

The Giant's Heart

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There was once a giant who lived on the borders of Giantland where it touched on the country of common people.

Everything in Giantland was so big that the common people saw only a mass of awful mountains and clouds; and no living man had ever come from it, as far as anybody knew, to tell what he had seen in it.

Somewhere near these borders, on the other side, by the edge of a great forest, lived a labourer with his wife and a great many children. One day Tricksey-Wee, as they called her, teased her brother Buffy-Bob, till he could not bear it any longer, and gave her a box on the ear. Tricksey-Wee cried; and Buffy-Bob was so sorry and so ashamed of himself that he cried too, and ran off into the wood. He was so long gone that Tricksey-Wee began to be frightened, for she was very fond of her brother; and she was so distressed that she had first teased him and then cried, that at last she ran into the wood to look for him, though there was more chance of losing herself than of finding him. And, indeed, so it seemed likely to turn out; for, running on without looking, she at length found herself in a valley she knew nothing about. And no wonder; for what she thought was a valley with round, rocky sides, was no other than the space between two of the roots of a great tree that grew on the borders of Giantland. She climbed over the side of it, and went towards what she took for a black, round-topped mountain, far away; but which she soon discovered to be close to her, and to be a hollow place so great that she could not tell what it was hollowed out of. Staring at it, she found that it was a doorway; and going nearer and staring harder, she saw the door, far in, with a knocker of iron upon it, a great many yards above her head, and as large as the anchor of a big ship. Now, nobody had ever been unkind to Tricksey-Wee, and therefore she was not afraid of anybody. For Buffy-Bob's box on the ear she did not think worth considering. So spying a little hole at the bottom of the door which had been nibbled by some giant mouse, she crept through it, and found herself in an enormous hall. She could not have seen the other end of it at all, except for the great fire that was burning there, diminished to a spark in the distance. Towards this fire she ran as fast as she could, and was not far from it when something fell before her with a great clatter, over which she tumbled, and went rolling on the floor. She was not much hurt however, and got up in a moment. Then she saw that what she had fallen over was not unlike a great iron bucket. When she examined it more closely, she discovered that it was a thimble; and looking up to see who had dropped it, beheld a huge face, with spectacles as big as the round windows in a church, bending over her, and looking everywhere for the thimble. Tricksey-Wee immediately laid hold of it in both her arms, and lifted it about an inch nearer to the nose of the peering giantess. This movement made the old lady see where it was, and, her finger popping into it, it vanished from the eyes of Tricksey-Wee, buried in the folds of a white stocking like a cloud in the sky, which Mrs. Giant

was busy darning. For it was Saturday night, and her husband would wear nothing but white stockings on Sunday. To be sure he did eat little children, but only *very* little ones; and if ever it crossed his mind that it was wrong to do so, he always said to himself that he wore whiter stockings on Sunday than any other giant in all Giantland.

At the same instant Tricksey-Wee heard a sound like the wind in a tree full of leaves, and could not think what it could be; till, looking up, she found that it was the giantess whispering to her; and when she tried very hard she could hear what she said well enough.

“Run away, dear little girl,” she said, “as fast as you can; for my husband will be home in a few minutes.”

“But I’ve never been naughty to your husband,” said Tricksey-Wee, looking up in the giantess’s face.

“That doesn’t matter. You had better go. He is fond of little children, particularly little girls.”

“Oh, then he won’t hurt me.”

“I am not sure of that. He is so fond of them that he eats them up; and I am afraid he couldn’t help hurting you a little. He’s a very good man though.”

“Oh! then—” began Tricksey-Wee, feeling rather frightened; but before she could finish her sentence she heard the sound of footsteps very far apart and very heavy. The next moment, who should come running towards her, full speed, and as pale as death, but Buffy-Bob. She held out her arms, and he ran into them. But when she tried to kiss him, she only kissed the back of his head; for his white face and round eyes were turned to the door.

“Run, children; run and hide!” said the giantess.

“Come, Buffy,” said Tricksey; “yonder’s a great brake; we’ll hide in it.”

