

THE UNSEEN GIANT

ONCE upon a time there was a giant; no one knew just when he began to live, but he was as old as the earth, that was quite sure.

Nobody had ever seen him or had even known where he lived; he came and went as he pleased, but always invisible. Sometimes he would play all manner of pranks, life off the roofs of houses and toss them in the air like balls, then he would roll up the big waves ever so high, and many a good ship was buried beneath the angry white foam in the ocean.

Often he would step into the forest and pull up great trees by the roots, flinging them on top of each other, blocking the roadway with branches and bushes.

Oh, how frightened the people would feel, when he tumbled their houses down around their ears! They had to run for their lives, and even then they feared he would take them on his strong wings high in the air, and dash them on the ground below.

But he was not always cruel, oh, no! Some little children were very sick in the hot city; every one thought they must die. "If there was only a breath of pure air!" cried the mother. Then the big giant felt sorry for the poor, suffering little ones, and swept the cooling mountain breezes along till they flew in the open window and fanned the children while they slept.

There were some tiny seed babies huddles together in a dry milkweed pod. "You'll never grow here," howled the giant, "you must go out into the world if you want to be of any use [439] at all." "But we are so afraid," whispered the timid babies; then the old giant lifted them up quite out of their house and carried them to a lovely spot where there was a green moss carpet and a big oak tree, whose leaves had all put on their gay fall dresses. The rain fairies, in their soft, gray cloaks, came down from the skies. "O, the poor, tired, seed babies!" the cried, "we'll put them to sleep"; so they patted them very gently, until they sank into the soft earth bed Mother Nature had prepared for them. Jack Frost tucked them in with a snow-white comfortable, and they slept until spring, then—well, you must ask the oak what became of those babies.

This giant can sing, and you have heard him many a time roaring through the tree tops so loudly that you truly felt afraid.

And then of a winter's night, when you were sitting round the warm fire, listening to the true stories grandma told you of the days when she was young, you have heard him whistle through the keyhole of the front door; no doubt he would have been delighted to walk into the room and stir things up generally, but he was shut out.

"What is this giant's name?" you ask. It is the Wind.

And whence he comes and whither he goes,

Nobody cares and nobody knows,

For never since time began, I ween,

Has this old giant ever been seen.