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TALE OF THE TOASTIE ELFINS



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TALE OF THE TOASTIE ELFINS

ONE sunshiny day in late August, a small boy named Tommy Morgan went out to a cornfield near the farmhouse where he was staying, and lay down in the clover for a rest.

Tommy's father lived in the city, and Tommy and his mother had come into the country where they could get fresh air and good food so they could go back home happy and healthy in the autumn.

So this hot day Tommy, being tired of playing, rested in the clover, just on the edge of the cornfield, and he had the funniest experience that most any boy ever had.

The bumblebees buzzed around in the clover, and the ground sparrow that at first flew away, thinking Tommy meant to harm her five tiny eggs, came back to her nest. But the wisest of all was little Jack Rabbit.

He noticed Tommy lying as if asleep, so he scratched his ear and looked wise.

Jack Rabbit said to himself, "I know boys pretty well, because they

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"Out from the clover and corn appeared strange little heads."



"Quick as a wink the little folks climbed the corn stalks and began chopping off the ears."

have chased me so much, and this seems to be the boy I have been looking for."

So after thinking awhile, Jack Rabbit picked up a piece of straw and began to whistle on it just like a boy playing a tin flute. The tune he played sounded like this, "Come over! Come over! Come over!"

Tommy was a bit drowsy, but he heard this funny little noise and lay very still. In a minute, out from the clover and the corn appeared strange little heads with big round eyes and queer little caps.

After hesitating a minute, as if to assure themselves that everything was all right, the odd little people drew cautiously near. You see this was the very first time Jack Rabbit had ever called them together when a child was anywhere around.

All this time Tommy never even stirred, although the sun was shining in his eyes so that he had to keep them nearly closed, but this made the little folks think him really asleep, and they grew bolder, but the corners of his eyes were open, and he saw it all.

At a signal from Jack Rabbit the little people pulled a toy wagon from between the corn stalks, and quickly they hitched Jack Rabbit to it and backed him up between two rows.

Quick as a wink the little folks

climbed the corn stalks and began chopping off the ripe ears. When the ears fell, they were caught by other little people and loaded into the wagon.

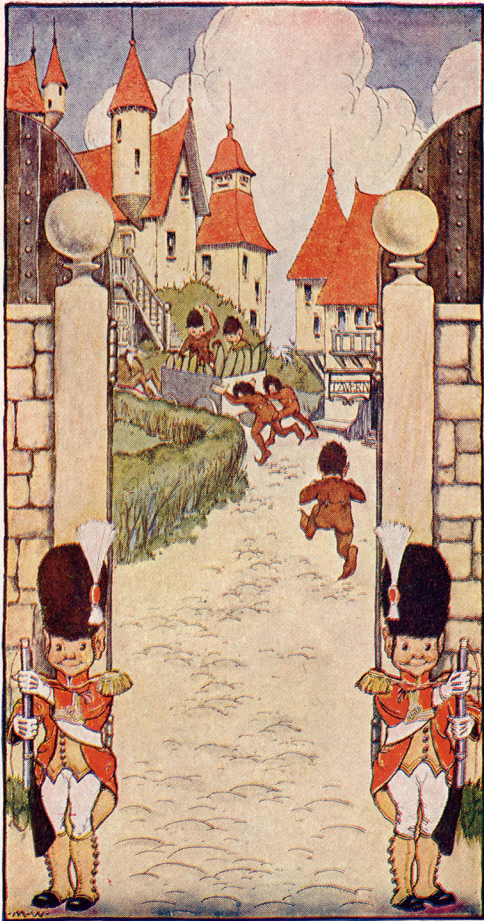
This was too much for Tommy. No matter what happened, he decided, he must see what was going to be done next. The moment he moved, every hatchet stopped in mid-air and every pair of bright eyes watched him closely. But Jack Rabbit shouted, "He's all right, fellers; he's the kind of a boy I've been looking for for a long time." This seemed to satisfy the little folks, and the work went on right merrily once more. Then comes the queerest part of the story.

The wagon was filled and Jack Rabbit started off with one of the little men driving, and more of them on top of the load of corn, singing as they went, "Come on, Tommy; you're one of us now!"

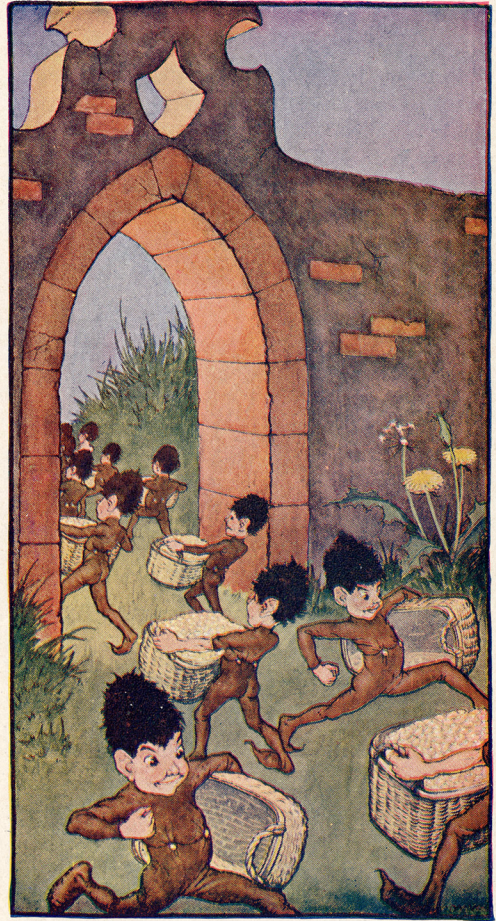
Away raced Jack Rabbit with his load of corn and little people, and close behind ran Tommy, bent on finding out just what this was all about.

