



Jack and the Beanstalk

From *English Fairy Tales*

Collected by Joseph Jacobs

There was once upon a time a poor widow who had a son named Jack, and a cow named Milky-white. And all they had to live on was the milk the cow gave every morning, which they carried to the market and sold. But one morning Milky-white gave no milk and they didn't know what to do.

"What shall we do, what shall we do?" said the widow, wringing her hands. "We must sell Milky-white and with the money do something, start shop, or something."

"All right, mother," says Jack; "it's market-day today, and I'll soon sell Milky-white, and then we'll see what we can do."

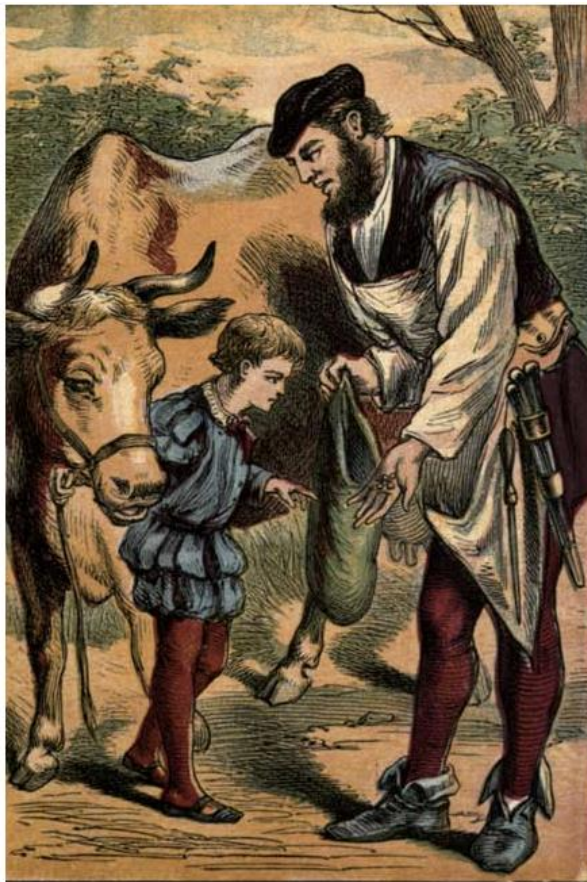
So he took the cow's halter in his hand, and off he starts. He hadn't gone far when he met a funny-looking old man who said to him: "Good morning, Jack."

"Good morning to you," said Jack, and wondered how he knew his name.

"Well, Jack, and where are you off to?" said the man.

"I'm going to market to sell our cow."

"Well, that's good news for me," said the man. "I am in need of a cow and this one looks good enough. The man pulled a number of strange-looking beans out of his bag. 'I'll give you these five beans for your cow.'"



"Ha!" says Jack; "wouldn't you like that?"

"Ah! You don't know what these beans are," said the man; "if you plant them over-night, by morning they grow right up to the sky."

"Really?" says Jack.

"Yes. And if it doesn't turn out to be true you can have your cow back."

"Right," says Jack, and hands him over Milky-white's halter and pockets the beans.

Back goes Jack home.

"Back already, Jack?" said his mother; "I see you haven't got Milky-white, so you've sold her. How much did you get for her?"

"You'll never guess, mother," says Jack.

"Good boy! Five pounds? Ten? Fifteen? No, it *can't* be twenty!"

"I told you you couldn't guess...Here mother, these beans were what I got; they're magical, plant them over-night and — —"

"What!" says Jack's mother, "have you been such a fool, such a dolt, such an idiot, as to give away my Milky-white, the best milker in the county, for a set of paltry beans? Take that! Take that! Take that! And as for your precious beans, here they go out of the window. And now off with you to bed. No dinner for you tonight."

So Jack went upstairs to his little room in the attic, and sad and sorry he was, to be sure, as much for his mother's sake, as for the loss of his supper.

At last he dropped off to sleep.

When he woke up, the room looked so funny. The sun was shining into part of it, and yet all the rest was quite dark and shady. So Jack jumped up and dressed himself and went to the window.

And what do you think he saw? Why, the beans his mother had thrown out of the window into the garden, had sprung up into a big beanstalk which went up and up and up till it reached the sky.

So the man spoke truth after all.

The beanstalk grew up quite close past Jack's window, so all he had to do was to open it and give a jump on to the beanstalk, which was like a big braided ladder.

So Jack climbed

and he climbed
and he climbed
and he climbed
and he climbed
and he climbed
and he climbed.....
till at last he reached
the sky.



And when he got there he found a long broad road going as straight
as an arrow.

So he walked along and he walked along and he walked along till he came to a great big tall house, and on the doorstep there was a great big tall woman.

"Good morning!" says Jack, quite politely. "Could you be so kind as to give me some breakfast?" For he hadn't had anything to eat, you know, the night before and was as hungry as a hunter.

"It's breakfast you want, is it?" says the great big tall woman, "it's breakfast you'll *be* if you don't move along. My husband is a giant and there's nothing he likes better than little boys broiled on toast. You'd better be moving on or he'll soon be coming."

