

PERCIVAL LEIGH

JACK THE
GIANT KILLER

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Содержание

THE ARGUMENT	4
OF GIANTS IN GENERAL	6
JACK'S BIRTH, PARENTAGE, EDUCATION, AND EARLY PURSUITS	8
HOW JACK SLEW THE GIANT CORMORAN.	11
—	
JACK SURPRISED ONCE IN THE WAY	18
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

Percival Leigh

Jack The Giant Killer

THE ARGUMENT

I sing the deeds of famous Jack,
The doughty Giant Killer hight;
How he did various monsters "whack,"
And so became a gallant knight.
In Arthur's days of splendid fun
(His Queen was Guenever the Pliant), —
Ere Britain's sorrows had begun;
When every cave contained its giant;
When griffins fierce as bats were rife;
And till a knight had slain his dragon,
At trifling risk of limbs and life,
He did n't think he'd much to brag on;

When wizards o'er the welkin flew;
Ere science had devised balloon;
And 'twas a common thing to view
A fairy ballet by the moon; —
Our hero played his valiant pranks;
Earned loads of *kudos*, *vulgô* glory,
A lady, "tin," and lots of thanks; —

Relate, oh Muse! his wondrous story.

OF GIANTS IN GENERAL

A Giant was, I should premise,
A hulking lout of monstrous size;
He mostly stood – I know you 'll laugh —
About as high as a giraffe.

His waist was some three yards in girth:
When he walked he shook the earth.
His eyes were of the class called "goggle,"
Fitter for the scowl than ogle.

His mouth, decidedly carnivorous,
Like a shark's, – the Saints deliver us!
He yawned like a huge sarcophagus,
For he was an Anthropophagus,
And his tusks were huge and craggy;
His hair, and his brows, and his beard, were shaggy.

I ween on the whole he was aught but a Cupid,
And exceedingly fierce, and remarkably stupid;
His brain partaking strongly of lead,
How well soe'er he was off for head;
Having frequently one or two
Crania more than I or you.

He was bare of arm and leg,
But buskins had, and a philabeg;
Also a body-coat of mail
That shone with steel or brazen scale,
Like to the back of a crocodile's tail;

A crown he wore,
And a mace he bore
That was knobbed and spiked with adamant;
It would smash the skull
Of the mountain bull,
Or scatter the brains of the elephant.

His voice than the tempest was louder and gruffer —
Well; so much for the uncouth "buffer."

JACK'S BIRTH, PARENTAGE, EDUCATION, AND EARLY PURSUITS

Of a right noble race was Jack,
For kith and kin he did not lack,
 Whom tuneful bards have puffed;
The Seven bold Champions ranked among
That highly celebrated throng,
 And Riquet with the Tuft.

Jack of the Beanstalk, too, was one;
And Beauty's Beast; and Valour's son,
 Sir Amadis de Gaul:
But if I had a thousand tongues,
A throat of brass, and iron lungs,
 I could not sing them all.

His sire was a farmer hearty and free;
He dwelt where the Land's End frowns on the sea,
And the sea at the Land's End roars again,
Tit for tat, land and main.

He was a worthy wight, and so
He brought up his son in the way he should go;

He sought not – not he! – to make him a "muff;"
He never taught him a parcel of stuff;

He bothered him not with trees and plants,
Nor told him to study the manners of ants.
He himself had never been
Bored with the Saturday Magazine;
The world might be flat, or round, or square,
He knew not, and he did not care;
Nor wished that a boy of his should be
A Cornish "Infant Prodigy."

But he stored his mind with learning stable,
The deeds of the Knights of the famed Round Table;
Legends and stories, chants and lays,
Of witches and warlocks, goblins and fays;
 How champions of might
 Defended the right,

Freed the captive, and succoured the damsel distrest
 Till Jack would exclaim —
"If I don't do the same,
An' I live to become a man, —*I'm blest!*"

Jack lightly recked of sport or play
 Wherein young gentlemen delight,
But he would wrestle any day,
Box, or at backsword fight.

He was a lad of special "pluck,"
And strength beyond his years,
Or science, gave him aye the luck
To drub his young compeers.

His task assigned, like Giles or Hodge,
The woolly flocks to tend,
His wits to warlike fray or "dodge"
Wool-gathering oft would wend.

And then he'd wink his sparkling eye,
And nod his head right knowingly,
And sometimes "Won't I just!" would cry,
Or "At him, Bill, again!"

