
SIXPENCE OR COLOURED ONE SHILLING.
ALFRED CROWQUILL'S FAIRY TALES
THE GIANT HANDS.
G. ROUTLEDGE & Co. LONDON & NEW YORK.

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GIANT HANDS; OR, THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY ***

The Poor Home.

Alfred Crowquill's Fairy Tales.

THE
GIANT HANDS:

OR,

THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY.

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THE GIANT HANDS.

Poor lit-tle Wil-lie re-turn-ed from the for-est la-den with as much wood as his fee-ble strength could bear. He was hun-gry and wea-ry, and had a great sor-row at his heart, for he had lost his fa-ther in the ear-ly spring, leav-ing his mo-ther to toil for a scant live-li-hood to sup-port her-self and him.

He threw the wood up-on the cin-ders on the hearth, and quick-ly rais-ed a cheer-ful blaze, at which he warm-ed his na-ked, swol-len feet, as he watch-ed the smoke ma-king its fan-tas-tic ed-dies up the wide chim-ney, and a-midst the raf-ters of the low roof. He heav-ed a deep sigh; for he saw no pot up-on the fire, which ought to have been bub-bling up with their fru-gal din-ner: but, a-las! they had none.

"This must not be any long-er," thought he, "for I am get-ting ve-ry big and strong, and have a pair of hands that ought not to be i-dle. As my poor mo-ther gets weak-er, I should work for her; and as I grow in-to a man, she should not work any more, but sit by the fire and get the din-ner rea-dy, which I shall then be a-ble to la-bour for."

Meeting the Hands.

Wil-lie was of an in-dus-tri-ous mind, and did not love to sit i-dle when e-ven his ti-ny strength might be used to some end.

So he sat and lis-ten-ed for the foot-step of his poor mo-ther, who, he knew, would come home, wea-ri-ed with la-bour, to share her scan-ty crust with her boy.

He had not to wait long be-fore the latch lift-ed, and his mo-ther en-ter-ed. She kiss-ed him, and threw her-self in-to a chair, with the tears of fa-tigue and ex-haus-tion in her eyes.

He em-bra-ced her, and whis-per-ed in-to her ear his firm resolve to start out in-to the world, and seek for la-bour, that he might no long-er be a bur-then to her. Her heart sank at the i-dea; but she saw no o-ther means to save them from star-va-tion, as her fail-ing strength gave warn-ing of the in-e-vi-ta-ble e-vil.

The morn-ing a-rose bright and cheer-ful. The old lock-er was o-pen-ed, and his on-ly shoes, trea-sur-ed for high-days and ho-li-days, were ta-ken out and brush-ed up, as was al-so his best suit, which was in-deed ve-ry lit-tle bet-ter than the care-ful-ly mend-ed suit of his e-ve-ry-day wear. He, how-e-ver, thought him-self ve-ry fine, and felt that his ap-pear-ance would act as a re-com-men-da-tion in his fa-vour.

They sat down to break-fast: it was a ve-ry tear-ful one, and, with a strange feel-ing, they a-void-ed each o-ther's looks, hop-ing to hide their tears one from the o-ther.

Oh! it want-ed a great re-so-lu-tion for poor Wil-lie to say, "Well! dear mo-ther, I must be start-ing;" but he did do it at last, al-though it was af-ter ma-ny strug-gles to keep down the beat-ings of his heart.

The First Assistance.

His mo-ther heard him with a be-wil-der-ed look, as if she heard the pro-po-sal for the first time; and her grief burst forth with un-con-trol-la-ble vi-o-lence as she threw her arms round his neck with an a-go-ny on-ly known to a fond mo-ther.

He tried to com-fort her, and to smile through his tears, as he put on his hat with a re-so-lute thump, seiz-ed up-on his stick and wal-let, and lift-ed the latch of the door that was to o-pen for his bold en-trance in-to the world, so full of pro-mise to him.