The brake was a big broom; and they had just got into the bristles of it when they heard the door open with a sound of thunder, and in stalked the giant. You would have thought you saw the whole earth through the door when he opened it, so wide was it; and when he closed it, it was like nightfall.

“Where is that little boy?” he cried, with a voice like the bellowing of a cannon. “He looked a very nice boy indeed. I am almost sure he crept through the mousehole at the bottom of the door. Where is he, my dear?”

"I don't know," answered the giantess.

"But you know it is wicked to tell lies; don't you, my dear?" retorted the giant.

"Now, you ridiculous old Thunderthump!" said his wife, with a smile as broad as the sea in the sun, "how can I mend your white stockings and look after little boys? You have got plenty to last you over Sunday, I am sure. Just look what good little boys they are!"

Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob peered through the bristles, and discovered a row of little boys, about a dozen, with very fat faces and goggle eyes, sitting before the fire, and looking stupidly into it. Thunderthump intended the most of these for pickling, and was feeding them well before salting them. Now and then, however, he could not keep his teeth off them, and would eat one by the bye, without salt.

He strode up to the wretched children. Now, what made them very wretched indeed was, that they knew if they could only keep from eating, and grow thin, the giant would dislike them, and turn them out to find their way home; but notwithstanding this, so greedy were they, that they ate as much as ever they could hold. The giantess, who fed them, comforted herself with thinking that they were not real boys and girls, but only little pigs pretending to be boys and girls.

"Now tell me the truth," cried the giant, bending his face down over them. They shook with terror, and every one hoped it was somebody else the giant liked best. "Where is the little boy that ran into the hall just now? Whoever tells me a lie shall be instantly boiled."

"He's in the broom," cried one dough-faced boy. "He's in there, and a little girl with him."

"The naughty children," cried the giant, "to hide from *me*!" And he made a stride towards the broom.

"Catch hold of the bristles, Bobby. Get right into a tuft, and hold on," cried Tricksey-Wee, just in time.

The giant caught up the broom, and seeing nothing under it, set it down again with a force that threw them both on the floor. He then made two strides to the boys, caught the dough-faced one by the neck, took the lid off a great pot that was boiling on the fire, popped him in as if he had been a trussed chicken, put the lid on again, and saying, "There, boys! See what comes of lying!" asked no more questions; for, as he always kept his word, he was afraid he might have to do the same to them all; and he did not like boiled boys. He like to eat them crisp, as radishes, whether forked or not, ought to be eaten. He then sat down, and asked his wife if his supper was ready. She looked into the pot, and throwing the boy out with the ladle, as if he had been a black beetle that had tumbled in and had had the worst of it,

answered that she thought it was. Whereupon he rose to help her; and taking the pot from the fire, poured the whole contents, bubbling and splashing, into a dish like a vat. Then they sat down to supper. The children in the broom could not see what they had; but it seemed to agree with them, for the giant talked like thunder, and the giantess answered like the sea, and they grew chattier and chattier. At length the giant said,—

“I don’t feel quite comfortable about that heart of mine.” And as he spoke, instead of laying his hand on his bosom, he waved it away towards the corner where the children were peeping from the broom-bristles, like frightened little mice.

“Well, you know, my darling Thunderthump,” answered his wife, “I always thought it ought to be nearer home. But you know best, of course.”

“Ha! ha! You don’t know where it is, wife. I moved it a month ago.”

“What a man you are, Thunderthump! You trust any creature alive rather than your wife.”

Here the giantess gave a sob which sounded exactly like a wave going flop into the mouth of a cave up to the roof.

“Where have you got it now?” she resumed, checking her emotion.

“Well, Doodlem, I don’t mind telling *you*,” answered the giant, soothingly. “The great she-eagle has got it for a nest egg. She sits on it night and day, and thinks she will bring the greatest eagle out of it that ever sharpened his beak on the rocks of Mount Skycrack. I can warrant no one else will touch it while she has got it. But she is rather capricious, and I confess I am not easy about it; for the least scratch of one of her claws would do for me at once. And she *has* claws.”

