

Smythies G.
Some Famous Giants.
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SOME FAMOUS GIANTS.

By W. GORDON SMYTHIES.

A CURIOUS treatise appeared in the year 1718, written by Henrion, the celebrated French savant, in which he gravely informs us that Adam was 123 feet 9 inches in height, and that Eve measured 118 feet 9 inches. He goes on to inform us that since the period when Adam delved and Eve span the stature of man has steadily decreased. Abraham, he tells us, was only 20 feet high, and Moses but 13 feet; while the mighty Goliath, if we take the cubit at 21 inches, stood exactly 11 feet 11 inches, according to the Biblical measurements.

The finding of gigantic skeletons, supposed to be human remains, buried deep in the earth, gave rise to the belief that there were at some period of the world's history giants and giantesses 100 feet high; but Sir Hans Sloane and Georges Cuvier effectually dispelled the notion, and demonstrated beyond all doubt that these bones were the mortal remains of mammoths and mastodons, and that the so-called "giants' teeth" had originally ornamented the mouths of colossal whales.

The earnest seeker after truth must therefore considerably modify his notions as to the true height of the men who were giants in those days, and regretfully accept

the latest opinion that there is no well-authenticated case of any human being attaining to a greater height than 10 feet.

The celebrated giants of the last three hundred years have in no case reached the 10-foot limit, the majority being only something over 7 feet.

Together with illusions as to the great height attained by giants, other fond ideas have also to go by the board. Giants are not, as a rule, remarkable for great strength, nor for abnormal appetites; they have anything but bloodthirsty dispositions, but are, on the contrary, gentle, mild, and given to melancholy. The burthen of their greatness seems an intolerable weight, not to be cheerfully borne, which they shuffle off at an early age, most of them dying while still in the prime of life.

Our Illustrations cover a period of more than two

hundred years, and give the counterfeit presentment of most of the famous giants who have appeared since the early days of the seventeenth century.

Daniel, Oliver Cromwell's porter, comes first in point of time. He is described as a man "of gigantic proportions," though his exact measurements are not given. The same authority informs us that he



DANIEL, OLIVER CROMWELL'S PORTER.

was "eminent for his sanctity, and for prophesying many memorable events, particularly the Fire of London." Another giant who flourished in the early part of



MAXIMILIAN CHRISTOPHER MULLER.

the seventeenth century was Walter Parsons, who was gate-porter to two Kings, James I. and Charles II. Parsons stood 7 feet 6 inches in his stockings, possessed remarkable muscular power, and was of a merry disposition. He loved practical jokes as a medium for the display of his great strength, a favourite pastime being the sudden snatching up of two of the most stalwart of the soldiers on guard at the Palace. Carrying one under each arm he would run round the courtyard with his indignant burthens, who were perfectly powerless in that iron grip.

Maximilian Christopher Muller, whose portrait we give, was a native of Leipsic, and was exhibited at the Blue Posts, Charing Cross, in the year 1732. He was 8 feet in height, well proportioned, and, unlike most modern giants, possessed of remarkable strength. Before his arrival in England he had made a tour of Europe, and had been presented to most of the leading potentates. He was a great favourite at the Court of Louis XIV. of

France, who presented him with a silver mace and a richly jewelled scimitar. Our Illustration presents him as he appeared at his receptions in London, which were always crowded by the *élite* of fashion. Muller's characteristic figure, with its abnormally large head, was immortalised by the pencil of Hogarth. Muller lived to a comparatively old age, dying in 1734, at the age of sixty.

It has always been a favourite method with showmen to exhibit a giant and a dwarf on the same platform. From an old print, published in 1771, we give the portraits of those "two remarkable persons," Mr. Bamfield, the "Staffordshire giant," and Mr. Coan, the "Norfolk dwarf." Bamfield measured just an inch over 7 feet, while Coan was 3 feet high. Both the giant and the dwarf took up their abode in London, Bamfield residing close to Temple Bar and Coan in Chelsea, and, curiously enough, both died at the same age—namely, thirty-six.