Again they lin-ger-ed in their lit-tle gar-den, where e-ve-ry flow-er seem-ed an old friend to be part-ed with: a-gain the tears and the em-bra-ces. At last the lit-tle gate was swung wide o-pen, and Wil-lie step-ped bold-ly forth. His mo-ther co-ver-ed her face and wept. He turn-ed to-wards her with ir-re-so-lu-tion: he felt how dif-fi-cult it was to leave one so dear and af-fec-tion-ate; but his du-ty was sim-ple, and he would do it: with one more "good bye," he was gone on his way weep-ing.

The lark rose in the morn-ing sky, and sang her joy-ous song. The sweet, bal-my air of ear-ly day cool-ed his throb-bing brow, and his tears gra-du-al-ly ceas-ed to flow; but his lit-tle breast heav-ed now and then with sobs as the storm of grief sub-si-ded. His foot-steps grew quick-er the far-ther he left his home be-hind; for be-fore him lay the land of pro-mise, and his lit-tle brain was full of dreams of suc-cess, and the con-se-quent joy that would be at his heart when he re-trod those ve-ry fields on his re-turn, la-den with rich-es to throw in-to his mo-ther's lap.

As these thoughts rush-ed through his mind, they gave him much com-fort; and he even hummed an air as he trot-ted on, to show his man-li-ness and cou-rage.

Pre-sen-tly, as he pass-ed through a val-ley which was la-den with the sweets of wild flow-ers that bloom-ed on ei-ther side, a cu-ri-ous and al-most trans-pa-rent flee-cy cloud ap-pear-ed a-cross his path, from which a-rose *two e-nor-mous hands*. He start-ed, and well he might, for he saw

no-bo-dy be-long-ing to them: no, there they were, on-ly hands. There was no fear of them, for they were spread o-pen up-on the grass be-fore him with-out the slight-est ex-pres-sion of threat-en-ing in them.

As he stood ga-zing with won-der up-on them, a voice, which ap-pear-ed to pr-oceed from the cloud, said,—

"Wil-lie, be not a-fraid: I know the praise-wor-thy er-rand that you are on, and I come to be-friend you. Per-se-vere in your de-sire to be in-dus-tri-ous, and. I will be e-ver rea-dy to as-sist you. I shall be in-vi-si-ble to all eyes but yours, and will work when the need ap-pears. Come on, then, and fear not; the road to suc-cess is o-pen to you, as it al-ways is to in-dus-tr-ious re-so-lu-tion."

"Thank you, good hands," said Wil-lie; "I am sure you mean me good, for I am too lit-tle for you to wish to harm." The arms va-nish-ed, and Wil-lie pro-ceed-ed on his way.

He felt so re-as-su-red by this ex-tra-or-di-na-ry ad-ven-ture, which pro-mi-sed so well for his fu-ture suc-cess, that he leap-ed and dan-ced a-long his path with ex-cite-ment and de-light: he look-ed for-ward to no ob-sta-cle to stop him in his ca-reer, and he pur-su-ed his way re-joic-ing.

The Ogress's Castle.

How-e-ver, as the day grew on, he slack-en-ed his pace, for the un-ac-cus-tom-ed fa-tigue be-gan to tell up-on his frame; so at last he threw him-self up-on the grass, and look-ed up-wards to the blue sky, and watch-ed the flee-cy clouds pur-sue each o-ther a-cross the bound-less ex-panse of the hea-vens. As he lay, half dream-ing, he thought he heard some-thing like the roll-ing of thun-der: he lis-ten-ed with great-er at-ten-tion, un-til he was as-sur-ed there was some cause in his close vi-ci-ni-ty for the un-u-su-al and cu-ri-ous sounds. He a-rose, and pro-ceed-ed to-wards the di-rec-tion of the sounds, which grew loud-er and loud-er as he

ad-van-ced; when, com-ing to the edge of a pre-ci-pice, he be-held a grand and aw-ful rush of foam-ing wa-ters, which threw them-selves head-long down the riv-en rocks with a deaf-en-ing roar and tu-mult.

He look-ed from right to left, and his way seem-ed bar-red by this tre-men-dous ob-sta-cle. His heart fail-ed him as he saw how im-pos-si-ble it was for him to pro-ceed: in-deed, as he sat him-self down on the edge of the ca-ta-ract, he could not help weep-ing at his un-ex-pect-ed di-lem-ma.

