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A Story of a Giant

A Parable Not Laid Down in the Gospels, but Which
Will Bear Careful Reflection.

Lizzie M. Swank

1887

Once upon a time there lived a great, strong, patient giant who faithfully served some young princes of the realm.

The princes ordered him about, sent him out on all sorts of perilous errands, rode upon his shoulders, and loaded him with burdens to carry, as though he were a pack-horse. They knew he was so strong that he could have annihilated them with his thumb and forefinger, but they laughed at the idea, for he had so long obeyed their every word; he had been so patient, so stupid and uncomplaining, and he believed implicitly in the divine right of the young princes to rule him, they scouted the suggestion that his strength might some day prove dangerous to them. So that they fed him three times a day a huge solid meal and give him a rude place to sleep in at night he seemed content.

But as the princes grew older and more conscious of their power they grew more insolent and exacting. They began to torment and tease the poor old giant, to keep back part of his food, and to beat and whip him with their sticks.

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Sometimes he growled and looked menacingly out of this great, sleepy-looking eyes. Then they reminded him of his duty to them, his masters, and threatened him with vague and unknown torments if he dared resist them, and so quieted him again. But their own cruelties multiplied day by day. The life of the great, patient giant became a burden to him, but still he plodded on, for he was proud of being called a good, obedient and orderly giant, and would not forfeit the name even to resent his own wrongs. And still they starved and beat and loaded him with burdens, and taunted him with his inability to feel himself better. When he sat down to his meager meal, looking hungry and disconsolate, they asked him why he hadn't saved enough out of his last meager meal to make this one sufficient, and sometimes the stupid giant sighed and thought he had been dreadfully extravagant somehow.

Just outside his miserable shed were great storehouses of food which he had garnered and preserved, and which he could have obtained with one turn of his brawny hand. But the young princes had forbidden it, and he thought he must respect their commands.

But one day he became exasperated, and before a roomful of courtiers and subjects he told the princes they were wronging him, and that it might be dangerous to continue their course. He demanded the right to be decently provided for in return for his services, and if not complied with something terrible might happen to them.

The princes were so angry and astonished at the giant's audacity that they ordered his tongue cut out, so that he might never say such words again. Wiser men expostulated with the princes, telling them there was danger in going too far, and that it was best to gag him for the rest of his natural life. It was of no use—the princes were determined.

Even to this the great giant submitted without hurting his tormenters, believing that his rights would be recognized some times, if he were only patient and orderly.

Then the princes said: "There! Didn't I tell you so? We knew we could carry out our will without any trouble or disturbance. See how powerful and great we are? The giant dares not resist us—he is but a coward after all."

And so the lot of the poor dumb giant was harder than ever. He could not cry out, and the followers of the princes believed he was cowardly, and so heaped upon him any wrong they saw fit. Some few pitied him, but consoled themselves with the idea that the giant must have deserved it or he would not have received such treatment; of course, the princes could not be wrong.

And what was the end?

At last the giant grew insane over his terrible treatment, and was no longer responsible for his acts. He rushed into the princes' palace one day like a wild beast, and with one sweep of his great arms crushed the life out of the princes, courtiers, and followers; with another the walls of the palace were demolished and laid in a heap of ruins, with the blood of the tyrannical princes oozing up through it.

The fields of grain were destroyed and the storehouses thrown into the sea with another wild rush of the raving giant. Everything fell before him, and when there was no longer a living thing to destroy he tore a huge mountain up by its roots from the bowels of the earth and hurled it over his head, and so died.

And the whole country became a black, desolate, and lifeless desert.