Cornelius Magrath, the celebrated Irish giant, was born in 1737, and at the age of sixteen measured 6 feet. He was an orphan, brought up by the philosopher Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, who was suspected of dabbling in the black art, and a ridiculous story obtained credence that the great height of Magrath was the result of a course of experimental feeding and the imbibing of magic potions. This strange tale had, doubtless, no better foundation in fact than that the good Bishop opined that good living and tonics are the best means of building up the constitutions of



MR. BAMFIELD, THE STAFFORDSHIRE GIANT,
AND MR. COAN, THE NORFOLK DWARF.

overgrown youths. Be that as it may, Magrath steadily increased in length and strength, and at the age of nineteen measured 7 feet 8 inches. Our Illustration,

from a print of the period, represents him side by side with a German drum-major. The skeleton of "the great Irish Giant" is

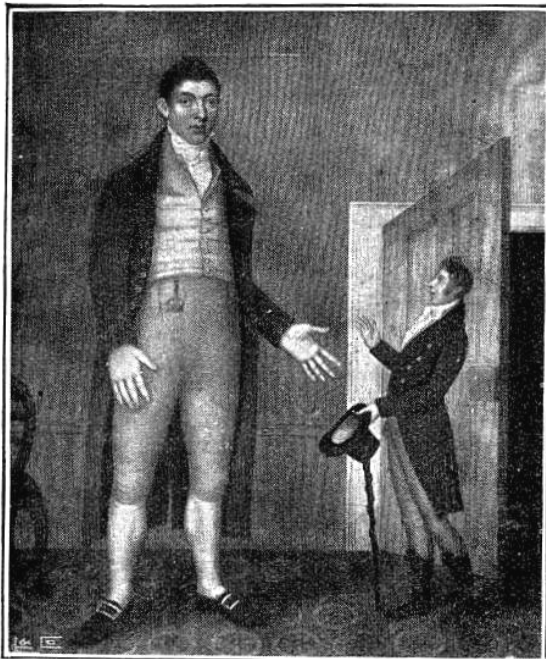


CORNELIUS MAGRATH.

preserved in the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin.

Two other celebrated Irish giants, Charles and Patrick O'Brien, flourished in the eighteenth century.

Charles, whose surname was really Byrne, measured 8 feet 2 inches, and died



WILLIAM BRADLEY.

in Cockspur Street, Charing Cross, in 1783, aged twenty-two. His death was precipitated by excessive drinking, to

which he was always addicted, but more particularly after the loss of all his property, saved from the profits of exhibiting himself, which he had simply vested in a bank-note for £700. On going to bed one night O'Brien hid the precious note in the fireplace. A servant-girl, unaware of the fact, lit the fire, and the note was destroyed.

O'Brien had a morbid dread lest after his death his body should be seized on by the surgical fraternity and dissected, so in his will he directs that his remains shall

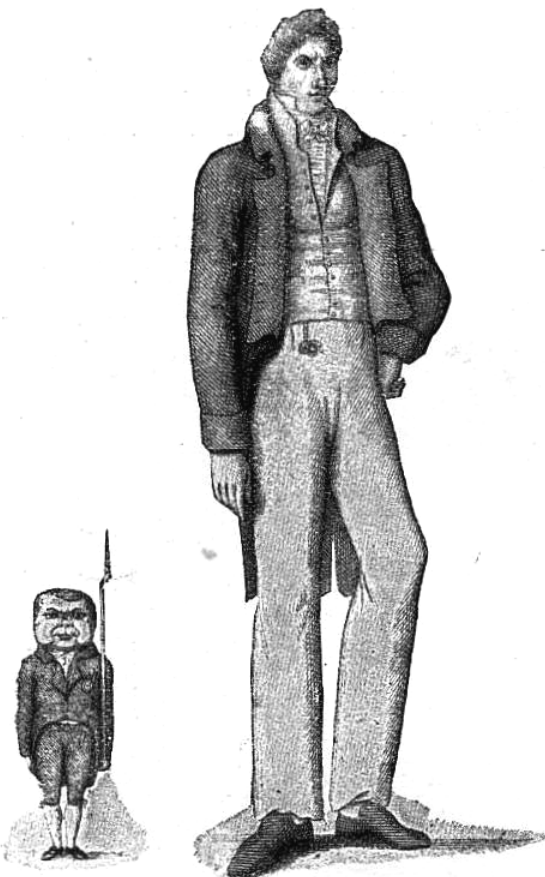


PATRICK O'BRIEN.