He had not been ma-ny mi-nutes in-dul-ging in his grief, when he felt him-self gent-ly lift-ed from the ground by a gi-gan-tic hand, which pass-ed him high a-bove the threat-en-ing wa-ters, and pla-ced him in safe-ty on the op-po-site bank. As the hand put him on his feet, it be-came in-dis-tinct; but be-fore it had quite van-ish-ed, Wil-lie took off his hat, and, bow-ing, said,—"Thank you kind-ly, good hand; you have kept your promise well."

The Ogress's Castle.

Cer-tain now that the fai-ry hands were not a dream, which he had real-ly be-gun to think them, his cou-rage rose with the con-vic-tion of the pro-tec-tion which sur-round-ed him from their great pow-er and good-will to-wards him.

He soon came to a dense wood, where the gi-gan-tic trees, with gnarl-ed and twist-ed trunks, wound their e-nor-mous limbs a-round each o-ther in the most fan-tas-tic forms, and the tan-gled un-der-wood twi-ned like snakes a-cross the path, as if to for-bid any ven-tu-rous foot from en-ter-ing into the dark green depths. He, how-e-ver, look-ed up-on all such ob-sta-cles as no-thing in com-pa-ri-son with the last which he had been en-a-bled to sur-mount with the as-sist-ance of the hands. So he plun-ged on, strik-ing right and left, to clear his way, with his good stick. As he

was lay-ing a-bout with a right good will, he was brought to a stand-still by a fe-ro-ci-ous growl. He turn-ed his eyes a-round, and be-held, much to his dis-may, a fierce wolf pre-par-ing to spring up-on him. He shrank down with ter-ror as he look-ed up-on the white teeth and fi-e-ry eyes of the sa-vage brute, and gave him-self up for lost, when, to his joy, one of the great hands e-mer-ged from a-midst the thick fo-li-age of a tree, and pla-ced it-self be-tween him and his en-e-my; at the same time the o-ther hand seiz-ed the wolf, and crush-ed it in its grasp.

Wil-lie fell on his knees, and re-turn-ed thanks for his de-li-ver-ance; then, look-ing round for the hands, he found they had va-nish-ed.

The Kitchen of the Ogress.

Wea-ri-ed with his jour-ney, he sat down un-der a tree, de-ter-min-ed to rest for the night; and pull-ing out his wal-let, pre-par-ed to re-fresh him-self with part of its con-tents, for he had scarce-ly eat-en any all day, so com-plete-ly had he been ta-ken up by the won-der-ful ap-pear-ance of the good hands.

Af-ter fi-nish-ing his meal, which he did with ex-ceed-ing rel-ish, he be-gan to turn o-ver in his mind how he was to make up his bed in his ve-ry large bed-cham-ber, for it ap-pear-ed as if he had got the great fo-rest all to him-self. When he had col-lect-ed a suf-fi-ci-en-cy of dri-ed leaves to-ge-ther to make his rest-ing place soft-er, he pre-par-ed to lie down, when, to his as-to-nish-ment and de-light, he be-held the gi-gan-tic hands spread them-selves over him, with the fin-gers en-twin-ed, ma-king for him the most per-fect lit-tle tent in the world. How his heart bound-ed with gra-ti-tude to-wards the good fai-ry hands, as he felt how safe-ly he might in-dulge in his slum-bers be-neath such pro-tec-tion!

"Thank you a-gain, good hands," said he, "for your kind care of me; but be-fore I say my pray-ers, can-not you, since you are so pow-er-ful, tell me some-thing of my dear mo-ther—whe-ther she is more con-so-led, and whe-ther she has food to eat?"

"Good Wil-lie," re-plied a voice, "your mo-ther knows that you will be pro-tect-ed, as all good chil-dren are; and she has food, for she is in-dus-tri-ous; her hands were giv-en to her from my king-dom, in which no i-dle hands are ever made, as you shall know from me here-af-ter. Sleep, then, in peace, that you may rise pre-pa-red for la-bour on the com-ing morn." So Wil-lie slept.

