

The History of Tom Thumb and Other Stories. eBook

The History of Tom Thumb and Other Stories.

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[Illustration]

[Illustration]

THE HISTORY OF TOM THUMB AND OTHER STORIES

[Illustration]

Profusely Illustrated

THE HISTORY OF TOM THUMB

In the days of King Arthur, Merlin, the famous enchanter, was out on a journey, and stopped one day at the cottage of an honest ploughman to ask for refreshment. The ploughman's wife brought him some milk in a wooden bowl, and some brown bread on a wooden platter.

Merlin could not help observing that, although everything within the cottage was particularly neat and in good order, the ploughman and his wife had the most sorrowful air, so he questioned them about the cause of their distress, and learned that they were miserable because they had no children. The poor woman declared that she would be the happiest creature in the world if she had but a son, although he were no bigger than his father's thumb. Merlin was very much amused at the thought of a boy no bigger than a man's thumb; and as soon as he returned home he sent for the Queen of the Fairies and related to her the desire of the ploughman and his wife to have a son the size of his father's thumb.

[Illustration]

The Queen of the Fairies promised that their wish should be granted. And so it happened one day that the ploughman's wife had a son exactly of the size of his father's thumb. While the mother was sitting up in bed, admiring the child, the Queen of the Fairies appeared, and kissed the infant, giving it the name of Tom Thumb, and summoned several fairies to clothe her little favorite.

Tom never grew any bigger; but, as he grew older, he became very cunning and sly, which his mother did not sufficiently correct him for; so that, when he was old enough to play with the boys for cherry-stones, and had lost all his own, he used to creep into the other boys' bags, fill his pockets, and come out again to play. But one day, as he was getting out of a bag of cherry-stones, the boy to whom it belonged chanced to see him.

[Illustration]

“Ah, ah! my little Tom Thumb,” said the boy, “have I caught you at your bad tricks at last? Now I will pay you off well for thieving.”

Then drawing the string tight round his neck, and shaking the bag heartily, the cherry stones bruised Tom’s limbs and body sadly, which made him beg to be let out, and promise never to be guilty of such doings any more.

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Shortly afterwards Tom's mother was making a batter pudding, and, that he might see how she mixed it, he climbed up to the edge of the bowl, but his foot happening to slip he fell over head and ears into the batter, and his mother not observing him, stirred him into the pudding and popped it all into the pot to boil. The hot water made Tom kick and struggle; and his mother, seeing the pudding jump up and down, thought it was bewitched. A tinker was going by just at the time, so she gave him the pudding, and he put it into his budget and walked away. As soon as Tom could get the batter out of his mouth he began to cry aloud; this so frightened the poor tinker that he flung the pudding over the hedge. The pudding being broken by the fall Tom was released, and walked home to his mother, who gave him a kiss and put him to bed.

Tom Thumb's mother once took him with her when she went to milk the cow; it being a very windy day, she tied him with a needleful of thread to a thistle. The cow, liking his oak-leaf hat, took him and the thistle up at one mouthful. While the cow was chewing the thistle, Tom, terrified at her great teeth, cried out, "Mother! mother!"

[Illustration]

"Where are you, Tommy, my dear Tommy?" said the mother.

"Here, mother; here in the red cow's mouth."

The mother began to cry and wring her hands; but the cow, surprised at such odd noises in her throat, opened her mouth and let him drop out. His mother clapped him into her apron and ran home with him.

[Illustration]

Tom's father made him a whip of barley-straw to drive the cattle with, and one day in the field Tom slipped into a deep furrow. A raven flying over picked him up with a grain of corn, and flew with him to the top of the giant's castle by the seaside, where he left him. Old Grumbo, the giant, came out soon afterwards, to walk upon his terrace, and Tom, frightened out of his wits, managed to creep up his sleeve. Tom's motions made the giant uncomfortable, and with a jerk of his arm, he threw him into the sea. A great fish then swallowed him. The fish was soon after caught, and sent as a present to King Arthur. When it was cut open, everybody was delighted with little Tom Thumb, who was found inside. He became the favorite of the whole court, and by his merry pranks often amused the King and Queen.

