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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Little Traveler

Maud Lindsay

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who had a long journey to go. He had a very dear mother, and she did not want her little son to leave her; but she knew he must go, so she put her arms around him and said: "Now, don't be afraid, for I shall be thinking of you."

Then the little boy kissed her goodbye and ran away, singing a merry song. As long as he could see her he would turn and wave his hand to her; but by and by she was out of sight. Just then he came to a stream of water that ran across his path.

"How can I get over?" thought the little boy; but a white swan swam up to greet him, and said:—

"There is always a way to get over the stream. Follow me! follow me!"

So the little boy followed the swan till he came to a row of great stepping stones, and he jumped from one to another, counting them as he went.

When he reached the seventh he was safe across, and he turned to thank the white swan. And when he had thanked her, he called:—

"White swan, white swan, swimming so gay!

Carry a message for me to-day:

My love to my mother, wherever she be;

I know she is always thinking of me."

Then the white swan swam back to carry the message, and the little boy ran on his way.

Oh! there were so many beautiful things to hear,—the birds singing and the bees humming; and so many beautiful things to see,—the flowers and butterflies and green grass! And after a while he came to a wood, where every tree wore a green dress; and through the wood, under the shade of the trees, flowed a babbling creek.

"I wonder how I can get over?" said the little boy; and the wise wind whispered:

"There is always a way to get over the stream.
Follow me! follow me!"

Then he followed the sound of the wise wind's voice, and the wind blew against a tall pine tree, and the pine tree fell across the creek, and lay there, a great round foot-log, where the little boy might step. He made his way over, and thanked the wise wind; and he asked:—



"Wise wind, wise wind, blowing so gay!
Carry a message for me to-day:
My love to my mother, wherever she be;
I know she is always thinking of me."

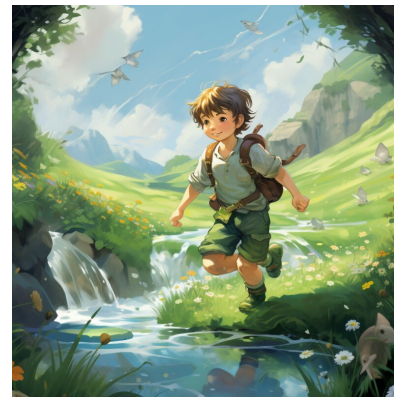
The wind blew back to carry the message, and the little boy made haste on his journey. His way lead through a meadow, where the clover grew and the white sheep and baby lambs were feeding together in the sunshine.

On one side of this meadow flowed a silver shining river, and the child wandered up and down the bank to find some way to cross, for he knew that he must go on.

As he walked there, a man called a carpenter found him, and said to him:—

"There is always a way to get over the stream.
Follow me! follow me!"

Then the little boy followed the carpenter, and the carpenter and his men built a bridge of iron and wood that reached across from bank to bank. And when the bridge was finished, the child ran over in safety; and after he had thanked the carpenter, he said:—



"Carpenter, carpenter, on your way!
Carry a message for me to-day:
My love to my mother, wherever she be,
I know she is always thinking of me."

The carpenter gladly consented; and after he had turned back to carry the message, the little boy followed the path, which led up hill over rocks and steep places, through brambles and briars, until his feet grew weary; and when he came down into the valley again, he saw a river that was very dark and very deep.

There was no white swan or wise wind to help him. No tree in the forest could

bridge it over, and the carpenter and his men were far away.

"I must get over. There is a way," said the little boy bravely; and, as he sat down to rest, he heard a murmuring sound. Looking down, he spied a tiny boat fastened to a willow tree.

"I am the boat with a helping oar,
To carry you over from shore to shore,"

repeated the boat; and when the little boy had unfastened it, he sprang in, and began to row himself over the dark water.

As he rowed, he saw a tiny bird flying above him. The bird needed no boat or bridge, for its wings were strong; and when the little boy saw it, he cried:—

"Little bird, little bird, flying so gay!
Carry a message for me to-day:
My love to my mother, wherever she be;
I know she is always thinking of me."

The little bird flew swiftly back to carry the message, and the boy rowed on till he reached the opposite shore. After he had thanked the boat with its helping oar, he tied it to a tree as he had found it, and then hastened away, singing his happy song again.

By and by he heard an answer to his song, and he knew that it was the great sea, calling "Come! Come! Come!" And when he reached the shore where the blue waves were dancing up to the yellow sands, he clapped his hands with delight; for there, rocking on the billows, was a beautiful ship with sails as white as a lady's hands.

"I knew there would be a way!" said the little boy, as he sprang on deck and went sailing over the deep blue sea,—sailing, sailing, sailing, day after day, night after night, over the beautiful sea.

At night the stars would look down, twinkling and blinking; and as the little boy watched them, he would say:—

"Little stars, little stars, shining so bright!
Carry a message for me to-night:
My love to my mother, wherever she be;
I know she is always thinking of me."

The little boy went on sailing, sailing, day and night, until he came to a land beyond the sea,—a land so full of delight that the little boy felt that his journey was ended, until one day when a great storm came.

The wind blew, the thunder crashed, the lightning flashed, the rain came pouring

down, and the little boy wanted to go home.

"I will find a way!" he cried at last; and, just as he spoke, the sun came bursting out, the storm clouds rolled away, and there in the sky was a rainbow bridge that seemed to touch both sky and earth.

Then the little boy's heart leaped for joy, and he ran with feet as light as feathers up the shining bow; and when he reached the highest arch, he looked down on the other side and saw home and his mother at the rainbow's end.

"Mother! Mother!" he called, as he ran down into her arms. "Mother, I've always been thinking of you."

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