"Oh! Please! Do give me something to eat. I've had nothing to eat since yesterday morning, really and truly!" says Jack. "I may as well be broiled, as die of hunger."

Well, the giant's wife wasn't so a bad, after all. So she took Jack into the kitchen, and gave him a piece of bread and cheese and a jug of milk.

But Jack hadn't half-finished these when....

thump!

thump!

thump!

the whole house began to tremble with the noise of someone coming.

"Goodness gracious me! It's my husband," said the giant's wife, "What on earth shall I do? Here, come quick and jump in here."

And she hurried Jack into the oven just as the giant came in.

He was a big one, to be sure.

At his belt he had three cows strung up by the heels, and he unhooked them and threw them down on the table and said: "Here, wife, broil me a couple of these for breakfast. Ah what's this I smell?

*Fee-fi-fo-fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Be he alive, or be he dead
I'll have his bones to grind my bread."*

"Nonsense, dear," said his wife, "you're dreaming. Or perhaps you smell the scraps of that little boy you liked so much for yesterday's dinner. Here, go you and have a wash and tidy up, and by the time you come back your breakfast'll be ready for you."

So the giant went off, and Jack was just going to jump out of the oven and run off when the woman said, "Wait till he's asleep, he always has a snooze after breakfast."



Well, the giant had his breakfast, then he said: "Wife, bring me the hen that lays the golden eggs." So she brought the giant an ordinary looking hen, and the giant said: "Lay," and what do you know it laid an egg made all of gold.

The giant grinned a horrible toothy grin. Then his head began to nod until a loud snore shook the house.

Jack crept out of the oven on tiptoe and caught hold of the golden hen, and was turning to leave... when the hen gave a cackle that woke the giant!

Jack was out of the house like a flash when he heard the giant calling, "Wife, wife, what have you done with my golden hen?"

And the wife said: "What, my dear?"

But that was all Jack heard, for he rushed off to the beanstalk and climbed down like a house on fire. And when he got home he showed his mother the wonderful hen and said "Lay." It laid a golden egg for Jack, just as it had for the giant. And, even better, it laid a golden egg every time he said "Lay."

For a little while, Jack and his mother were satisfied. Thanks to the hen's golden eggs, they had all they needed to live a comfortable life.

But, it wasn't very long before Jack began to wonder if he couldn't find something else up there in the sky.

So one fine morning, he got up early, and went on to the beanstalk

and he climbed,

and he climbed,

and he climbed,

and he climbed,

till at last he reached
the sky.

But this time he knew
better than to go straight
to the giant's house. And
when he got near it he
waited behind a bush till
he saw the giant's wife
come out with a pail to
get some water, and then
he crept into the house
and got into a big copper
pot near the stove in the kitchen.



He hadn't been there long when he heard

thump!

thump!

thump!

And, as before, and in came the giant and his wife.

"Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman," cried out the giant; "I smell him, wife, I smell him!"

"Do you, my dearie?" says the giant's wife. "If it's that little brat that stole the hen that laid the golden eggs he's sure to have got into the oven."

And they both rushed to the oven. But Jack wasn't there, luckily, and the giant's wife said: "There you are again with your fee-fi-fo-fum. Why of course it's the boy you caught last night that I've broiled for your breakfast. How forgetful I am, and how careless you are not to tell the difference between a live one and a broiled one."

So the giant sat down to the breakfast and ate it, but every now and then he would mutter: "Well, I could have sworn — —" and he'd get up and search the kitchen and the cupboards, and everything, only luckily he didn't think of the copper pot.

After breakfast was over, the giant called out: "Wife, wife, bring me my golden harp." So she brought it and put it on the table before him. Then he said: "Sing!" and the golden harp sang most beautifully. And it went on singing till the giant fell asleep, and began to snore like thunder.

Then Jack lifted up the copper-lid very quietly and got down like a mouse and crept on hands and knees until he got to the table. He stood up and caught hold of the golden harp and dashed with it towards the door.

But the harp called out quite loudly: "Master! Master!" and the giant woke up just in time to see Jack running off with his harp.



Jack ran as fast as he could, and the giant came rushing after! When Jack got to the beanstalk, the giant was not more than twenty feet away. Jack began climbing down.

Well, the giant didn't like trusting his giant weight to the beanstalk, and so he stopped. But just then the harp cried out: "Master! Master!" and the giant swung himself down on to the beanstalk after his harp.

Down climbs Jack, and after him climbed the giant.

Jack climbed down

and climbed down

and climbed down

till he was very nearly home.

So he called out: "Mother! Mother! Bring me an axe, bring me an axe."

And his mother came rushing out with the axe in her hand, she caught sight of the giant coming down just below the clouds.

Jack got hold of the axe and gave a chop at the beanstalk, which cut it nearly in half. The giant felt the beanstalk shake so he stopped to see what was the matter. Then Jack gave another chop with the axe, and the beanstalk was cut in two and began to topple over. The giant fell down and broke his crown, and the beanstalk came toppling after.



Then Jack showed his mother his golden harp. She was delighted!

Jack and his mother became very rich, and he married a great princess, and they lived happy ever after.



Text and pictures courtesy of Gutenberg.org.