be thrown into the sea. A paper of the period gives a detailed account of his burial at sea, off the coast of Margate, but it was afterwards asserted in *The Public Ledger* that Dr. William Hunter had purchased the body of the celebrated giant, whose skeleton was subsequently added to the other wonders of the Hunterian Collection to be seen in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The other Irish giant, Patrick O'Brien, whose portrait we give, was born about 1760, at Kinsale. His real name was Cotter, and he measured 8 feet 7 inches, though the advertisements of the time give

his height as 9 feet, and claim for him a descent from King Brian Boru. Though much taller than Charles O'Brien (to



JAMES TOLLER, THE HUNTINGDON GIANT,
AND SIMON PAAP, THE DWARF

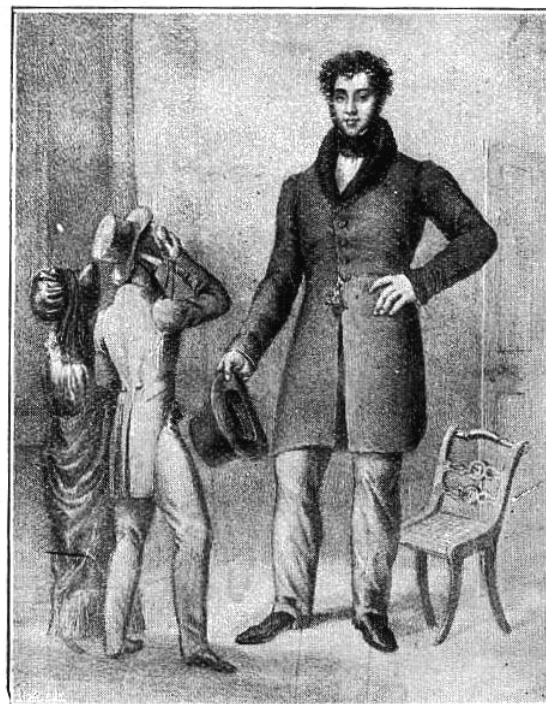
whom he was in no way related), Patrick lacked the latter's strength and physique, though he lived to be more than twice as old as the smaller giant, dying at the age of forty-seven.

It is said that from Yorkshire and Lancashire come the tallest men and women as far as England is concerned.

William Bradley was a native of the former county, and was born in the East Riding in the year 1792, according to a description of him published with an old print, which we reproduce. Bradley was a teetotaler, having never tasted wine, beer, or spirits. At the age of nineteen he measured 7 feet 8 inches, and was remarkable for the great size of his hands and feet. At the age of eleven he weighed 11 stones, while at nineteen he turned the scale at 27 stones. His shoe was 15 inches long and 5½ inches wide, and his stockings 3 feet 9 inches in length. Like so many other giants, Bradley died young, and was buried in his native town, Market Weighton, but the skeleton of his gigantic right hand may be seen at the College of Surgeons.

James Toller, the Huntingdon giant whose portrait, together with that of Simon Paap, the dwarf, we present to our readers, was born in 1795 at St. Neots, Huntingdonshire. At the age of seventeen he measured 8 feet; and at his death, which took place in 1819, he had reached the great height of 8 feet 6 inches. His father and mother were of the ordinary altitude, but he had a sister who at the age of sixteen stood fully 6 feet. Simon Paap, the dwarf, measured only 28 inches, and at the age of twenty-six weighed only 27 lb. His head was out of all proportion to his diminutive body, but he was very intelligent, speaking several languages fluently. Both he and Toller drew all London when they were exhibited early in the present century.

Two foreign giants, Louis Franz, a Frenchman, and Joachim Eleicegui, a Spaniard, became for a period the lions of the day. Louis Franz, better known as "Monsieur Louis," was exhibited in New Bond Street, and stood 7 feet 6 inches in his stockings; while the Spaniard, who called himself "the Spanish Goliath," measured 7 feet 10 inches. He was appointed drum-major to one of the French regiments, and made a grand show with his bâton of office, a heavily headed long cane, profusely ornamented and gilded, which he twirled and twisted in time to the martial music as the regiment marched through the streets of the gay city. He came to London in 1846 and was exhibited in the Cosmorama Rooms,



LOUIS FRANZ, A FRENCH GIANT.

