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"Tell Us a Story" (or "The Giant's Heart") in The Illustrated London News

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Textual Study

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"Tell Us a Story" was the original published version of "The Giant's Heart." It appeared in the 1863 Christmas supplement of *The Illustrated London News* along with stories such as "Freeman's Phantoms" and "The Hairdresser of Tetherham," and poems like "Lily's Ball," all accompanied by festive line-illustrations. Also included was a sumptuous full-color fold-out reproduction of James Sant's painting "Little Red Riding Hood," the largest chromo-typographic reproduction that the *News* had ever attempted.

"Tell Us a Story" was shortly thereafter reprinted as one of the interpolated stories in *Adela Cathcart* (around April 1864); then in 1867 it was republished with the rest of MacDonald's fairy tales in *Dealings With the Fairies* in the form that is most familiar to readers today. Whilst the actual fairy tale remains the same across all of the versions, three significant variations make "Tell Us a Story" unique: the frame narrative, the inclusion of "The Owl and the Bell" as the concluding poem, and two illustrations by C. Robinson.

As befitting a Christmas supplement, the frame narration begins after Christmas dinner with a large extended family gathering around the fire to conclude the joyous day. The only non-family member is "Uncle Bogie," a merry trickster figure who is the favorite of the children and whose "head is full of nonsense." Uncle Bogie prefigures John Smith, the playful narrator of *Adela Cathcart* who is similarly an unrelated "uncle" and slightly mischievous. Indeed, it is even possible that "Tell Us a Story," with its frame narrative and interruptions by the children, gave MacDonald the idea for *Adela Cathcart*. When the story migrated to *Adela Cathcart*, MacDonald kept much of the frame dialogue but transferred the scene to the Cathcart home. In at least one place, however, MacDonald forgot to modify the children's utterances to accord with the new setting. The boy who asks for a story about "a good giant" is described in both versions as "a priggish imp, with a face as round as the late plum pudding" even though in *Adela Cathcart* it is not

Christmas day and there has been no mention of pudding.

The concluding poem, "The Owl and the Bell," is a delightful piece of nonsense equal to even the very best of Lear and Carroll, which MacDonald later reprinted in the second volume of his *Poetical Works* under the section "Parables." It concerns a "poor and genteel" owl who blames his habit of sleeping through the day and stealing food by night on the noisy church bell that is always tolling "Bing, Bang, Bome" and calling people to prayer. When the bell is silenced for a few weeks while the villagers repair the church, the owl is exultant and begins to taunt the bell, but then a loud "Bang" sends the poor owl falling "like an avalanche of feathers and foam." The poem ends with the owl trying to save his dignity by ridiculously claiming that he brought the bell back to life when he perched inside. The themes of pride, hypocrisy and vanity harmonize well with those raised in "The Giant's Heart." Yet the proximity of this nonsensical poem with the fairy tale suggests that neither is meant to be interpreted straightforwardly for moralistic purposes. The narrator even admits that the evening's entertainment has been rather mischievous when he says, "the little ones went off to sleep, and, I am afraid, to dream."

The story was also accompanied by illustrations from C. Robinson, who was a staff illustrator for *The Illustrated London News* at the time. He is more famous as the uncle of the three Robinson brothers: Charles, Thomas, and William. Charles Robinson, for example, illustrated Stevenson's *A Garden Book of Verses* (1895). These two illustrations seem to be C. Robinson's only collaboration with George MacDonald. With a moon and a candle for illumination, the line-drawings both have a strong aspect of chiaroscuro—as if the illustrator were drawing attention to the dreamlike quality of MacDonald's tale—full of shadows and partial lights.

Restoring these elements to "The Giant's Heart" will hopefully serve to renew interest in this often neglected and denigrated fairy tale and to elucidate MacDonald's childlike love of stories for their own sake, beyond their moral purpose and pedagogical usefulness.

