

The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle

By

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For

THE REAL LITTLE LUCIE
OF NEWLANDS

ONCE upon a time there
was a little girl called
Lucie, who lived at a farm
called Little-town. She was
a good little girl--only she
was always losing her pocket-
handkerchiefs!

One day little Lucie came
into the farm-yard crying--
oh, she did cry so! "I've lost
my pocket-handkin! Three
handkins and a pinny! Have
you seen them, Tabby Kitten?"

THE Kitten went on washing
her white paws; so
Lucie asked a speckled hen--

"Sally Henny-penny, have
you found three pocket-handkins?"

But the speckled hen ran
into a barn, clucking--

"I go barefoot, barefoot,

barefoot!"

AND then Lucie asked Cock
Robin sitting on a twig.

Cock Robin looked sideways
at Lucie with his bright black
eye, and he flew over a stile
and away.

Lucie climbed upon the stile
and looked up at the hill behind
Little-town--a hill that goes
up-up--into the clouds as
though it had no top!

And a great way up the hillside
she thought she saw some
white things spread upon the
grass.

LUCIE scrambled up the
hill as fast as her stout
legs would carry her; she ran
along a steep path-way--up
and up--until Little-town was

right away down below--she
could have dropped a pebble
down the chimney!

PRESENTLY she came to
a spring, bubbling out
from the hill-side.

Some one had stood a tin
can upon a stone to catch the
water--but the water was
already running over, for the
can was no bigger than an
egg-cup! And where the sand
upon the path was wet--there
were foot-marks of a very
small person.

Lucie ran on, and on.

THE path ended under a
big rock. The grass was
short and green, and there
were clothes-props cut from
bracken stems, with lines of
plaited rushes, and a heap of

tiny clothes pins--but no
pocket-handkerchiefs!

But there was something
else--a door! straight into the
hill; and inside it some one
was singing--

"Lily-white and clean, oh!
With little frills between, oh!
Smooth and hot--red rusty spot
Never here be seen, oh!"

LUCIE, knocked--once--
twice, and interrupted
the song. A little frightened
voice called out "Who's that?"

Lucie opened the door: and
what do you think there was
inside the hill?--a nice clean
kitchen with a flagged floor
and wooden beams--just like
any other farm kitchen. Only
the ceiling was so low that
Lucie's head nearly touched it;

and the pots and pans were
small, and so was everything
there.

THERE was a nice hot
singey smell; and at the
table, with an iron in her hand
stood a very stout short person
staring anxiously at Lucie.

Her print gown was tucked
up, and she was wearing a
large apron over her striped
petticoat. Her little black
nose went sniffle, sniffle, snuffle,
and her eyes went twinkle,
twinkle; and underneath her
cap--where Lucie had yellow
curls--that little person had
PRICKLES!

"Who are you?" said
Lucie. "Have you
seen my pocket-handkins?"
The little person made a
bob-curtsey--"Oh, yes, if you

please'm; my name is Mrs.
Tiggy-winkle; oh, yes if you
please'm, I'm an excellent
clear-starcher!" And she took
something out of a clothes-
basket, and spread it on the
ironing-blanket.

"What's that thing?"
said Lucie--"that's
not by pocket-handkin?"
"Oh no, if you please'm;
that's a little scarlet waist-coat
belonging to Cock Robin!"
And she ironed it and folded
it, and put it on one side.

Then she took something
else off a clothes-horse--
"That isn't my pinny?" said Lucie.
"Oh no, if you please'm;
that's a damask table-cloth
belonging to Jenny Wren;
look how it's stained with
currant wine! It's very bad
to wash!" said Mrs. Tiggy-winkle.

MRS. TIGGY-WINKLE'S
nose went snuffle, snuffle,
snuffle, and her eyes went
twinkle, twinkle; and she
fetched another hot iron from
the fire.