I refer anyone who doubts this part of my story to certain chronicles of Giantland preserved among the Celtic nations. It was quite a common thing for a giant to put his heart out to nurse, because he did not like the trouble and responsibility of doing it himself; although I must confess it was a dangerous sort of plan to take, especially with such a delicate viscus as the heart.

All this time Buffy-Bob and Tricksey-Wee were listening with long ears.

“Oh!” thought Tricksey-Wee, “if I could but find the giant’s cruel heart, wouldn’t I give it a squeeze!”

The giant and giantess went on talking for a long time. The giantess kept advising the giant to hide his heart somewhere in the house; but he seemed afraid of the advantage it would

give her over him.

“You could hide it at the bottom of the flour-barrel,” said she.

“That would make me feel chokey,” answered he.

“Well, in the coal-cellar. Or in the dust-hole—that’s the place! No one would think of looking for your heart in the dust-hole.”

“Worse and worse!” cried the giant.

“Well, the water-butt,” suggested she.

“No, no; it would grow spongy there,” said he.

“Well, what *will* you do with it?”

“I will leave it a month longer where it is, and then I will give it to the Queen of the Kangaroos, and she will carry it in her pouch for me. It is best to change its place, you know, lest my enemies should scent it out. But, dear Doodlem, it’s a fretting care to have a heart of one’s own to look after. The responsibility is too much for me. If it were not for a bite of a radish now and then, I never could bear it.”

Here the giant looked lovingly towards the row of little boys by the fire, all of whom were nodding, or asleep on the floor.

“Why don’t you trust it to me, dear Thunderthump?” said his wife. “I would take the best possible care of it.”

“I don’t doubt it, my love. But the responsibility would be too much for *you*. You would no longer be my darling, light-hearted, airy, laughing Doodlem. It would transform you into a heavy, oppressed woman, weary of life—as I am.”

The giant closed his eyes and pretended to go to sleep. His wife got his stockings, and went on with her darning. Soon the giant’s pretence became reality, and the giantess began to nod over her work.

“Now, Buffy,” whispered Tricksey-Wee, “now’s our time. I think it’s moonlight, and we had better be off. There’s a door with a hole for the cat just behind us.”

“All right,” said Bob; “I’m ready.”

So they got out of the broom-brake and crept to the door. But to their great disappointment, when they got through it, they found themselves in a sort of shed. It was full of tubs and things, and, though it was built of wood only, they could not find a crack.

“Let us try this hole,” said Tricksey; for the giant and giantess were sleeping behind them, and they dared not go back.

“All right,” said Bob.

He seldom said anything else than *All right*.

Now this hole was in a mound that came in through the wall of the shed, and went along the floor for some distance. They crawled into it, and found it very dark. But groping their way along, they soon came to a small crack, through which they saw grass, pale in the moonshine. As they crept on, they found the hole began to get wider and lead upwards.

“What is that noise of rushing?” said Buffy-Bob.

“I can’t tell,” replied Tricksey; “for, you see, I don’t know what we are in.”

The fact was, they were creeping along a channel in the heart of a giant tree; and the noise they heard was the noise of the sap rushing along in its wooden pipes. When they laid their ears to the wall, they heard it gurgling along with a pleasant noise.

“It sounds kind and good,” said Tricksey. “It is water running. Now it must be running from somewhere to somewhere. I think we had better go on, and we shall come somewhere.”

It was now rather difficult to go on, for they had to climb as if they were climbing a hill; and now the passage was wide. Nearly worn out, they saw light overhead at last, and creeping through a crack into the open air, found themselves on the fork of a huge tree. A great, broad, uneven space lay around them, out of which spread boughs in every direction, the smallest of them as big as the biggest tree in the country of common people. Overhead were leaves enough to supply all the trees they had ever seen. Not much moonlight could come through, but the leaves would glimmer white in the wind at times. The tree was full of giant birds. Every now and then, one would sweep through, with a great noise. But, except an occasional chirp, sounding like a shrill pipe in a great organ, they made no noise. All at once an owl began to hoot. He thought he was singing. As soon as he began, other birds replied, making rare game of him. To their astonishment, the children found they could understand every word they sang. And what they sang was something like this:—

“I will sing a song.

