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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Measles

Once upon a time there was a boy who didn't like to go to school. Every chance he had he stayed at home instead of going to his classes to learn his lessons. Sometimes he would get up in the morning and say: "Mother, I think I'm going to have the toothache. I guess I better not go to school to-day."

But his mother would laugh and say:

"Oh, run along! If you get the toothache in school the teacher will let you come home."

Then the boy would go to school, though he didn't want to, and he would be thinking up some new excuse for staying home, so really he did not recite his lessons as well as he might.

One day this boy came running in the house, all excited, and called out:

"Oh, Mother! I just know I can't go to school to-morrow!"

"Why not?" asked Mother.

"'Cause I've been playing with the boy across the street, an' he's got the measles, an' I'll catch 'em an' I can't go to school. You ought t' see! He's all covered with red spots!" The boy who didn't like school was much excited. "He's all red spots!" he exclaimed.

"Is he?" asked Mother. "Well, the measles aren't painful, though they are 'catching,' as you children say. However, you can't catch them quite as soon as one day.

So you may go to school until you break out with red spots. Then it will be time enough to stay at home."

"Can't I stay home to-morrow?" begged the boy.

"Oh, of course not!" laughed Mother. "I want you to go to school and become a smart man! Time enough to stay home when you get the measles!"

Now, of course, this did not suit that boy at all. When he went to bed he was thinking and thinking of some plan by which he could stay home from school. For there was to be a hard lesson next day, and, though I am sorry to say it, that boy was too lazy to study as he ought.

"If I could only break out with the measles I could stay home," he kept saying over and over again as he lay in bed. Every now and then he would get up, turn on the electric light in his room and look at himself in the glass to see if any red spots were coming. But he could see none.

"What's the matter, Boysie?" his mother called to him from her room. "Why are you so restless?"

"Maybe I'm getting the measles," he hopefully answered.

"Nonsense! Go to sleep!" laughed Daddy.

Finally the boy did go to sleep, but either he dreamed it, or the idea came to him in the night, for, early in the morning, he awakened and, slipping on his bath robe, went into his sister's room.

"Hey, Sis!" he whispered. "Where's your box of paints?"

"What you want 'em for?" asked Sister.

"Oh, I—I'm going to paint something," mumbled the boy. Sister was too sleepy—for it was only early morning as

yet—to wonder much about it, so she told her brother where to find the paints, and then she turned over and went to sleep again.

Now what do you suppose that boy did?

Why, he went back to his room, and with his sister's brush and color box he painted red spots on his face, just as he had seen them on the face of the real Measles Boy across the street. Then this boy put the paints away and waited.

After a while Mother called:

"Come, Boysie! Time to get up and go to school!"

"I—I don't guess I'd better go to school this morning," said the boy, trying to make his voice sound weak and ill and faint-like.



"Not go to school! Why not?" cried Mother in surprise.

"I—I'm all red spots," the boy answered. And when his mother went in his room, and saw that he really was spotted, she exclaimed:

"Why, you have the measles!

I didn't think they'd break out so soon! Well, you must stay in the dark on account of your eyes. I'll bring you in some breakfast, and of course you can't go to school!"

Then that boy had to put the bedquilt over his mouth so he wouldn't laugh. If his room had been light his

mother, of course, would have seen that the spots were only red paint. But in the dimness of early morning she didn't see.

"Isn't Brother going to school?" asked Sister as she ate her breakfast.

"He has the measles," said Mother. "I expect you'll come down with them next, and break out in a day or so. But wait until you do."

And if Sister thought anything about her red paint she said nothing. I don't believe she ever imagined her brother would play such a trick.

At first, after his sister had gone to school, and he had been given his breakfast in bed, the boy thought it was going to be lots of fun to pretend to have the measles and stay home from school. But after a while this began to grow tiresome.

It was a beautiful, warm sunshiny day outside, and staying in a dark room wasn't as much fun as that boy had thought. He could hear the bees humming outside his open window, and the birds were singing.

His mother opened the door and spoke to him.