"Tell Us A Story" by George MacDonald

The Christmas dinner, pudding and all, was over; the wine and nuts had held out for a time, but had given in at last; and even snapdragon would snap no longer. The children—some of whom were very young, and some with grey hairs, younger still—drew round the drawing-room fire. There were a grandfather and grandmother, and about fifteen grandchildren, with three

papas and three mammas, besides two young aunts and three young uncles, one of whom the children called Uncle Bogie. He was, in fact, no uncle at all; but the children liked him best of all their uncles; and so did one of their aunts. The reason why they called him Uncle Bogie was that he knew all about bogies. You would have thought he had been the papa of all the bogies, he knew so much about them.

No sooner were they all seated, and the responsible ones thinking what to do next, than a long-haired, solemn little girl said, staring hard into the fire, and never turning her big, deep eyes towards the person she addressed:—

"Do tell us a horrid story, Uncle Bogie."

"You little Goblin!" said Uncle Bogie; "because you like horrid stories, you think everyone else does."

"*I* do," cried one.

"And *I* do," cried another.

"And *I* do," cried a third.

And all the children called out "I do," except one child, whose face faded a little as she turned and got hold of her mother's dress.

"Uncle Bogie," said the child he had called Goblin, going up to him, "you know your head is full of stories about ghosts, and giants, and fairies."

"How do you know, Goblin?"

"I will tell you. Mamma says stories of that kind are all nonsense. And Auntie says your head is full of nonsense. So I know, you see."

"Which Auntie said so, Goblin?"

"Why, Aunt Kate."

By this time Aunt Kate's face was as red as the Christmas fire. Uncle Bogie caught sight of it, and, being very good-natured, replied instantly,

"Well, Goblin, Aunt Kate is quite right; my head *is* as full of nonsense as it can hold, and I must positively let some of it out. I will tell you a story directly."

"Oh! thank you, Uncle Bogie," broke from all parts of the circle.

"What shall it be about then?"

"A wicked fairy."

"No; that's stupid. I'm tired of wicked fairies," said a scornful little girl.

"A good giant, then," said a priggish imp, with a face as round as the late plum-pudding.

"I am afraid I could not tell you a story about a *good* giant; for,

unfortunately, all the good giants I ever heard of were very stupid; so stupid that a story would not make itself about them; so stupid, indeed, that they are always made game of by creatures not half so big nor half so good; and I don't like such stories. Shall I tell you about the wicked giant that grew little children in his garden instead of radishes, and carried them about in his waistcoat-pocket, and ate one as often as he remembered he had got some?"

"Yes, yes, Uncle Bogie; please do."

"He used to catch little children and plant them in his garden, where you might see them in rows, with their heads only above ground, rolling their eyes about, and growing awfully fast. He liked greedy boys best—boys that ate plum-pudding till they felt as if their belts were too tight."

Here the fat-faced boy stuck both his hands inside his belt.

"Because he was so fond of radishes," Uncle Bogie went on, "he lived just on the borders of Giantland, where it touched on the country of common people. Now, 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 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 sorry 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 up to the side of it, and right up to what she took for a black, round-topped mountain, far away; but she soon discovered that it was close to her, and was 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, so 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; Tricksey-Wee crept through it, and found herself in an enormous hall, as big as if the late Mr. Martin, R.A., had been the architect. 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. She ran towards this fire as fast as she could, and was not far from it when something fell before her with a great clatter, and she tumbled over it, and went rolling on the floor. She was not much hurt, however, and got up in a moment. Then she saw that she had tumbled over something not unlike a great iron bucket. When she examined it more closely she saw 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.

Tricksey-Wee with the Giantess's Thimble
Drawn by C. Robinson

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."

"But how could he be so particular about white stockings on Sunday, and eat little children?" asked one of the group.

"Why, to be sure," answered Uncle Bogie, "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 that 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 so 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! in that case," 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 the 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 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," said the giantess.

"But you know it is wicked to tell lies, don't you, 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 seed, and was feeding them first before planting them. Now and then, however, he could not keep his teeth off them, and would eat one by the by, and without salt.

"Now, Uncle Bogie, you know that's nonsense; for little children don't grow in gardens. I know. *You* may believe in the radish-beds: *I* don't."

"I never said I did," replied Uncle Bogie. "If the giant did, that's enough for my story. I told you the good giants are very stupid: so you may think what the bad ones are. Indeed, the giant never really tried the plan. No doubt he did plant the children, but he always pulled them up and ate them before they had a chance of increasing.

