

## Tom Thumb

A poor woodman sat in his cottage one night, smoking his pipe by the fireside, while his wife sat by his side spinning. "How lonely it is, wife," said he, "for you and me to sit here by ourselves." "How happy should I be if I had but one child!" said the wife, sighing. Now, odd as you may think it, not long afterward, she had a little boy, who was quite healthy and strong but was not much bigger than my thumb. So they said, "Little as he is, we will love him dearly." And they called him Thomas Thumb.

They gave him plenty of food, yet he never grew bigger, but kept just the same size as he had been when he was born. Still, he soon showed himself to be a clever little fellow.

One day, as the woodman was getting ready to go into the wood to cut fuel, he said, "I wish I had someone to bring the cart after me, for I want to make haste." "Oh, father," cried Tom, "I will take care of that." Then the woodman laughed and said, "How?" "Never mind that, father," said Tom; "I will get into the horse's ear and tell him which way to go." "Well," said the father, "we will try for once."

When the time came, the mother harnessed the horse and put Tom into his ear; and the little man told the beast, "Go on!" and "Stop!" and the horse went on well. It happened that two strangers came up. "What an odd thing that is!" said one. "There is a cart going along, and I hear a carter talking to the horse, but yet I can see no one." Said the other, "Let us follow the cart." So they went on into the wood, till at last they came to where the woodman was. Then Tom Thumb cried out, "See, father, here I am all right and safe! Now take me down!" So his father took his son out of the horse's ear and put him down upon a straw.

The two strangers were looking on in wonder. At last one said, "That little urchin will

make our fortune." So they went up to the woodman and asked what he would take for the little man. "I won't sell him at all," said the father. But Tom crept up his father's coat and whispered in his ear, "Take the money, father, and let them have me; I'll soon come back to you."

So the woodman at last said he would sell Tom for a large piece of gold, and they paid the price. "Where would you like to sit?" said one of them. "Oh, put me on the rim of your hat." So they did as he wished; and when Tom had taken leave of his father, they took him away with them.

They journeyed on till it began to be dusky, and then the little man said, "Let me get down; I'm tired." So the man took off his hat and put him down on the side of the road. But Tom slipped into an old mouse hole. "Good night, my masters!" said he, "I'm off!" Then they ran at once to the place, but all in vain; and at last, it became quite dark, so that they were forced to go their way without their prize, as sulky as could be.

When Tom found they were gone, he came out of his hiding place. By good luck, he found a large empty snail shell. "This is lucky," said he. "I can sleep here very well" and in he crept.

Just as he was falling asleep, he heard two men passing by, and one said, "How can we rob that rich parson's house of his silver and gold?" "I'll tell you!" cried Tom. "Take me with you, and I'll soon show you how to get the parson's money." "But where are you?" said they. "Look about on the ground," answered he. At last, the thieves found him out and lifted him up in their hands. "You little urchin!" they said. "What can you do for us?" "Why, I can get between the iron window bars, and throw you out whatever you want." "That's a good thought," said the thieves.



When they came to the parson's house, Tom slipped through the window bars into the room and then called out as loud as he could bawl, "Will you have all that is here?" The thieves said, "Softly, softly! Speak low." But Tom bawled out again, "How much will you have? Shall I throw it all out?" Now the cook lay in the next room and heard this quite plain; so she sprang out of bed and ran to open the door. The thieves ran off as if a wolf was at their tails. Tom slipped off into the barn.

The little man crawled about in the hay loft, and laid himself down, meaning to sleep till daylight. But alas! How woefully he was undone! The cook got up early to feed the cows and carried a large bundle of hay, with the little man in the middle of it, fast asleep. He did not awake till he found himself in the mouth of the cow. At last down, he went into her stomach. More and more hay was always coming down. At last he cried out as loud as he could, "Don't bring me any more hay! Don't bring me any more hay!"

The maid was so frightened that she ran off to her master the parson, and said, "Sir, sir, the cow is talking!"

Tom called out, "Don't bring me any more hay!" Then the parson himself was frightened and told his man to kill her on the spot. So the cow was killed, and cut up; and the stomach, in which Tom lay, was thrown out upon a dunghill.

Soon a hungry wolf sprang out and swallowed up the whole stomach, with Tom in it, at one gulp, and ran away.

Tom called out, "My good friend, I can show you a famous treat," describing his own father's house. "You can crawl into the pantry, and there you will find cakes, ham, and everything that your heart can wish."

The wolf that very night went to the house and crawled into the pantry and ate and drank there to his heart's content. He wanted to get away; but he had eaten so much that he could not go out by the same way he came in.

This was just what Tom had reckoned upon; and now he began singing and shouting as loud as he could. The woodman and his wife, being awakened by the noise, peeped through a crack in the door; but Tom cried out, "Father, father! I am here; the wolf has swallowed me." And his father aimed a great blow, struck the wolf on the head, and killed him on the spot! And when he was dead, they cut open his body and set Tommy free. "Ah!" said the father, "What fears we have had for you!" "Yes, father," answered he. "I have traveled all over the world, I think, in one way or other, and now I am very glad to come home and get fresh air again."

"Well," said they, "you are come back, and we will not sell you again for all the riches in the world."

Then they hugged and kissed their dear little son. So Master Thumb stayed at home with his father and mother, in peace; for though he had done and seen so many fine things, and was fond enough of telling the whole story, he always agreed that, after all, there's no place like HOME!