The Death of the Ogress.

Wil-lie was ear-ly a-foot; for the day, ac-cord-ing to the hands, was to be a day of la-bour, with its fruits. He soon left the wood be-hind him, and saw a large cas-tle before him.

"Here, sure-ly, is some-thing to be done," thought he; so he leapt up the steps, and tri-ed to raise the knock-er, but it was too hea-vy for his pu-ny strength. In an in-stant the hands ap-pear-ed, and knock-ed such a dou-ble knock, that it e-cho-ed like thun-der through the val-ley, and you might have heard it rum-bling a-way on the dis-tant moun-tains.

The door o-pen-ed with a sud-den jerk, and the mis-tress of the man-sion ap-pear-ed. The mo-ment Wil-lie saw her, he back-ed down the steps, for she was an o-gress, and as ug-ly as o-gress-es ge-ne-ral-ly are. She gla-red up-on the lit-tle-man who she sup-po-sed had giv-en that great knock, with sur-prise and as-to-nish-ment; and then, in a voice like a ve-ry hoarse ra-ven, she cri-ed—

"How dar-ed you to knock like that at my door, you lit-tle var-let? You have put me all in a twit-ter."

Wil-lie trem-bling-ly took off his hat, and re-pli-ed in an hum-ble voice, "If you please, prin-cess, I wish-ed to know whe-ther you want-ed a ser-vant to as-sist in your mag-ni-fi-cent cas-tle."

"A ser-vant, brat!" said she; "what can you do?"

"Any-thing to please your high-ness, for I want to work."

"Oh, oh! do you? Then, come in, for my ser-vants have all left me be-cause I don't put my work out," said she.

The Rescue.

With that, Wil-lie en-ter-ed, and soon found that he had plen-ty to do; for his first job was to get the o-gress's din-ner ready, who, in truth, had no de-li-cate ap-pe-tite, for the pro-vi-si-on con-sist-ed of fish, fowl, beef, soup, mut-ton, and ham-pers of ve-ge-ta-bles.

He sigh-ed as he look-ed up-on such a-bun-dance, which would have di-ned sump-tu-ous-ly his own na-tive vil-lage. A-gain he sigh-ed: as he did so, the gi-ant hands ap-pear-ed. If you could on-ly have seen them truss this, skew-er that, boil the o-ther, turn out the sau-ces, pick the pic-kles, cut the bread, and put the dish-es to the fire, you would have been as-to-nish-ed, Wil-lie all the time do-ing all he knew to aid in the work.

The o-gress di-ned, and smi-led up-on her trea-sure of a ser-vant.

Self-in-dul-gent people are al-ways un-grate-ful; and so the o-gress pro-ved, for she was con-ti-nu-al-ly de-si-ring more and more at the hands of poor Wil-lie, un-til he had no rest: and, one day, when she had been more im-po-sing than u-su-al, he turn-ed round, and told her that she left him hard-ly time to sleep, and that her ap-pe-tite was fright-ful.

Could you have seen her face, you would have been as fright-en-ed as Wil-lie was.

"Lit-tle wretch!" scream-ed she, "I have half a mind to snap you up as I would the wing of a chick-en: and, re-mem-ber from this mo-ment, if my din-ner is short of what I de-sire, I will eat you to make up for what you have o-mit-ted."

"Then I shall leave you," said Wil-lie.

The Reaping.

Rage made the face of the o-gress glow like a fur-nace, as she made a pounce at poor Wil-lie for his ill-ad-vis-ed speech; and she would have caught him in her gripe, had he not dod-ged round a large bun-dle of ve-ge-ta-bles which luck-i-ly lay on the floor. Round and round she went af-ter him, un-til he felt that he must be caught; when a ve-ry large hand grasp-ed her round the waist, and hur-ri-ed her, yell-ing, out of the kit-chen; Wil-lie fol-low-ing, re-turn-ing thanks for his de-li-ver-ance. They came to a large win-dow which o-pen-ed to the sea: the hand thrust the o-gress out, and held her ex-ten-ded over the roll-ing waves.