Regent Street, with great éclat and prestige, "having been honoured with munificent tokens of approbation from his Majesty Louis Philippe, King of the French, her Majesty the Queen of Portugal, and her Majesty the Queen of Spain." The great Spaniard was, however, eclipsed by the celebrated Norfolk giant, Robert Hales, a native of the little village of West Somerton, near Great Yarmouth. He was one of a family of giants, his father measuring 6 feet 6 inches and his mother 6 feet. He had five sisters considerably over 6 feet and four brothers nearly as tall as their father,



JOSEPH DRASAL, TYROLESE GIANT,
AND "COLONEL" ULPTS, TYROLESE DWARF.

but Robert overtopped them all, measuring nearly 8 feet, and possessing a strongly knit frame in perfect proportion. He measured 62 inches round the chest, and 21 inches round the calf of the leg. It took 7 yards of broad cloth to make him a suit of clothes. At the age of thirteen he entered the Royal Navy, and served on board H.M.S. *Ranger* under Captain Wells during a period of three years.

Mr. Hales and his sister were for a time exhibited together, and a handbill, lapsing, like Silas Wegg, into poetry, thus describes them—

Miss Hales and her brother are here to be seen;
Oh, come, let us visit the sweet, lovely queen!
Behold she is handsome—in manners polite—
Both she and her brother near eight feet in
height.



JOACHIM ELEICEGUI, A SPANISH GIANT.



MR. ROBERT HALES, THE NORFOLK GIANT.

The enterprising Barnum took Hales to America in 1848, whence he returned and set up as mine host of the Craven Head Tavern, Drury Lane. Here he dispensed



COLONEL CHANG, OF PEKIN.

stout and bitter to an admiring crowd, who gaped in wonder at his gigantic proportions, and examined with awe the massive gold watch and chain which the royal hands of Queen Victoria had bestowed upon him.

Hales failed, however, to make the Craven Head Tavern pay, and returned once more to the show business. While making a tour in a caravan he caught a severe cold which, settling on the lungs, carried him off at the early age of forty-three.

Some few years back, when George Leybourne, styled "The Lion Comique," was singing "Up in a Balloon, Boys," and "The Great" Macdermott was causing rapturous enthusiasm by his rendering of a song whose refrain asserted that "We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do," a very remarkable giant, Joseph Drasal, was also on view at the leading

music-halls. He was a native of Holleschau, in the Tyrol, and was accompanied by a dwarf who described himself as Colonel Ulpts, the Tyrolese Midget, aged twenty-two years, and thirty-four inches high."

Herr Joseph Drasal, the giant, measured 8 feet 4 inches, and was, it was said, a landed proprietor and town councillor of his native place. He spoke several languages fluently, while his hands were so enormous that a two-shilling piece could easily be passed through his signet-ring.

Another foreign giant, who held receptions in London, accompanied by a wonderful dwarf, General Tiny-Mite, was Colonel Chang, of Peking, who at the age of thirty-five measured 8 feet 6 inches, and weighed 500 pounds, or over thirty-five stone, while his little partner measured only 19 inches, and weighed four pounds and three quarters. Chang was remarkably handsome, and presented an imposing appearance in his richly-embroidered white satin garments. He was a man of culture and considerable refinement, speaking, besides his native tongue, Japanese, English, Spanish, German, and French. In spite of his gigantic proportions, there was considerable grace about his movements, while a certain air of distinction added greatly to his almost regal presence. Like most giants of modern times, he died comparatively young, passing away at Bournemouth in 1893 at the age of forty-eight.

A celebrated Scotch giant named Randall was exhibited with his wife, a lady of lofty stature, and their appearance created a sensation in America and Europe. Randall and his wife wore



MR. AND MRS. RANDALL.

Highland costume, as represented in a print which we reproduce. Randall measured 7 feet 6 inches, and was well

proportioned; while his wife, who claimed descent from Sir William Wallace, is described in a French biographical sketch as "la plus grande géante du monde."



MARRIAGE OF CAPTAIN BATES, THE KENTUCKY GIANT, AND MISS ANNA SWAN, THE NOVA SCOTIA GIANTESSE, AT ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, 1871.

A remarkable marriage took place in the summer of the year 1871, when Captain Bates, "the Kentucky giant," espoused Miss Anna H. Swan, "the Nova Scotia giantess." Captain Bates measured 8 feet, while his fair bride stood nearly 7 feet 11 inches in her satin shoes.