I’m the Owl.”

“Sing a song, you Sing-song

Ugly fowl!

What will you sing about,

Night in and Day out?”

“Sing about the night;

I’m the Owl.”

“You could not see for the light,

Stupid fowl.”

“Oh! the Moon! and the Dew!

And the Shadows!—tu-whoo!”

The owl spread out his silent, soft, sly wings, and lighting between Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob, nearly smothered them, closing up one under each wing. It was like being buried in a down bed. But the owl did not like anything between his sides and his wings, so he opened his wings again, and the children made haste to get out. Tricksey-Wee immediately went in front of the bird, and looking up into his huge face, which was as round as the eyes of the giantess’s spectacles, and much bigger, dropped a pretty courtesy, and said,—“Please, Mr. Owl, I want to whisper to you.”

“Very well, small child,” answered the owl, looking important, and stooping his ear towards her. “What is it?”

“Please tell me where the eagle lives that sits on the giant’s heart.”

“Oh, you naughty child! That’s a secret. For shame!”

And with a great hiss that terrified them, the owl flew into the tree. All birds are fond of secrets; but not many of them can keep them so well as the owl.

So the children went on because they did not know what else to do. They found the way very rough and difficult, the tree was so full of humps and hollows. Now and then they plashed into a pool of rain; now and then they came upon twigs growing out of the trunk where they had no business, and they were as large as full-grown poplars. Sometimes they came upon great cushions of soft moss, and on one of them they lay down and rested. But they had not lain long before they spied a large nightingale sitting on a branch, with its bright eyes looking up at the moon. In a moment more he began to sing, and the birds about him began to reply, but in a different tone from that in which they had replied to the owl. Oh, the birds did call the nightingale such pretty names! The nightingale sang, and the birds replied like this:—

“I will sing a song.

I’m the nightingale.”

“Sing a song, long, long,

Little Neverfail!

What will you sing about,

Light in or light out?”

“Sing about the light

Gone away;

Down, away, and out of sight—

Poor lost Day!

Mourning for the Day dead,

O’er his dim bed.”

The nightingale sang so sweetly, that the children would have fallen asleep but for fear of losing any of the song. When the nightingale stopped they got up and wandered on. They did not know where they were going, but they thought it best to keep going on, because then they might come upon something or other. They were very sorry they had forgotten to ask the nightingale about the eagle's nest, but his music had put everything else out of their heads. They resolved, however, not to forget the next time they had a chance. So they went on and on, till they were both tired, and Tricksey-Wee said at last, trying to laugh,—

“I declare my legs feel just like a Dutch doll's.”

“Then here's the place to go to bed in,” said Buffy-Bob.

They stood at the edge of a last year's nest, and looked down with delight into the round, mossy cave. Then they crept gently in, and, lying down in each other's arms, found it so deep, and warm, and comfortable, and soft, that they were soon fast asleep.

Now, close beside them, in a hollow, was another nest, in which lay a lark and his wife; and the children were awakened, very early in the morning, by a dispute between Mr. and Mrs. Lark.

“Let me up,” said the lark.

“It is not time,” said the lark's wife.

“It is,” said the lark, rather rudely. “The darkness is quite thin. I can almost see my own beak.”

“Nonsense!” said the lark's wife. “You know you came home yesterday morning quite worn out—you had to fly so very high before you saw him. I am sure he would not mind if you took it a little easier. Do be quiet and go to sleep again.”

“That's not it at all,” said the lark. “He doesn't want me. I want him. Let me up, I say.”

He began to sing; and Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob, having now learned the way, answered him:—

“I will sing a song.

I'm the Lark."

"Sing, sing, Throat-strong,

Little Kill-the-dark.

What will you sing about,

Now the night is out?"

"I can only call;

I can't think.

Let me up—that's all.

Let me drink!

Thirsting all the long night

For a drink of light."

