

The Dorchester Giant

By Oliver Wendell Holmes

1830

THERE was a giant in time of old,
A mighty one was he;
He had a wife, but she was a scold,
So he kept her shut in his mammoth fold;
And he had children three.

It happened to be an election day,
And the giants were choosing a king;
The people were not democrats then,
They did not talk of the rights of men,
And all that sort of thing.

Then the giant took his children three,
And fastened them in the pen;
The children roared; quoth the giant, "Be still!"
And Dorchester Heights and Milton Hill
Rolled back the sound again.

Then he brought them a pudding stuffed with
plums,
As big as the State-House dome;
Quoth he, "There's something for you to eat;
So stop your mouths with your 'lection treat,
And wait till your dad comes home."

So the giant pulled him a chestnut stout,
And whittled the boughs away;
The boys and their mother set up a shout.
Said he, "You're in, and you can't get out,
Bellow as loud as you may."

Off he went, and he growled a tune
As he strode the fields along
'Tis said a buffalo fainted away,

And fell as cold as a lump of clay,
When he heard the giant's song.

But whether the story's true or not,
It isn't for me to show;
There's many a thing that's twice as queer
In somebody's lectures that we hear,
And those are true, you know.

.....

What are those lone ones doing now,
The wife and the children sad?
Oh, they are in a terrible rout,
Screaming, and throwing their pudding about,
Acting as they were mad.

They flung it over to Roxbury hills,
They flung it over the plain,
And all over Milton and Dorchester too
Great lumps of pudding the giants threw;
They tumbled as thick as rain.

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Giant and mammoth have passed away,
For ages have floated by;
The suet is hard as a marrow-bone,
And every plum is turned to a stone,
But there the puddings lie.

And if, some pleasant afternoon,
You'll ask me out to ride,
The whole of the story I will tell,
And you shall see where the puddings fell,
And pay for the punch beside.

Note from the Complete Poetic Works:

The "pudding-stone" is a remarkable conglomerate found very abundantly in the towns mentioned, all of which are in the neighborhood of Boston. We used in those primitive days to ask friends to *ride* with us when we meant to take them to *drive* with us.

[It is interesting to see how the same subject presented itself to the poet in different moods. There is a passage in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* which begins, "I wonder whether the boys who live in Roxbury and Dorchester are ever moved to tears or filled with silent awe as they look upon the rocks and fragments of 'pudding-stone' abounding in those localities." Then follows a half page of eloquent speculation on the pudding-stone.]