The means of breaking the enchantment is engraved on the inner doorway of the castle, and may be read by anybody who can pass the outer gates; but these are guarded by two griffins who dart fire from their mouths, and have destroyed all the brave knights who have yet tried to enter. But with your coat of darkness you can safely pass them, and once in, you will easily manage the rest.

Jack promised to do his best, and started the next morning for the top of the mountain. There he saw the two fiery griffins, but as he had on his magical coat he passed between them unhurt. Then he came to the inner doorway, where hung a golden trumpet under which was written:

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

Jack seized it and blew with all his might. It rang out loud and clear, and the doors flew open with a crash. The giant ran trembling to hide when he heard the trumpet, knowing that his enchantments would no longer avail him, but Jack found him, and with his sword of sharpness quickly put an end to him. The captives were all changed back to their own shapes when the trumpet sounded, and now Jack went through the castle and set them free. Among them there was a beautiful young lady, the daughter of a duke, and Jack thought he would see her safely to her father's castle. Upon the way, he fell deeply in love with her; and finding that she returned his affection, he asked her father's consent to their marriage, and it was given. King Arthur, for his great services, made him a baron, and gave him estates and a castle, in which he and his fair wife lived long in content and happiness.