The giant 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, stooping with 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 bang that threw them both on the floor. But they were soon up and into it again. 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 liked 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 the giant spoke, instead of laying his hand on his bosom, he waved it away towards the comer where the children were peeping from the broom bristles.

"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*," said 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 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."

"What funny things you do make up, Uncle Bogie! How could the giant's heart be in an eagle's nest and the giant himself alive and well without it?"

"Whatever you may think of it, Master Fred, I assure you I did not make it up. If it ever was made up, no one can tell who did it; for it was written in the chronicles of Giantland long before one of us was born. It was quite common," said Uncle Bogie in an injured tone, "for a giant to put his heart out to nurse, because he did not like the trouble and responsibility of doing it himself. It was, I confess, a dangerous sort of thing to do.—But do you want any more of my story or not?"

"O yes, please," cried Frederick, very heartily.

"Then don't you find any more fault with it, or I will stop."

Master Fred was straightway silent, and Uncle Bogie went on.

All this time Buffy-Bob and Tricksey-Wee were listening with long ears. *They* did not dispute about the giant's heart, and impossibility, and all that; for they were better educated than Master Fred, and knew all about it. "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," said he.

"Well—in the coal-cellar, or in the dusthole. That's the place! No one would think of looking for your heart in the dusthole."

"Worse and worse!" cried the giant.

"Well, the water-butt?" said she.

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

"Well, what will you do with it?" said she.

"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, you know, and then my enemies can't find it. 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, then, 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," said 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! I'm ready," said Bob.

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," said 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 it 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 the birds sang. And what they said 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,
  Now the light is 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, 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!"

Buffy-Bob, Tricksey-Wee, and the Giant Owl
Drawn by C. Robinson

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 very 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 forgot 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. 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 the hollow of a tree, 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's 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 aud Buffy-Bob, having new 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 sprung 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 staid 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?"

"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 for an 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 the 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,
And he sank, and quivered, 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 she was 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," answered 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's our secret," said Tricksey-Wee.

"Well, it's no business of mine," said Lady Lark, a little offended, and 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.

By this time the sun was up, and they soon reached the outside of the tree. It was so knobby and rough, and full of twigs, that they managed to get down, though not without great difficulty. 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, shining 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. At the foot of the mountain, and all round it, was a ring of water, not very broad, but very deep. Now, as they sat watching, 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 straggled 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 easier," said 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. They had not found it very difficult: for wherever too great a gap came the spider spun a strong cord and 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. Presently about six of the wisest of the spiders came back with him. It was rather horrible to 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 would kill it," said 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."

"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 find convenient to carry."

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

"Put it into 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," 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. 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 spiderwebs, 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 the very top, where they all stopped. Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob could see above them a great globe of feathers, that finished off the mountain like an ornamental knob.

"How shall we drive her off?" said Buffy.

"We'll soon manage that," said 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 picking 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 lest the wind of the eagle's flight should knock 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 the 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. So the children, after renewed thanks to their friends, 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 did give an awful roar of pain the moment they anointed his heart; and fell down in a fit, and 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 Thunderthump," 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 a few hours, he exclaimed,

"It is in the house, I know;" and jumped up and walked about, looking in every corner.

Just then, 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. "Give me my heart."

Tricksey gave the heart a sharp pinch, and 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.

"What do you want me to do?" said he, whimpering.

"Take all those boys and girls and carry them home at once?"

"I'm not able; I'm too ill."

"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 a bundle of them in his arms. Then he staggered to the door. All this time poor Doodlem was sitting in her armchair, crying, and mending a white stocking.

The giant led the way to the borders. He could not go very fast, and 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 them all down, Mr. Thunderthump?" asked Tricksey-Wee.

"Yes," said the giant.

"That's a lie," cried a squeaking voice; and out came a head from his left 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," said 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 do you promise never to again wear white stockings on Sunday all your life long?"

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 demanded that, if 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 dusthole."

"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.

"Silly thing!" said one little wisehead.

"What a horrid story!" said little Goblin, still staring into the fire.

