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Ongoing Tales

Old Time Fairy Tales

Jack & the Beanstalk



**The text for this fairy tale is taken from the 1919 *Young Folks Treasury*
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Once upon a time there lived a poor widow who had an only son named Jack. She was very poor, for times had been hard, and Jack was too young to work. Almost all the furniture of the little cottage had been sold to buy bread, until at last there was nothing left worth selling. Only the good cow, Milky White, remained, and she gave milk every morning, which they took to market and sold. But one sad day Milky White gave no milk, and then things looked bad indeed.

"Never mind, mother," said Jack. "We must sell Milky White. Trust me to make a good bargain," and away he went to the market.

For some time he went along very sadly, but after a little he quite recovered his spirits. "I may as well ride as walk," said he; so instead of leading the cow by the halter, he jumped on her back, and so he went whistling along until he met a butcher.

"Good morning," said the butcher.

"Good morning, sir," answered Jack.

"Where are you going?" said the butcher.

"I am going to market to sell the cow."

"It's lucky I met you," said the butcher. "You may save yourself the trouble of going so far."

With this, he put his hand in his pocket, and pulled out five curious-looking beans. "What do you call these?" he said.

"Beans," said Jack.

"Yes," said he, "beans, but they're the most wonderful beans that ever were known. If you plant them overnight, by the next morning they'll grow up and reach the sky. But to save you the trouble of going all the way to market, I don't mind exchanging them for that cow of yours."

"Done!" cried Jack, who was so delighted with the bargain that he ran all the way home to tell his mother how lucky he had been.

But oh! how disappointed the poor widow was.

"Off to bed with you!" she cried; and she was so angry that she threw the beans out of the window into the garden. So poor Jack went to bed without any supper and cried himself to sleep.

When he woke up the next morning, the room was almost dark; and Jack jumped out of bed and ran to the window to see what was the matter. The sun was shining brightly outside, but from the ground right up beside his window there was growing a great beanstalk, which stretched up and up as far as he could see, into the sky.

"I'll just see where it leads to," thought Jack, and with that he stepped out of the window on to the beanstalk, and began to climb upwards. He climbed

up and up, till after a time his mother's cottage looked a mere speck below, but at last the stalk ended, and he found himself in a new and beautiful country. A little way off there was a great castle, with a broad road leading straight up to the front gate. But what most surprised Jack was to find a beautiful maiden suddenly standing beside him.

"Good morning, ma'am," said he, very politely.

"Good morning, Jack," said she; and Jack was more surprised than ever; for he could not imagine how she had learned his name. But he soon found that she knew a great deal more about him than his name; for she told him how, when he was quite a little baby, his father, a gallant knight, had been slain by the giant who lived in yonder castle, and how his mother, in order to save Jack, had been obliged to promise never to tell the secret.

"All that the giant has is yours," she said, and then disappeared quite as suddenly as she came.

"She must be a fairy," thought Jack.

As he drew near to the castle, he saw the giant's wife standing at the door.

"If you please, ma'am," said he, "would you kindly give me some breakfast? I have had nothing to eat since yesterday."

Now, the giant's wife, although very big and very ugly, had a kind heart, so she said: "Very well, little man, come in; but you must be quick about it, for if my husband, the giant, finds you here, he will eat you up, bones and all."

So in Jack went, and the giant's wife gave him a good breakfast, but before he had half finished it there came a terrible knock at the front door, which seemed to shake even the thick walls of the castle.

"Dearie me, that is my husband!" said the giantess, in a terrible fright; "we must hide you somehow," and she lifted Jack up and popped him into the empty kettle.

No sooner had the giant's wife opened the door than her husband roared out:

"Fee, fi, fo, fun,

I smell the blood of an Englishman:

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

It's a boy, I'm sure it is" he continued. "Where is he? I'll have him for my breakfast."