[Illustration]

The King, when he rode on horseback, frequently took Tom in his hand; and if a shower of rain came on, the tiny dwarf used to creep into the King's waistcoat pocket and sleep till the rain was over. The King now questioned him concerning his parents; and when



Tom informed his majesty they were very poor people, the King led him into his treasury, and told him he should pay them a visit and take with him as much money as he could carry.

[Illustration]

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Tom soon got rested at his mother's house, but could not travel because it had rained; his mother therefore took him in her hand and carried him back to King Arthur's court. There Tom entertained the King and Queen and nobility at tilts and tournaments, at which he exerted himself so much that he brought on a fit of sickness. At this juncture the Queen of the Fairies came in a chariot drawn by flying mice, and placing Tom by her side she drove through the air till they arrived at her palace. After restoring him to health, the Queen commanded a fair wind, and, placing Tom before it, blew him straight back to the court of King Arthur. But just as Tom should have alighted in the courtyard, the cook happened to pass with the King's great bowl of his favorite dish, furmenty, and poor Tom fell plump into the middle of it, and splashed the hot furmenty into the cook's eyes. Down went the bowl. "Oh, dear," cried Tom. "Murder! murder!" bellowed the cook; and away ran the King's nice furmenty into the kennel. The cook was a cross fellow and swore to the King that Tom had done it out of some evil design; so he was tried for high treason and sentenced to be beheaded. When the judge delivered this dreadful sentence it happened that a miller was standing by with his mouth wide open, so Tom took a good spring and jumped down his throat, unperceived by all, even by the miller himself. As Tom could not be found the court broke up, and away went the miller to his mill. But Tom did not leave him long at rest, he began to roll and tumble about, so that the miller thought himself bewitched, and sent for a doctor. When the doctor came, Tom began to dance and sing. The doctor was as much frightened as the miller, and sent in great haste for five more doctors.

[Illustration]

While all these were talking the miller began to yawn, and Tom, taking the opportunity, made another bold jump and alighted on his feet in the middle of the table. The miller, provoked to be thus tormented by such a little creature, caught hold of Tom and threw him out of the window into the river. A large salmon swimming by snapped him up in a moment.

The salmon was soon caught and sold in the market to the steward of a great lord. The grandee, thinking it an uncommonly fine fish, made a present of it to the King, who ordered it to be dressed immediately. When the cook cut open the salmon he found poor Tom inside, and ran with him directly to the King; but the King being busy, desired that he might be brought another day.

[Illustration]

The cook was resolved to keep him safely this time, so clapped him into a mouse-trap. There he was shut up for a whole week, when the King sent for him, forgave him for throwing down the furmenty, and ordered him new clothes, gave him a spirited mouse for a hunter, and knighted him.

Thus dressed and mounted, he rode a hunting with the King and nobility.



[Illustration]

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As they were riding by a farmhouse one day, a cat jumped from behind the door, seized the mouse and little Tom, ran off with them both, and was just going to devour the mouse when Tom boldly drew his sword and attacked the cat with great spirit. The King and his nobles, seeing Tom in danger, went to his assistance, and one of the lords bravely saved him just in time, but poor Tom was sadly scratched by the claws of the cat.

[Illustration: *Lice.*]

The Queen of the Fairies came and took him again to Fairyland, where she kept him some years; after which, dressing him in bright green, she sent him flying once more through the air to the earth. King Thunstone now reigned in the place of King Arthur. The people flocked far and near to look at Tom Thumb, and the King, before whom he was carried, asked him who he was and where he lived. Tom answered:

“My name is Tom Thumb,
From the fairies I come;
When King Arthur shone,
This court was my home.
In me he delighted,
By him I was knighted.
Did you ever hear of
Sir Thomas Thumb?”

