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 sniffle, sniffle,
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.

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(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!)