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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The giant Energy and the fairy Skill

Maud Lindsay

Long, long ago, when giants could still be seen, there lived a young giant who was very strong and very willing, but who found it hard to get work to do. The name of the giant was Energy, and he was so great and clumsy that people were afraid to trust their work to him.

If he were asked to put a bell in the church steeple, he would knock the steeple down, before he finished the work. If he were sent to reach a broken weather vane, he would tear off part of the roof in his zeal. So, at last, people would not employ him and he went away to the mountains to sleep; but he could not rest, even though other giants were sleeping as still as great rocks under the shade of the trees. Young Giant Energy could not sleep, for he was too anxious to help in the world's work; and he went down into the valley, and begged for something to do, so a good woman gave him a basket of china (porcelain!) to carry home for her.

"This is child's play for me," said the giant as he set the basket down at the woman's house, but he set it down so hard that every bit of the china was broken.

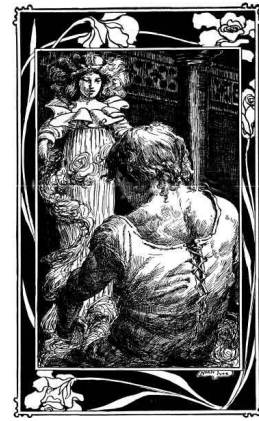
"I wish I didn't give it to you" answered the woman, and the young giant went away sorrowful. He climbed the mountain and lay down to rest; but he could not stay there and do nothing, so he went back to the valley to look for work. There he met the same woman. She had forgiven him for breaking her china, and had made up her mind to trust him again; so she gave him a pitcher of milk to carry home.

"Be quick in bringing it," she said, "don't let it sour on the way."

The giant took the pitcher and made haste to run to the house; and he ran so fast that the milk was spilled and not a drop was left when he reached the good woman's house. The good woman was sorry to see this, although she did not scold; and the giant went back to his mountain with a heavy heart.

Soon, however, he was back again, asking at every house:— "Isn't there something for me to do?" and again he met the good woman, who was here, there and everywhere, carrying soup to the sick and food to the hungry.

When she met the young Giant Energy, her heart was full of love for him; and she told him to make haste to her house and fill her tubs with water, for the next day was wash day. Then the giant made haste with mighty strides towards the good woman's house, where he found her great tubs; and, lifting them with ease, he carried them to the watertank and began to pump.



He pumped with such force and with so much delight, that the tubs were soon filled so full that they ran over, and when the good woman came home she found her yard as well as her tubs full of water. The young giant had such a downcast look, that the good woman could not be angry with him; she only felt sorry for him.

"Go to the Fairy Skill, and learn," said the good woman, as she sat on the doorstep. "She will teach you, and you will be a help in the world after all."

"Don't go fast," said the good woman. "Stand still and listen! Go through the meadow, and count a hundred daffodils; then turn to your right, and walk until you find a mullein stalk that is bent. Notice the way it bends, and walk in that direction till you see a willow tree. Behind this willow runs a little stream. Cross the water by the way of the shining pebbles, and when you hear a strange bird singing you can see the fairy palace and the workroom where the Fairy Skill teaches her school. Go to her with my love and she will receive you."

The young giant thanked the good woman, stepped over the meadow fence, and counted the daffodils, "One, two, three," until he had counted a hundred. Then he turned to the right, and walked through the long grass to the bent mullein stalk, which pointed to the right; and after he had found the brook and crossed by way of the shining pebbles, he heard a strange bird singing, and saw among the trees the fairy palace.

He never could tell how it looked; but he thought it was made of sunshine, with the glimmer of green leaves reflected on it, and that it had the blue sky for a roof. That was the palace; and at one side of it was the workshop, built of strong pines and oaks; and the giant heard the hum of wheels, and the noise of the fairy looms, where the fairies wove carpets of rainbow threads.



When the giant came to the door, the doorway stretched itself for him to pass through. He found Fairy Skill standing in the midst of the workers; and when he

had given her the good woman's love, she received him kindly. Then she set him to work, bidding him sort a heap of tangled threads that lay in a corner like a great bunch of bright-colored flowers. This was hard work for the giant's clumsy fingers, but he was very patient about it. The threads would break, and he got some of them into knots; but when Fairy Skill saw his work, she said:— "Very good for today;" and touching the threads with her wand, she changed them into a tangled heap again. The next day the giant tried again, and after that again, until every thread lay unbroken and untangled.

Then Fairy Skill said "Well done," and led him to a loom and showed him how to weave.

This was harder work than the other had been; but Giant Energy was patient, although many times before his strip of carpet was woven the fairy touched it with her wand, and he had to begin over. At last it was finished, and the giant thought it was the most beautiful carpet in the world.

Fairy Skill took him next to the potter's wheel, where cups and saucers were made out of clay; and the giant learned to be steady and to shape the cup. The cups and saucers that were broken before he could make beautiful ones would have been enough to set the queen's tea table!

Fairy Skill then took him to the gold-smith, and there he was taught to make chains and bracelets and necklaces; and after he had learned all these things, the fairy told him that she had three trials for him. Three pieces of work he must do; and if he did them well, he could go again into the world, for he would then be ready to be a helper there.

"The first task is to make a carpet," said Fairy Skill, "a carpet fit for a palace floor."

Giant Energy sprang to his loom, and made his silver shuttle glance under and over, under and over, weaving a most beautiful pattern. As he wove, he thought of the road he took to get here; and his carpet became as green as the meadow grass, and lovely daffodils grew on it. When it was finished, it was almost as beautiful as a meadow full of flowers!

Then the fairy said that he must make a cup fine enough for a king to use. And the giant made a cup in the shape of a flower; and when it was finished, he painted birds on it with wings of gold. When she saw it, the fairy cried out with delight.

"One more trial before you go," she said. "Make me a chain that a queen might be glad to wear."

So Giant Energy worked by day and by night and made a chain of golden links; and in every link was a pearl as white as the shining pebbles in the brook. A

queen might well have been proud to wear this chain. After he had finished, Fairy Skill blessed him, and sent him away to be a helper in the world, and she made him take with him the beautiful things which he had made, so that he might give them to the one he loved best.

The young giant crossed the brook, passed the willow, found the mullein stalk, and counted the daffodils. When he had counted a hundred, he stepped over the meadow fence and came to the good woman's house. The good woman was at home, so he went in at the door and spread the carpet on the floor, and the floor looked like the floor of a palace. He set the cup on the table, and the table looked like the table of a king; and he hung the chain around the good woman's neck, and she was more beautiful than a queen.

And this is the way that young Giant Energy learned to be a helper in the world.

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