Now this behaviour did evince
A longing for a foe to mince;
An instinct fitter for a Prince
Than for a shepherd swain.

HOW JACK SLEW THE GIANT CORMORAN. —

I

Where good Saint Michael's craggy mount
Rose Venus-like from out the sea,
A giant dwelt; a mighty- Count
In his own view, forsooth, was he;
And not unlike one, verily,

(A foreign Count, like those we meet
In Leicester Square, or Regent Street),
I mean with respect to his style of hair,
Mustachios, and beard, and ferocious air, —
His figure was quite another affair.

This odd-looking "bird"
Was a Richard the Third,
Four times taller and five as wide;
Or a clumsy Punch,
With his cudgel and hunch,
 Into a monster magnified!

In quest of prey across the sea
He'd wade, with ponderous club;
 For not the slightest "bones" made he
 Of "boning" people's "grub."
There was screaming and crying "Oh dear!" and "Oh law
When the terrified maids the monster saw;

 As he stalked – tramp! tramp!
 Stamp! stamp! stamp! stamp!
Coming on like the statue in "Don Giovanni."
 "Oh my!" they would cry,
 "Here he comes; let us fly!
Did you ever behold such a horrid old brawny? —
 A – h!" and off they would run
 Like "blazes," or "fun,"
Followed, pell-mell, by man and master;
 While the grisly old fellow
 Would after them bellow,
To make them scamper away the faster.

II

When this mountain bugaboo
Had filled his belly, what would he do?
He'd shoulder his club with an ox or two,
Stick pigs and sheep in his belt a few, —

There were two or three in it, and two or three under
(I hope ye have all the "organ of wonder");
Then back again to his mountain cave
He would stump o'er the dry land and stride through the
wave.

III

What was to be done?
For this was no fun;
And it must be clear to every one,
The new Tariff itself would assuredly not
Have supplied much longer the monstrous pot
Of this beef-eating, bull-headed, "son-of-a-gun."

IV

Upon a night as dark as pitch
A light was dancing on the sea; —
Marked it the track of the Water Witch?
Could it a Jack-a-lantern be?
A lantern it was, and borne by Jack;
A spade and a pickaxe he had at his back;
In his belt a good cow-horn;

He was up to some game you may safely be sworn.
Saint Michael's Mount he quickly gained,
And there the livelong night remained.

What he did
The darkness hid;
Nor needeth it that I should say:
Nor would you have seen,
If there you had been
Looking on at the break of day.

V

Morning dawned on the ocean blue;
Shrieked the gull and the wild sea-mew;
The donkey brayed, and the grey cock crew;
Jack put to his mouth his good cow-horn,
And a blast therewith did blow.

The Giant heard the note of scorn,
And woke and cried "Hallo!"
He popped out his head with his night-cap on,
To look who his friend might be,
And eke his spectacles did don,
That he mote the better see.

"I'll broil thee for breakfast," he roared amain,
"For breaking my repose."
"Yaa!" valiant Jack returned again,
With his fingers at his nose.

VI

Forward the monster tramps apace,
Like to an elephant running a race;
Like a walking-stick he handles his mace.
Away, too venturous wight, decamp!
In two more strides your skull he smashes; —
One! Gracious goodness! what a stamp!
Two! Ha! the plain beneath him crashes:
Down he goes, full fathoms three.

"How feel ye now," cried Jack, "old chap?
It is plain, I wot, to see
You 're by no means up to trap."
The Giant answered with such a roar,
It was like the Atlantic at war with its shore;
A thousand times worse than the hullabaloo
Of carnivora, fed,
Ere going to bed,
At the Regent's Park, or the Surrey "Zoo."

"So ho! Sir Giant," said Jack, with a bow,
"Of breakfast art thou fain?
For a tit-bit wilt thou broil me now,
An' I let thee out again? "
Gnashing his teeth, and rolling his eyes,
The furious lubber strives to rise.

"Don't you wish you may get it?" our hero cries
And he drives the pickaxe into his skull:
Giving him thus a belly-full,
If the expression is n't a bull.

VII

Old Cormoran dead,
Jack cut off his head,
And hired a boat to transport it home.
On the "bumps" of the brute,
At the Institute,
A lecture was read by a Mr. Combe.