"I'm just going across the street a few minutes," she said. "You'll be all right, won't you?"

"Yes'm," answered the boy. "My measles don't hurt hardly any."

And of course they couldn't, being only painted measles, you know.

When Mother went away, softly closing the door after her, the sound of the buzzing bees and the singing birds came to the boy through his window. He knew it must be lovely outside, and yet he had to stay in bed.

"But I can get up and run out for a little while," he said to himself. "Mother will never know!"

No sooner thought of than done! The boy quickly put on some clothes—not many, for it was summer—and out into the yard he went, his face all red paint spots. He didn't dare wash them off or his mother would have noticed.

Now it happened that Uncle Wiggily, the bunny rabbit gentleman, was out that day, taking a walk with

Grandfather Goosey Gander. The two friends passed through the woods, close to the edge of the yard of the house where the make-believe Measles Boy lived.

And the boy saw the bunny gentleman, all dressed up as Uncle Wiggily was. Grandpa Goosey, also, had on his coat and trousers. Uncle Wiggily wore his golf suit that day—black and white checkered trousers and a cap.

"Oh, what a funny rabbit! What a funny goose!" cried the boy. "I'm going to catch 'em and have a play circus in my yard!"

Forgetting that he was supposed to be suffering from measles, this boy chased after Uncle Wiggily and Grandpa Goosey.

"We'd better run," quacked the goose gentleman. "Boy, you know! Chase us! Throw stones, you know. Better run; what?"

"I believe you!" answered Uncle Wiggily. "Run it is!"

Off hopped the bunny! Off waddled the goose! But the boy was a fast runner, in spite of the red spots on his face and he came nearer and nearer to Uncle Wiggily.

"I'm afraid he's going to catch me, Grandpa!" spoke Mr. Longears in animal talk, of course, which the boy could not hear, much less understand.

"Hop faster!" quacked Grandpa, who was half running and half flying.

On came the boy! Grandpa Goosey, who was ahead, looked back and saw that Uncle Wiggily was soon going to be caught.

"There is only one way to save the bunny," thought Grandpa Goosey. "I'll splash some water in that boy's face and eyes so he can't see for a moment. Then Uncle Wiggily and I can get away!"

Near the path along which the boy was chasing the bunny and goose was a puddle of water. As quick as a wink Grandpa Goosey splashed into this, and, with his wings and webbed feet, he sent such a shower of water into the face of the boy that the bad chap had to stop.

"Oh! Ouch! Stop splashing me!" cried the boy. His face was all wet, but he wiped it off on his sleeve, and with his handkerchief. And when he had cleared his eyes of water he started to run again.

But by this time Uncle Wiggily and Grandpa Goosey were far off, hidden in the forest, and the boy could not find them.

"I guess I'd better go back home and get into bed," thought the boy. "Mother will be looking for me."

He was just going in the house when his mother came up the steps.

"Why, Boysie!" exclaimed Mother. "You shouldn't have gone out with the measles! Why—where are your measles?" she asked, for the spots were gone. "Your face is all red, like a lobster; but you haven't any more measles spots! What happened?"

The boy remembered the water that Grandpa Goosey had splashed up from the puddle. He took out his handkerchief and looked at it. That, too, was red!

"Why, it's red paint!" cried Mother. "Oh, Boysie! How could you play such a trick?" and she felt so sad that tears came into her eyes. "What made you do it, Boysie?"

"I—I didn't want to go to school," the boy answered, softly and much ashamed.

"Oh, how foolish of you!" said Mother. "Now I'll have to take you to school myself, but I won't tell teacher what you did—that is, I will not if you study your lessons well."

"I will, Mother! I will!" the make-believe Measles Boy promised. "I'll never want to stay home from school again!"

And he never did—even when he really had the measles which broke out on him about a week later. But he did not have them very hard, though he didn't need any of his sister's paints to make red spots.

And when Grandpa Goosey looked in the window of the boy's house, and saw the little chap with his face all speckled, the goose gentleman said:

"Serves him right for chasing Uncle Wiggily and me!"