"Mercy! mercy!" groan-ed, the o-gress, as she gaz-ed upon the aw-ful depth be-neath her.

The hand gra-du-al-ly re-lax-ed its hold; and the o-gress, with one des-pair-ing cry, whirl-ed o-ver and o-ver, and fell with such a plump in-to the sea, that the spray flew o-ver the high-est tow-er, and the fish-es swam a-way in ter-ror. She went down, down, down: but never came up, up, up.

Wil-lie ran out of the front door; and when he got to the mar-gin of the sea, he turn-ed his eye to the waves, ex-pect-ing every mo-ment to see the head of the dread-ful o-gress pop up a-gain; but it did not. He saw the good hands fol-low-ing him: they plun-ged into the sea close at his feet; he jump-ed in-to the palm of one, and seat-ed himself. Be-tween the fin-ger and thumb of each hand was one of his cook-ing forks, stuck through

two of the o-gress's ve-ry best hand-ker-chiefs, which made ve-ry ad-mi-ra-ble sails, catch-ing the wind, and waft-ing him a-long o-ver the sea as well as the fi-nest ship e-ver built.

The Ploughing.

As the moon rose, it found him safe-ly land-ed and snug under the roof of a good farm-er who had pro-mi-sed him work—ay, e-ven as much as he could do: but the farm-er did not know the trea-sure he pos-sess-ed, for the next morn-ing lit-tle Wil-lie was work-ing in his shirt-sleeves in the corn-field reap-ing and shear-ing as much as two men, and stout ones too, could do in a long day. But there, un-der the shel-ter of the high corn, were the friend-ly hands work-ing mi-ra-cles; ga-ther-ing up the corn, and put-ting it in-to sheaves in a man-ner that could not be e-qual-led by mor-tal hands.

Wil-lie whistl-ed, and cut a-way, not-with-stand-ing the burn-ing heat of the sun: his sic-kle glis-ten-ed, and the corn fell in such long sweeps that I do be-lieve it was as ma-gi-cal as the hands them-selves.

The long-est day will, how-e-ver, have an end: but when Wil-lie's first day wa-ned, the farm-er was struck with as-to-nish-ment at be-hold-ing the gold-en rows of hea-vy corn, stand-ing for his ad-mi-ra-tion in the well ti-ed sheaves. He look-ed from the lit-tle man to the fruits of his la-bour, and pro-mi-sed to him-self to do his best to se-cure so va-lu-a-ble a ser-vant.

"Oh, oh!" said the farm-er, "if he can reap so well, per-haps he can plough:" so ac-cord-ing-ly the next morn-ing found lit-tle Wil-lie as a plough-man. But how could he know how to do it? any one would say. Why, the hands guid-ed the plough; and the lands were plough-ed in fur-rows as straight as the flight of an ar-row sped by the strong-est arm.

The Bridge.

The farm-er watch-ed from his win-dow, but the hands were in-vi-si-ble to his eyes: he saw the plough cut its way un-err-ing-ly in-to the bo-som of the earth, in a man-ner that sur-pri-sed e-ven his ex-pe-ri-ence, and he a-gain bless-ed his good for-tune that had giv-en him such a won-der-ful lit-tle la-bour-er.

Wil-lie sat at the board of the good farm-er, who thought he could not make too much of him, for he was grate-ful to the in-dus-tri-ous youth, who seem-ed to take plea-sure in work-ing for the in-ter-est of his mas-ter. Time roll-ed on, and Wil-lie be-came quite head man, for it was found that he could be en-trust-ed with any-thing. One day, when he was out on the moun-tains, where he had gone to ga-ther the flocks for the shear-ing, heavy storms came on, and the floods de-lu-ged the val-ley, sweep-ing the flocks and the herds a-way in their head-long course. Wil-lie wise-ly kept his charge upon the moun-tain's side un-til the wa-ters had in some de-gree sub-si-ded; but he was a-larm-ed when he de-scend-ed in-to the val-leys to find that, in ma-ny pla-ces, the wa-ter was im-pass-a-ble to his charge. As he stood in deep thought, the gi-ant hands spread them-selves over the tur-bid wa-ters, form-ing the most per-fect bridge im-a-gin-a-ble. He drove the sheep a-cross with-out fear, and reach-ed his mas-ter's house in safe-ty, much to the joy of all, who had giv-en him up for lost.