By this time the lark was standing on the edge of his nest and looking at the children.

"Poor little things! You can't fly," said the lark.

"No; but we can look up," said Tricksey.

"Ah, you don't know what it is to see the very first of the sun."

"But we know what it is to wait till he comes. He's no worse for your seeing him first, is he?"

"Oh no, certainly not," answered the lark, with condescension, and then, bursting into his *Jubilate*, he sprang aloft, clapping his wings like a clock running down.

"Tell us where—" began Buffy-Bob.

But the lark was out of sight. His song was all that was left of him. That was everywhere, and he was nowhere.

“Selfish bird!” said Buffy. “It’s all very well for larks to go hunting the sun, but they have no business to despise their neighbours, for all that.”

“Can I be of any use to you?” said a sweet bird-voice out of the nest.

This was the lark’s wife, who stayed at home with the young larks while her husband went to church.

“Oh! thank you. If you please,” answered Tricksey-Wee.

And up popped a pretty brown head; and then up came a brown feathery body; and last of all came the slender legs on to the edge of the nest. There she turned, and, looking down into the nest, from which came a whole litany of chirpings for breakfast, said, “Lie still, little ones.” Then she turned to the children.

“My husband is King of the Larks,” she said.

Buffy-Bob took off his cap, and Tricksey-Wee courtesied very low.

“Oh, it’s not me,” said the bird, looking very shy. “I am only his wife. It’s my husband.” And she looked up after him into the sky, whence his song was still falling like a shower of musical hailstones. Perhaps *she* could see him.

“He’s a splendid bird,” said Buffy-Bob; “only you know he *will* get up a little too early.”

“Oh, no! he doesn’t. It’s only his way, you know. But tell me what I can do for you.”

“Tell us, please, Lady Lark, where the she-eagle lives that sits on Giant Thunderthump’s heart.”

“Oh! that is a secret.”

“Did you promise not to tell?”

“No; but larks ought to be discreet. They see more than other birds.”

“But you don’t fly up high like your husband, do you?”

“Not often. But it’s no matter. I come to know things for all that.”

“Do tell me, and I will sing you a song,” said Tricksey-Wee.

“Can you sing too?—You have got no wings!”

“Yes. And I will sing you a song I learned the other day about a lark and his wife.”

“Please do,” said the lark’s wife. “Be quiet, children, and listen.”

Tricksey-Wee was very glad she happened to know a song which would please the lark’s wife, at least, whatever the lark himself might have thought of it, if he had heard it. So she sang,—

“‘Good morrow, my lord!’ in the sky alone,

Sang the lark, as the sun ascended his throne.

‘Shine on me, my lord; I only am come,

Of all your servants, to welcome you home.

I have flown a whole hour, right up, I swear,

To catch the first shine of your golden hair!’

“‘Must I thank you, then,’ said the king, ‘Sir Lark,

For flying so high, and hating the dark?

You ask a full cup for half a thirst:

Half is love of me, and half love to be first.

There’s many a bird that makes no haste,

But waits till I come. That’s as much to my taste.

“And the king hid his head in a turban of cloud;
And the lark stopped singing, quite vexed and cowed.
But he flew up higher, and thought, ‘Anon,
The wrath of the king will be over and gone,
And his crown, shining out of its cloudy fold,
Will change my brown feathers to a glory of gold.’

“So he flew, with the strength of a lark he flew.
But as he rose, the cloud rose too;
And not a gleam of the golden hair
Came through the depth of the misty air;
Till, weary with flying, with sighing sore,
The strong sun-seeker could do no more.

“His wings had had no chrism of gold,
And his feathers felt withered and worn and old;
So he quivered and sank, and dropped like a stone.
And there on his nest, where he left her, alone,
Sat his little wife on her little eggs,
Keeping them warm with wings and legs.

“Did I say alone? Ah, no such thing!

Full in her face was shining the king.

‘Welcome, Sir Lark! You look tired,’ said he.

‘*Up* is not always the best way to me.

While you have been singing so high and away,

I’ve been shining to your little wife all day.’