"Nonsense!" said his wife; "you must be mistaken. It's the ox's hide you smell." So he sat down, and ate up the greater part of the ox. When he had finished he said: "Wife, bring me my money-bags." So his wife brought him two full bags of gold, and the giant began to count his money. But he was so sleepy that his head soon began to nod, and then he began to snore, like the rumbling of thunder. Then Jack crept out, snatched up the two bags, and though the giant's dog barked loudly, he made his way down the beanstalk back to the cottage before the giant awoke.

Jack and his mother were now quite rich; but it occurred to him one day that he would like to see how matters were going on at the giant's castle. So while his mother was away at market, he climbed up, and up, and up, and up, until he got to the top of the beanstalk again.

The giantess was standing at the door, just as before, but she did not know Jack, who, of course, was more finely dressed than on his first visit. "If you please, ma'am," said he, "will you give me some breakfast?"

"Run away," said she, "or my husband the giant will eat you up, bones and all. The last boy who came here stole two bags of gold - off with you!" But the giantess had a kind heart, and after a time she allowed Jack to come into the kitchen, where she sat before him enough breakfast to last him a week. Scarcely had he begun to eat than there was a great rumbling like an earthquake, and the giantess had only time to bundle Jack into the oven when in came the giant. No sooner was he inside the room than he roared:

"Fee, fi, fo, fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman:

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

But his wife told him he was mistaken, and after breakfasting off a roasted bullock, just as if it were a lark, he called out: "Wife, bring the little brown hen!" The giantess went out and brought in a little brown hen, which she placed on the table.

"Lay!" said the giant; and the hen at once laid a golden egg. "Lay!" said the giant a second time; and she laid another golden egg. "Lay!" said the giant a third time; and she laid a third golden egg.

"That will do for to-day," said he, and stretched himself out to go to sleep. As soon as he began to snore, Jack crept out of the oven, went on tiptoe to the table, and snatching up the little brown hen, made a dash for the door. Then the hen began to cackle, and the giant began to wake up; but before he was quite awake, Jack had escaped from the castle, and, climbing as fast as he could down the beanstalk, got safe home to his mother's cottage.

The little brown hen laid so many golden eggs that Jack and his mother had now more money than they could spend, but Jack was always thinking about the beanstalk; and one day he crept out of the window again, and climbed up, and up, and up, and up, until he reached the top.

This time, you may be sure, he was careful not to be seen; so he crept round to the back of the castle, and when the giant's wife went out he slipped into the kitchen and hid himself in the oven. In came the giant, roaring louder than ever:

"Fee, fi, fo, fum.

I smell the blood of an Englishman;

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread!"

But the giantess was quite sure that she had seen no little boys that morning; and after grumbling a great deal, the giant sat down to breakfast. Even then he was not quite satisfied, for every now and again he would say:

"Fee, fi, fo, fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman;"

and he got up and looked in the kettle. But, of course, Jack was in the oven all the time!

When the giant had finished, he called out: "Wife, bring me the golden harp" so she brought in the golden harp, and placed it on the table. "Sing!" said the giant; and the harp at once began to sing the most beautiful songs that ever were heard. It sang so sweetly that the giant soon fell fast asleep; and then Jack crept quietly out of the oven, and going on tiptoe to the table, seized hold of the golden harp. But the harp at once called out: "Master! master!" and the giant woke up just in time to catch sight of Jack running out of the kitchen-door.

With a fearful roar, he seized his oak-tree club, and dashed after Jack, who

had the harp tight, and was running faster than he had ever run before. The giant, brandishing his club, and taking terribly long strides, gained on Jack at every instant, and he would have been caught if the giant hadn't slipped over a boulder. Before he could pick himself up, Jack began to climb down the beanstalk, and when the giant arrived at the edge he was nearly half-way to the cottage. The giant began to climb down too; but as soon as Jack saw him coming, he called out: "Mother, bring me an axe!" and the widow hurried out with a chopper. Jack had no sooner reached the ground than he cut the beanstalk right in two. Down came the giant with a terrible crash, and that, you may be sure, was the end of him. What became of the giantess and the castle nobody knows. But Jack and his mother grew very rich, and lived happy every after.



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