The Escape from the Fire.

As Wil-lie lay down that night, full of gra-ti-tude for his great good for-tune, and think-ing of his home, to which he knew he should so soon re-turn to take hap-pi-ness to his fond mo-ther, he was sud-den-ly a-rous-ed by screams of ter-ror and cries of a-larm. He jump-ed from his bed, and put-ting on his clothes, rush-ed in-to the farm-yard, where, to his hor-ror, he be-held his good mas-ter wring-ing his hands, and a-ban-don-ed to grief; for the flames were fast de-vour-ing his peace-ful house, and,

worse than all, they had reach-ed the cham-ber of his fa-vour-ite daugh-ter, whom he had in vain at-tempt-ed to res-cue, for no lad-der could reach her win-dow, and the stair-case had long been burnt. Wil-lie look-ed on in des-pair, for he could de-vise no means to save the poor child; when sud-den-ly the gi-ant hands ap-pear-ed, and plac-ing them-selves a-gainst the side of the house, form-ed a lad-der, up which Wil-lie sprang with-out the least he-si-ta-tion. In a few mo-ments he gain-ed the suf-fo-cat-ing cham-ber of the girl, and fold-ing her in his arms, rush-ed down the friend-ly hands, and pla-ced her, unharm-ed, in the em-brace of her des-pair-ing fa-ther.

A hea-vi-ly la-den wag-gon creaks along the wind-ing road, co-ver-ed with a tilt as white as snow; but what has it in-side? You can peep and see: beau-ti-ful ta-bles and chairs, and sides of ba-con, and geese and chick-ens, and fair round chees-es, and rolls of gold-en but-ter, with white eggs peep-ing through the bars of their wick-er pris-on. Where is the wag-gon go-ing? To mar-ket, per-haps: ask the youth who is trudg-ing by its side, with a smil-ing, hap-py face, rud-dy with health and the warm tinge of the sun.

The Triumphant Return.

Why, I de-clare that it is Wil-lie, grown quite stout and strong! Where is he go-ing with that well-stored wag-gon, which real-ly has no hor-ses to draw it, and yet it goes for-ward at a pret-ty pace? Why, I do be-lieve that the gi-ant hands are drag-ging it along!

It is Wil-lie, in-deed; and, joy-ous mo-ment! he is go-ing home. In his pock-et he has much bright sil-ver, the pro-duce of his la-bour: the con-tents of the wag-gon shows the farm-er's gra-ti-tude to Wil-lie for his promp-ti-tude, en-er-gy, and in-dus-try; and, more than all, for his risk-ing his life to save that of his dar-ling child.

At last the cot-tage path is reach-ed. His mo-ther is stand-ing at the gate: Wil-lie shouts; such a heart-y shout! His mo-ther looks up-on him, but can-not speak: he is soon in her arms.

That night they sat late be-side their blaz-ing hearth: a-midst the smoke might now be seen a large well-filled pot bub-bling with some-thing more than wa-ter in it.

How much Wil-lie had to tell his mo-ther of his la-bour, and what he ow-ed to the won-der-ful gi-ant hands, pre-serv-ing him through all dan-gers, and e-ver yield-ing him as-sist-ance!

Wil-lie's mo-ther smi-led up-on him, as he con-clu-ded his nar-ra-tive, with a kiss.

"Dear child," said she, "you have been in-deed for-tu-nate; but you were de-serv-ing. That which ap-pears to you as a mi-ra-cle is none. Those gi-ant hands have been known to ma-ny: their pow-er is e-nor-mous; they al-ways as-sist the will-ing and the good; the re-ward they be-stow is cer-tain; they are the pow-er-ful *hands of In-dus-try.*

THE END.

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28. The Cherry Orchard.
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30. The History of Our Pets.
31. Punch and Judy.
32. The History of John Gilpin.
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