Their Worships, the Justices of the Peace,
Called the death of the monster a "happy release:"
Sent for the champion who had drubbed him,
And "Jack the Giant Killer" dubbed him;
And they gave him a sword, and a baldric, whereon

For all who could read them, these versicles shone: —

**'THIS IS YE VALYANT CORNISHE MAN
WHO SLEWE YE GIANT CORMORAN'**

JACK SURPRISED ONCE IN THE WAY

I

Now, as Jack was a lion, and hero of rhymes,
His exploit very soon made a noise in the "Times;"
All over the west
He was *fêted*, caressed,
And to dinners and *soirees* eternally pressed:
Though't is true Giants did n't move much in society,
And at "twigging" were slow,
Yet they could n't but know
Of a thing that was matter of such notoriety.

Your Giants were famous for *esprit de corps*;
And a huge one, whose name was O'Blunderbore,
From the Emerald Isle, who had waded o'er,
Revenge, "by the pow'rs!" on our hero swore.

II

Sound beneath a forest oak
Was a beardless warrior dozing,
By a babbling rill, that woke
Echo – not the youth reposing.
What a chance for lady loves
Now to win a "pair of gloves!"

III

"Wake, champion, wake, be off, be off;
Heard'st thou not that earthquake cough!
That floundering splash,
That thundering crash?
Awake! – oh, no,
 It is no go!"
So sang a little woodland fairy;
 'T was O'Blunderbore coming
And the blackguard was humming
The tune of "Paddy Carey."

IV

Beholding the sleeper,
He open'd each peeper
To about the size of the crown of your hat;
"Oh, oh!" says he,
 "Is it clear I see
Hallo! ye young spalpeen, come out o' that."

 So he took him up
 As ye mote a pup,
Or an impudent varlet about to "pop" him:
"Wake up, ye young baste;
 What's this round your waist?
Och! murder! " – I wonder he did n't drop him.

He might, to be sure, have exclaimed "Oh, Law!"
But then he preferred his own *patois*;
And "Murder!" though coarse, was expressive, no doubt,
Inasmuch as the murder was certainly out.

He had pounced upon Jack,
 In his cosy bivouack,
And so he made off with him over his back.

V

Still was Jack in slumber sunk;
Was he Mesmerised or drunk?

I know not in sooth, but he did not awake
Till, borne through a coppice of briar and brake,
He was roused by the brambles that tore his skin,
Then he woke up and found what a mess he was in
He spoke not a word that his fear might shew,
But said to himself – "What a precious go!"

VI

Whither was the hero bound,
Napping by the Ogre caught?
Unto Cambrian Taffy's ground
Where adventures fresh he sought.

VII

They gained the Giant's castle hall,
Which seemed a sort of Guy's museum;
With skulls and bones 'twas crowded all —
You would have blessed yourself to see 'em.

The larder was stored with human hearts,
Quarters, and limbs, and other parts, —
A grisly sight to see;
There Jack the cannibal monster led,

"I lave you there, my lad," he said,
"To larn anatomy! —

I'm partial to this kind of mate,
And hearts with salt and spice to ate
Is just what plases me;
I mane to night on yours to sup,
Stay here until you 're aten up
He spoke, and turned the key.

"A pretty business this!" quoth Jack,
When he was left alone;
"Old Paddy Whack,
I say! come back —
I wonder where he's gone?"

In ghastly moans and sounds of wail,
The castle's cells replied;
Jack, whose high spirits ne'er could quail,

Whistled like blackbird in the vale,
And, "Bravo, Weber!" cried.

When, lo! a dismal voice, in verse,
This pleasant warning did rehearse: —

IX

"Haste!" quoth the hero, "yes, but how?
They come, the brutes! — I hear them now.'
He flew to the window with mickle speed,
There was the pretty pair indeed,
Arm-in-arm in the court below,
O'Blunderbore and his brother O.

"Now then," thought Jack, "I plainly see
I 'm booked for death or liberty; —
Hallo! those cords are 'the jockeys for me.'

X

Jack was nimble of finger and thumb —
The cords in a moment have halters become

Deft at noosing the speckled trout,
So hath he caught each ill-favoured lout:
He hath tethered the ropes to a rafter tight,
And he tugs and he pulls with all his might,
"Pully-oi! Pully-oi!" till each Yahoo
In the face is black and blue;
Till each Paddy Whack
Is blue and black;
"Now, I think you're done *brown*," said courageous Jack.
Down the tight rope he slides,
And his good sword hides
In the hearts of the monsters up to the hilt;
So he settled them each:
O'Blunderbore's speech,
Ere he gave up the ghost was, "Och, murder, I'm kilt!"

XI

The dungeons are burst and the captives freed;
Three princesses were among them found —
Very beautiful indeed;
Their lily white hands were behind them bound:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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