

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Modern Jack the Giant-Killer.

A boy was sitting by a cottage fire, gazing intently into it. His name was Jack Symonds. On his knee lay a book of fairy tales. He had been reading 'Jack the Giant-Killer,' and was stirred by it, as what boy is not, and girl too, for the matter of that.

'Oh, mother,' he said, 'I wish I could fight a giant as Jack did. But of course it's only a story and never happened.'

'Ah! my son,' said Mrs. Symonds, 'there have been giants, and they have been fought and conquered, thank God; but they are not all dead yet. I fear there is a very great and powerful giant living in our village.'

Jack was puzzled. What did his mother mean?

'He has several castles; one rears its head proudly in our village street. I fear much that Mark Somers will soon be in the giant's clutches.'

'Oh! mother,' said Jack, with some disap-

pointment, 'you mean the giant drink, and his castle, I suppose is the public-house.'

Just so, my son.'

Jack was silent, he was thinking. His mother said no more, but went about her work.

'I don't see what to do,' said Jack, after some time.

'Be brave, and keep your eyes open; you will soon find a chance of fighting him.'

Jack was lost in thought. He went over the story of Jack the Giant-Killer, and pictured it all in the burning coals—the castles, the giants, and their poor victims.

Just then a low knock was heard at the door. Jack opened it. A woman stood there, pale and trembling.

'Come in,' said Mrs. Symonds in her cheery way, 'Why, what's the matter?'

'The poor woman, whose name was Mrs. Somers, dropped on a chair and burst into tears.

'Oh! dear,' she cried, 'what shall I do? My Mark is taking to bad ways and going to the public-house, and now he has come home drunk.'

'Poor thing, I am sorry for you,' she said at length; 'perhaps he will mend, he is young yet.'

'Difficult to get out of the giant's clutches,' Jack said to himself.

'What can be done?' said Mrs. Symonds.

Jack wondered. Suddenly a thought struck him. He would see if he could not fight this giant. True, it seemed almost a hopeless task, but so was that of Jack the Giant-Killer. He was still thinking about it when Mrs. Somers continued, sobbing, 'I wish my Mark was more like your boy; he was nice enough before he took to these bad ways.'

'Yes,' said Jack, 'he is real jolly. I used to like playing with him.' He stopped. An idea came into his head. 'He's fond of reading, ain't he?'

'Yes, very,' said Mrs. Somers.

'I've a nice book here, all about giants and adventures. Perhaps Mark would like to see it.'

'I'm most sure he would, if you could spare it. I'd be glad of anything to keep him at home a bit.'

'Oh, yes, he can have it,' said Jack, and handed her the book.

to see how late it was. Mrs. Symonds had begun to lay the supper.

Mark said he must go.

'Oh, you must stay to supper, with Jack,' she said; 'it isn't often he has a friend in.'

Mark hesitated. It certainly looked inviting—hot roast potatoes and sausages did not come in one's way every day, so when Jack added his entreaties, he agreed to remain. They had a merry time, to be sure. After supper they had games, and ten o'clock came round all too soon. When Mark went home, his mother looked up as he entered, and was glad to see by his face that he was all right.

'I have been to Jack Symonds's, mother, and have had supper, so good-night,' and Mark went whistling to bed.

'Well,' said Mrs. Somers to herself, 'I be fine and glad; it was good of 'em.'

The next day Jack called to ask him if he would come in again that evening. Mark was in a dilemma, for he had promised to meet some of his old companions outside the 'Blue Boar,' down the street.

'Well, I don't mind if I do come in for a spell, it was rare fun. Tell Jim Sykes, mother, if he comes, that I'll meet him later on.'

So they went off together. Jack exerted all his powers that evening; the spelling game lasted a long time. Then they had another, and Mrs. Symonds joined in. When Mark looked up at the clock it was long after nine—too late to go anywhere; besides a tempting roast apple lay just beside him.

Every evening now found Mark at the Symonds's. The boys began to chaff him, and say, 'they wouldn't go to be lectured by Mrs. Symonds, not they.'

'Why, she doesn't lecture,' said Mark. 'We play games and have awful fun.'

'I wish I could go, too,' said a lean, hungry-looking boy, who had a miserable home. His father and mother were victims of the giant.

A thought struck Mark, 'Mrs. Symonds,' he said that night, 'I'm going to ask you something; please don't think me rude! There's Jim Sykes. You know what dreadful folks his people be. He would so like to come here. I've told him what nice times we have.'

'I should be pleased to see him,' said Mrs. Symonds. 'Bring him by all means.'

Mark ran off and returned with Jim. He was shy at first, but soon began to feel at home. After that he came often with Mark.

'Well,' Mrs. Symonds said one evening, 'I really think we had better form ourselves into a little club; the only condition must be that we all have nothing to do with the drink.'

Then Jack explained to them about Jack the Giant-Killer, and how he wanted to be one, too.

'I see,' said Mark, 'I'll join you.'

'And I,' chimed in Jim.

'God bless you all, my children,' said Jack's mother. 'I think the giant's castle will soon fall now.'

So the Boys' Temperance Club began. It became so popular that Mrs. Symonds's front room was crowded out, and many applicants had to be refused.

A gentleman who heard of Jack and his mother's noble effort against the giant drink, came forward and offered a larger room.

The temperance cause, which had been sadly languishing, revived, and the meetings which were started were well kept up.

The little band worked on bravely, each



THIS IS THE WAY JACK SYMONDS BECAME JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

Jack was very quiet after she had gone for the rest of the evening. When he said good-bye to his mother there was a new light in his eyes.

A week passed. Jack thought much of his new resolve. He saw his mother's words were true; drink was indeed a giant, terrible and great. How to fight him was the point, for Jack was determined that fight him he would. One day he met Mark.

'Hallo! Thanks for your book; I think it's prime fun. Ain't that Jack a plucky fellow though, to fight the giants as he did? I've most finished. Are you in a hurry for it?'

'Oh, no,' said Jack, 'keep it as long as you like.'

A few evenings after Mark appeared at Mrs. Symonds's with the book in his hand. He was kindly welcomed. How bright everything looked! Different from their home, he thought.

Mrs. Symonds bade him be seated, adding that Jack was out, but he would soon be back. Presently he came in. Together they looked at the book, and talked over the various heroes and their marvellous adventures. When they had finished, they were surprised