“He had set his crown all about the nest,

And out of the midst shone her little brown breast;

And so glorious was she in russet gold,

That for wonder and awe Sir Lark grew cold.

He popped his head under her wing, and lay

As still as a stone, till the king was away.”

As soon as Tricksey-Wee had finished her song, the lark’s wife began a low, sweet, modest little song of her own; and after she had piped away for two or three minutes, she said,—

“You dear children, what can I do for you?”

“Tell us where the she-eagle lives, please,” said Tricksey-Wee.

“Well, I don’t think there can be much harm in telling such wise, good children,” said Lady Lark; “I am sure you don’t want to do any mischief.”

“Oh, no; quite the contrary,” said Buffy-Bob.

“Then I’ll tell you. She lives on the very topmost peak of Mount Skycrack; and the only way to get up is to climb on the spiders’ webs that cover it from top to bottom.”

“That’s rather serious,” said Tricksey-Wee.

“But you don’t want to go up, you foolish little thing! You can’t go. And what do you want to go up for?”

“That is a secret,” said Tricksey-Wee.

“Well, it’s no business of mine,” rejoined Lady Lark, a little offended, and quite vexed that she had told them. So she flew away to find some breakfast for her little ones, who by this time were chirping very impatiently. The children looked at each other, joined hands, and walked off.

In a minute more the sun was up, and they soon reached the outside of the tree. The bark was so knobby and rough, and full of twigs, that they managed to get down, though not without great difficulty. Then, far away to the north, they saw a huge peak, like the spire of a church, going right up into the sky. They thought this must be Mount Skycrack, and turned their faces towards it. As they went on, they saw a giant or two, now and then, striding about the fields or through the woods, but they kept out of their way. Nor were they in much danger; for it was only one or two of the border giants that were so very fond of children.

At last they came to the foot of Mount Skycrack. It stood in a plain alone, and shot right up, I don’t know how many thousand feet, into the air, a long, narrow, spearlike mountain. The whole face of it, from top to bottom, was covered with a network of spiders’ webs, with threads of various sizes, from that of silk to that of whipcord. The webs shook and quivered, and waved in the sun, glittering like silver. All about ran huge greedy spiders, catching huge silly flies, and devouring them.

Here they sat down to consider what could be done. The spiders did not heed them, but ate away at the flies.—Now, at the foot of the mountain, and all round it, was a ring of water, not very broad, but very deep. As they sat watching them, one of the spiders, whose web was woven across this water, somehow or other lost his hold, and fell in on his back. Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob ran to his assistance, and laying hold each of one of his legs, succeeded, with the help of the other legs, which struggled spiderfully, in getting him out upon dry land. As soon as he had shaken himself, and dried himself a little, the spider turned to the children, saying,—

“And now, what can I do for you?”

“Tell us, please,” said they, “how we can get up the mountain to the she-eagle’s nest.”

“Nothing is easier,” answered the spider. “Just run up there, and tell them all I sent you, and nobody will mind you.”

“But we haven’t got claws like you, Mr. Spider,” said Buffy.

“Ah! no more you have, poor unprovided creatures! Still, I think we can manage it. Come home with me.”

“You won’t eat us, will you?” said Buffy.

“My dear child,” answered the spider, in a tone of injured dignity, “I eat nothing but what is mischievous or useless. You have helped me, and now I will help you.”

The children rose at once, and climbing as well as they could, reached the spider’s nest in the centre of the web. Nor did they find it very difficult; for whenever too great a gap came, the spider spinning a strong cord stretched it just where they would have chosen to put their feet next. He left them in his nest, after bringing them two enormous honey-bags, taken from bees that he had caught; but presently about six of the wisest of the spiders came back with him. It was rather horrible to look up and see them all round the mouth of the nest, looking down on them in contemplation, as if wondering whether they would be nice eating. At length one of them said,—“Tell us truly what you want with the eagle, and we will try to help you.”