"Now darlings, go to bed and dream about it," said one of the mothers.

"No, thank you, mamma; I had rather not," said an older girl. "I don't think it at all a nice story for supper, with those horrid spiders, too."

"Well, you must go to bed now, anyhow."

"More sing, first, mamma, more sing," pleaded a very little one, who, not understanding the story, had yet been pleased with the bit of verse in it.

"Well, ask Uncle Bogie."

"More sing, Uncle Bodie, please."

"Yes, my darling," said Uncle Bogie, lifting her on his knee. "You shall have more sing."

So he thought for a little, and then repeated the following verses:—

The Owl and the Bell
"Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!"
Sang the Bell to himself in his house at home,
Up in the tower, alone and unseen,
In a twilight of ivy, cool and green;
With his Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!
Singing bass to himself in his house at home.

Said the Owl to himself, as he sat below
On a window-ledge, like a ball of snow,
"Pest on that fellow, sitting up there,
Always calling the people to prayer!
With his Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!
Mighty big in his house at home!

"I would move," said the Owl, "but it suits me well;
And one may get used to it, who can tell?"
So he slept in the day with all his might,
And rose and flapped out in the hush of night,
When the bell was asleep in his tower at home,
Dreaming over his Bing, Bang, Bome!

For the owl was born so poor and genteel,
He was forced from the first to pick and steal;
He scorned to work for honest bread;
"Better have never been hatched!" he said.
So he slept all day; for he dared not roam
Till night had silenced the Bing, Bang, Bome!

When his six little darlings had chipped the egg,
He must steal the more: 'twas a shame to beg.
And they ate the more that they did not sleep well:
"It's their gizzards," said Ma; said Pa, "It's the bell!
For they quiver like leaves in a wind-blown tome,
When the bell bellows out his Bing, Bang, Bome!"

But the Bell began to throb with the fear
Of bringing the house about his one ear;

And his people were patching all day long,
And propping the walls to make them strong.
So a fortnight he sat, and felt like a mome,
For he dared not shout his Bing, Bang, Bome!

Said the Owl to himself, and hissed as he said,
"I do believe the old fool is dead.
Now—now, I vow, I shall never pounce twice;
And stealing shall be all sugar and spice.
But I'll see the corpse, ere he's laid in the loam,
And shout in his ear Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!

"Hoo! hoo!" he cried, as he entered the steeple,
"They've hanged him at last, the righteous people!
His swollen tongue hangs out of his head;
I am sure at last the old brute is dead.
There let him hang, the shapeless gnome!
Choked, with his throat full of Bing, Bang, Bome!"

So he danced about him, singing Too-whoo!
And flapped the poor Bell, and said, "Is that you?
Where is your voice with its wonderful tone,
Banging poor owls, and making them groan?
A fig for you now, in your great hall-dome!
Too-whoo! is better than Bing, Bang, Bome!"

So brave was the owl, the downy and dapper,
That he flew inside, and sat on the clapper;
And he shouted Too-whoo! till the echo awoke,
Like the sound of a ghostly clapper-stroke:
"Ah! ha!" quoth the Owl, "I am quite at home—
I will take your place with my Bing, Bang, Bome!"

The Owl was uplifted with pride and self-wonder;
He hissed, and called the echo thunder;
And he sat the monarch of feathered fowl;
Till—Bang! went the Bell—and down went the owl,
Like an avalanche of feathers and foam,

Loosed by the booming Bing, Bang, Bome!

He sat where he fell, as if nought was the matter,
Though one of his eyebrows was certainly flatter.
Said one of the owlets, "Pa, you were wrong;
He's at it again with his vulgar song."
"Be still," said the Owl; "you're guilty of pride.
I brought him to life by perching inside."

"But why, my dear?" said his pillowy wife;
"You know he was always the plague of your life."
"I have given him a lesson of good for evil;
Perhaps the old ruffian will now be civil."
The Owl looked righteous, and raised his comb,
But the Bell bawled on his Bing, Bang, Bome.
"Now! you must go to bed, now."

In this all the mammas were of one mind; so, after various and elaborate *Good-nights*, the little ones went off to sleep, and, I am afraid, to dream.