"THERE'S one of my
pocket-handkins!" cried
Lucie--"and there's my pinny!"
Mrs. Tiggy-winkle ironed it,
and goffered it, and shook out
the frills.

"Oh that is lovely!" said
Lucie.

"AND what are those long
yellow things with fingers
like gloves?"

"Oh, that's a pair of stockings
belonging to Sally Henny-penny
--look how she's worn the
heels out with scratching

in the yard! She'll very soon
go barefoot!" said Mrs. Tiggy-winkle.

"WHY, there's another
handkersniff--but it
isn't mine; it's red?"

"Oh no, if you please'm;
that one belongs to old Mrs.
Rabbit; and it did so smell
of onions! I've had to wash
it separately, I can't get out
the smell."

"There's another one of
mine," said Lucie.

"WHAT are those funny
little white things?"

"That's a pair of mittens
belonging to Tabby Kitten;
I only have to iron them; she
washes then herself."

"There's my last pocket-
handkin!" said Lucie.

"AND what are you dipping

into the basin of starch?"

"They're little dicky shirt-fronts

belonging to Tom Tits-mouse

--most terrible particular!"

said Mrs. Tiddy-winkle.

"Now I've finished my ironing;

I'm going to air some clothes."

"WHAT are these dear soft
fluffy things?" said Lucie.

"Oh those are woolly coats
belonging to the little lambs
at Skelghyl."

"Will their jackets take-off?"
asked Lucie.

"Oh yes, if you please'm;
look at the sheep-mark on the
shoulder. And here's one
marked for Gatesgarth, and
three that come from Little-town.
They're always marked
at washing!" said Mrs. Tiggy-winkle.

AND she hung up all sorts

and sizes of clothes--
small brown coats of mice;
and one velvety black mole-skin
waist coat; and a red tail-coat
with no tail belonging to
Squirrel Nutkin; and a very
much shrunk jacket belonging
to Peter Rabbit; and
a petticoat, not marked, that
had gone lost in the washing
--and at last the basket was
empty!

THEN Mrs. Tiggy-winkle
made tea--a cup for herself
and a cup for Lucie. They
sat before a fire on a bench
and looked sideways at one
another.

Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's
hand, holding the tea-cup, was
very very brown, and very very
wrinkly with the soap suds;
and all through her gown and
her cap, there were hair-pins

sticking wrong end out; so
that Lucie didn't like to sit
to near her.

WHEN they had finished
tea, they tied up the
clothes in bundles; and Lucie's
pocket-handkerchiefs were
folded up inside her clean
pinny, and fastened with a
silver safety-pin.

And then they made up the
fire with turf, and came out
and locked the door, and hid
the key under the door-sill.

THEN away down the hill
trotted Lucie and Mrs.
Tiggy-winkle and the bundles
of clothes!

All the way down the path
little animals came out of the
fern to meet them; the very
first that they met was Peter

Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny!

AND she gave them their
Nice clean clothes; and
all the little animals and birds
were so very much obliged to
dear Mrs. Tiggy-winkle.

SO that at the bottom of the
hill when they came to
the stile, there was nothing
left to carry except Lucie's
one little bundle.

Lucie scrambled up the
stile with the bundle in
her hand; and then she turned
to say, "Good-Night," and to
thank the washer-woman--
But what a very odd thing!
Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle had not
waited either for thanks or for
the washing bill!
She was running running
running up the hill--and
Where was her white frilled

cap? and her shawl? and her
gown--and her petticoat?

AND how small she had
grown--and how brown
--and covered with prickles!
Why! Mrs. Tiggy-winkle
was nothing but a hedgehog.

* * * * *

(Now some people say that little
Lucie had been asleep upon the stile--
but then how could she have found
three clean pocket-handkins and a pinny,
pinned with a silver safety pin?
And besides--I have seen that door
into the back of the hill called Cat
Bells--and besides I am very well
acquainted with dear Mrs. Tiggy-winkle!)