Then Tricksey-Wee told them that there was a giant on the borders who treated little children no better than radishes, and that they had narrowly escaped being eaten by him; that they had found out that the great she-eagle of Mount Skycrack was at present sitting on his heart; and that, if they could only get hold of the heart, they would soon teach the giant better behaviour.

“But,” said their host, “if you get at the heart of the giant, you will find it as large as one of your elephants. What can you do with it?”

“The least scratch will kill it,” replied Buffy-Bob.

“Ah! but you might do better than that,” said the spider.—“Now we have resolved to help you. Here is a little bag of spider-juice. The giants cannot bear spiders, and this juice is dreadful poison to them. We are all ready to go up with you, and drive the eagle away. Then you must put the heart into this other bag, and bring it down with you; for then the giant will be in your power.”

“But how can we do that?” said Buffy. “The bag is not much bigger than a pudding-bag.”

“But it is as large as you will be able to carry.”

“Yes; but what are we to do with the heart?”

“Put it in the bag, to be sure. Only, first, you must squeeze a drop out of the other bag upon it. You will see what will happen.”

“Very well; we will do as you tell us,” said Tricksey-Wee. “And now, if you please, how shall we go?”

“Oh, that’s our business,” said the first spider. “You come with me, and my grandfather will take your brother. Get up.”

So Tricksey-Wee mounted on the narrow part of the spider’s back, and held fast. And Buffy-Bob got on the grandfather’s back. And up they scrambled, over one web after another, up and up—so fast! And every spider followed; so that, when Tricksey-Wee looked back, she saw a whole army of spiders scrambling after them.

“What can we want with so many?” she thought; but she said nothing.

The moon was now up, and it was a splendid sight below and around them. All Giantland was spread out under them, with its great hills, lakes, trees, and animals. And all above them was the clear heaven, and Mount Skycrack rising into it, with its endless ladders of spider-webs, glittering like cords made of moonbeams. And up the moonbeams went, crawling, and scrambling, and racing, a huge army of huge spiders.

At length they reached all but the very summit, where they stopped. Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob could see above them a great globe of feathers, that finished off the mountain like an ornamental knob.

“But how shall we drive her off?” said Buffy.

“We’ll soon manage that,” answered the grandfather-spider. “Come on you, down there.”

Up rushed the whole army, past the children, over the edge of the nest, on to the she-eagle, and buried themselves in her feathers. In a moment she became very restless, and went pecking about with her beak. All at once she spread out her wings, with a sound like a whirlwind, and flew off to bathe in the sea; and then the spiders began to drop from her in all directions on their gossamer wings. The children had to hold fast to keep the wind of the eagle’s flight from blowing them off. As soon as it was over, they looked into the nest, and there lay the giant’s heart—an awful and ugly thing.

“Make haste, child!” said Tricksey’s spider.

So Tricksey took her bag, and squeezed a drop out of it upon the heart. She thought she heard the giant give a far-off roar of pain, and she nearly fell from her seat with terror. The heart instantly began to shrink. It shrunk and shrivelled till it was nearly gone; and Buffy-Bob caught it up and put it into his bag. Then the two spiders turned and went down again as fast as they could. Before they got to the bottom, they heard the shrieks of the she-eagle over the loss of her egg; but the spiders told them not to be alarmed, for her eyes were too big to see them.—By the time they reached the foot of the mountain, all the spiders had got home, and were busy again catching flies, as if nothing had happened.

After renewed thanks to their friends, the children set off, carrying the giant’s heart with them.

“If you should find it at all troublesome, just give it a little more spider-juice directly,” said the grandfather, as they took their leave.

Now, the giant had given an awful roar of pain the moment they anointed his heart, and had fallen down in a fit, in which he lay so long that all the boys might have escaped if they had not been so fat. One did, and got home in safety. For days the giant was unable to speak. The first words he uttered were,—

“Oh, my heart! my heart!”

“Your heart is safe enough, dear Thunderstump,” said his wife. “Really, a man of your size ought not to be so nervous and apprehensive. I am ashamed of you.”

“You have no heart, Doodlem,” answered he. “I assure you that at this moment mine is in the greatest danger. It has fallen into the hands of foes, though who they are I cannot tell.”