The gallant bridegroom had won his spurs in the American Civil War, in which

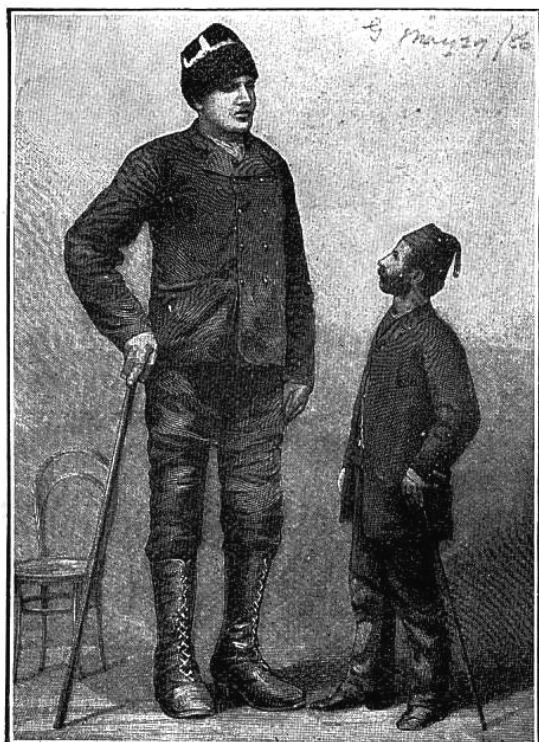
he had greatly distinguished himself, being wounded several times in various engagements. Both he and his bride had been exhibited in London in the years 1869 and 1870, and it was during this period that an affection sprang up between the two which culminated in the marriage at St. Martin's Church of which we give an illustration.

Captain Bates was one of a family of giants, but Miss Swan's parents were, if anything, below the usual stature.

It was not likely that Barnum, the prince of showmen, would miss the chance of



CATHERINE BOEBNER, A SWISS GIANTESSE.



AMANAB, A GREEK GIANT.

exhibiting a young lady who at eleven years of age measured 6 feet, and like another giantess of later times, was "still growing." Hence we find her astonishing all New York till the burning down of Barnum's establishment, and the narrow escape of the fair Nova Scotian, put an end for a time to Miss Swan's receptions.

Possessed of considerable attractions and some histrionic ability, we find Miss Swan, soon after the disastrous fire, drawing large audiences to a New York theatre to witness her impersonation of Lady Macbeth, but she soon returned to the show business, and made a grand tour in America, subsequently visiting the principal cities of the Old World.

Amanab, a Greek giant, whose portrait we give, though much shorter than Captain



“THE ASTONISHING FRENCH GIANTESSE.”

Bates, measuring only 7 feet 9 inches, was a splendid specimen of humanity, possessing a well-knit frame in perfect proportion and a chest measurement of 53 inches.

Place aux dames! We have hitherto, with two exceptions, made mention only of famous male giants, reserving to the last a little portrait gallery of three celebrated giantesses, whose biographical notices, having regard to the amount of space at disposal, must necessarily be brief.

Some years ago there was exhibited in Piccadilly a young Swiss lady named Catherine Boebner. At the age of twenty-three she measured 6 feet 5 inches, and came to this country after a tour in Europe, during which she was presented at the Courts of Russia and Germany, creating quite a sensation by her beauty, which was greatly enhanced by the picturesque costume in which she appeared. Another lady, described as “The Astonishing French Giantess,” was exhibited in St. James’s Street about the year 1825. We give the portrait of “The Beautiful Frenchwoman,” who was 6 feet 4 inches in height, depicted in the evening dress of the period, while gazing at her in mute amazement stand two somewhat diminutive specimens of the buck and the belle of the day. About

fourteen years ago a very remarkable spectacular performance, called “Babil and Bijou,” drew enormous audiences to the old Alhambra, in Leicester Square, then under the management of “the People’s Caterer,” the late William Holland. Maas, the celebrated singer, made his reputation in the piece, but the chief attraction was the Amazon Queen, impersonated by a young German girl called Marian, whose gigantic proportions put all former tall ladies completely in the shade. She measured 8 feet 2 inches, and presented a gorgeous appearance as she strode on to the stage with the limelight shining upon her comely face and well-proportioned limbs.

We reproduce her portrait, taken with “The People’s Caterer” standing by her side.

After “Babil and Bijou” had run its course, Marian returned to Germany, where she died at the early age of seventeen.



FRÄULEIN MARIAN AS THE AMAZON QUEEN, IN “BABIL AND BIJOU,” WITH HER MANAGER, MR. WILLIAM HOLLAND.