Up hill and down dale they went until they came to the queerest town, with a wall about it—the quaintest little city that any child ever saw. It had gates of stone and iron, and outside the gates stood two little soldiers on guard.

When Jack Rabbit drew up with his



"They trooped into the quaintest little city that any child ever saw."



"A great red arched doorway, in and out of which scampered dozens of little folks."

load, followed by Tommy, the soldiers presented arms, the password was given, and the gates opened. Everybody trooped in but Tommy, for he was a well-mannered boy, and eager as he was to see what was going to happen next, he felt shy about going uninvited into this well-guarded little town.

"Where am I? What is this road?" asked Tommy.

"You have been on the Road to Wellville and here you are—come in," answered one of the little soldiers.

Tommy hurried through the gates, looking eagerly about him as he went. Everything was green and gold and red. Down at one side stood the wagon that Jack Rabbit had just brought in. Nearby were lots of little people with queer little tools prying off the ripe kernels of corn from the ears that had just been hauled in.

Just at the top of the green hill was a great red arched doorway, in and out of which scampered dozens of little folks, carrying in basketfuls of ripe corn.

Tommy rubbed his eyes. Was he awake or was he just dreaming it all? Surely he was awake, for there before him were all those funny little people, every one of them so busy, and every one smiling and happy in his work.

At last the wagon was empty, Jack

Rabbit was unharnessed, and the chief jumped on Jack Rabbit's back. As Jack Rabbit hopped away toward the great doorway, the chief waved his hand toward Tommy and said, "Come on and see the rest."

Out on a green hillside at the other side of the great red doorway were more of the little people, every one with a baker's cap and apron, busy as so many ants, and laughing while they frolicked at their work.

Then Tommy saw where the kernels of corn had gone. He saw them cooking the corn in huge iron kettles. Then other cooks and bakers dipped out the cooked kernels and fed them through monster rollers that flattened them into rich, substantial flakes, sweet with flavor. Then he saw them toast these flakes in the ovens after they had been flavored with sugar and salt. From the other side out rolled the flakes like a great golden waterfall, rustling like leaves in a breeze, and they seemed to smile at Tommy, and sent toward him a wonderfully tempting odor.

As the shining golden stream rolled out of the big ovens, scores of the little folks filled great boxes or cartons with the flakes. These tall cartons were being made by another crew of little workmen and pulled in place for filling as they were needed. When they were filled and the tops sealed they were



"The shining golden stream rolled out of the big ovens."



"Tommy couldn't help laughing at this funny little gang."

pushed and pulled on queer little rollers to the painting gang.

Tommy couldn't help laughing at this funny gang. As each carton full of its goodness was pushed to them, a lot of the little fellows quickly built up scaffolds around the carton and raised ladders and then went at it with yellow, black and red paint. The painters themselves were covered with paint, but they shouted and laughed at their work. Near the top they painted the words, "POST TOASTIES," and to Tommy's surprise, when they had finished, each carton had on it a cozy fireplace scene and a little girl eating some of the flakes, and a cat looking on, just as you can see it on the cartons.

After Tommy had seen all this wonderful work of the enterprising little people, he noticed Jack Rabbit hopping toward him, jerking his head and waving his ears as if he wanted Tommy to come quickly.

When Tommy ran to him, Jack Rabbit said, "Here is the dish you have been waiting for," and there came six of the little people carrying a bowl heaped up with the sweetest, crispest Toasties one could imagine. Behind these six came three others carrying a pitcher of cream, and down before Tommy they placed them. My! How good it did look to Tommy, and he sat down quickly to begin eating, when—

"Tommy! Tommy!" said a loud

voice just behind him. All the little folks started running away. Tommy turned quickly and—woke up.

There before him stood his mother and the little girl from the farmhouse! His mother had in her hand a big bowl of fresh, crisp Post Toasties and the little girl was carrying a pitcher of cream. Tommy looked at them in a dazed way, and then peered wonderingly around through the clover and the corn.

"It's two o'clock," said his mother, "do you know you have been asleep here in the clover since half-past eleven?"

"O mother," said Tommy, "if you had seen the things I have seen! And this"—pointing to the Toasties and the cream—"is really part of the dream I had! Mother, do you know how Post Toasties are made—it's the funniest thing"—

"Hurry up now and eat your lunch, Tommy, you must be hungry," said his mother.

But he couldn't help looking around again through the clover and the corn, and thinking how the funny little folks made from corn the delicious, little golden-brown Post Toasties.

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BATTLE CREEK, MICH.



"Thinking how they made from corn the delicious, golden-brown Post Toasties."