Here he fainted again; for Tricksey-Wee, finding the heart begin to swell a little, had given it the least touch of spider-juice.

Again he recovered, and said,—

“Dear Doodlem, my heart is coming back to me. It is coming nearer and nearer.”

After lying silent for hours, he exclaimed,—

“It is in the house, I know!”

And he jumped up and walked about, looking in every corner.

As he rose, Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob came out of the hole in the tree-root, and through the cat-hole in the door, and walked boldly towards the giant. Both kept their eyes busy watching him. Led by the love of his own heart, the giant soon spied them, and staggered furiously towards them.

“I will eat you, you vermin!” he cried. “Here with my heart!”

Tricksey gave the heart a sharp pinch. Down fell the giant on his knees, blubbering, and crying, and begging for his heart.

“You shall have it, if you behave yourself properly,” said Tricksey.

“How shall I behave myself properly?” asked he, whimpering.

“Take all those boys and girls, and carry them home at once.”

“I’m not able; I’m too ill. I should fall down.”

“Take them up directly.”

“I can’t, till you give me my heart.”

“Very well!” said Tricksey; and she gave the heart another pinch.

The giant jumped to his feet, and catching up all the children, thrust some into his waistcoat pockets, some into his breast pocket, put two or three into his hat, and took a bundle of them under each arm. Then he staggered to the door.

All this time poor Doodlem was sitting in her arm-chair, crying, and mending a white stocking.

The giant led the way to the borders. He could not go so fast but that Buffy and Tricksey managed to keep up with him. When they reached the borders, they thought it would be safer to let the children find their own way home. So they told him to set them down. He obeyed.

“Have you put them all down, Mr. Thunderthump?” asked Tricksey-Wee.

“Yes,” said the giant.

“That’s a lie!” squeaked a little voice; and out came a head from his waistcoat pocket.

Tricksey-Wee pinched the heart till the giant roared with pain.

“You’re not a gentleman. You tell stories,” she said.

“He was the thinnest of the lot,” said Thunderthump, crying.

“Are you all there now, children?” asked Tricksey.

“Yes, ma’am,” returned they, after counting themselves very carefully, and with some difficulty; for they were all stupid children.

“Now,” said Tricksey-Wee to the giant, “will you promise to carry off no more children, and never to eat a child again all your life?”

“Yes, yes! I promise,” answered Thunderthump, sobbing.

“And you will never cross the borders of Giantland?”

“Never.”

“And you shall never again wear white stockings on a Sunday, all your life long.—Do you promise?”

The giant hesitated at this, and began to expostulate; but Tricksey-Wee, believing it would be good for his morals, insisted; and the giant promised.

Then she required of him, that, when she gave him back his heart, he should give it to his wife to take care of for him for ever after.

The poor giant fell on his knees, and began again to beg. But Tricksey-Wee giving the heart a slight pinch, he bawled out,—

“Yes, yes! Doodlem shall have it, I swear. Only she must not put it in the flour-barrel, or in the dust-hole.”

“Certainly not. Make your own bargain with her.—And you promise not to interfere with my brother and me, or to take any revenge for what we have done?”

“Yes, yes, my dear children; I promise everything. Do, pray, make haste and give me back my poor heart.”

“Wait there, then, till I bring it to you.”

“Yes, yes. Only make haste, for I feel very faint.”

Tricksey-Wee began to undo the mouth of the bag. But Buffy-Bob, who had got very knowing on his travels, took out his knife with the pretence of cutting the string; but, in reality, to be prepared for any emergency.

No sooner was the heart out of the bag, than it expanded to the size of a bullock; and the giant, with a yell of rage and vengeance, rushed on the two children, who had stepped sideways from the terrible heart. But Buffy-Bob was too quick for Thunderthump. He sprang to the heart, and buried his knife in it, up to the hilt. A fountain of blood spouted from it; and with a dreadful groan the giant fell dead at the feet of little Tricksey-Wee, who could not help being sorry for him after all.

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