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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Manoel Littlebean

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Long ago there lived a man and his wife who had no children.

"I wish I had a little boy," said the man.

"I'd like a son of my own even if he were not any larger than a little bean," said the woman.

Time passed and a son was born to this worthy couple. He was no larger than a little bean and as the years went by he never grew any bigger. His name was Manoel Littlebean. He caused his mother endless trouble by constantly getting lost. Sometimes she'd nearly step on him. Other times he'd fall into the food and she would almost swallow him.

One day his mother couldn't find him.

"Manoel Littlebean! Manoel Littlebean!" she called.

There was no answer.

She went outside the house and called his name anxiously. There was no reply. She asked all the neighbors if they had seen the child, but there was nobody who had noticed him that day. His poor mother was nearly wild with anxiety.

"I'm afraid I'll never see the dear child again," she mourned. "I'm sure I have either stepped on him or swallowed him!"

"You never stepped on him or swallowed him yet," comforted her husband. However, he added anxiously, "I can't see what has become of my Manoel."

The truth of the matter was that Manoel Littlebean had been swallowed by the goat. He was a most active youngster in spite of his small size and he caused the goat a terrible attack of indigestion.

The goat did not know what was the matter and he tore around so wildly and caused so much destruction that his master decided to kill him.

"I simply can't be bothered with that goat any longer," he said. "I have quite enough to worry about already with Manoel Littlebean lost and my poor wife nearly sick with anxiety because of it."

He never dreamed that it was his son who was making the goat so wild with

misery. When the goat was dead he threw it out into the street.

That night a wolf came and ate the goat. He swallowed the goat's stomach so greedily that Manoel Littlebean had no time to escape. However he jumped about just as actively inside the wolf as he had done when the goat had swallowed him. The wolf was just as uncomfortable as the goat had been.

"What is the matter with me?" thought the wolf. "Never in my life have I had such a stomachache. I believe I'm going to die."

He ran away into the forest and crept into a cave to await his end. Inside the cave was a robbers' den. Three of the robbers were there counting over the gold they had just brought back.

When they saw the wolf they were so frightened that they dropped their bags of gold and ran away as fast as they could, leaving everything behind them.

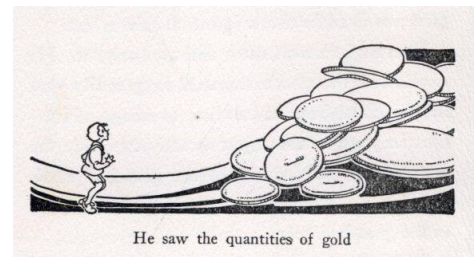
Manoel Littlebean guessed that he was making the wolf sick.

"If I can only make him so ill that he will spit me up!" said Manoel to himself as he jumped about his liveliest.

That is exactly what happened. The wolf spit Manoel Littlebean out.

He was decidedly dirty and unattractive, but he didn't mind in the least. He saw the quantities of gold in the robbers' cave and his eyes shone.

"If I can only find my way home to tell my father about it, he will be a rich man!" he cried.



It was a long distance home and several times he thought that he had lost his way. Finally, however, he saw his own mother's light in the window. He ran toward it as fast as he could run.

"Manoel Littlebean, what have you been doing?" cried his mother when she saw him. "Where did you get so dirty? Come, let me give you a bath the first thing!"

"Never mind about the bath, mother," said Manoel. "I have more important things to attend to. Where is father?"

His mother called her husband and they both forgot how dirty the child was when they heard his story.

"Let us hurry to the robbers' cave, father," he said. "We must get there before they return."

"What about the wolf?" asked his mother anxiously.

Manoel Littlebean laughed.

"The wolf doesn't have any stomachache now," he said. "He went home long ago."

They went to the robbers' cave and brought home the huge sacks full of gold. It was enough to make them live like princes for a lifetime.

"I have the best and cleverest son in the world," said the father.

"Never in the world was there a son who was such a joy and comfort to his parents," said his mother.

Manoel Littlebean was treated by every one as politely as if he had been big.

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