The King was so charmed with this address that he ordered a little chair to be made, and also a palace of gold a span high, with a door an inch wide, for little Tom to live in. He also gave him a coach, drawn by six small mice. This made the Queen angry, because she had not a new coach too; therefore, resolving to ruin Tom, she complained to the King that he had behaved very insolently to her. The King sent for him in a rage. Tom, to escape his fury, crept into a large, empty snail-shell, and there lay for some time, when, peeping out of the shell, he saw a fine butterfly on the ground. He ventured forth and got astride the butterfly, which took wing, and mounted into the air with little Tom on his back. Away he flew straight to the King's court.

[Illustration: *The Wood-cutter's daughter.*]

The King, Queen, and nobles all strove to catch the butterfly. At length poor Tom slipped from his seat, and fell into a sweet dish called white-pot, where he was found, almost drowned. The Queen vowed he should be punished, and he was secured once more in a mouse-trap, when the cat, seeing something stir, and supposing it to be a mouse, patted the trap about till she broke it and set Tom at liberty.

[Illustration]

Soon afterwards a spider, taking poor Tom for a big fly, made a spring at him. Tom drew his sword and fought valiantly, but the spider's poisonous breath overcame him.

King Thunstone and his whole court went into mourning for little Tom Thumb. They buried him under a rose-bush, and raised a nice, white marble monument over his grave.

[Illustration]

THE LION AND THE FOX

There was once a fox who had never seen a lion; and so, when he saw a lion for the first time, this fox was so scared that he did not know what to do.

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The lion did him no harm: and the fox crept off out of the way, and ran to his hole, and there hid. He stayed in his hole a long while, until he found he must go in search of food, and then he crept out.

[Illustration]

Ella and May are the girls you see on this page. Ella is older than May, and can read, but May cannot.

But Ella is kind, and will read to May a long time, if May will do as she is bid, and sit still on her lap.

And Ella will show May how to read herself.

[Illustration]

In a country called Holland, storks are very kindly treated, for so many frogs live in the marshes there, that if the storks did not eat them, the people would hardly know what to do. The storks are very clever at catching the poor froggies; they snatch them up in their long bills, and go flying off, with their great wings spread and their long legs stretched out behind them, carrying off two or three at once.

CATCHING BLACKBIRDS.

Two little boys were running through the meadows as hard as they could go. "What are you doing there?" said a man who was passing along.

[Illustration]

"Catching blackbirds?" said Willie. "Have you caught any?" said the man.

"No, not yet," said Willie. "But grandpa is going to give me five dollars when I catch one. He wants one."

Willie's grandpa did happen to say to him that morning, "You catch me a blackbird, and I will give you five dollars." He said it just out of fun. He did not think that Willie would ever try to do it.

[Illustration]

THE DOG.

Do you see the dog and the hen? The dog bit the hen, and she was mad. My dog bit a fox on the hip. One day the fox bit the dog on the lip and ran off. Tom and I had a gun, and we set off to get the fox; but the sun was so hot we did not go far, but sat on the hay, and had fun.

A letter to Frank.

[Illustration]

Dear Frank,—One day a rabbit came out of the woods to see if he could find any clover. Some boys saw him, and tried to catch him. He ran under the barn; then came out, sprang through the fence, and so got clear.

[Illustration]

I will tell you of a smart thing that my red cow does. When she goes for a drink and finds the trough empty, she takes hold of the handle with her horns, and pumps the water.

While I was waiting for a train at the station, the other day, a boy with a little dog came in to wait also. The poor dog was afraid, and tried very hard to get away; but the boy held him fast by a stout string.

[Illustration]

There is one very selfish little chicken in my barn. When the other chickens are just going to sleep, this selfish little chick pecks them, and drives them down from the roost. He is very naughty, and wants the roost all to himself.

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[Illustration]

[Illustration]

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