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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Brown Wren

"Well, where are you going this morning?" asked the red squirrel's mother as Uncle Wiggily finished his breakfast, and shook out from his long ears the oatmeal crumbs that had fallen in them.

"Oh, I suppose I will have to be traveling on," answered the rabbit. "That fortune of mine seems to be a long distance off. I've tried rainbows and moon-beams and I didn't find any money at their ends. I guess I'll have to look under the water next, but I'll wait until I get back home, and then I'll have Jimmie Wibblewobble the duck boy put his head at the bottom of the pond and see if there is any gold down there."

So off the old gentleman rabbit started, limping on his crutch, for his rheumatism was troubling him again, and at his side swung his valise, with some crackers and cheese and bread and butter and jam in it—plenty of jam, too, let me tell you, for the red squirrel's mamma could make lovely preserves, and this was carrot jam, with turnip frosting on it.

Well, Uncle Wiggily traveled on and on, over the hills and through the deep woods, and pretty soon he came to a place where he saw a lot of little black ants trying to carry to their nest a nice big piece of meat that some one had dropped.

"My, how hard those ants are working," thought the rabbit. "But that meat is too heavy for them. I'll have to help carry it."

Now the piece of meat was only as big as a quarter of a small coconut, but, of course, that's too big for an ant to carry; or even for forty-'leven ants, so Uncle Wiggily kindly lifted it for them, and put it in their nest.

"Thank you very much," said the biggest ant. "If ever we can do you a favor, or any of your friends, we will." The old gentleman rabbit said he was glad to hear that, and then, taking up his crutch and valise again, on he went.

Pretty soon he came to a place in the woods where the sun was shining down through the trees, and a little brook was making pretty music over the stones. And then, all at once, the old gentleman rabbit heard a different kind of music, and it was that of a little bird singing. And this is the song.

Now I did not make up this song. It is much prettier than I could write, even if I had my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes on, and I don't know who did write it. But it used to be in my school reader when I was a little boy, and I liked it very much. I hope whoever did write it won't mind if you sing it. This is it:

"There's a little brown bird sitting up in a tree,
He's singing to you—he's singing to me.
And what does he say, little girl—little boy?
Oh, the world's running over with joy!"

Then the bird sang about how there were five eggs laid away up in a nest, and how,



pretty soon, little birds would come out from them, and then, all of a sudden, the bird sang like this:

"But don't meddle,—don't touch,

Little girl—little boy,

Or the world will lose some of its joy!"

"Ha! you seem quite happy this beautiful morning," said

Uncle Wiggily, as he paused under the tree where the bird was singing. "Why, I do declare," he exclaimed. "If it isn't Mrs. Wren! Well, I never in all my born days! I didn't know you were back from the South yet."

"Yes, Uncle Wiggily," said the little brown wren, "I came up some time ago. But I'm real glad to see you. I'm going to take my little birdies out of the shell pretty soon. They are almost hatched."

"Glad to hear it," said the rabbit, politely, and then he told about seeking his fortune, and all of a sudden a great big ugly crow-bird flew down out of a tall tree and made a dash for Mrs. Wren to eat her up. But Mrs. Wren got out of the way just in time, and didn't get caught.

But alack, and alas—a-day! The crow knocked down the wren's nest, and all the sticks and feathers of which it was made were scattered all about, and the eggs, with

the little birdies inside, would have been all broken ker-smash, only that they happened to fall down on some soft moss.

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Wren, sorrowfully. "Now see what that crow has done! My home is broken up, and my birdies will be killed."

"Caw! Caw! Caw!" cried the crow as unkindly as he could, and it sounded just as if he laughed "Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"Oh, whatever shall I do?" asked Mrs. Wren. "My birdies will have no nest, and I haven't time to make another and break up the little fine sticks that I need and gather the feathers that are scattered all over. Oh, what shall I do? Soon my birdies will be out of the shells."

"Never fear!" said Uncle Wiggily, bravely. "I will help you. I'll gather the sticks for you."

"Oh, but you haven't time; you must be off seeking your fortune," answered the wren.

"Oh, I guess my fortune can wait. It has been waiting for me a long time, and it won't hurt to wait a bit longer. I'll get you the sticks," said the rabbit gentleman.

So while Mrs. Wren sat over the eggs to keep them warm with her fluffy feathers, Uncle Wiggily looked for sticks with which to make a new nest. He couldn't find any short and small enough, so what do you think he did?

Why, he took some big sticks and he jumped a jiggily dance up and down on them with his sharp paws, and

broke them up as fine as toothpicks for the nest. Then he arranged them as well as he could in a sort of hollow, like a tea cup.

"Oh, if we only had some feathers now, we would be all right," said Mrs. Wren. "It's a very good nest for a rabbit to make."

"Don't say a word!" cried some small voices on the ground. "We will gather up the feathers for you." And there came marching up a lot of the little ants that Uncle Wiggily had been kind to, and soon they had gathered up all the scattered feathers. And the nest was made on a mossy stump, and lined with the feathers, and the warm eggs were put in it by Mrs. Wren, who then hovered over them to hatch out the birdies. And she was very thankful to Uncle Wiggily for what he had done.